

Majority say NO nuke dump

One of the worst kept secrets in Australia's recent history was finally made public last week. Site 40a – a working sheep station near Woomera in South Australia – has been chosen as the location for the national low-level radioactive waste dump.

by Bob Briton

The previously favoured Site 52a was ruled out at a late stage because of safety risks arising from the military's nearby Range E missile target area. Site 45a was another of the short listed locations. It was unsuitable because mining transnational WMC Resources owns the property in question and doesn't want a nuclear dump on its land – end of story.

Leean and Andrew Pobke, on the other hand, hold no hope of preventing the compulsory acquisition of land on their Arcoona station by the Commonwealth. Section 51 of the Constitution and the Lands Acquisition Act allow the Federal Government to take over property on what are called "just terms".

Finance and Administration Minister Nick Minchin and Science Minister Peter McGauran have gone to considerable lengths to sell the decision as a compromise. McGauran has given an undertaking that SA will not be expected to host the other proposed national dump

for intermediate or high level waste.

Democrats MLA Sandra Kanck spoke for the overwhelming majority of South Australians last week when she dismissed this promise as a device for easing in this first stage of the Federal Government's plans.

For its part, the Rann Labor Government is sounding very Churchillian about fighting the decision on a number of fronts. The SA Government is expected to mount a legal challenge to the compulsory acquisition of the land and the granting of a licence to operate the dump.

Several native title claims will have to be overridden for the Commonwealth to press ahead with its plans and unions affiliated to the United Trades and Labor Council will refuse to work on or provide services to any dump project.

In spite of all these obstacles – and polls showing the opposition of 72 percent of South Australians – the Commonwealth is sounding upbeat. Senator Minchin maintains that the dump will not damage the State's image as a clean, green wine producer and points to the presence of a nuclear dump in France's Champagne district in defence of his argument. Apparently, the dump at Centre de L'Aube has even become something of a tourist attraction.

Catherine Hockley couldn't resist making the following suggestion to tourists making their way to outback South Australia in a recent column in *The Advertiser*:

"Visit the Barossa Valley, drop in on the Eden and Clare Valleys, then head up the Stuart Highway towards Woomera, en route to the nation's first radioactive waste dump. Why not detour to Port Augusta to check out Baxter Detention Centre while you're there, and drop off for some pics for posterity of the mothballed Woomera centre... Then pop across to the Maralinga lands to see the legacy of British atomic testing."



Catherine went as far as to suggest a new slogan for the State: "Forget the Festival State. Our new slogan? South Australia – what a waste."

Legacy of atomic tests

The consequences of the British atomic weapons tests in the 1950s and 1960s are again to the fore, and such bitter experiences have had a profound effect on the opposition of South Australians to the dump.

This includes the high number of stillbirths and other premature deaths of children in Woomera in the years in question and the horrendous health problems of

generations of some of the families of Australian servicemen from among the 17,000 who worked on the tests.

Some 1200 South Australians have received counselling during the last 12 months about the taking of bones from dead stillborn babies, infants, toddlers and teenagers by Federal authorities right up to the 1970s. Australia-wide, some 21,830 bodies had bones removed – mostly without the consent of the parents.

The remains were then tested in Commonwealth facilities in Melbourne for the presence of strontium 90 and other residues of the atomic tests. Families are now being contacted to see if they would

like to receive the little plastic bottles containing the ashes of the stolen remains.

The Indigenous Advisory Committee to the Federal Environment Minister also has fears about the possible exclusion of the Kokatha people from the land being sought for the dump.

In an address by Mike Rann to the Maralinga Tjarutja community at Oak Valley the Premier said that before land used for the British atomic tests is handed back to its owners, the Commonwealth must be forced to accept financial liability for problems that might arise from any shortcomings in their "cleanup" of the area.☛

Budget Coverage

Coverage of the Federal Budget will appear in next week's *Guardian*. The Treasurer had not delivered his statement at the time of going to press.

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From invasion to occupation and colonisation

The visit of John Howard to the United States coincided with the colonialist stage of the US, British, Polish and Australian military occupation of Iraq. Howard reached a new nauseating depth of toadyism while in the US, even deeper than Harold Holt's "All the way with LBJ" during the Vietnam war. The dictionary is replete with words to describe Howard's fawning, servility, obsequiousness, slavishness, cringing, crawling, flunkeyism and grovelling, just to list a few.

The mutual backslapping by Bush, Howard and Blair, the main parties to the criminal invasion of Iraq, will sicken many. But it was not just an occasion for backslapping. The next stage in the colonisation of Iraq is now underway. Howard and others representing Australian corporations and government agencies are putting in their claims to take part in thieving Iraq's resources while compelling the Iraqi people to pay for the reconstruction of their country.

The first to land a contract is Chris Corrigan of waterfront infamy. He has been given a contract by the US Agency for International Development to assess Baghdad's international airport which has been turned into one of the US's main military bases.

The Australian Wheat Board (AWB) is not far behind. It is angling to get into the act of showing the Iraqi people how to develop their agriculture. The AWB hopes to sell even more wheat to the Iraqi people who have been made hungry by the 12 years of US and British imposed sanctions.

The *Australian Financial Review* (AFR) (2/5/03) published a plan laying out the US's objectives. These involve changing Iraq's economy from one largely based on public ownership to one where private property rules. State-owned enterprises are to be privatised including Iraq's oil resources. Exxon, Shell, BP, Mobil and many others are lining up to thief and milk the property of the Iraqi people.

The plan says that the "private sector is to be jump-started by fresh credit and training" – no doubt provided by US, British and Australian taxpayers. The tax code is to be "re-written" to protect the private corporations and their profits in just the same way as both Bush and Howard have altered the tax schedules in the US and Australia, giving huge tax breaks to the wealthy corporations. Iraq is to become a test case for US-style free-market capitalism in the Arab world, says the AFR.

While overseas, Howard continued his arrogant lecturing to the world. He told members of the UN Security Council "not to argue the toss" over the coalition's decision to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein and that the coalition powers were the effective administering body in Iraq.

In Qatar, Howard told Australian troops that they had fought in a "just cause". The truth is much different. The war against Iraq was an invasion of another sovereign country. It was a war of aggression. Its purpose was occupation and colonisation. It was a violation of the UN Charter. It was illegal under international law. It was a war crime and those responsible should be condemned and charged by the International Criminal Court of the UN. Australian troops are accessories to that war crime. They were sent there to kill Iraqis and those engaged in the bombing and firing on Iraqi targets undoubtedly killed Iraqi citizens.

It matters little that having killed or wounded others that a drink of water is then offered to the suffering.

There is only one war among many in which Australian forces have been engaged that had a progressive objective. That was WW 2 with its objective of stopping the Nazi ambition of world domination. The Iraq war is part of another drive for world domination, this time on the part of the leaders of the United States. This war is the most obvious and despicable of all. In time there will be a heavy price to pay by those who organised this crime and by those who were misled into taking part. The Iraqi people will also take part in that retribution.

PRESS FUND

By the time they'd entered Baghdad, coalition forces had destroyed almost all the major government buildings (including those housing the Ministries for Education, Science and Agriculture). They didn't bother to guard the hospitals or museums, just the Ministry for Oil building, which (surprise, surprise) was completely intact. Just goes to show, you have to get the priorities right! We hope your priority lies in helping us bring you The Guardian each week, and that you'll send us a contribution for the next issue. This week our heartfelt thanks go to the following, for their generous contributions:

\$50 for Johnno the Violin Man

Donna in memory of Johnno \$50

B Appleton \$20, T Bartlett \$100, C J and P J \$11, "Round Figure" \$10.50, Stan \$25

This week's total: \$266.50. Progressive total: \$5005.

Johnno Johnson

John Godschall Johnson, affectionately known by many as *The Violin Man*, died on May 4 aged 91, after a long illness.

As a young man in the 1930's, at the time of the Great Depression, his apprenticeship papers were cancelled when the engineering firm of Dick Rye closed its doors forever.

Johnno joined the Communist Party in Townsville in 1934 and helped to produce and manage the *North Queensland Guardian* which was distributed from Rockhampton to Cairns. It was sold in the streets, factories and farms in Ingham, Innisfail and the North.

He worked for the election of Fred Paterson as the member for the State seat of Bowen, the first and only Communist elected to an Australian Parliament.

In 1938, Johnno was seconded to Sydney to work with Jack Simpson as manager of the Party's national paper, the *Workers' Weekly*.

He became one of the Communist Party's speakers in the Domain and at street meetings in Kings Cross, Darlinghurst, Balmain, Paddington, Newtown and Bankstown.

Johnno made sure that the communist newspapers, leaflets, posters and literature were available to an audience long before the advent of television, talkback radio and the internet kept people behind closed doors.

He saw the communist press as important in winning people to understand their role in the struggle for socialism.

In his youth John painted portraits and landscapes and became a very good photographer. Many of his photographs showed his concern and compassion for the plight of the Aboriginal fringe dwellers. These prints highlight our shame, a period not yet over.

John's photographs also showed the thin and gaunt faces of the unemployed, queued up outside soup kitchens and those receiving hand-me-downs of warm clothing and blankets.

Many of those photographs were used to illustrate articles in the

communist press. They illustrated the demand for work by the jobless.

John also organised the first booklet on the plans, hopes and aspirations of the Torres Strait Islander people.

As a member of the Seamen's Union he joined the crew of the *Elsana*, which ran between Brisbane and Thursday Island.

Johnno wrote in his diary, "On each trip I sat with the leaders, and they told me the problems of life as indigenous people. I wrote this up in simple language and when it was approved, the pamphlet *Let the Sun Shine* was printed by the communist press in 1954 in English and translated into two Island languages."

He also became a maker of violins, violas, cellos and bows and, in this respect, he was a legend.

In the 1950s John bought his mother a violin and this marked the start of his study into the science of violin making in the tradition of Stradivarius, Cuarnari and Amati, the old Italian violin makers of 300 years ago.

Johnno made his first violin out of a wooden crate for a man who could not afford a violin, but wished to buy one.

On his 88th birthday, Johnno was honoured at a special luncheon to launch an exhibition at Bankstown Library (Sydney) of his life's work as an acclaimed painter and master craftsman — earning him an Order of Australia in 1989.

Bankstown Councillor Helen Westwood said in her opening address at that time that musicians have come from the four corners of the world to meet and work with Johnno.

Testifying to his global recognition, his instruments are on display in the permanent Acoustical Museum in Mexico and at the Power House Museum in Sydney.

Amsterdam is home to a 12-piece Baroque orchestra and all the instruments were made by Johnno.

Johnno never sold his

instruments but bestowed on the new owners "custodianship" of his violins, violas, cellos and bows — and engraved into the belly of each: "This instrument may be freely given, never to be bought or sold".

"John removed himself from the tyranny of the market place", his wife Phyllis said.

In an interview in 1993, Johnno said, "I don't accept money. I'm interested in young people with talent who haven't a chance to get a violin.

"If I think they've got talent, I make them the custodian of a violin. But my instruments have to be passed from one player to another."

John experimented in the woods and varnishes, and used his knowledge of chemistry to add the component parts, such as extracts from the Madden plant which he grew next to the letter box.

Some makers can turn out a violin within a week and use antique furniture varnish, but John worked and studied in the traditions of the old masters. He gouged out the bellies and backs with 100-year-old tools, one as small as a man's thumb.

The sole electrical device permitted in his workshop is a machine which measures the frequencies of vibrations emitted from the timbers as they yield their characteristic sounds.

John Godschall Johnson has passed on but his work as artist, sculptor, photographer, woodworker, chemist, acoustical engineer and Communist activist will live on, remembered by his many friends and comrades and by those who continue to play his magnificent violins and other instruments. Will they also become the Stradivarius of the future?

John was married to wife Phyllis who is also a vibrant and dedicated member of the Communist Party. They were married for 64 years.

The Communist Party and *The Guardian* extend their deepest sympathy to Phyllis, and children Alice and Peter. We salute the life of Johnno, a great humanitarian and man of the people. ✪



"If I think they've got talent, I make them the custodian of a violin."

Skewered & short-sighted

The de-funding and corporatisation of Australia's universities is the benchmark being set in this week's Federal Budget. It is the US model for higher education.

The Howard Government is pushing the idea of five centres of higher learning where research would be based on the tailoring of the end product to global corporate needs and demands.

Promoting this agenda is Rupert Murdoch. In a book launched earlier this month by Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson, *2020 Vision*, Murdoch expounds his and the government's ideal for higher education. "We ought to be ensuring that our universities have the money to buy the best brains in the world, the best teachers and the best researchers, who in turn will attract the best students in the world."

Murdoch described as examples to be followed Stanford University in America's Silicon Valley and Harvard, that academy for the offspring of the rich and the ruling class.

He also gave vent to his opinion of Australia's public education system: "I think the education establishment with its insistence on tenure at tertiary level, and its power at primary and secondary level – setting bullshit syllabuses – is really doing the country an immense disservice."

It is just such a skewed and short-sighted vision, founded on elitism and the holy grail of profit, that has spread like a virus through the US higher education system.

Anthony Badgerow writing in *Political Affairs*, a journal published by the Communist Party, USA, gives some insight into how the law of the corporate jungle is being imposed on America's public universities. Badgerow writes:

On December 12, 2001, George W Bush appointed University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Chancellor Martha Gilliland to the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). There she joined a set of executives from industries such as Dell, Microsoft and Lockheed Martin.

The Council is designed to provide a link between the White House and representatives of the private sector regarding a range of scientific issues. In an interview, UMKC biology professor Marino Martinez-Carrion explained that, essentially, the Council's role is to "pretend that the president has consulted experts".

Gilliland was herself selected for the position on the council, which overwhelmingly represents information technology, for her reputation as an academic highly involved in the life sciences.

Gilliland's reputation with life sciences is owed not to credentials within the field but her policy of favouring corporate interests over those of faculty and students at her own institution of learning.

It is not surprising to see Gilliland alongside corporate heads such as Gordon E Moore of the Intel Corporation and Dell CEO Michael S Dell. Gilliland runs her university like any other corporation.

Corporatisation

The actual process of corporatisation has taken two forms: an external form, characterised by the exertion of corporate power over the academy itself, and an internal form, in which the university mimics the nature and tendencies of any other corporation.

Gilliland is highly involved in spearheading corporatisation in both of its forms. The very vision and purpose of the academy within our society is called into question as learning and the posing of critical questions become secondary to the University's Board of Curators' thirst for profit.

Staff and faculty voices at UMKC are marginalised; exploited part-time instructors are not provided anything close to a living wage (they are typically paid roughly one third to one half of what the American Association of University Professors recommends).

As a result of the low pay, most instructors are forced to work at one or even two other local academic institutions just to make ends meet.

The sort of free speech one expects at a university is not present on her campus. In 1997, Gilliland wrote that those who vocalise dissent are "terrorists" who should be ignored or they "may ... need to be removed."

This form of rhetorical intimidation has been successful in shifting the blame from those who might be at fault within the university's administration to the dispossessed themselves, who are often accused of being "unco-operative". This is what a "community of learners" consists of within the university administration's ideology.

In order to change the shape and ideology of the university itself, which makes corporatisation possible, Gilliland has created what she calls a "Blueprint for the Future."

The primary agent of change propelling this Blueprint consists of what are called Transformation Workshops, three-day sessions which all staff and faculty members are encouraged (and sometimes forced) to attend.

An article in Kansas City's *Pitch Weekly* compared the sessions to brainwashing and found their intellectual roots in the so-called "EST" (Erhard Seminars Training) programs of the 1970s, demeaning, cult-like corporate integration exercises now run by a business called the "Landmark Forum."

A former EST executive was Gordon Starr, whom Gilliland pulled out of unemployment in San Francisco and who has since been paid \$750,000 to run UMKC's Transformation Workshops.

At these sessions, one can literally expect to join a round of "Hokey Pokey", and develop what, in an interview, Vice Provost Laurence Kaptain vaguely refers to as "quantum organisations" within the "commitment, vision and possibility" of the "extended future." Much like life in a fascist society, the rhetoric of community integration masks the top-down imposition of all decisions without the consent of the people.

Professor Martinez-Carrion called the experience "very demean-

ing and anti-intellectual" and stated that taking instructors away from the classroom for this sort of nonsense can destroy a semester's entire schedule of learning for students and faculty.

In fact, Martinez-Carrion was once Dean of the School of Biological Sciences (SBS). Gilliland forced him to resign last fall because, in his words, he "refused to be Blueprinted". Professor Martinez-Carrion, who created SBS in 1986, was removed due to his resistance to what he sees as an impending corporate takeover of the School of Biological Sciences.

The biggest threat levelled against the "uncooperative" members of the SBS faculty, however, has been privatisation. This form of threat, biology professor Ed Gogol explains, is designed to quell academic freedom and free speech with the threat that faculty tenure will be stripped from academics in the private sector.

Although such a process would take a number of years, this form of "reorganisation" throws the aims of the university out of balance and would transform it into a pure profit-generating machine.

The full text of Anthony Badgerow's article can be found at www.politicalaffairs.net



Water privatisation

Northern NSW agribusinesses recently celebrated the arrival of long-delayed rainwater for their vast rice and cotton floodplains. However, their rejoicing spelt terrible news for people further down the once mighty Murray-Darling river network, which has now ceased to flow.

by Peter Mac

Continued extraction by these corporations of huge amounts of water from the upper reaches of the Darling deprives those downstream of irrigation and drinking water, and will soon render Adelaide's water undrinkable.

Scientists and organisations around Australia have expressed deep concerns that water must be seen as a shared resource under strict, fair and rational government control. The Howard government is now finalising a plan ostensibly aimed at achieving a more rational and efficient use of our water resources.

The government describes the plan as a "national water rights trading scheme". It obviously sees the main issue relating to water as the right to trade it as private property.

The quantity and distribution of water are not the only problems. The quality of our drinking water, and its safe disposal, are now jeopardised by the privatisation of Australia's water services.

For example, in 1995 the South Australian Government signed a contract with an essentially French and British conglomerate, United Water International Consortium.

The contract, for the management and operation of Adelaide's entire water supply and disposal system, commenced in 1996. Water rates immediately rose, the first 136 kilolitres costing an extra 59 percent.

A third of the water treatment workforce was retrenched. The company's chairman later stated bluntly: "We're not here because we love the state and we've got

bleeding hearts, for Christ's sake. We're here to make money."

In the contract's second year, Adelaide endured a widespread and unbearable stench. Queensland University investigators traced this to raw sewage accidentally released into open treatment ponds at Adelaide's Bolivar water treatment plant.

United Water's monitoring was subsequently found to have been inadequate. The University team's head investigator concluded: "It was dollars driving everything. The big emphasis was on minimising costs. The Bolivar incident is an illustration of what can happen when things like monitoring and maintenance are cut to the bone."

Such comments didn't, however, deter the State Government from upgrading the plant. This cost SA taxpayers \$27 million, but will considerably reduce United Water's maintenance bill over the life of the plant.

Shortly afterwards, Sydney residents got a taste of "third world" conditions with the unwelcome arrival of the parasites *Crypto Sporidium* and *Giardia* in their drinking water.

Sydney's newly opened Prospect water treatment plant, which supplies nearly 85 percent of the city's water supply needs, had been built and was operated by Australian Water Services, a French/American consortium.

During a subsequent inquiry, the NSW Government and the company bickered about their respective responsibilities, but both tried to prevent the airing of "commercial-in-confidence" documents relating to the plant.

With remarkable understatement,

inquiry commissioner Peter McClellan concluded that: "Public need will generally require the provision of the highest reasonable quality of service. This may be inconsistent with the profit motive and other commercial considerations. ... The inevitable question is whether some essential government services should remain within the ownership and control of government, with direct ministerial responsibility."

By 2001, some 25 percent of Australia's drinking water was supplied by private firms, mostly foreign-owned.

The situation is not, of course, unique to Australia. Water supply and services are now looming as a huge international problem.

Proposed new dams in Turkey would drastically cut water flows to Iraq. A pan-American association of scientists recently found that in 2000, 15 percent of Latin American and Caribbean people had no drinking water supply and 21 percent had no sanitation system.

Privatisation of Bolivian water supplies brought about a series of "water wars". The Nicaraguan government supports privatisation of the state-owned Aqueducts and Drainage Company, despite the threat that privatisation poses to preventive health care of millions. Privatised water services in Argentina are now only supplied to those who can afford them.

And within 15 years the three largest water resource corporations (Suez, Vivendi, and Thames Water) will probably control between 65 and 75 percent of the world's waterworks.

Privatisation of water supply and services is clearly not the solution to water problems. Indeed, it is actually at the root cause of most of the problems along with the environmentally destructive practices that come with the profit-driven, private sector.

Social inequality virtually untouched by Minimum Wage Decision

The Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) last week awarded a two-tier wage rise for the 1.7 million workers covered by federal awards. The decision grants a \$17 a week, pre-tax increase to workers earning less than the full-time equivalent of \$731.80 per week and a \$15 a week boost to those receiving more than that amount. The Federal Minimum Wage will increase to \$448.40 per week, or \$11.80 an hour.

by Bob Britton

Peak trade union bodies in the States are set to claim the increases for workers covered by state awards. Bureaucratic hurdles may delay the passing on of the increase by up to 12 months for some workers.

While every extra cent is welcome for those on low incomes, the increase will hardly compensate for recent price rises, let alone contribute to improving living standards.

For the many workers trying to survive in casual and part-time work, it might only amount to a few extra dollars a week.

The ACTU has "cautiously welcomed" the decision. Their submission to the case was for a \$24.80 per week increase for the country's lowest paid workers.

The case was primarily fought in the Commission, using economic and social arguments, with little mobilisation or action in the workplace by workers.

The Commonwealth argued for a \$12 a week increase while employer organisations were prepared to pay – you guessed it – NOTHING or \$0 per week extra to the working poor in the community.

Only twice in the last five years have the bosses lowered their guard before the AIRC and shown any willingness to open their wallets. In 2001 and 2002 they agreed with the Commonwealth that workers on the

lowest incomes should be helped to the tune of \$10 a week. Employer groups consistently argue an inability to meet the modest pay claims put before them.

Yet an analysis of the top 100 CEO incomes (not counting retirement benefits) shows that they have swollen by 38 per cent on average last year. That converts to an average pay rise of more than \$10,000 extra per week. Amazing what industry can afford when it tries!

"There has been a massive increase in inequality. The top 100 CEOs' average income in 2001 was 67 times the Federal Minimum Wage. In just 12 months it has skyrocketed to 89 times the Federal Minimum Wage", ACTU President Sharon Burrow observed just prior to the latest AIRC decision.

The ACTU has calculated, for example, that the combined earnings of the top five percent of income earners exceeds the entire national spending on all social security and family payments.

The ACTU highlighted the growing inequality in Australian society as part of a renewed drive for union membership. They have released a new report entitled *Future Strategies: Unions Working for a Fairer Australia* that underscores the need for more highly skilled workplace delegates using more modern communications and campaign methods.

A three-day *Let's Get Real* conference involving 700 union organisers, held in Sydney last week, took up these same themes.

It is to be hoped that the union representatives can hit upon a strategy for quickly injecting some greater militancy and class consciousness – from the workers' side – into the bleak industrial relations scene in Australia.

Federal Treasurer Peter Costello warned last week that the economy was beset by a number of "challenges" such as the drought, the effect of SARS on tourism, the bill for the war on Iraq and the cost of strengthening domestic "security". As well as promising a tough budget, he foreshadowed a new round of structural and industrial relations "reforms".

Costello is talking about a renewed attack on the ability of unions to defend workers.

Over the last 20 years, the stripping of awards, their replacement by enterprise agreements and individual contracts, along with a battery of laws restricting the right to strike, have seriously weakened the trade union movement.

National campaigns, national wage decisions and community standards have been replaced by a system where the majority of workers have been left behind to become what is referred to as "the working poor". The Minimum Wage Decision is not enough on its own.

So *Let's Get Real*, and take on the Government and employers, by organising and mobilising workers to defeat the anti-union legislation and restore a centralised system of bargaining. ✪



"Management is trying anything to improve the financial bottom line."

Ground-breaking paid maternity leave plan

Hotel workers employed by the multinational Starwood Hotel chain are on the eve of signing a ground-breaking provision for six weeks paid maternity leave. The proposed leave provisions are contained in an enterprise agreement being negotiated by the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (LHMU).

"If union members vote for the enterprise agreement then the proposed six weeks paid maternity leave will be a first for the hospitality industry, outside the Star City Casino", Tim Ferrari, LHMU Assistant National Secretary said.

The agreement – which effects 2000 hotel workers – is also significantly better than what the Industrial Relations Commission has just awarded other low-wage workers in the hospitality industry who are either not unionised, or have not achieved the collective power in the workplace to insist on an enterprise agreement.

While the Minimum Wage Decision handed down by the AIRC underlined the crisis of low pay in this country the Starwood Hotel agreement is a real demonstration that it is possible for unionised workers to challenge this crisis.

"Unionised workers can win if they act collectively and campaign and negotiate for an enterprise agreement", Tim Ferrari said.

Maternity win comes while Feds go back on promises

The union notes that the win by unionised workers comes at a time that the Federal Government has furiously back-pedaled on earlier promises to provide improved work-and-family standards, including extending maternity leave rights to ordinary working Australians, in this month's budget.

"Our members believe this win shows what collective action can do at a time when the Howard Government is showing no interest in such a vital issue", said Mr Ferrari.

"Our members, in hotels in Victoria, NSW and Queensland, will now discuss the new enterprise agreements at workplace meetings being held over the next fortnight."

Talks involved the LHMU Hotel Union negotiating team and Starwood Hotels which includes the Sheraton Hotels in Brisbane, Noosa and Melbourne; the Westin Hotels in Melbourne and Sydney; Four Points in Port Macquarie and Geelong and the "W" in Sydney.

Terms

The LHMU membership meetings will be given feedback from the negotiating team about the new three-year agreement which includes:

- A \$62 a week increase in wages;
- Six weeks paid maternity leave;
- Reclassification of room attendants who check room standards for guests;
- An additional day of bereavement leave;
- New delegate rights to be involved in induction programs explaining the benefits of the agreement to new workers.

Mr Ferrari said the agreement had come together after regular negotiating meetings over four months between union delegates, union officials and management representatives. ✪

Major banks exploit SARS

Using SARS as another excuse to bully workers, two major banks – Westpac and ANZ – were exposed last week for punishing any staff who travelled to a SARS affected area. Workers were to be forced into a 10-day "quarantine" period, docked from their sick leave.

These extreme measures fly in the face of advice from the NSW Health Department which confirmed that forced 10-day stand-downs of workers travelling to Asia were not necessary.

Chief Health officer Greg Stewart told unions that only staff exhibiting flu-like symptoms returning from high-risk areas should be quarantined. He said general stand-downs need only apply to health workers.

As soon as ANZ's SARS policy was exposed in the media it quickly rescinded the order.

Westpac remained resolute – all staff will take 10 days leave, and unless the workers has a "strong personal reason" for travelling to Asia (to be judged by Westpac of course), the absence will be at their own expense.

"If a person is going for a holiday they will have to use their sick leave on their return", said Westpac spokesperson David Lording.

If the staff have no sick or annual leave accrued then they are on leave without pay.

Westpac's policy was introduced the same week the bank announced a half-year profit of \$1.05 billion.

Finance Sector Union National

Secretary Tony Beck said occupational health and safety laws meant it was the employer's duty to provide a healthy and safe work environment and staff should not have to pay out of their own pocket.

"Staff cannot be forced to take their sick leave or recreation leave", Mr Beck said. "Sick leave is for sickness and if someone returns, the employer needs to take into account the impact of SARS."

NSW Labor Council Secretary John Robertson said it is time for employers to take a reality check.

"We have health experts telling us to be alert but not alarmed – maybe these are the people who should be setting the policy and not a bunch of SARS enthusiasts in the Human Resources Department.

"The bottom line is that employers should be the ones to bear the cost of any increased precautions – not the workers.

"Unions support precautions against the SARS virus ... but for a bank to impose an edict that workers must stand down for 10 days at their own expense seems to be an overreaction to the situation", Mr Robertson said.

Acknowledgement to Workers Online ✪

“The war against the Iraqi people is not over”

The following is the text of the speech made by Dr Hannah Middleton Co-convenor, Walk Against the War Coalition, at the May Day rally in Sydney.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq was and is wrong, illegal and immoral. The US-led invasion has killed and injured many thousands of Iraqi people. It has destroyed basic services which were already badly damaged by war and over a decade of punitive sanctions.

Today the Iraqi people face shortages of water and food, hospitals overflowing and without medicines, water or electricity, and the on-going danger of death and injury.

War has brought US military occupation, not stability and democracy. Occupation is not liberation – and this is an occupation in which US soldiers did not control the looters but do shoot political protesters. The presence of hundreds of thousands of US troops is a huge barrier to the Iraqi people’s right to decide their own future. Only the Iraqi people can create democracy in Iraq.

of the spoils of war in Iraq between competing, mainly US, corporations. It is called “reconstruction” but in reality it is nothing more than colonial plunder.

We demand: Iraqi control of Iraq’s resources!

There is evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq – but they are not Iraqi weapons.

The US forces have been using depleted uranium munitions in the invasion. These were also employed in the 1991 Gulf War, leaving a legacy of horrifying cancers among both Iraqi civilians and US troops. The Bush administration has taught the world a terrible lesson – countries must develop weapons of mass destruction as a deterrent to protect themselves from a US pre-emptive strike.

There will be a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a terrible new arms race which will gobble up desperately needed

to win global domination, to seize power so that it can privatise the economies of all countries and inflict on people everywhere the blessings of ‘free market’ corporate capitalism.

Bush and his advisers speak of “endless war”. Iraq is an early victim. The Palestinian people have been fighting and suffering for decades. Who is next? Syria, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Russia, Venezuela, Libya...

We demand: No more wars of aggression!

We reject the Howard Government’s support for the Bush’s doctrine of “preventive war”.

We reject the Government’s support for the US spy base at Pine Gap which was so crucial for the US attack on Iraq.

And let’s not forget that Australian workers at Pine Gap have been on strike twice this year already because they are paid substantially less than Americans at Pine Gap who do exactly the same job.

We condemn the Howard Government for trampling on our democratic rights by defying the will of the great majority of the people of this country who were opposed to war against Iraq.

We condemn the Government for its attacks on our civil liberties under the guise of “security” and “fighting terrorism”.

We will resist all moves by the Howard Government to make us pay for this illegal, immoral and barbaric war.

We will not permit our Medicare cards to be taken from us, we will not allow our public hospitals and public schools to be starved of funds while the Federal Government’s war spending spirals into billions upon billions of workers dollars.

On May Day, we say: We don’t need new wars and an arms race; we don’t need transnational corporation dominance.

We need, we demand, we will fight for workers rights, global justice and peace. ☺



The national scientific and research body, the CSIRO, has been hit with budget cuts over a long period of time. Now the CSIRO Staff Association has warned that unless there is a 10 percent funding increase in this month’s federal budget, vital jobs and scientific expertise will be lost. “Staff in the CSIRO are committed to delivering the best research outcomes for the people of Australia”, says the Staff Association’s Sandy Ross. “Every time funding priorities are changed, money is wasted and public investment in research is thrown away.”

It’s a different story in the big end of town. Former federal Health Minister Michael Wooldridge has sent clients of health consultancy Commercial Eyes invitations to a seminar at the Stanford Hotel in Sydney where he will speak on “how best to address issues that may be effecting your business at a federal level”. The cost of attending this talk fest is \$984.50 per head. It should be recalled that Wooldridge kept equipment from his office and retained his minister’s e-mail link four months after he’d resigned. Also that while he was Health Minister he redirected \$5 million of funding meant for rural health services and asthma research into construction of new offices for the Royal College of General Practitioners, where he was employed as a consultant when he left Parliament.

The dirt keeps flying out of the Pan Pharmaceuticals debacle. Last week it was revealed that the family members of the company’s general manager, John Brennan, sold all their shares a week after the surprise audit of the company by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Brennan was responsible for, among other things, the company complying with the rules in its manufacturing licence, rules that were ignored, resulting in the poisoning of who knows how many people using Pan products. A TGA spokesperson said Brennan was “very agitated” while attending the audit. Of course. At that point he hadn’t sold the family’s company shares, which he knew would be worth zilch when the dirt hit the fan.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is that pathetic herd of swine in Hollywood who are campaigning to bring Iraqi child victim of the US-led invasion of Iraq, Ali Ismail Abbas, to America. Ali was the sole survivor of a US missile that hit his home, killing 20 people, including his parents and his brothers and sisters. He had to have both his arms amputated. Ali was also the subject of a cruelly opportunist media campaign headed by the warmongering Murdoch empire. Now the likes of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Angelina Jolie are pushing to have him brought to the US for treatment. From an embarrassment of riches to expose such hypocrisy, let us simply recall that since last July the US, backed by Britain and Australia, blocked humanitarian supplies to Iraq, including vaccines, plasma and pain killers, all of which Iraq had paid for and the UN Security Council had approved.

The presence of hundreds of thousands of US troops is a huge barrier to the Iraqi people’s right to decide their own future. Only the Iraqi people can create democracy in Iraq.

The foreign troops also directly threaten other Middle Eastern countries.

The Walk Against the War Coalition demands: End the occupation! Troops out now!

The “Coalition of the killing” bombed Baghdad’s water supply. It is not yet restored, but it is being privatised. A US corporation will reap the profits from the Iraqi people’s need for water.

There is a sickening carve up

resources and threaten the survival of this planet.

There are already more than 26,000 nuclear weapons in our world. The US military budget is now over \$US437 billion every year. This is larger than the Australian economy. Yet global poverty and inequality are getting worse.

We demand the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction! The Bush administration is using its overwhelming military force

Arise then, women of this day!

Each year the US President issues a Mother’s Day Proclamation. In his 2003 Proclamation last week, George W Bush focused on the “dedicated and caring women who are devoted to their families”, that it is a day to “to honour the role of women in the family”. The original Mother’s Day Proclamation was made in 1870 by Julia Ward Howe, who is perhaps best known today for having written the words to *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* in 1862 when she was an anti-slavery activist. Howe’s Proclamation was an impassioned call for peace and disarmament. In the years following the Civil War her political activism increased, as did her condemnation of war. Here are the words to the original Mother’s Day Proclamation:

Arise then, women of this day! Arise all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be of water or of tears!

Say firmly: “We will not have questions decided by irrelevant agencies. Our husbands shall not come to us reeking of carnage for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able

to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience. We women of one country will be too tender to those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs. From the bosom of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with our own, it says ‘Disarm! Disarm!’; The sword of murder is not the balance of justice. Blood does not wipe out dishonour, nor violence indicate possession.”

As men have forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel. Let them meet first as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead. Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace, each bearing after his time the sacred impress not of Caesar, but of God.

In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women without limit of nationality be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace. ☺

The great unravelling

US global power

Centuries of lording it over slaves, butchering Indians, and pushing aside Mexicans have ill-prepared white America to live in civilised company, much less to act as maestro for the globe. As Johnny Cochran could tell them, those gloves don't fit.

by *The Black Commentator*

Easy victories over weak, captive or Stone Age adversaries served to teach all the wrong lessons, creating a perverse set of American family values. Unlimited resources, right there for the stealing; fertile fields, awaiting unpaid labour; fragile southern neighbours available to be mauled for sport and profit – heady brew swilled sloppily, on a mean drunken binge of four hundred years.

Entitlement is a word the Bush men abhor. Nevertheless, it is the essence of their distilled, white American sense of themselves as entitled to each bloody slab of meat they can gouge from the baggage or body of the unwary.

Ever since there has been such a thing as American popular culture, predation has been celebrated. Killer cowboys, killer soldiers, killer cops, killer business tycoons.

John Wayne played all of these roles, which is why he is the quintessential white American actor. The parts he played, the ease with which he dominated, reverberate through centuries of cultural memory and idealisation, a birthright bequeathed in full to the children of more recent white immigrants.

People die all around white Americans, an historical fact that is also reflected in exaggerated popular cultural forms. White Americans are entitled to live, and live well. Others are not. Others means non-whites, in the nation that invented whiteness to subsume into a melting pot "all the races of Europe" while separating out the Others as non-entitled, nonwhites.

It was only yesterday that these social relationships constituted the inviolable laws of the land – capital punishment was instantaneously imposed on those who offended the birthright privileges of white Americans.

Privilege and Predation

Like advantageous traits in biological evolution, the human social organism – through culture – retains those behaviours and worldviews that work. Aggression against Native Americans worked for the European settlers – it brought them free land.

Slavery made them kings and queens and princes and princesses, and rich. Foreign conquests of weaker, darker people made them respected among Europeans.

Except in the Civil War that they wished they had not fought and treated until just yesterday as a great tragedy, relatively few white Americans were killed in these conflicts. Predation was a good trait. It worked.

Armed and extremely dangerous from the day they set foot on North American shores for the express purpose of claiming title to everything within range of their

imaginings, white Americans "learned" that they were admired by the survivors among the people they preyed upon and enslaved.

They gained this knowledge from each other, the only people whose opinions counted. Their overwhelming arsenals brooked no objection to the self-evident fact of their innate superiority and ... goodness. Who would disagree?

In this closed, continental conversation a worldview was refined that has grown so fundamental to white American methods of thought, so perfect in its affirmation of self-serving assumptions, so automatically corrective of unwanted information, that the social organism is all but impermeable to disagreeable facts. Outside of the centuries-old American cocoon, much of reality simply does not compute.

Propelled by very special circumstances resulting from World War II, the United States stepped to the centre of the world stage with all of its previous advantages, plus nuclear weapons and the only intact economy on the planet. (See *Conspiracy Theories*, April 17.)

By default, the dollar became the global currency. Newly tapped oil, priced in dollars, fuelled a world of post-war growth, much of it to the direct benefit of the United States. By the '50s, pundits had declared the 20th Century to be the American Century.

Fifty years later, the Bloomberg financial service's Tokyo bureau reports: Pertamina, Indonesia's state oil company dropped a bombshell recently. It is considering dropping the US dollar for the euro in its oil and gas trades.

With war unfolding in Iraq and a mysterious pneumonia spreading around Asia, few noticed. News that Indonesian government officials favour the euro also fell through the cracks. Yet it could have major implications for the world's biggest economy.

Indonesia's rationale: The dollar may be the world's reserve currency



but it has become too volatile. "One thing is for sure, the adoption of the euro as an alternative means of payments could be an effective solution to speculative dollar-oriented dealings", Indonesia's Vice President Hamzah Haz said last month.

What if, for example, the US began setting the stage for another pre-emptive attack in the Middle East or East Asia?

Even so, there is no ignoring Asia's desire to reduce US influence in the region. Leaders here wonder if scrapping the dollar might expedite the process.

Last September, Asian and European leaders formed a taskforce to help Asia boost euro currency reserves, issue more euro-denominated debt and use the single currency to settle trade bills.

The news from Tokyo, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur is no flash in the pan, not a temporary case of the jitters, but dramatic evidence of the growing, global recoil from the United States, a nation that learned nothing from its half century at the top except that which reinforced its own delusions. It has fouled the

common well of trust – or at least, some measure of predictability – among nations.

Tectonic shifts

There is even more happening below the surface than is indicated by the public statements of Prime Ministers. The American problem is not a case of bad manners, but of unfitness.

No sensible people, of any social sector, will place their treasure and futures in the hands of a nation formed of people who see no reality other than their own. Much of the world has already decided that the dollar is the umbilical that has become a potential noose, and must be severed.

Bloomberg's founder is the Mayor of New York, the financial capital of the world. The last thing on Bloomberg's institutional mind is to rattle financial markets. If anything, it is American analysts who slept the "tectonic shifts", as reporter William Pesek put it, that may be at work.

The great irony is that the Bush men launched their attack on a world order that had privileged the United States for generations in order to pre-empt a politically motivated switch to the euro by angry Arab oil producers, or rebellious Venezuela.

Instead, their bald, openly declared policy of global hegemony has accelerated a trend that might have taken decades to unfold. *Shock and Awe*, in the form of threats to global stability, has caused nations to seek safety from, rather than safe haven in, America.

As we wrote in, *They Have Reached Too Far: Bush's road to ruin, for himself and his Pirates*, March 13: "Every plan and project of individuals and nations will be shaped by having witnessed a racist America raining fire on a weaker people – and revelling in the crime."

It is not as though the US had

been a fit guardian of capitalism, prior to the Pirate's ascension to power, January 2000. As rulers of an entitled nation, American Governments abused their world currency trusteeship for short-term political and economic ends, oblivious to the interconnected fortunes of other countries, including allied elites.

Washington derides Malaysia's Prime Minister as "unstable", when the opposite is true. Pesek continues: One reason leaders like Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia favour the euro: It lacks a domestic agenda. Washington has proven quite adept at steering the dollar up and down depending on economic needs.

In the early 1990s, a lower dollar was favoured to boost growth. Later in the decade, the White House favoured a rising currency to attract foreign capital. Since 12 countries use Europe's single currency, it may be less susceptible to unpredictable political agendas. In addition, the European Central Bank, not politicians, manages it.

Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan regularly huddles with the political honchos of whichever administration is in charge, fiddling with the world's currency to make the occupants of the White House look good to the American elite and electorate.

US behaviour, consistently self-consumed, has long bedevilled the global trading system. However, national planners and central banks crave stability most of all.

No one relished the dislocations that even a modest break with the dollar might bring, much less the prospect of American retaliation – the US is known as a nation that kills simply to eliminate inconveniences.

Inertia became increasingly untenable as it dawned upon the world that the Bush men were really serious about The New American Century, that the Bush-Cheney-

"Every plan and project of individuals and nations will be shaped by having witnessed a racist America raining fire on a weaker people – and revelling in the crime."

g of

Halliburton: poised for the spoils

One of the biggest beneficiaries of the recent US invasion and occupation of Iraq is a corporation called Halliburton. While the Abrams tanks were rolling across the desert and good old Aussie "special forces" were risking their lives for "democracy", the political leaders knew what they were after. They allowed Iraqi culture, history and government infrastructure to be looted and burnt while the oil ministry was protected. Halliburton provides oil drilling, construction and military support and is ideally situated to have a triple-header of wartime spoils.

by Denis Doherty

Anti-globalisation activists have been active in exposing the greed of corporations like Halliburton. The corporation is also a particularly potent target for peace activists opposed to the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

In Sydney on May 1, for example, activists protested outside Halliburton's office in a prestigious building in Kent Street in Sydney's central business district.

Halliburton has dubious connections with the Bush administration, particularly with Vice President Dick Cheney.

No one in the US Government is concerned about conflict of interest. In fact, the opposite is true. The Bush administration is driven by the interests of the oil conglomerates, the arms corporations and the IT industry.

On the administration's Defense Committee of 30, there are at least nine members who have close ties with major arms manufacturing corporations.

US Vice President Dick Cheney and Halliburton have a particularly cosy relationship. Cheney was CEO of the company prior to becoming the Vice President. He still receives a retainer and is a major shareholder with US\$45 million in shares.

"Not bothering to call for tenders the Pentagon has granted a Halliburton subsidiary, the delightfully named Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KBR), a US\$7 billion (\$11.5 billion Aust) contract to clean up Iraq's oil industry", wrote Mike Carlton in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (18/4/2003).

"Cheney's income tax declaration reported in *The New York Times* reveals that he earned \$162,392 in 'deferred compensation' from Halliburton last year. As President Bush said, 'These are great days in the history of freedom'", said Mr Carlton.

Political influence and economic growth

Halliburton began its days as a construction company, building dams. Generously donating to Lyndon Johnson's political campaigns, it gained a contract to become a major company.

The company now builds oil platforms, military bases, ports, nuclear facilities, harbours and tunnels.

It also provides logistics support to the military. There are no longer quartermasters in the US military – Halliburton does it all. Halliburton is so large and so diverse it can train armies, arm, feed, supply and house them.

Firstly by the shrewd manipulation of political influence under LBJ and now with Cheney's patronage, this huge corporation has grown rich at the expense of the misery and desperation of the poor around the world.

Halliburton has over 20,000

employees in 100 countries, a resource no doubt utilised by the many branches of the US Government Halliburton is entwined with.

Oil and war

Wherever there is oil, there is Kellogg, Brown, and Root (Halliburton).

Everywhere there is war or insurrection there is Kellogg, Brown, and Root.

From Bosnia and Kosovo, to Chechnya, Rwanda, Burma, Pakistan, Laos, Vietnam, Iran, Libya, Mexico and Colombia, KBR operates.

Since KBR supplies the US military with provisions, it is reasonable to assume that wherever the company sets up huge warehouse capability war will soon erupt. In Colombia, KBR has nearly one million square feet of covered space.

In the ultra crook world of big business, Halliburton has a reputation for dishonesty. The company has a dirty history, littered with shady deals and highly questionable business practices. These include:

Government blank cheques: The US Army came under fire from the Government's General Accounting Office over a US\$2.2 billion contract it signed with Halliburton. The army was found to "frequently have simply accepted the level of services the contractor provided without questioning whether they could be provided more efficiently or less frequently at lower cost".

Questionable accounting: Government agencies are investigating allegations that Halliburton artificially boosted earnings by US\$234 million over four years. These were the years when Cheney was CEO of Halliburton.

Business with "The Axis": Halliburton has not been affected by moves to restrict commerce with so-called "axis of evil" regimes. The company made profits out of business with Libya, Iran and Saddam Hussein, avoiding government embargoes on trade with these countries with the assistance of Dick Cheney.

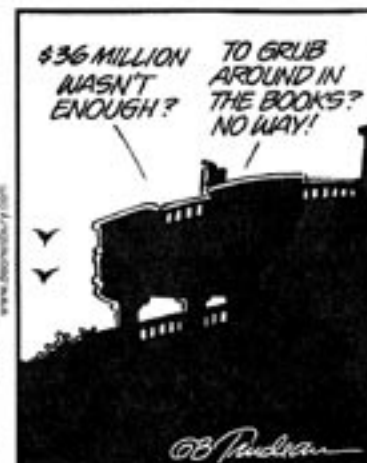
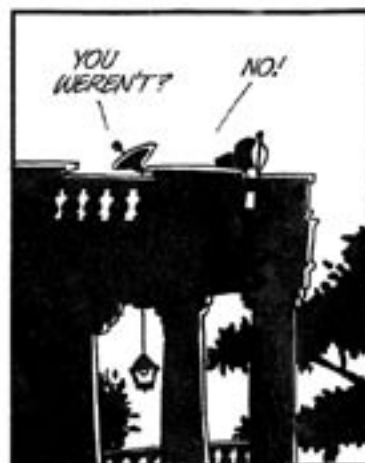
As Cheney once said: "The good Lord didn't see fit to put oil and gas only where there are democratic regimes friendly to the US".

Off-shore subsidiaries: Under Cheney's tenure, the number of Halliburton subsidiaries in offshore tax havens rose from nine to 44.

The tax paid by Halliburton went from US\$302 million company taxes paid in 1998 to a US\$85 million refund in 1999. (*Halliburton, Dick Cheney and Wartime Spoils*)

Halliburton in Australia

KBR's global infrastructure division, headquartered in Adelaide, has some 2500 staff based in 44 offices operating in three regions – the Americas, Europe/Africa and Asia-Pacific.



Rumsfeld crew were not just another brand of bullying, oafish American cowboys, and that the frenzied American behaviour following September 11 was more like civilised inhibitions giving way than a cry of national pain.

Euro-talk became more commonplace after Bush's growling "with us or against us" speech in November 2001, followed by the war declaration-like "axis of evil" 2002 State of the Union address.

International bankers who considered themselves reasonable and cautious spoke of oil transactions in a "market basket" of currencies. But the US was intent on enshrining the dollar as a monopoly currency – forever.

The Pirates believed that seizure of Middle Eastern oil fields would ensure continued denomination of oil in dollars, and that the ritual mauling of Iraq would teach the world not to mess with the dollar.

Shouting out reality

The Pirates were wrong. World revulsion is near universal, beyond emotion, and fast translating into concerted action in collective defence against the madman. Indonesia and Malaysia are simply speaking more frankly than other nations.

The Bush men cannot comprehend that their systematic, transparent assault on international stability is unpardonable. And they do not know what it feels like to be hurt. This, too, will come as a surprise – their Shock and Awe.

"Punish France, ignore Germany and forgive Russia", urges Condoleezza Rice, thereby guaranteeing that these potent powers will deepen their conspiracy to facilitate the isolation of the US.

Use "psychological leverage" in the breathing space before the next armed assaults, barks Founding Pirate William Kristol. Keep up the "political attack" on Syria and Iran, screams Michael Ledeen, of the Pirate incubator American Enterprise Institute.

The Bush men think this is diplomacy, a gift that the world should appreciate as a respite from Washington's wrath. The international community – in which the US is no longer a true member but, rather, a dangerous presence – struggles to work around the Americans as new structures of trade and co-operation are created.

The Pirates believe they hold the trump card: half the world's military under one, super-tech command. It is a blunt instrument, with a narrow range of uses. The real bomb ticks under America's porch, and will devastate the dollar in a spasm of millions of individual and institutional decisions to run in the other direction.

Stability is what attracted the world's capital to the United States. Now, the Bush men have transformed the US into a dreadful engine of instability. The Pirates scream threats at the snow bank on top of the mountain. Delusional, they will be amazed when it comes down on top of us. ☛

The 1200 infrastructure staff based in the Asia Pacific region include engineering (civil, structural, water, mechanical, electrical, mining, process, municipal), project management and construction.

KBR has links to the Australian military as well big infrastructure jobs in Australia.

The company's highest profile work in Australia is the Alice Springs to Darwin railway. The railway is being built at enormous expense but experts suggest that it is not economically viable.

An influential US policy document, Project for the New American Century, suggests that the US needs another base in Australia. This could possibly be an aircraft carrier base along with a marine detachment. Is the railway a precursor to a new US base in Darwin?

While US corporations are getting a free ride in the reconstruction of Iraq, an operation estimated to

cost as much as US\$120 billion, the prospect for Australian companies is less rosy.

An Australian delegation led by Trade Minister Mark Vaile and including major Australian companies such as BHP and Multiplex went to the US to try to grab their share of the spoils of war. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (30/4/03) reported that they travelled to Houston to visit Halliburton.

Halliburton is not simply a major capitalist corporation but an arm of the Bush administration's greedy larceny of the heritage of the Iraqi people.

Further Reading:

- *Bush-Cheney Drug Empire* by Michael Ruppert, published on www.fromthewilderness.com
- *Halliburton, Dick Cheney, and Wartime Spoils* by Lee Drutman and Charlie Cray, published on www.commondreams.org ☛

Appeal for signatures for Cuba To the conscience of the world

The international order has been violated as a consequence of the invasion against Iraq. A single power is inflicting grave damage to the norms of understanding, debate and mediation amongst countries. This power has invoked a series of unverified reasons in order to justify its invasion. Unilateral action has led to massive loss of civilian life and devastation of one of the cultural patrimonies of humanity.

We only possess our moral authority, with which we appeal to world conscience in order to avoid a new violation of the principles, which inform and guide the global community of nations. At this very moment, a strong campaign of destabilization against a Latin American nation has been unleashed. The harassment against Cuba could serve as a pretext for an invasion. Therefore, we call upon citizens and policy makers to uphold the universal principles

of national sovereignty, respect of territorial integrity and self-determination, essential to just and peaceful co-existence among nations.

Please circulate the above statement to as many people as possible.

To sign on, it is necessary to visit – <http://www.porcuba.cult.cu> At the top, on the right, you will find the word "English" in very small print. Click on it and then complete details and click on "Signature". ☛

Fidel's message to the US people

"We do not want war"

On behalf of the one million people gathered in José Martí Revolution Square on May Day, Cuban President Fidel Castro sent a message to the world and to the US people at the end of his speech marking the international workers' day:

by Joaquin Oramas

"We do not want Cuban or US blood to be shed in a war, we do not want an incalculable number of lives of persons who could be friends lost in any battle. But never did a people have such sacred things to defend, or such profound convictions for which to fight.

"In any case, Cuba would prefer to vanish off the face of the Earth rather than renounce the noble and generous work for which many generations of Cubans have paid the elevated cost of the many lives of their finest sons and daughters. We are accompanied by the most profound conviction that ideas can do more than weapons, however sophisticated and powerful they might be.

"Let us say it like Che when he bade us farewell: 'Ever onwards to victory.'"

Students, trade union leaders and academics from Uruguay, Costa Rica, Spain, Argentina, the United States, Peru, Mexico, Germany and Cuba spoke at the rally.

Pedro Ross, General Secretary of the Central Organisation of Cuban Trade Unions, ratified the support of its more than 3.5 million members for the measures adopted by the revolutionary government in defence of its sovereignty and security in the face of US government plans against the Cuban Revolution.

Uruguayan student Fernando Sosa Tais exposed the submissive policy of Jorge Battle, the Uruguayan President, in exchange for begged crumbs from the Bush regime. He affirmed that five children died of hunger in his country while that nation of three million

inhabitants has more than 10 million heads of cattle.

Juan José Gerroti, Peruvian trade union leader, emphasised that it is precisely human rights that are respected in Cuba, and mentioned, among others, education, health, work, dignity and independence.

Mexican researcher and sociologist Pablo González Casanova read out a statement signed by 96 academics, artists and scientists from Latin America and other regions ratifying their support for Cuba and denouncing the generalised US media campaign that is part of its preparation for an attack on the Caribbean island.

The declaration affirmed that the aggression against Iraq has resulted in a breakdown of international order and called on the conscience of the world to avert a new outrage of the principles that govern us.

"As opposed to this we put forward the universal principles of national sovereignty, respect for territorial integrity and the right to self-determination, all indispensable for the just coexistence of nations", it said.

On behalf of the Pastors for Peace, Reverend Lucius Walker affirmed that he had come to join his brothers and sisters in Cuba in the midst of the worst provocation in history by a US administration.

"But I come to state that you are loved, you are respected, you are appreciated and you are supported by part of the millions of US citizens who are opposed to the hostility, provocation and violation of diplomatic norms of the government of the United States."

He continued: "Your US friends are real friends, not just fair-weather



"We do not want Cuban or US blood shed in war"

friends. We have been with you in the past, we are with you in the present moment of crisis and aggression by our government and we shall be with you in the future, whatever the consequences might be."

Cuban writer Miguel Barnet affirmed that in these times of military threat the unity of all Cubans of good will and genuine friendship is essential.

It is about closing ranks against the evil forces of fascism that are destroying human beings, oppressing them and alienating them, he warned, noting the distortion of information by the media at the service of the forces of reaction.

As one recent example, he quoted Fidel's exposés linking José María Aznar, the current Spanish

Prime Minister, with NATO's genocidal escalation against Yugoslavia, and that of the former Prime Minister of that country, Felipe González with the execution of ETA members. Surprisingly, these revelations have been silenced, while attacks on Cuba are escalating daily.

Hans Dieter Stefan, a German sociologist, speaking on behalf of the old Europe and all upstanding Europeans, stated that the neo-Nazis would not pass.

Argentine Claudia Camba cited the charges of an illegal trial meted out in the United States to the five Cuban heroes sentenced to lengthy prison terms there for defending the Cuban people and US citizens from acts of terrorism committed by the Miami mafia. ☛

Dien Bien Phu victory celebrated

A grand ceremony to mark the 49th anniversary of the Dien Bien Phu victory against the French occupiers (May 7) was held on Wednesday morning last week in the town of Dien Bien, northwestern Lai Chau province.

Trinh Long Bien, Secretary of the provincial Party Committee, spoke about the province's achievements recorded over the past five years, including a GDP growth of 7-8 percent a year and the formulation of concentrated industrial crop areas in Phong Tho, Tua Chua and Tuan Giao districts.

The province has focused on the construction of socio-economic infrastructures, especially the transport network, schools, hospitals and other public utilities.

A number of key projects, including hydro-power and irrigation stations, airport, paper and cement plants, are under construction, thus helping improve ethnic minority people's living conditions, Mr Bien stressed.

He added that the province also paid attention to building the Party and other people's organisations.

In preparation for the 50th victory anniversary next year, Lai Chau worked out five tasks for political and socio-economic development, focusing on a program on socio-economic development in 500 specially difficult villages and the resettlement of people from the construction site of Son La hydro-power plant.

On this occasion, activities to celebrate the victory were organised in the province, including the inauguration of a 9300 kW hydro-power plant and the launch of a website on provincial rural and agricultural development. (VNA) ☛

West Papua

Fear for safety of detainees

A security crackdown by Indonesian authorities in West Papua has left international agencies fearing for the safety of numerous detainees. Reports of torture and a suspicious death in custody have led to calls for Indonesian Police and Military to honour human rights obligations in the occupied territory.

Indonesian forces have long history in West Papua of serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", torture and arbitrary detentions.

West Papua (formerly called "Irian Jaya" and now "Papua" by Indonesia) was transferred from Dutch to Indonesian colonialisation during 1962-63, after eight years of failed negotiations in the United Nations.

Under the 1963 agreement, Indonesia promised to hold a referendum of the Papuan people on the independence issue.

No referendum was ever held. Instead, in 1969, Indonesia hand-picked a council of 1026 members to represent all the Papuan people. When a vote was held the council, not surprisingly, chose unanimously to remain under Indonesian control.

Seven civilians have been detained, accused of being involved

in an armed attack on the Indonesian Military District Command (Kodim 1702) in Wamena on April 4.

All of the detainees are reported to be badly bruised as a result of beatings and torture that occurred whilst in custody.

One of the detainees, Mikael Heselo, reportedly had a thumbnail torn out, his fingers were placed under the legs of a table and his shins kicked.

Yapenus Murib, who was arrested in connection with the attack, died in military custody on April 14 or 15, allegedly as a result of torture.

They are among at least 22 people who are known to have been arrested during joint police and military operations to find those responsible for the attack.

Security force operations are still continuing in the Wamena area and have resulted in houses being

burnt down and inhabitants fleeing to the forest.

Nine members of Kodim 1702 have also been arrested in connection with the attack and are now detained at the Headquarters of the Military Police in Jayapura.

There is no information about the treatment of the nine, but there are concerns for their safety. Two of them have been charged with direct involvement in the attack and may face the death penalty.

Call for urgent action

Amnesty International is calling for appeals to be sent to the Indonesian Chief of Police and the National Human Rights Commission as quickly as possible.

You can express your concerns at reports that Mikael Heselo and the six other civilian detainees named above have been subjected to torture and call on the authorities to provide guarantees that they, and the nine military detainees, will not be subjected to further torture or ill-treatment.

Amnesty is also asking that

you urge the Government to take immediate measures, in accordance with its obligations under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which it has ratified, to undertake an immediate, effective and impartial investigation of the allegations of torture, including of Mikael Heselo and the other six detainees and of the death of Yapenus Murib which is alleged to have resulted from torture.

Please send your appeals to:

Chief of Police
Insp. Gen. Budi Utomo
Head of Regional Police Papua
Jl. Sam Ratulangi No. 8
Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia
Fax: +62 967 531717

The Chairman
National Human Rights
Commission (Komnas HAM)
Abdul Hakim Garuda Nusantara
Jl Latuharhary No. 4B
Menteng, Jakarta Pusat 10310
Indonesia
Fax: + 62 21 3925227 ☛

European CPs to discuss program of actions to save the world

A meeting of ten European Communist Parties held at the end of April discussed the international situation following the US and British war and the occupation of Iraq.

They concluded that the aggressiveness of the USA is growing. "Efforts to colonise strategic regions of our world are taking on an open and in no way hidden form. The USA ignores international organisations, international law, Geneva Conventions and public opinion", said a statement issued by the Parties.

The statement went on: The war in Iraq represented a dangerous blow to the legitimacy of the international institutions which emerged after World War II and a dangerous precedent which can be repeated at any time and in any place.

Leaders of the US administration have made threats against Syria and Iran, and it is only a question of time before they act on these threats.

Some speakers stressed the opinion that the war against Iraq showed that the different attitudes of certain imperialist big powers before the war reflected the different interests of these big powers both in Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

When the war became a fact, the attitudes of the big powers began to change [as they attempted] to maintain their friendship with the US administration in order to protect as many of their interests as they could.

The war showed the great gap which exists between the Arab nation and the Arab regimes. It can be expected that major political changes will take place in this region.

With this war the USA opened a new phase of its geopolitical

strategy of safeguarding not only US interests but especially, Israeli interests in the Arab world.

Some speakers stressed that the peoples of Europe are facing new threats in the form of militarisation of the European Union (EU), increased military expenditure, intensification of inter-imperialist rivalries and NATO's expanded role.

The lying campaign conducted by the US before the attack on Iraq, especially regarding weapons of mass destruction, will now be used against Iraq's neighbours, or they may even think up another pretext.

The strategic aims of the USA remain to impose its hegemony, secure strategic raw material resources and remove its economic rivals from other centres of world business.

If, during the period of the bipolar world, the US used the whip and sugar to pursue its interests, today it has begun to use the whip more than the sugar.

The US can occupy Iraq, unleash civil war, divide Iraq and appoint a collaborationist government, but such moves will never be acceptable to the Iraqi people and the world's democratic and progressive public. Demonstrations by thousands of Iraqis show that the Iraqi people have already begun their resistance to the US occupation.

The participants stressed the paramount importance of the new elements characterised by the European and world-wide anti-war movement, the imperative need to strengthen it and establish stable relations with the anti-globalisation

movement and the trade union movement on the basis of social demands and the movements opposing NATO and the militarisation of the EU.

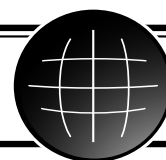
Some participants expressed the view that there was a need for a new European political subject (movement, organisation?) capable of promoting these demands and social movements providing alternatives.

Through demonstrations and strikes and the blocking of US "transports of death", these movements had overwhelmingly condemned the direct involvement, support or acceptance by European governments and the EU of the war and "facilities" provided to the USA despite general opposition to the war, with or without a UN resolution.

In a situation in which world peace and humanity's security are threatened, the communists will have a big role to play, a role that cannot be played without a desirable level of co-ordination. In this direction many specific possibilities for joint projects open to the parties were discussed.

The parties taking part were:

- Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia,
- Georgi Dimitrov Bulgarian Communist Party,
- Party of Democratic Socialism, Germany,
- Communist Party of Greece,
- Refoundation Communist Party, Italy,
- Portuguese Communist Party,
- Communist Party of Russian Federation,
- Communist Party of Slovakia,
- Communist Party of Spain
- United People's Party, Spain



Global briefs

SYRIA: Syrian Foreign Minister Faruk al-Shara warned that the invasion and occupation of Iraq was a "catastrophic war that will lead to chaos", in an interview published by the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*. "The war was badly planned, the opinions of the countries in the region were ignored, mediation was not sought, nor the passive acceptance of neighbouring countries (Turkey, Syria and Iran), but the United States allowed itself to be carried away by hatred, prejudice and a desire for revenge", the Foreign Minister said.

IRAQ: The USA construction corporation Fluor is tipped to land a massive reconstruction deal in Iraq. The company is currently facing a multi-million dollar lawsuit alleging that it exploited and brutalised Black workers in apartheid-era South Africa. Lawyers acting for thousands of victims of the racist regime are to file a detailed suit in the USA. One of the charges is that Fluor hired security guards dressed in Ku Klux Klan robes to attack unarmed workers who were protesting about poor pay and conditions.

IRAQ: The US military has banned the anti-war and solidarity organisation *Voices in the Wilderness* from meeting with military personnel or international journalists working out of the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad after the group criticised the lack of humanitarian intervention in Iraq. The ban came less than 24 hours after the organisation issued a press release charging that rubbish removal in Baghdad hasn't occurred for a month, seriously damaged electricity, sanitation and communications services have not been restored in the Iraqi capital, outbreaks of cholera have been reported in the cities of Basra and Hilla and damaged health centres lacking essential medicines and quality control equipment could lead to epidemics resulting from contaminated blood products.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Members of the Kananam community (Madang, PNG) have formed the Idawad Association to protest against the development of a huge tuna cannery on their land. The wholly Filipino owned company R D Tuna has gained access to a wharf facility on Kananam land after a deal with the Catholic Church and the Madang Provincial Government. The Kananam landowners are furious at the deal struck behind their backs and point out that the cannery presents a serious pollution threat to their lagoon, wetlands, water and air. Workers are paid very low wages (less than US\$2 a day) and unions are banned. RD Tuna ships are encouraging prostitution trade in the Kananam community; all senior managers are Filipino and all profits are sent to the Philippines; RD Tuna does not pay any tax in PNG.

It is for these reasons that the Kananam community is launching an international campaign to boycott the RD Tuna products. They are traded under the names: Omega, Tovos, Loreley, Goddess, Cana, La Miranda, Adria, Everyday, Diana, Le Pecheur, Les Doris, La Perla, and Osprey.

Canada

Health workers under attack

At the end of another dismal rainy season, it's still open season on organised labour in British Columbia. Thousands of workers are facing new employer threats on the west coast, including hospital employees and workers in the retail and forestry sectors.

by Kimball Cariou

One of the biggest blows since the election of the Campbell Liberals in 2001 has been directed at the Hospital Employees Union (HEU). Premier Campbell told the union before the election that he would not rip up their collective agreements, only to break that promise and virtually declare the HEU his government's main enemy.

Now, facing a massive privatisation drive which could wipe out as many as 20,000 jobs, the HEU has reluctantly agreed to \$1 an hour pay cuts for some of its 46,000 members, a longer work week (with no increase in pay), cancelled wage increases, and other concessions.

A tentative framework agreement reached with the government in mid-April will mitigate the impact of contracting out on union members and the public, according to HEU leaders.

"In exchange for forgone wage and pay equity increases, longer hours of work and wage reductions,

government has agreed to cap the number of positions that can be contracted out", said Chris Allnutt, HEU secretary-business manager.

"At the same time, we've also gained access to better severance provisions and more bumping options for laid off workers."

Achieved through "intense and difficult negotiations", the agreement "is not our ideal outcome", said Allnutt, speaking for the multi-union Health Services and Support Facilities Bargaining Association.

"But it is a practical solution that provides our members and the public with a measure of stability and certainty in the face of government policies that are causing chaos in health care."

The deal would extend the current collective agreement by two years to March 31, 2006, and cap contracting out at 3500 full-time equivalents, or 5000 jobs, much less than the government's original target of 20,000 jobs.

The unions have recommended that their members vote to approve

the deal in balloting that will be completed by mid-May. Allnutt expects that the tentative agreement will be controversial.

"After all", he said, "these workers already ratified a collective agreement with the expectation that government would respect it. Instead, the BC Liberals shredded those contracts to pave the way for their reckless agenda of cuts, closures and privatisation. And thousands of skilled, experienced health care workers – most of them women who've made valuable contributions to our health care system – may still lose their jobs."

Savings from the agreement are estimated at about \$500 million over three years. Allnutt said health authorities should weigh these gains against the considerable risks of contracting out critical services. Legal efforts by health care unions to have Campbell's contract-breaking Bill 29 declared unconstitutional will continue.

Allnutt said the framework agreement forms part of the unions' strategy to mitigate the impact of contracting out on health care workers while the case works its way through the courts.

People's Voice

Workers of the world ...

It seems to be the general opinion that the conflict grows sharper and the battle lines ever more clearly defined.

No, I am not talking about the war on Iraq – that is only a part of the conflict. I am thinking of, with all due respect to the Iraqi people and the death and destruction they have endured, that is only a “prelim” – a curtain raiser – a time for trying out new tactics and new weapons.

No the conflict I am referring to has been racing for decades sometimes very openly but mainly silently but deeply.

It was never declared and never openly acknowledged – in fact there have been occasions when some (from both sides too) have declared it doesn't exist, that it is not happening!

I am referring of course to the class war – between the exploiter and the exploited – the capitalist and the worker.

The capitalists threw down the gauntlet – raised the ante with their declaration of the coming of a

period of indefinite war – of which the already planned invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were but the opening stages.

The working class responded – demonstrating in their millions throughout the world – they not only rejected the first stages – they rejected the concept of war totally.

NO MORE WAR.

These demonstrations on their own will not halt the capitalist warmongers – but there is a healthy sign that the communist parties throughout the world are leading the charge to organise and co-ordinate these mass demonstrations into a unified whole which then becomes the super superpower and will run the world for the benefit of humanity.

No system can operate without its workers. The more workers come in contact in the demonstrations with the better informed communists and regular readers of communist papers, the more and more will they unite.

Forward the revolution! Workers of the world you are ready to unite and take your rightful place as runners of the earth.

B Appleton
Killcare Hts, NSW

Best documentary ever

I have just seen what seems to me to be, with the benefit of my personal knowledge of world events in the last 60 odd years, the best documentary film ever shown on television: *The Children of Russia*, shown on SBS.

It is long and much of it is in Spanish, with English subtitles, but if you ever get a chance to see it, do so. It is the story of the children of Spanish communists.

As Franco advanced, with the aid of the German blitzkrieg, the parents made an extremely painful decision to send their children to the Soviet Union to save their lives.

The Soviet people cared for them, educated them and loved them in a way which is difficult to imagine in any country today, except possibly Cuba.

Then the fascists entered the Soviet Union and the children again suffered hardship, but many were now old enough to help defeat the fascists.

They later (1963) returned to Spain but were oppressed by the CIA and could not find work.

Some later returned to what was left of Russia and were appalled to find that it had been corrupted and destroyed, with people begging in the streets.

Some later went to Cuba, some again back to Spain. It is a story of love for humanity and love for life, beautifully and honestly recorded.

Through it all, behind the

images and the words, the wonderful achievements of the Soviet Party, now so widely and cheaply denigrated, emerge with startling and still inspiring clarity.

Max Whisson
Subiaco, WA

Reclaiming the Future

Like many Australians I am deeply concerned at the way the PM appears to be giving away our national sovereignty in the name of free trade.

The past decade of legislation has damaged work, health care, education, welfare programs and Human Rights. It has created huge underemployment and public insecurity for many citizens who are robbed of a living wage.

The working poor is a reality in Australia today. We need to save ourselves from the global economy. Global Trade will not save the Australian way of life, it will kill it.

Australians have always been proud of their work ethic. Today too many chains bind us to the US. Where is the advantage to Australian farmers, steel workers, and the community at large when all services are privatised?

This Americanisation of Australia must be stopped. While the US Senate discusses Australia's economy why is it not being discussed in our Parliament? Have we no say in the matter?

Mary Jenkins
UPU WA Inc

Traineeships exposed

I have always been a bit suspicious of these so-called traineeships. Now, I have had my suspicions confirmed by what I have heard of the abuse of traineeships reported to a Senate Committee.

If I didn't know capitalism any better, I would say it was beyond belief. But, on second thoughts, what else would you expect!

Apparently a clothing company has helped itself to nearly half a million taxpayer dollars for signing existing staff over to traineeships in skills they already possessed.

An airline ticketing operation took off with \$60,000 after employing 44 staff as trainees and sacked the lot before their 13-week traineeships expired.

A fast food franchise which helped itself to \$1375 for a trainee, who received no training and was sacked just prior to the end of the training contract.

Does the government monitor what happens to handouts to industry? How many other bogus schemes are there? And how many unemployed are there who would appreciate an opportunity to be trained and gain work experience?

June Hamilton
Melbourne, Vic

Got something to say?
Up to 400 words preferred.

Sydney
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Corner of Chisholm and Chiswick Rds, Auburn
Bring a picnic lunch and join us
for an afternoon of fun and entertainment
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Enquiries Ph: Edward 0414 761618 or Tony 9649 7768

Culture & Life

“Liberation”

The Bush administration and its compliant media sought from the beginning to portray the US invasion of Iraq as “liberation”. The Iraqis were supposedly going to rise up and welcome the US and British (and Australian) liberators with garlands of flowers and tears in their eyes.

by Rob Gowland

Well, there were tears in their eyes all right, but they were not tears of joy. Desperate for footage of “liberated” Iraqis during the US advance on Baghdad, the Yank military staged “joyous looting of food consignments” for the embedded TV journalists to film.

Eager young men were shown pillaging the contents of large vans and containers. No attempt was made to stop them or even to make the distribution of the goods orderly.

The US army, armed to the teeth, was right there and could easily have done it. A single burst of machine-gun fire from a US tank would have scattered the “looters” and turned them into a meek group willing to receive whatever the US soldiers wanted to distribute.

But there was no such action from the US military, because they needed those shots of “looting” Iraqis.

When the “Allied” armies entered Baghdad itself and still there were no garlands of flow-

ers, Pentagon media manipulation swung into overdrive. How they did it is recounted by Khaled Bayomi.

Bayomi lives in Sweden but went to Baghdad as a volunteer “human shield”, arriving on the same day the fighting began. He subsequently told the Swedish paper *Dagens Nyheter* how he watched as “the US forces told people to commence looting”.

“I had visited a few friends that live in a worn-down area just beyond Haifa Avenue, on the west bank of the Tigris River. It was April 8, and the fighting was so heavy I couldn't make it over to the other side of the river.

“In the afternoon, though, it became perfectly quiet, and four American tanks pulled up into position on the outskirts of the slum area. From these tanks we heard anxious calls in Arabic, which told the population to come closer.

“During the morning, everyone who tried to cross the streets had been fired upon. But during this strange silence people eventually became curious.

“After three-quarters of an hour, the first Baghdad citizens dared to come forward. At that moment

the US soldiers shot two Sudanese guards posted in front of a local administrative building on the other side of the Haifa Avenue.

“I was just 300 meters away when the guards were murdered. Then they shot the building entrance to pieces, and their Arabic translators in the tanks told the people to run ‘for grabs’ inside the building.

“Word spread rapidly, and the offices were cleaned out. Moments later tanks broke down the doors to the Justice Department, which was located in a neighbouring building, and the looting was carried forward into there as well.

“I was standing in a big crowd of civilians that saw all this together with me. They did not take any part in the looting, but were too afraid to take any action against it. Many of them had tears of shame in their eyes.

“The next morning, the looting spread to the Museum of Modern Art, which lies another 500 metres to the north. There as well, two crowds were present – one that was looting, and another one that saw this disgrace happen.”

The US and its acolyte Britain

have developed considerable expertise over the last few decades or so in manipulating the poor and especially the very poor in countries as diverse as Chile, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Zimbabwe and El Salvador – to name only some.

Nothing helps imperialism sell its policies to its own people so well as images of “the wrath of the people” being visited upon some hapless government that is imperialism's current target.

It has other advantages for imperialism, too. It absolves the invading power from any charge of “making war on civilians”, since the destruction is ostensibly the work of the local population.

In Yugoslavia, the people who led the “spontaneous” attacks on the offices of the Socialist Party of Serbia in the various towns and cities all had the well-muscled build and carriage of out-of-uniform soldiers – but in which particular country's army, one wonders.

This kind of looting destroys the ability of the “enemy administration” to organise the people to resist. That it also destroys historical records, torches historic buildings, and cloaks the theft of cultural and

other precious artefacts is of little concern to imperialism.

In fact, there is plenty of evidence that the looting of the Iraqi National Museum, an act that appalled the world, was in fact well organised by a group from the USA. It seems there were two waves of looting of the Museum.

The first was by a well-organised, well armed criminal gang, who knew where in the museum the real treasures had been stored for safe-keeping. They knew who had the keys, and most importantly, they knew what they wanted.

They took only authentic pieces and ignored replicas. Some were well-dressed with mobile phones and radios and communicated with persons unknown about what to “secure”. Their loot was taken away in a convoy of waiting vehicles.

Only after they had left did the “mob” appear, getting away with whatever they could carry.

The National Museum had been made the safe repository for the most important relics from the other museums in the country, so the spoils were remarkably rich.

So what was this US group? Tell you next week. ☘



**Rob Gowland
previews**

**ABC & SBS public
television programs**

**Sun May 18 ~
~ Sat May 24**

When I was a boy, Charles Dickens was considered the greatest novelist in the English language. He had been so considered for over 100 years.

Certainly he was the most popular. His books were read not only by the intelligentsia but above all by the people.

This was not only a tribute to his skill as a writer (although he was in Oscar Wilde's memorable phrase "a lord of language"), it was also the recognition that, as well as the comic invention and the vivid, unforgettable characterisations, his novels stood boldly and unapologetically on the side of the poor and oppressed in society.

His heroes as well as his incidental characters had to work for their living, just as his readers did and as Dickens himself had had to do from the age of 12.

The industrial revolution had brought great wealth to the British ruling class, but it was paid for by the British working class, confined in teeming, indescribably filthy towns and cities, their children fortunate if they could get a job working from dawn to dark in a factory, mine or mill.

"The number of child prostitutes in the streets, and of child labourers in the mines and factories, was a terrible indictment of Victorian 'civilisation', which seemed to have built upon the shuddering backs of oppressed innocents" – Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens, Public Life and Private Passion*.

Peter Ackroyd is the writer and presenter of the three-part docudrama series *Dickens* (ABC 7.30pm Sundays).

At a time when half the funerals in London were of children, the 12-year-old Dickens was sent to work in a blacking factory. Although he was to escape this environment of noxious fumes and relentless toil relatively soon, he never forgot it.

A journalist as well as a novelist, he early became a social reformer. He regularly walked long distances through the streets of London, observing the hordes of homeless children huddled at night in doorways, often within sight of the mansions of the well-to-do.

He saw poor people offering their daughters for sale to "fine gentlemen", people living on streets piled high with human excrement, people living amidst brutality and appalling poverty who could still find things to laugh at in their lives.

He was an unparalleled observer, noting everything and (he claimed) forgetting nothing. The people and scenes that he witnessed he incorporated into his books, with a truth and a sympathy that his readers, especially his working class readers, could readily identify with.

"There never was a writer less inclined to lock himself up in an ivory tower, or to profess the doctrine of 'art for art's sake'; he wanted to be read by as many people as possible and, to that end, carefully arranged his fictions to appeal as much to the reading clubs of working-class men as to the solitary study of the bishop or doctor" – Peter Ackroyd.

And it was not just Britain that he observed. In 1842 he sailed to the USA, expecting "to encounter a young and optimistic republic" but "his visit to the 'low' areas of New York, and to its central prison, known as the Tombs, convinced him that life for the poor was no different from, and in certain respects a great deal worse than, that in London" – Peter Ackroyd.

He privately railed against slavery and publicly engaged in vociferous attacks on the US practice of pirating the works of foreign authors, his own included. He had been lionised on arrival in the US, but his criticisms outraged the newspaper barons who were among the worst literary bootleggers, happily printing his works in unauthorised editions and not paying Dickens (or any other foreign author) a penny.

It is indeed a pity, then, that *Dickens* is such an unsatisfying production. This is due to two conceits in its making: the first, the decision to have Peter Ackroyd as on-screen presenter of the program.

Ackroyd is a stolid, stiff figure who stumps through the program in



A passionate work with an unconventional heroine – Daniel Deronda

a black overcoat imparting information and drawing unsubstantiated conclusions in equal part. Someone with a little more verve would have helped enormously.

The other conceit is more fundamental: the filmmakers have chosen to present acted "interviews" with Dickens (Anton Lesser), his wife (Miriam Margolyes), his friend and biographer John Foster (Kenneth Cranham) and several other friends and family members.

Although these are all authentic, in that they are based on published letters, reminiscences, etc, they are presented as though television existed in Dickens' time, giving them a jarring unreality.

Lesser is very good as Dickens, but I found the early part of the first episode tiresomely "precious". However, bear with it, for it improves as Dickens' own story carries you along.

As someone said, his life could well have been one of his own

novels (and with *David Copperfield* to some extent it was).

The other major literary program this week is a BBC adaptation in four parts of George Eliot's last novel, *Daniel Deronda* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays).

George Eliot, as everyone knows, was the pen name of the 19th century English writer Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880). Originally a pious Evangelical, she came under the influence of the free-thinkers but remained strongly influenced by religious concepts of love and duty.

She translated Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* into English and endorsed his view that religious belief is an imaginative necessity for man and a projection of his interest in his own species.

Her beliefs underlie the substance of her novels, although her readers were usually only vaguely aware of them. I readily confess that I am not a fan of Eliot.

Like everything she did, however, *Daniel Deronda* is a passionate work with an unconventional heroine (a little like Eliot herself). The novel has been adapted for television by Andrew Davies, who rose to fame with what I thought was a deeply flawed adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

On the big screen, he had a smash hit with *Bridget Jones Diary* (and has just written a sequel to it) but I thought it a very poor effort.

I find it significant that the press, when dealing with Davies' period adaptations usually talk about the costumes more than the writing. And of course, the sets and costumes in *Daniel Deronda* are all one could ask for.

Understanding of the theme, comprehension of the characters and their motivation is, for Davies, as much of a hit and miss affair as it was in *Pride and Prejudice*. But it is still quite worth watching. ★

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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

May 16
Melanesia (PNG & West Papua, Bougainville, Solomons):
**Violence, development, human rights
and Australia's accountability?**
Moses Havini, Bougainville regional representative,
NFIP (Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific)
Tim O'Connor, Aid Watch recently returned from PNG
Denise Leith, Author of *The Politics of Power - Freeport
and Suharto's Indonesia*

May 23
MEDIA COVERAGE OF IRAQ WAR
Chris Nash, Director, Centre For Independent Journalism at UTS
Debbie Spillane, ABC News Radio

May 30
NO FUTURE WITHOUT THE UN
Dr Don Rothwell, Professor of International Law, Univ. Of Sydney;
Wendy Lambourne, Co-ordinator Peace Studies, Uni Sydney

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.
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Salute to Walter Sisulu

In a moving tribute to Walter Sisulu who died on May 5, just days before his 91st birthday, the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party Blade Nzamindé said, "A giant has left us". Blade continued:

In his life and personality, in his easy-going non-racialism, unpretentious humility and passion for justice, Walter Sisulu embodied the core values of the struggle that liberated our country.

Comrade Walter is synonymous with more than half a century of ANC-led mass struggles. He was a rural boy, son of a domestic worker, later an urban worker, nurtured within the ranks of the ANC, and became one of the foremost architects of a non-racial, non-sexist and revolutionary organisation.

In 1949, when he assumed the position of ANC Secretary General on a full-time basis (he was the first to serve full-time in this post), there were still strong reservations among significant sections of the ANC leadership about working with other racial groups committed to change in our country.

Walter Sisulu distinguished himself as a promoter and defender of the revolutionary alliance between the national liberation movement, the Communist Party and the trade union movement.

He was in the thick of the major struggles in the 1950s that forged the Alliance into a fighting machine. He helped to overcome a deeply anti-communist sentiment found within the ranks of our movement at the time.

As a founding member of the ANC Youth League, comrade Walter had shared the same original anti-communist sentiments of the early leadership collective. But, and sooner than some of the others, through concrete struggles

and working together with communist giants like Moses Kotane, JB Marks, Yusuf Dadoo and Michael Harmel, he gradually changed his attitude.

In his last year, comrade Walter chose to reveal his longstanding association with the Communist Party. He was recruited to Party membership in 1955 and later became a member of the Central Committee.

In 1960, he was centrally involved in the launching of the armed struggle. Arrested, he joined Comrade Mandela in making a brave, defiant speech from the dock, fully expecting to be sentenced to death. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and served, mostly on Robben Island, for 25 years.

Together with his fellow-inmates, he refused to be broken by the barbarism of the prison regime. With his comrades, he struggled to transform prison into what became known as the "people's university", conducting political classes and, later, teaching the younger cadres about the ANC and what it stood for.

In honour of these traditions and of this giant, the SACP pledges to continue conducting political classes as an integral part of our struggle to transform our country and build a better life for all.

Comrade Walter Sisulu must surely rank as one of the greatest unifiers in our movement, a patient listener and a caring revolutionary. Some of us had the opportunity to work with him in the midst of the bitterest violence unleashed by the

apartheid regime in the killing fields of KwaZulu Natal.

The gravity of the situation threw up very sharp tactical differences within the ANC itself in that province in the late 1980s and early 1990s. How much emphasis should be placed on trying to talk peace with the Inkatha Freedom Party and the police? Or should the emphasis be on building self-defence structures?

The two options were not necessarily in contradiction, but there was a great deal of disagreement on how to combine the two and on the relative weight to be placed on each.

Comrade Mandela and the National Executive Committee of the ANC sent Walter Sisulu on more than one occasion to assist. He patiently listened to all points of view and was a great facilitator in trying to build a common strategic and tactical approach in one of the most difficult moments in the history of our revolution.

Some of us were fascinated by his ability to engage a militant like the late Comrade Harry Gwala, we were impressed at how the latter would sit and listen to his counsel and views. That was Comrade Walter Sisulu at work!

In the midst of all this, Sisulu was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. Our hearts go out to Mama Sisulu, a leader in her own right and a pillar of strength to younger activists, and to the Sisulu family.

A thoroughly democratic South Africa is the best monument that we can build in honour of Comrade Walter. Let us honour him by deepening the struggle for a better life for all, and most critically by tackling, collectively, the twin challenges of jobs and poverty eradication." ✪



Comrade Walter Sisulu

ABC: Howard's latest political appointee

The Federal Government is determined to destroy our national public broadcaster by whatever means it can. Budget cuts and stacking the ABC Board with pro-privatisation Liberal Party mates and other reactionaries have already eroded its ability to provide an independent and quality service. So it is not surprising that the newest appointment to the ABC Board is in keeping with this trend.

The new man, Ron Brunton, has been named as the replacement for Liberal Party hack Michael Kroeger whose five-year term expired in February.

Brunton's appointment brought a strong reaction from the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU).

Graeme Thomson, CPSU ABC section Secretary, pointed out that Ron Brunton "... has neither the broadcasting experience nor the business and financial skills to justify his seat on the Board. As part of the Institute of Public Affairs – a right wing think-tank – he has been an unrelenting critic of the ABC.

"He is on record as saying he has no sense of pride in the national broadcaster and wants limits placed on its editorial independence", Mr Thomson said.

Labor's Communications spokesmen Lindsay Tanner said that the appointment was a disgrace.

"Ron Brunton is an ideological zealot. He's been put on the ABC Board by John Howard to turn it into a propaganda arm of the Howard Government", Mr Tanner said.

As far as the Government is concerned Mr Brunton has a lot going for him.

Brunton, an anthropologist, is well-known for his virulent attacks on Indigenous rights. He was a senior fellow at the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) and the government intelligence agency, the Office of National Assessments. He is currently the director of Encompass Research, a conservative organisation dealing with native title, immigration and environmental issues.

His articles have appeared in the conservative Quadrant magazine where he has been highly critical of the *Bringing Them Home* report on

the Stolen Generations. He has also written scathing criticisms of Mabo and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and treated the "secret women's business" of the Ngarrindjeri women during Hindmarsh Island struggle as a fabrication.

He came to the defence of the murdered Dutch neo-fascist politician Pim Fortuyn who called on Muslim immigrants to assimilate to Dutch society and culture.

Dr Brunton's association with IPA would be an asset from the point of view of the Howard Government.

Australian Think Tanks

Sharon Beder writing in the *Arena* magazine (No 41, June/July 1999, pp 30-32) on the "The Intellectual Sorcery of Think Tanks" said: "Think tanks are generally private, tax-exempt research institutes which present themselves as providing impartial disinterested expertise.

"However, they are generally partisan, politically or ideologically motivated, and practice the art of 'directed conclusions', tailoring their studies to suit their clients or donors.

"In Australasia the largest think tank is the Sydney-based Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), established in 1976....

"Another prominent Australian conservative think tank, and the oldest, is the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA). The IPA describes itself as 'a political organisation in the sense that it influences the political agenda' but claims that it 'avoids political-party partisanship'.

"It stands for, among other things, 'less regulation and smaller government generally' and 'rational economic policies'.

"Almost one third of IPA's \$1.5 million annual budget comes from mining and manufacturing companies. It has 700 corporate members and 3,000 individual members, some of whom are subscribers to its various publications. Its council has included Murdoch as well as other conservative business leaders.

"Like many of the US conservative think tanks, the IPA has good connections in the media via right-wing commentators with regular columns in major newspapers. It also has good political connections. Its staff includes former senior public officials and former politicians.

"John Stone, a former Secretary of the Treasury, is a consultant to the IPA and Dame Leonie Kramer, Chancellor of the University of Sydney, has headed one of the IPA's units. The IPA's current units are on Deregulation, Economic Policy, Indigenous Issues and Environmental Policy.

"A number of Australian think tanks are modelled on US think tanks and have close ties with some of them, including the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute and the American Enterprise Institute.

"The Institute of Public Policy, now amalgamated with the IPA, modelled itself on the Heritage Foundation as well as the British IEA..."

As Graeme Thomson pointed out his union has been calling for an end to the system of stacking of the ABC Board and in its place a fair and open selection process for those positions.

"It should be the best person for the job, not just fixing up a mate to act as a propagandist for the party in power at the time", he said.

The ABC is in trouble, that's for sure. ✪