

Racism and fear mongering behind TERROR RAIDS

Actions under the banner of “anti-terrorism” in which the Federal Police terrorised people in their homes earlier this month, making pre-dawn raids on families in ten households in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, had two main objectives: the Government wanted to justify its planned deportation of Iranian asylum seekers while putting a gloss of credibility on its draconian terrorism laws.

Hot on the heels of the raids comes a corporate media frenzy with Federal Police “revelations” of terrorist attacks that were supposedly being planned for the Sydney 2000 Olympics and post-9/11.

These allegations stem from raids carried out over the last several years against Indonesian and other Islamic households.

However, careful reading of the Federal Police statement shows again the whole issue is carefully stage-managed scare mongering.

“Terror cell’s Aussie plans”, screamed the *Sydney Telegraph*.

Yet the Police said that they only *thought* the suspects *may* have had “aspirations” of being capable of launching terrorist attacks “one day”.

In truth: “There are a number of different reports and not all corroborated...”

The Federal Police further said that there was only a “suggestion” that the suspects were “involved in those sorts of discussions”.

No concrete evidence. No arrests. No charges laid.

State terror escalates

The most recent raids have been carried out against members of Australia’s Iranian community.

It is no coincidence that they were carried out following an agreement being reached between the Australian and Iranian Governments for the deportation of 277 Iranian asylum seekers for whom deportation means terrible persecution, and for some, death.

Clearly, a desired outcome of this Federal Police so-called “anti-terrorism” operation is to demonise people in Australia from the Middle East – whether they are citizens, residents or asylum seekers – so as to perpetuate a climate of fear in the wider community.

All the families concerned were

interrogated (for three hours in one case) concerning membership or financial support of the Mujahidin e-Kalq (MEK) group. One victim of the raids said he was also asked about Jemaah Islamiyah, Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as MEK.

It now only remains for the Government to connect the raids, and the organisations dredged up by them, to Osama bin Laden and al Qaida and warn of another “imminent” attack on Australia.

Since fleeing to Australia, Iranian asylum seekers have been locked up without charge or trial under the Federal Government’s mandatory detention regime. The Immigration Department says they are “failed” asylum seekers and has given details of their families and their claims to the Iranian Government.

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Sent back to Iran and not seen again

Nader and his brother came to Australia as stowaways on a ship arriving in Victoria in September 2000. The brothers were fleeing persecution in Iran following mass demonstrations for access to water in the city of Abadan. Twenty-three people were shot dead at this protest and hundreds disappeared.

Nader and a friend were targeted by police as working class activists who helped organise the demonstrations. They and Nader’s brother escaped by asking their seaman friend to hide them in the ceiling space of his cabin.

When they arrived in Australia they declared themselves as refugees. But all four were placed in detention, with the seaman who saved their lives being charged with “people smuggling”. Nader’s brother, unable to bear separation

from his wife and children, returned voluntarily in August 2001 and disappeared. Attempts by his family to find out what happened have been unsuccessful.

Nader was the main witness in the court case against his friend, who was found guilty of three counts of people smuggling. In summing up, the magistrate acknowledged that there was clearly no financial motive involved and his friend, a seaman and a unionist, had done this for humanitarian reasons.

During this court case no attempt was made to suppress the identity of the Iranians. The case was reported in Iranian newspapers and on cable television with pictures of Nader.

Nader broke down as he described missing his wife and children and being in detention for 20 months. He said, “I saved my life but lost my spirit.”

Despite pleas from advocates in Melbourne, Nader was returned to the Perth Immigration Detention Centre. While in Melbourne, he was kept in isolation and not allowed contact with his friend whom he had not seen for 12 months.

Nader was depressed and suicidal, slashing his wrists in April and locking himself in the toilet. He

was discovered, however, and taken to hospital. After that time, he was kept in isolation.

Nader was forcibly removed from the Perth Detention Centre in May 2002. Witnesses report that he put up a struggle but was overcome by guards and injected with sedatives. He was then restrained and deported on the same ship on which he had arrived, despite last ditch attempts by the Maritime Union of Australia to stop the deportation.

On arrival in Iran he was taken away and has since disappeared – apparently killed. To this day no one knows his fate. The two friends he escaped with were subsequently given refugee visas.

Refugee Action Committee ☛

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Investigate and expose the lies

Let's call things by their right names. Bush, Blair, Howard and their co-conspirators have been systematically lying in connection with the war on Iraq.

Even before the tragic events of September 11, George Bush and those who now form the core of the US administration, had decided to launch a war against Iraq and other countries that were resisting US domination.

The big corporations and their agents in government faced a world that was increasingly opposed to corporate globalisation, that supported peace between nations and national independence, and was demanding solutions to poverty, homelessness, starvation and unemployment. They needed to launch a military offensive if they were to maintain their power.

All that was lacking was a reason to go to war that would be publicly acceptable.

The destruction of the World Trade Centre (WTC) provided them with an excuse. They used it to launch the so-called "war on terrorism" and to denounce the "axis of evil" and anyone else who was "not with us".

Almost immediately the invasion of Afghanistan was set in train although not a single one of the pilots of the planes that smashed into the WTC came from Afghanistan. But such detail was buried in the campaign against "terrorism".

Next came the war against Iraq, using the pretext of weapons of mass destruction. The trouble was that after more than three months of searching by UN weapons inspectors no WMD were found. This threatened to derail the invasion and occupation plans.

Bush, Blair and Howard in particular, went into overdrive in their assertions that there were massive weapons in the hands of Saddam Hussein. They could be mobilised for use in "45 minutes" said Blair; they constituted "thousands of tons" of material declared US leaders; they all "knew they existed" and pictures of sites were splashed across TV screens and pompously presented to the United Nations by Colin Powell as evidence.

It is now becoming clearer by the day that these leaders lied.

They lied to the people of their countries about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

They lied about their aims behind the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

They lied when they claimed, as Howard repeatedly did before the war, that no decision had been made to go to war.

They lied about the alleged connections between the Iraqi Government of Saddam Hussein and the al-Qaida organisation.

They are lying again as they allege that Iraq's non-existent weapons of mass destruction were destroyed "around the time the war started", (Rumsfeld) or that they were smuggled across the border into Syria. "They could have been taken over the Syrian border", says Alexander Downer.

He admitted that this view was "speculation". In other words, there is no evidence to back up this assertion. It is another lie.

Then there is the doctoring of intelligence information. Tony Blair vehemently denies he or his government would do any such thing. But former British Government MP, Clare Short says there "was deceit on the way to military action. If we can be deceived about this then what can we not be deceived about?"

Howard and Downer are in similar denial mode but Andrew Wilkie a former analyst at the Office of National Assessments (ONA) is not. Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (May 31-June 1) says, "Australian intelligence agencies made it clear to the Government all along that Iraq did not have a massive WMD program".

He goes on, "The ONA ... understood months before it commenced that war was inevitable and Australia would be involved..."

"Now the WMD claims are unravelling. All that US intelligence garbage is on the nose", writes Andrew Wilkie.

A resolution for a Senate Inquiry into the Australian Government's claims is to be moved by Greens Senator Bob Brown. "It is now apparent that the claims ... were exaggerated and, in some cases, fabricated", he said.

"The hypocrisy of the US, Britain and Australian Governments is obvious. It is the US that harbours most of the world's weapons of mass destruction."

It is essential that the ALP and Democrats Senators support his initiative if Howard, Downer and Hill's lies are to be exposed and nailed.

PRESS FUND

US and British parliamentarians are probing the "weapons of mass destruction" fiction used to justify the unprovoked invasion of Iraq. Some people are asking what right Bush and Co. have to dictate which weapons another state can possess. There are demands that they should be tried for war crimes, and that the invading nations should pay for Iraq's reconstruction costs. Speaking of costs, the Press Fund isn't yet loaded up with cash, in fact we're slipping behind where we should be for this time of year. So please, send us a contribution for the next issue! This week our sincere thanks go to the following generous contributors:

T Bartlett \$100, Bill \$6, J Clancy \$20, Jim Robson \$20, "Round Figure" \$9.

This week's total: \$155. Progressive total: \$5535.

US media cave-in: Howard Government tickled pink

The Howard Government, and media barons Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch, have rejoiced at the proposed lifting of US cross-media ownership laws in the US.

by Peter Mac

The US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) last week approved the relaxation of US cross-media ownership laws, which like their Australian counterparts, restrict the number and type of media outlets that a business can own in any one city. The changes will probably be challenged in court, but the chances of them being overturned are minimal.

The FCC approved the ownership by single corporations of newspapers as well as radio and TV stations in the one market, e.g. the major cities. The Howard Government wants all such restrictions lifted. The decision also approved raising the "reach" of US TV channels from 35 to 45 percent of the population. The Howard Government wants the limit raised to 70 percent in Australia.

The FCC wants a guarantee of ten "independent voices" in major US media markets, while the Howard Government has stipulated only four here. And the US laws, if amended according to the FCC recommendations, would require that cable pay TV be included in any analysis of media diversity, while the Howard Government has rejected this idea altogether.

In 1997 the Howard Government sought to amend the laws, but refrained because of opposition from the Senate and objections by National Party parliamentarians. Recently, however, the Government signalled its intention of introducing redrafted legislation.

Democrats media spokesman Senator John Cherry wants any such move to await the major report on

the proposed ownership of Foxtel by Telstra.

Cherry commented that as they stand the Howard Government's proposals would give media moguls largely unrestricted operations, compared to those recommended by the FCC for the US media.

"Before the Senate debates what is by world standards a very radical deregulation of media ownership, I think we need to see all the information, including the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (CCC's) views on an important part of the ownership equation", he observed, with remarkable understatement.

One potential obstacle - ACCC head Alan Fels - has been replaced by a new man whose political complexion is yet to be tested in that job.

Media baron Bob Wright, Chairman of US broadcaster NBC, recently scoffed at suggestions that the new laws would restrict US media diversity, including news broadcasts, and would thus facilitate manipulation of public opinion by major corporations.

"There's more (broadcasting) production going on today in this country than there's ever been, by a factor of 10 or 20", he proclaimed loudly.

However, the diversity of news sources is more apparent than real, since the major outlets (including those in sources of media such as pay TV and the internet) are owned by a handful of organisations. In Australia the top 10 news websites are owned by PBI, Fairfax and the ABC. There are many smaller alternative media operations, but in

practice their influence varies from marginal to tiny.

And the potential for abuse by the big boys is chilling. As the ABC's *Mediawatch* program recently pointed out, without exception all 25 Murdoch newspapers around the world spoke with one voice in approving the war against Iraq, and were highly influential in quelling public opposition to it.

It has been suggested that the cross-media laws, if amended, should require companies operating multiple media outlets in the same area to have "separate" newsrooms. However, such a requirement would be laughably ineffectual.

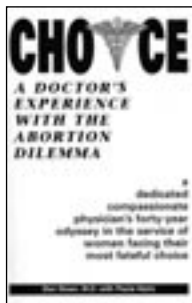
Mediawatch already highlights frequent cases where very similar items, even including identical text, are used by various outlets of the same company, and the separate newsroom requirements would not alter this practice one iota.

The new types of media technology are not covered by the present cross-media laws (and would presumably not be included in any amended legislation), thereby presenting an "open slather" approach for the main media corporations.

This explains the Government's determination to facilitate the introduction of digital TV, which involves a different media technology, and would enable corporations to broadcast in multiple channels within the bandwidth covered by their licence.

Nevertheless, the same corporations are determined to see a relaxation of the cross-media laws for conventional broadcasting and for publishing, which still dominate the media world as a whole.

All in all, the outlook for a relatively honest and independent media in Australia is not good, and deserves to be vigorously fought for. ☛

Bookshelf

Choice. A doctor's experience with the Abortion dilemma \$16 (p&p \$3)

By Don Sloan MD

Since 1992, America has witnessed a rash of violence toward abortion providers and clinics, including bombings and shootings that left two doctors, a nurse, and a clinic receptionist in different parts of the country dead and many others wounded. Still others have been forced to live and work under siege, behind razor wire and protected by armed guards, operating under persistent threats. As a result, the number of professionals willing to provide abortion services has been dwindling. As a result, there is a rash of newborns left in dumpsters or toilets, often by teenagers. Don Sloan has spent over 30 years in New York City as an obstetrician and gynaecologist, as well as a sex and marital therapist. He offers facts and insight in a candid, moving account of the case for choice.

Afghanistan - Washington's Secret War \$16 (p&p \$3)

By Phillip Bonosky

This book is not about the recent invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the US and other imperialist countries but about the earlier period. The author writes, "Although this is a book about Afghanistan, it is inevitably as much a book about Soviet-American relations. I have chosen to deal with a problem that, from the official American point of view, seems to be an open-and-shut case. And yet, as an eyewitness to those events Bonosky writes of an entirely different Afghanistan that began to take shape after the election of the People's Democratic Party in 1978. "I saw women working together in handicraft coops, adults, both women and men, learning to read, women working as professionals, poor working families able to afford a doctor and send their children to school." His book tells the story of this largely forgotten and ignored period of the beginnings of real liberation.



Brother Bill McKie - Building the Union at Ford \$15 (p&p \$3)

By Phillip Bonosky

Henry Ford boasted that he would never accept a union and for over 20 years he kept the union out of his huge factory with guns, goons, blacklists and frump. Here is the inspiring story about auto's rank and file - like "Brother" Bill McKie - how they fought a long and bloody struggle and how, together, they won.

Orders to SPA Books, 65 Campbell Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010. Payment by cheque, money order or Credit Card (give the name on the card, the number, the type and the expiry date).

The Gene Genie threatens workplaces

Late last month a report was tabled in the Federal Parliament that deserves the closest attention of the labour movement. Entitled *Essentially Yours: The Protection Of Human Genetic Information in Australia*, it is the result of a two-year inquiry by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) and the Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC). Health Minister Kay Patterson has already warned that the report's findings (and 144 recommendations) have implications in a wide range of fields, including research, privacy, clinical practice, the delivery of health services and in the workplace.

by Bob Briton

Some union organisations have been quick to respond. "It provides a hole for unscrupulous employers to engineer the perfect worker rather than accept the worker as they are," AWU National Secretary Bill Shorten told the media last week.

Central to his concerns was a recommendation that genetic testing of workers be allowed where a particular job – piloting an aircraft or dealing with dangerous chemicals, for example – might require a person with particular genetic characteristics. Conceivably, genetic testing might also be used to detect chromosomal damage or molecular mutations in workers handling hazardous substances.

However, as ACTU senior legal officer Linda Rubenstein pointed out, workplaces should be safe for all employees regardless of their genetic predisposition. She also argued that a workers' current state of health – not their genetic predisposition to certain health problems – should be used to assess fitness for employment.

It appears the above-mentioned "positive" aspects of genetic testing are being used to get one foot in the door for genetic testing in the workplace where it can join the already well-established drug testing regimes.

Two years ago, a *Sydney Morning Herald* internet poll revealed that 93.5 per cent of Australians want the Government to ban genetic testing in the workplace. Despite this overwhelming opposition from the people, the Government seems set to press ahead and open the door wider to the practice.

Internationally, only France and Norway have seen fit to ban genetic

testing for determining eligibility for employment.

Genetic underclass

Trade unions are concerned that already leaky privacy safeguards will be furthered compromised by legislation flowing from the ALRC/AHEC report. The Commonwealth's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) stipulates that all individuals should be treated alike, except where their circumstances are so "materially different" that they justify differing treatment.

The Commonwealth *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (WRA) sets out that an employer cannot judge an individual's suitability for work based on race, colour, sex, religion, physical or mental disability, birthplace, social origin, etc. The employer MAY choose to do so when one of these criteria renders the employee unable to fulfil the "inherent requirements" of the job.

Genetic testing would give the employer a strong argument in seeking exemptions from the restrictions of both these pieces of legislation. The genetic predisposition of certain ethnic groups to compensatable injury could even be considered if this push is not nipped in the bud in its early stages.

The future extent of genetic testing is a worrying question as well. While airline pilots and workers dealing with hazardous substances are in line for compulsory genetic testing, the rest of us are also more likely to have our DNA under the microscope.

Two years ago a 900-page issues paper from the ALRC and AHEC was released as part of the just completed inquiry. It reassured us that employers and private

investigators should be banned from collecting body samples for genetic tests without consent. The current report stands by this recommendation in the main.

Insurance (ab)use

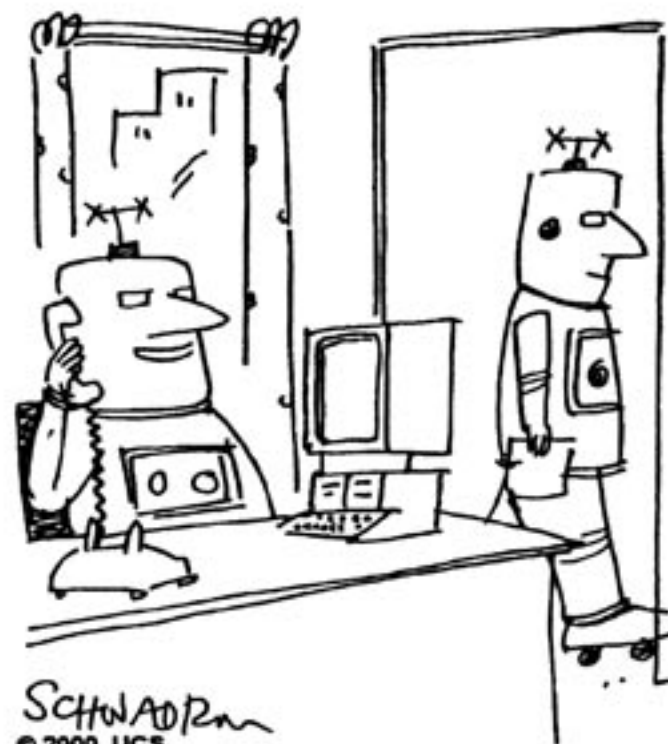
However, the report also recommends allowing insurance companies to make wider use of genetic testing. While they would not be able to compel an applicant for insurance to undergo such tests, they could make it obligatory to provide the results of any genetic tests undergone by them or their family.

Insurance companies could put pressure on employers to request such information on their behalf for underwriting purposes. Of course, employers would have their own interest in information detailing their workers genetic predisposition to certain health problems that would be contained in this exchange of information.

The potential for a genetic underclass based on insurability is not lost on the ALRC or AHEC. Nevertheless, they insist "private insurers should not be expected to provide a social security net for Australians regardless of their genetic status ... that function is more appropriately performed by the social security system."

It should be noted that, at the same time, the Federal Government is arguing the exact opposite proposition – that people should privately insure and let the state out of its obligation to maintain a social security system. Workers stand to be screwed three ways: possible genetic exclusion from employment, dearer or unobtainable private insurance and declining standards of the social security "safety net".

The Commonwealth would argue, no doubt, that existing legislation already prohibits the collection, use, storage and disclosure of personal health information (including genetic information) by private sector organisations. However, these legislative efforts can only express a desire for certain outcomes and the ALRC/AHEC inquiry is realistic in this regard.



"We've achieved the goal of a paper-free and human-free office."

Two years ago, its issues paper recommended the licensing or registration of human genetic research databases and the independent monitoring of national forensic DNA databases. It further advocated the regulation of ever cheaper "do-it-yourself" genetic testing kits by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

These responses reflect the challenge to privacy that genetic testing presents and the incredible potential for leaks in any safeguards. Over recent decades there has been an explosion in the number of "biorepositories" that could provide information on individuals.

Samples provided for one purpose could end up being used for genetic testing. Blood and saliva samples from convicts and criminal suspects, blood spots pricked from the heels of babies, donations of blood, tissue and other samples sent to pathology companies are now kept throughout the country and contain tradeable DNA secrets.

As usual, the US can provide glimpses of what lies ahead if current trends persist. For example, in 2001 the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission alleged that the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad was secretly testing its workers for any predisposition to carpal tunnel syndrome [a repetition strain injury].

The company eventually admitted that it was indeed acting in violation of anti-discrimination legislation and promised not to do it again. Other secret offenders would hardly feel threatened by this example!

Australian workers would be naïve to expect higher standards of propriety or transparency from their employers or more rigorous law enforcement from "their" government without a major struggle. Measures to tackle the genetic testing threat should be high on the agenda of the labour movement. ☺

Stop the Liberal power grab

"The proposal of Liberal Party leader, John Howard for joint sittings of the House of Representatives and the Senate to overcome opposition to his Government's legislation by the Senate can only be described as a blatant grab for complete power. If adopted the Senate would become irrelevant", said Peter Symon General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia when asked to comment by *The Guardian*.

"Howard wants a Senate that merely complies with whatever legislation the Liberal Party wants to wheel up. When it refuses to go along it is branded as 'obstructionist'.

"It is very fortunate that the Senate has refused to endorse some Government legislation. If it were not for the Senate Medicare would have been ended long ago, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme would have been destroyed, Telstra would have been fully privatised, all restrictions on media ownership would have been eliminated, university fees would have skyrocketed, the most draconic industrial legislation would now face the trade union movement, there would have been no resolution against the Iraqi war

– to name only a few Liberal policies that have been stymied by the Senate.

"The Senate is elected using a system of proportional representation and that is why it is much more representative of the wishes of the Australian people than the House of Representatives. If proportional representation applied in the House of Representatives the Liberal Party would probably not have been able to form a government following the last election. It did not win a majority of votes", said Peter Symon

"It is unfortunate that the immediate response of the Labor Party was to look for some sort of compromise with the Liberals, proposing to trade off the fundamentally necessary role of the

Senate for four-year terms of office and for fixed election dates. This is yet another opportunist response by the Labor Party. Rather than a bold rejection the response suggests that there is little real difference between the two major parties.

"Howard has announced that a 'discussion' paper will be issued with a referendum held in conjunction with the next Federal election. The 'discussion' is obviously a charade. The Liberal Government has already decided what it will do", said Peter Symon.

"This grab for complete power must be stopped and there is every reason to believe that the Australian people will not fall for it. A campaign to expose the Howard plan needs to be waged from now until the referendum is put up.

"The immediate opposition of The Greens and the Australian Democrats is welcome. The Labor Party should join in this outright opposition to ensure that Howard's grab is defeated", concluded Peter Symon. ☺

Bush and Blair nominated for Nobel Peace Prize! Unbelievable isn't it!!

Apparently, this is a serious proposition!

If you find it appalling that Bush and Blair have been placed on the nomination list for the Nobel PEACE Prize and have access to the Internet, then go to the address below and sign a petition to have them removed.

It only takes a minute, and there is an option to remain anonymous.

To follow the process, go to:
<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/302184339>

Melbourne

ALEIDA GUEVARA

Aleida Guevara is Che Guevara's eldest daughter. She is a Cuban-based pediatrician who has served as an international doctor in both Nicaragua and Angola in the 1980s. She has emerged as a prominent figure in the anti-globalisation movement, and will be speaking in Australia for the first time.

"Che Guevara, War and the Fight for Global Justice"
Public Meeting: Wednesday 2nd July 7pm
RMIT Storey Hall, Swanston Street
Entry \$5

For more information contact Pilar:
Ph: 03 93264280 Email: pilar@oceanbooks.com.au

Aleida will also be speaking in Sydney on July 5th.
(Details to be advised)

Workers' sacrifices rewarded with the sack

The major Australian supplier of quality leather upholstery to the auto industry, Howe Leather in Melbourne, last week retrenched around a quarter of its workforce because it has lost contracts to supply Mitsubishi.

"The Federal Government has shovelled millions of dollars to Mitsubishi to keep them manufacturing in this country, but Mitsubishi has paid Australia back by sending leather production for Australian-made autos to South Africa where production is based on third-world wages", Brian Daley, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU) Victorian branch Secretary said last week.

Melbourne tannery workers employed at Howe Leather are also angry that their employer had not let them know about the crisis and the effect on their jobs.

"They've behaved disrespectfully towards their workforce by not informing them about the crisis, it is a display of astounding disloyalty after years and years of demanding co-operation", Brian Daley said.

Union members discovered last week that Howe Leather had a secret plan to make nearly a quarter of the staff redundant – and were not going to tell them until the last minute.

"Howe Leather has got a lot of support from our union over the years; we've worked together to

lobby MPs to fight off the Howard Government over tariff policy.

"These campaigns throughout the '90s have been a success, despite the WTO huffing and puffing and trying to blow away Australian jobs.

"Now the War in Iraq and the effect of SARS has hit the industry big time – for months now the company has asked our people to work four-day shifts and eat into their own annual leave and long-service leave.

"We did that. The members were unhappy about it but we co-operated", Brian Daley said.

The volume of hides being produced at Howe Leather has declined by around 30 percent in recent times with the company only producing around 3000 hides per day on a four day week. On a five-day week Howe Leather was producing 3800-4000 hides every day, with the capacity to produce 5000-plus.

The union organised a meeting with the company as workers were concerned about their job security. The delegates were to ask management about Howe's long-term plans.

"It was at this meeting that the

company informed the union that redundancies would occur", Brian Daley said.

"During the course of the meeting it became blatantly obvious the company had no intention of telling the workforce about the redundancy until Thursday, when they were going to tap them on the shoulder and say 'bye bye'.

"If the union hadn't called the meeting the company was not going to tell anyone about their plans until the end of Thursday's shift.

"The delegates were outraged that the company had always leant on the union for support in this tough industry and they had no intention of telling the workers anything before redundancy day."

The LHMU has an enterprise agreement which delivers a better than average redundancy package – but that is a small victory for the workers, Mr Daley said.

The Howe sackings are a classic example of government handouts to ruthless and unaccountable transnational corporations, workers being kept in the dark and making sacrifices, only to be rewarded for their efforts with the sack.

This is corporate globalisation at work.

The Howard Government is now enthusiastically negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the US which will inevitably lead to more job destruction. ☘



"You don't belong here. We've got evidence of your failure to exploit workers!"

LABOUR NOTES

The Beattie Government's Education Budget has once again duded state schools, says Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) State President Julie-Ann McCullough. When inflation and increased student enrolments are taken into consideration, state school funding has not increased in real terms over the last four years. The extra teachers provided for in this year's budget were needed to cover new enrolments and those agreed to in 2000 as part of a new enterprise agreement. There are more than 50,000 students learning in crowded conditions. Teachers are seeking interim targets of 23 students for Kindergarten to year 3, with a maximum of 28 students in years 4-10.

A coronial inquest in Wollongong on the NSW South Coast heard that coal miner Greg Aspinall had "no chance" of survival when part of the roof of the Bellambi West Colliery collapsed on him two and a half years ago. At the time Greg and another worker were 3km underground. The other miner was seriously injured and spent six months in hospital.

Optus was bought by Singaporean telecommunications company SingTel in 2001. SingTel has flown in Singaporean workers to do the specialist IT work presently being done by Australian Optus workers. The ten Optus workers involved have been performing their specialist work for between six and 10 years. They have been told to train their replacements. Their performance bonuses have been threatened if they do not comply. Over the past 12 months the workers have been refused training that could have helped them keep their jobs.

When 35 highly specialised gas workers, members of the Australian Workers' Union, were sacked after their employer Australian Gas Technology Services (AGTS) went into voluntary liquidation in March this year, they were owed a total of \$2 million in entitlements. AGTS encompassed the Engineering and Scientific Services Unit of the Gas and Fuel Corporation which was broken up and privatised by the former Kennett Government in Victoria. Three of the four equal shareholders of AGTS – Energex Ltd, Country Energy Gas and AGL Service Businesses have agreed to pay their share of workers' entitlements lost by AGTS. The fourth shareholder, Envestra refuses to pay. The AWU has called on Origin Energy, Envestra's major shareholder, to pay its share. Envestra has more than \$2,500 million in assets – half a million dollars is hardly likely to bankrupt it! The question of safety remains. "The loss of AGTS threatens to leave dangerous gaps in the auditing and integrity of the Victorian gas system", the AWU said. The workers had irreplaceable experience, some had been in the same job for 36 years. Thanks to privatisation, Victoria faces yet more uncertainty over its gas supplies.

TCF workers demand an end to tariff cuts

Hundreds of workers from the textile, clothing and footwear industry marched on the Productivity Commission in Melbourne on June 5 to protest against the threat of further tariff cuts in their industry.

Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union (TCFU) Victorian Secretary Michele O'Neil told the rally that the Productivity Commission's desire to reduce tariffs by five per cent over the next 10 years was ideologically driven.

Workers and unions fear that the cuts will have a devastating effect on the TCF industry. Victoria accommodates 44 per cent of what remains of the industry, providing jobs for 34,000 workers and contributing almost \$5 billion a year to the state's economy.

Ms O'Neil said the Productivity Commission was determined to oversee further tariff cuts despite the loss of thousands of jobs and destruction of communities.

"The Productivity Commission want to destroy this industry. They don't care that thousands of workers in the industry will lose their jobs. This struggle is about our com-

munities and what kind of society we want. Do we want to support working people or throw them on the scrapheap", she said.

Victoria's Manufacturing and Export Minister Tim Holding told the rally that 19,000 jobs could be lost in Victoria if the Federal Government accepted the recommendations of the Productivity Commission to cut tariffs by a further five per cent over the next 10 years.

He said tariff cuts had already seen the destruction of 20,000 Victorian jobs since 1991.

Mr Holding said the Commission's own research confirmed that there would be no net gain to the Australian economy and that Victoria would experience a negative impact as a result of the proposed cuts.

Victorian Trades Hall Council Secretary Leigh Hubbard said workers should take the fight for jobs and against tariff cuts into their communities.

"Turn up outside your federal politician's office. You need to take this fight into your communities. The people upstairs in the

Productivity Commission don't give a damn about your jobs. They know that one-third of TCF workers who lose their jobs never work again once they lose their job.

"Other unions are here supporting you because they know the same battles are looming in their own industries. Victoria is the heartbeat of manufacturing and we are losing far too many jobs. This is a battle for the future of Victoria", Mr Hubbard said.

TCFUA President Beth McPherson told the rally she had started as a worker in the industry when it was growing in the 1970s. She said the loss of jobs in TCF was devastating.

In 1971, before the tariff cuts were commenced, more than 190,000 people were employed in the industry. A program of tariff cuts was commenced a few years later, with the loss of more than 50,000 jobs by 1977. The phasing out of tariffs under GATT (and now its successor the WTO) saw the steady destruction of further jobs, with only little over 75,000 TCF jobs remaining.

"We need to protect our jobs. We have to go back and tell our bosses and other workers that unless we have a voice now we will lose our industry", Ms McPherson warned. ☘

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WEST PAPUA

An Issue whose time has come!

AWPA's first AGM

Saturday 14th June at 4.30pm 65 Woodville Rd, Woodville
(directly opposite the Charles Sturt Council)

A Melanesian Feast and cultural events will follow meeting at 6pm
Food baked in traditional Melanesian style will be provided
For catering purposes please RSVP by c.o.b. Friday 13/06/03
Ph: Andrew 8340 1847 or e-mail sasha@airnet.com.au
AWPA-Adelaide contacted: PO Box 219, Kilkenny 5009;
dave-arkins@bigpond.com.au; ph 8345 4480
Australian West Papuan Association

Not so clever government

The Howard Government's "dumbing down" of Australia proceeds apace. While the billions being slashed from our educational institutions is met with significant public outcry, a background campaign is also being waged against our publicly funded research institutes. And the Government clearly has the CSIRO in its sights...

Andrew Jackson

Prior to the Budget, the CSIRO had warned the that Government without an additional \$120 million over the next three years, the agency would be forced to scrap vital research programs.

The CSIRO, like the ABC, receives funding on a triennial basis, and the new three-year budget was due to be outlined this year.

What the CSIRO was in fact allocated came as a shock – only \$20 million additional funding for just one year.

The Government refused to commit funds after that, pending the outcome of a "review" process currently under way.

Science Minister Peter McGauran says the review "will consider the potential for greater synergies between universities and [publicly funded research agencies, and] possible models for closer collaboration".

In practice this means dis-

banding the research agencies and folding their functions into the universities. Step one in the process has just been announced: the "amalgamation" of the Australian Institute of Marine Science with James Cook University.

Despite the disastrous Budget outcome, CSIRO Chief Executive Dr Geoff Garrett issued a glowing press release, no doubt breathing a sigh of relief that the agency would not be disbanded this year, and grateful to receive any increase at all.

"We are obviously very pleased that, in a tough budgetary climate, the Government is supporting our strategic directions and critical new programs."

"We are encouraged by the Government's commitment..."

The Government's \$20 million "commitment" came with strings – it is specifically allocated the CSIRO's Flagship programs.

Minister McGauran explains:

"Flagships have huge potential. Flagships will help build new industries, broaden the skill base of the Australian workforce, encourage innovation, sharpen out international competitive edge and make the most of complex new technologies".

For this one can read: We are abandoning the principle of research for the public good, pouring funding instead into research projects that can be flogged off to private corporations.

Sandy Ross, of the CSIRO Staff Association explained the true cost of the much-vaunted "Flagship" programs.

"Encouraged by Government, CSIRO is shifting a lot of its funding into the new Flagship programs. Due to the decline in Government funding of CSIRO over the last decade the Flagship programs can only be made workable by cutting current research projects.

"This will mean the loss of scientific knowledge and potentially hundreds of CSIRO jobs."

The tragic extent of the cost-cutting already taking place was revealed in a Senate Committee hearing last week.

Despite the outwardly cheery tenor of his Budget media release,

Dr Garrett outlined the extent of the agency's funding crisis in a memo to the Board.

The memo reveals how the CSIRO was forced to sell one of its research ships. Desperate to unburden themselves of the operating costs, the ship was panic-sold for just \$1.3 million, \$7.7 million below its market value.

Starving the CSIRO of funds and disbanding publicly funded institutions is only part of Mr Howard's demonstrated antipathy towards research and learning. Across all publicly funded institutions spending has decreased 11 per cent during the seven years of Howard's Government.

At the same time, spending on "useful" research remains unabated.

Most significantly, the Howard Government has committed over \$500 million to building a new nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights in Sydney.

The official Government excuse for the building the reactor is to make medical isotopes for diagnostic procedures and cancer therapies.

But the Government has also revealed it is in Australia's "national interest". By this they mean it will be a very useful tool in develop-



ing Australia's capability to build nuclear weapons.

Also paid out of the 2003 Science Budget – \$18 million to "upgrade security" at the reactor. ❖

The ultimate Piss Off

Wollongong workers on poverty-level wages are losing up to \$5000 for taking toilet breaks, according to the union representing staff at a Stellar call centre. In one extraordinary case a pregnant woman has had \$100 deducted from her pay.

Stellar management were red-faced when they confessed to having deducted \$100 over two months from the woman's pay due to her frequent toilet breaks.

The woman had even brought in a medical certificate explaining her request for leniency in the matter.

Stellar has confirmed the \$100 has been repaid, explaining that human resources had made an "error".

However, this case is only the tip of the iceberg.

Other employees claim they have lost their bonuses, worth up to \$5000 a year, for using sick leave entitlements.

The bonuses are significant to workers earning only \$25,000 a year thanks to non-negotiable individual

employment contracts (Australian Workplace Agreements – AWAs) that have been used to slash base earnings from the \$35,000 paid to Telstra employees before their jobs were outsourced.

Stellar has used AWAs, outsourcing and state government subsidies to become Australia's largest contract call centre operation, employing more than 2000 people around the country.

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) has launched inspections of Stellar call centres at Wollongong, Hornsby, Adelaide and Robina into suspected breaches of the Workplace Relations Act. Central to the investigations are claims that the company has not paid overtime and has mispre-

sented the legal situation regarding AWAs.

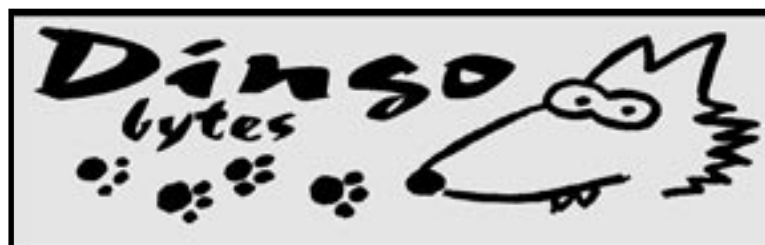
On the expiry of Australian Workplace Agreements staff who were denied the right to award coverage on employment are theoretically supposed to be offered that choice.

"We have information that this choice has not been provided", CPSU official Larissa Andelman says. "That these people have not even been told that they have a right to choose."

Ms Andelman says the reported use of bonuses to dissuade people from using their sick leave is a major concern to members.

Stellar call centres are understood to have an unusually high number of employees absent on stress leave. Ms Andelman says that annual staff turnover rates are as high as 40 percent in some of the company's call centres.

Acknowledgement: Workers Online ❖



The continuing drought is a natural disaster compounded by a dirty squabble over water "rights" – in fact compounded by years of abuse by big irrigators like the cotton conglomerates. Planting starts in a few months but reserves of water in dams and watercourses are at crisis levels, so much so that even cotton's environmental vandals will find their access to H2O limited. Big cotton swept into north-west NSW and south west Queensland more than two decades ago and promptly began using up the water and poisoning the river systems. In cahoots with government, they have been given water contracts regardless of the needs of other irrigators, townspeople and the environment. They have little use for the labour of rural workers and have become burdens on local economies. The best outcome from the disastrous drought would be for them to cease operation altogether.

Consider also public education, one of the fundamentals of building the economy and strengthening a cohesive society. The Federal Government continues to pour tens of millions of dollars of public school funding into private schools. Thus the elite Barker College in NSW – which last month had a state-of-the-art computer system installed at the cost of \$250,000 – will next year receive \$3.1 million from the Howard Government. And Trinity Grammar – with an estimated annual turnover of \$29 million – will next year be handed \$5.48 million of taxpayers' money. Of course, marginalising and depriving masses of people of a decent life has another effect – they tend to become very, very angry.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is the head of the armed forces, General Peter "Killer" Cosgrove. Having earned his blood-letting credentials in the dirty war on Vietnam, and having most recently overseen Australia's part in the slaughter of innocent men, women and children in Iraq, Cosgrove last week popped up in a News Ltd poll as the most popular choice to become the next Governor-General. Last week Dingo nominated arguably the biggest bludger in Australia's history i.e. Kerry Packer, for that honour, but Killer would also slot into the position, no worries.

Terror Raids

Continued from page 1

The latest raids were against Australian citizens as well as asylum seekers (one of the families has lived here for 15 years), and the Federal Police mode-of-operation from previous assaults was repeated.

Once again the raids were carried out in the early hours of the morning, with the clear intention of terrifying the families concerned; once again, the police removed computers, hard drives, mobile phones and files.

At the time of writing no prosecutions have resulted from the raids.

It is true that the MEK group has been proscribed by the United Nations. The group is openly dedicated to the overthrow of the Iranian dictatorship, and has been involved in armed struggle against it. However, many groups opposed to the Iranian Government believe the

proscription to be unjust, and have lobbied for the UN to remove it.

Greens spokesperson Bob Brown said the Howard Government owed the public a clear explanation about the police actions. Senator Brown accused the Government of "double-dealing", pointing out that while it supports a future war against Iran it is dealing with the Iranian Government to forcibly repatriate hundreds of refugees who have fled its rule.

The enforced return of the Iranian refugees offers the Australian Government an additional bonus – the removal of key witnesses in any investigation into the running of the detention centres, the subject of the recent sensational revelations on the ABC's Four Corners program.

Their removal would weaken any case against the government

and the US-based prison corporation running the detention centres.

The 277 Iranian asylum seekers have been told by the Immigration Department that they must agree to be returned to Iran within 28 days or else they will be forced onto a plane and returned, a procedure called "Defoulment", which is forbidden under the UN Refugee Convention.

Even those who still have court appeals and Refugee Review Tribunal hearings pending have been told they will be forcibly removed within a month.

Although the raids were carried out by the Federal Police, ASIO was undoubtedly involved. The Howard Government wants to grant ASIO increased powers to arrest and detain suspects, turning the body into a secret police force. The legislation is currently blocked in the Senate. ❖

Bush's Middle East road-show

The Bush travelling road-show made a sweep through the Middle East, turning on the biggest show of all at the resort city of Aqaba in Jordan. Its aim was to impress some Arab leaders that the Bush administration is committed to the creation of an independent Palestinian state and that he, Bush, is prepared to force the Israeli Government to make some "hurting concessions".

But the festive press conference, at which no questions were allowed, gave the impression of déjà vue.

The list of previous shows that led nowhere, except to give the Israelis more time to steal more Palestinian land and build more Israeli settlements, is long. To give a few examples:

* The Madrid international peace summit show with George Bush the Father, European Heads of States, and Israeli PM Shamir in the leading roles;

* The Washington White House 1993 hand-shaking signing ceremony of the Israeli-PLO Oslo accord with the lead roles given to Bill Clinton, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat;

* The Washington summit show of signing the abortive Israeli-Palestinian Oslo II Interim accord with Clinton, Rabin, Peres and Arafat again in the lead roles, and the Egyptian Hosni Mubarak in an assisting role;

* The Wye Farm bluff with the assassinated Rabin exchanged for Benjamin Netanyahu and Peres exchanged for Ariel Sharon.

All promised peace. But it was all about more pieces of Palestinian territory.

One aspect of the Aqaba get together and almost totally ignored by the media was Bush's call for the future establishment of a US-Middle East "Free Trade Zone".

Its real aim is to oust the European Union, particularly Germany and France, from their current position as the main trading partners of the Arab countries, Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

By this Bush expressed the

real aim of the whole show – to strengthen the hegemony of the US "New Order" in the interests of the leading capitalist power and their big corporations in the region, in the wake of the Afghan and Iraqi wars.

Beyond the handshakes and rhetoric, it was business as usual.

On the very day of the Aqaba show, the Israeli forces again intruded into several Gaza Strip towns and refugee camps in West Bank cities, executing several leading members of the Hamas and Jihad militias, and destroying another 22 houses – adding to the 1200 houses already turned into rubble during the last 25 months alone. And there is no end to it yet.

According to Sharon's Aqaba promise, some of the 17 settlement outposts would be evacuated by the Israelis, most probably filmed and broadcast by the domestic and foreign TV networks.

And at the same time – and this has been sworn by the right-radical settlers' leaders – or the very next day, all those dismantled outposts would be re-established, this time without TV crews present, and probably even prohibited by the occupation forces to be present.

It has all happened before and there will be no difference now except that Sharon now regards these settlements as "non-authorised" and no longer as "illegal".

There already exist more than a hundred such "outposts", set up since Sharon came to power, set up in order to obstruct any possibility of ever establishing a viable Palestinian state.

True, Sharon formally

adopted the roadmap, however he preconditioned their acceptance by demanding from the new Palestinian Premier, Abbas (who Sharon and Bush have taken to their hearts as the native indigenous "boy") should bring an end to the Palestinian Intifada. Sharon defines this struggle as "Palestinian terrorism". He demands the disarming of all the Palestinian militia.

Only after this, will Sharon and his associates be prepared to consider any kind of withdrawal from some of the occupied Palestinian areas.

But Abbas has not the slightest chance of fulfilling this demand. The Israeli occupationists have, during the last 25 months, systematically destroyed or stolen the political, economic and administrative establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

Its archives and documents, electronic computer equipment, including police stations, records and jails have all been taken or destroyed making the task that the Israeli and US bosses are demanding of Abbas into an impossible task.

By this device, Sharon will be excused from implementing his side of the obligations.

The Israeli media made an enthusiastic victory of Bush's recognition in his Aqaba speech that Israel was a "Jewish" State and explained this folly as a US commitment to the Israeli reservation against allowing any Palestinian refugee to return into Israel, as implied by the roadmap.

Maybe Bush was not aware of the consequences of what he said. Perhaps it was a slip of tongue put in by a speechwriter.

Anyway, the chair of the Hadash Front (which is close to the Communist Party of Israel) and Knesset Member Mohammed Barakei, defined Bush's recognition of Israel as a "Jewish" State, as outrageously racist. How can



Israel, with almost 20 per cent of its citizens being non-Jews, but Arab-Palestinians, be defined as a "Jewish" State?

The cheers of the jubilant media over Bush's lapse express the wishful thinking of the right-radical Israeli chauvinists, who design to annex the whole of pre-1948 Palestine and to ethnically cleanse the land of its indigenous Arab-Palestinian population, said Mohammed Barakei.

The Israeli Labor Party has supported the roadmap and promised support to Ariel Sharon should the right-wing fascist parties that are behind the settler movement and the expulsion of all Palestinians, desert him.

For their part, the radical right-wing and fascist parties, with their terrorist setup in the colonialist

settlements and their supporters in Israel proper, accuse Sharon of being a traitor who wants to "give away part of the holy land of Israel to foreigners". By foreigners, they mean the indigenous Palestinians.

A mass rally of tens of thousands of their followers on West Jerusalem's Zion Square reminded many of the anti-Oslo rallies of the Right in 1995. They culminated in the assassination of Rabin in November 1995.

In truth, all those shouting that "Sharon is a traitor" should remember that he is the mastermind of the settlement movement and that he has not changed. He has already, and will continue to commit treason, not against the settlers, but against the true interests of the Israeli people.

Based on an article by Hans Lebrecht ☼

Silent crimes

In the increasingly surreal world of Iraq, where those deemed "most wanted" by the US are pictured on a pack of playing cards and given silly nicknames in a mindset that most of us grew up of in kindergarten school – Dr Germ or Dr Anthrax – the case of the arrest of Dr Huda Ammash, aka Dr Anthrax, is especially disturbing.

by Felicity Arbuthnot

Dr Ammash, a graduate of the University of Missouri and of Texas University, is an internationally respected environmental biologist.

Since the 1991 Gulf War she has devoted much of her expertise to studying the health effects of the toxic and radioactive depleted uranium (DU) weapons used by the US and Britain and the other environmental impacts of the war, on both the civilian population of the region and on Iraqi and allied soldiers suffering from "Gulf war syndrome".

She is a fellow of the Islamic Academy of Science and has served as both Dean of the College of Education for Women at the University of Baghdad and Dean of the College of Science.

She has spoken widely internationally on the dangers of depleted uranium.

At a major international confer-

ence in Manchester three years ago, she and an expert from Hiroshima drew stark comparisons between the radiation-linked cancers and birth defects both in Iraq and Japan.

Her publications include *Impact of Gulf War Pollution in the Spread of Infections Diseases in Iraq*, published by Soli Al Mondo, Rome, in 1999 and *Electronic, Chemical and Microbial Pollution Resulting from War and Embargo and its Impacts on the Environment and Health*, in the *Journal of the Iraqi Academy of Science* in 1997.

She also contributed a chapter to *Iraq Under Siege – the Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* (Pluto Press, UK and South End Press, US) which was reprinted and updated in February.

Ammash addressed *Toxic Pollution, the Gulf War and Sanctions* in a book about which one reviewer commented: "A bril-

liant book, which exposes the grim reality behind the US new world order and British 'ethical foreign policy'"

She also drew attention to the illegality in international law of the use of weapons whose effects continue to kill and pollute long after the war is over – DU weapons remain toxic and radioactive for four-and-a-half billion years.

Contributors to *Iraq Under Siege* include Robert Fisk, John Pilger, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Ali Abunimah and former UN Under Secretary General and UN co-ordinator in Iraq Denis Halliday.

The whole is a devastating condemnation of pollution, politics towards Iraq, resultant infant mortality, dodgy dealings at the UN – all in all a shameful, shoddy US-British-driven policy.

Their respective government policy-makers must have been less than happy.

South End Press have no doubt about the reason for Dr Ammash's detention and are "outraged at the US extra-legal detention of Dr Ammash and its plans to interrogate her".

Co-publisher Alexander Dwinell demands that "she be released immediately".

Dwinell says starkly: "The US government is trying to silence Dr Ammash's outspoken criticism of the US role in causing cancers and other illnesses in Iraq through its use of biological hazardous weapons such as radioactive depleted uranium".

Deeply concerning is that those arrested by the US are being "disappeared" with absolutely no accountability, even more totally than those in Guantanamo Bay.

Ironically, that is exactly what happened under Iraq's previous regime.

League of Arab Lawyers President Sabah Al Mukhtar, whose practice frequently acts for governments – including, on occasion, that of Kuwait – is incandescent.

"From A to Z this is illegal. From the occupation to the detentions. To target, detain, disappear without any charge being made public, with no legal representation, with no magistrate, public prosecutor, proper state representative having made the decision.

"For the US army in Doha to issue a list of nationals in another country – it is unlawful, unlawful, unlawful."

With the ghost of McCarthy walking tall in the White House, Dr Strangelove stalking the Pentagon and Machiavelli's descendants apparently running US foreign policy, the future looks bleak for Iraq, democracy and the disappeared.

Ironically, many Iraqis are already saying that it was better under Saddam.

Regime change anyone? ☼

Deeply concerning is that those arrested by the US are being "disappeared" with absolutely no accountability...

Poll: US isolated & despised

A public opinion poll taken by the non-partisan US Pew Research Centre shows that the war in Iraq has widened the rift between the United States and the rest of the world, with a further surge of anti-Americanism in a number of countries.

One of the most extreme shifts was seen in Turkey, where the poll found that 83 per cent of Turks now have an unfavourable opinion of the United States, up from 55 per cent last summer.

The swing was even sharper in Indonesia, where 75 per cent had a favourable opinion of the US in 2000 while now, 83 per cent have an unfavourable view.

Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Centre, said, "Anti-Americanism has deepened, but it has also widened. People see America as a real threat. They think we're going to invade them."

In France, Germany and Spain,

where public anger over the US war plans spilled massively into the streets, fewer than 50 per cent have a positive view of the United States, the poll showed.

Among the French, favourable opinion of the United States has recovered to 43 per cent — up from what Pew describes as the "abysmal" level of 31 per cent in March, but well below the 63 per cent favourable rating last year.

In Germany, favourable opinion was up from 25 per cent in March but down from the 61 per cent in the summer of 2002.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Americans are infuriated

by the lack of support for their war-mongering government.

Only 29 per cent of Americans now say they have a very favourable or somewhat favourable view of France, down from 79 per cent in February 2002. Just 44 per cent of Americans take a favourable view of Germany, a dramatic plunge from 83 per cent in February 2002.

"The figures confirm that the Iraq crisis has precipitated a profound crisis in trans-Atlantic relations", said Timothy Garton Ash, author and director of the European Studies Centre at Oxford.

The strongest support for the US was in Britain, America's chief partner in the war. Positive views among the British have bounced back to 70 per cent, up from 48 per cent in March.

In Spain, also a US ally in the war, only 38 per cent now have a positive opinion of the United States, although this is a big increase from the 14 per cent in March.

The hostility in Spain is not limited to US policies but extends to Americans as people — fewer than half have a positive impression.

Asked if they had an unfavourable view of the United States because of George W Bush or a more general problem with America, a majority in Western Europe blamed the President. Nearly three quarters in France and Germany blame Bush, as do two-thirds in Italy and six out of 10 in Britain.

One casualty of the increased strains between America and Europe is NATO. A more independent approach to security and diplomatic affairs for Western Europe was favoured by more than three-quarters in France, more than six out of 10 in Spain, Turkey and Italy, and 57 per cent in Germany.

Another casualty of the war is the credibility of the United Nations. "Favourable ratings for the world body have tumbled in 16 of the 18 countries for which benchmark figures are available", the Pew report notes.

In not a single country surveyed does a majority believe that the United Nations still plays an important role in dealing with international conflicts.

The post-September 11 sympathy for the United States is also down, dropping to 60 per cent from 75 per cent in France, to 60 per cent from 70 per cent in Germany and to 51 per cent from 73 per cent in Russia.

Opposition to the war on terror has swelled to more than 70 per cent in Pakistan and Turkey and to 97 per cent in Jordan.

Majorities in most countries polled reject the Bush doctrine of military pre-emption. Those with majorities backing the doctrine were traditional US allies — Canada, Britain, Australia, Israel and Pakistan, which is involved in a military stand-off with India over Kashmir.

Acknowledgement to Information Clearing House www.informationclearinghouse.info/

Coca-Cola in the dock

The World Social Forum has declared July 22, 2003, the international day of action against Coca-Cola and the start of a year-long boycott of all their products, in solidarity with Sinaltrainal, the Colombian food and drinks workers' union.

by David Rhys-Jones

Managers at Colombian bottling plants, which are part-owned and operated by Coca-Cola, stand accused of paying paramilitary death squads for the assassinations of eight trade unionists, several counts of kidnapping and torture and the falsification of evidence and testimony that led to trade unionists being arrested on charges of terrorism.

In a March 31, 2003 ruling, US district court judge Jose E Martinez ruled that cases for human rights violations by paramilitaries on behalf of Coca-Cola, brought by Sinaltrainal under the Aliens Tort Claims Act (ACTA), can go forward.

Significantly, the court held that the allegations were sufficient to allow the case to proceed on a

theory that the paramilitaries were acting in a symbiotic relationship with the Colombian Government.

This satisfies a technical requirement of the ACTA that there was a component of "state action".

In a similar situation in Guatemala in the early 1980s, Coca-Cola was forced by a consumer campaign to terminate its bottling agreements with a Guatemalan bottler who used right-wing death squads to murder trade union leaders at that facility.

Pointing to this situation, Sinaltrainal's lawyers note that "wholly apart from the legal liability, Coca-Cola remains the sole entity that can change the practice of its bottlers."

"In the Colombian case, even though what was happening in the plants was well known internationally, Coca-Cola decided to do nothing."

Sinaltrainal have called on all student groups and others who are protesting against Coca-Cola's policy in Colombia to redouble their efforts, "as we saw in the Guatemala case, the company will not do the right thing unless it is forced by consumers".

The International Labor Rights Fund in the US is also calling on Attorney General John Ashcroft to prosecute Coca-Cola's bottlers in Colombia under a law that makes it a crime to provide material support to terrorists.

Despite close links to the CIA, Colombian paramilitaries have been declared terrorists by the State Department.

Morning Star, Britain's socialist daily. ✪

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The Guardian
get around.

Korean Lullaby

When at last the guns were silent,
In the graves where children lay
The crying passed away,
And the dead had stopped their weeping,
Little children sleeping
While night turned into day.

Then I saw that wheat was golden
On the vast and rolling plain,
And I heard the people singing,
A thousand bells were ringing,
Yet the little children sleeping,
Forgotten of their weeping,
Stirred not, though the wind blew sweetly.

They went to sleep with a lullaby;
Go to sleep, my baby child,
Close your little eyes,
Your eyes so wide and clear and round,
And see no burning gasoline,
The gentle, jellied gasoline
That burns with a flame so pure and serene,
That the scorched bone stands out white and clean,
And hear no sound
Of bursting bombs that fall around,
And tear the flesh and rend the ground,
And hear no sound
Of screaming pain,
From the guts of a man gone half insane,
But close your eyes, my baby child.

And how does it sound in Korean,
The land where we hold a lien
On every inch of blasted soil
And every hour of human toil
And every cup of fresh-wept tears
And every hour of awful fears,
A language expressive, I have no doubt,
Expressive the whisper, symphonic the shout
Of screaming pain
From the guts of a man gone half insane?

Die gently, little children,
And dry your frightened tears,
And have no fears,
You are rescued from oppression,
And the "free world" from depression,
And all the bits of brain and bone,
The wail of pain, the anguished moan,
The stink of burning human flesh,
Lacerations bleeding fresh,
And nothing, you see,
Since they make you free.

When was a lullaby like this composed before
By men who came from a foreign shore,
And when will the memory go away
From the scorched earth where the children lay?

Howard Fast



French workers defend pensions

Hundreds of thousands of workers marched through the streets of Paris on May 25 to denounce the French Government's scheme to "reform" pension rights and take away other hard-won benefits. The plan would force government employees – about 25 percent of all French workers – to work two and a half years more before they get a full pension.

by G Dunkel

The protest march from the Place de la Nation was so huge that it was split into three sections. The last demonstrators did not arrive at the final destination, the Place d'Italie in the southern part of the city, until 10pm.

Unions that organised the march estimated that 600,000 to one million workers turned out, the ranks swelled by many teachers and students. The government is also trying to restructure the education system.

In France the national government organises education.

Tens of thousands of workers marched in other big French cities: Marseille, Avignon, Toulon, Toulouse, Nice and Bordeaux.

On May 13, two million workers had rocked France with a strike that drew its strength mainly from the public sector unions, but with significant contingents from large private companies like Danone, Renault, Thales, Air France, Alstom and Bouygues. They also held dem-

onstrations in 115 French cities, some larger than those held in the same cities in 1995 and even in the political tumult of 1968.

The government party, the Alliance for a Parliamentary Majority (UMP), held a pro-reform rally in Paris on May 25. It drew 1000 people, according to police.

Given the relative size of the two rallies, French political analysts doubt that Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin will call a referendum on the retirement question any time soon. Many workers in France believe that rather than risk a referendum, Raffarin plans to hang tough and ram his reforms through parliament, where the UMP holds a commanding majority.

Raffarin has managed to get two major union confederations, including the Democratic Confederation of French Workers (CFDT), to agree to the changes in the retirement plan. The CFDT, however, faces a major revolt of its local affiliates which endorsed, sponsored and participated in the May 25 march.

In France, workers in the same jobs may choose which union they will join. Thus different unions with different leaderships may represent parts of the same work force. A walkout of the entire work force of an enterprise requires an agreement among all the unions.

If French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Raffarin are seeking a confrontation with the French union movement, they might just get it.

Bernard Thibault, head of the General Confederation of Workers (CGT), asked, "Is our rejection of this plan clear enough?" With 700,000 members, the CGT is a major force, especially among transportation workers.



Last month striking workers rocked France

Marc Blondel, head of the Workers Force (FO) union confederation, has hinted that a general strike might force the government to back down. He avoids using the words themselves,

telling reporters he is for "the amplification of the movement, its generalisation and coordination, for as long as it takes to move the government."

Workers' World ☘

UN deems Morocco Western Sahara's administrative power

In presenting its new peace plan for the Moroccan-occupied territory of Western Sahara, the United Nations for the first time has referred to Morocco as the "administrative power" of the territory. Earlier legal assessments had rejected this term, which implies Morocco may exploit Western Sahara's natural resources.

In his latest report on Western Sahara to the UN Security Council, Secretary-General Kofi Annan on several occasions referred to "the Government of Morocco, as the administrative power in Western Sahara". This is the term used by the Moroccan Government, not by the people of Western Sahara. Also the UN news service presents Morocco as "the territory's administering power" in a statement.

The UN Vice-Secretary General for Legal Affairs, Hans Corell, in a legal assessment made last year found that Morocco is "not considered" to be the administrative power of the area, which implies that Morocco under no circumstance has the right to act on behalf of the people of the territory or to exploit the territory's natural resources.

Western Sahara is officially considered a case of decolonisation by the UN system. This implies that the territory's original population – most of it confined to refugee camps in the Algerian desert since the 1970s – has the right to determine the future of the territory, but also is considered the real owner of its natural resources.

The exiled government of Western Sahara considers itself the legitimate administrative power of the territory, although almost all of it is under Moroccan occupation. Alternatively, Saharawi representative Emhamed Khadad told *afrol News* that the former colonial power Spain should be considered the territory's formal administrative power, as proper decolonisation never took place.

The naming of Morocco as Western Sahara's "administrative power" is highly controversial and an issue of current conflict. The international oil companies Total (former TotalFinaElf) and Kerr-McGee signed contracts with the Rabat regime to explore oil

resources off Western Sahara. The legal basis of these contracts has been disputed due to the former UN assessment that Morocco is not the territory's administrative power. The same applies to fishing rights and the exploitation of phosphates.

The controversial term occurs in the latest of Mr Annan's regular reports on Western Sahara. Here, the UN Secretary-General also presents a new peace plan, representing something of a "compromise", as Mr Annan calls it. The plan calls for Western Sahara to obtain the status of an autonomous Moroccan province during five years and then to hold a referendum on possible independence.

POLISARIO, the liberation movement and legal representative of the Saharawi people, earlier rejected this "new peace plan" due to the fact that the proposed referendum would include a majority of voters of Moroccan origin, introduced to the territory by the occupying power and maintained through large state subsidies.

The "new peace plan" would also for the first time recognise Morocco's claims to the territory, which has been disputed since the colonial power Spain withdrew in 1976.

Information released this year seriously questioned Mr Annan's objectivity in the Saharawi conflict as it was known that he had ordered his Personal Envoy James Baker III to find a solution that would integrate the territory into Morocco five years ago.

Mr Baker, a former US Secretary of State, has personal interests in the US oil industry, which again has an interest in seeing Morocco as the territory's administrative power. It is the same Mr Baker usually edits the UN Secretary-General's reports on Western Sahara. *afrol News* ☘

Anger grows at deaths of 19 immigrants

A Mexican Air Force C-180 cargo plane flew the bodies of 19 immigrant workers back to Mexico last month for burial in many grief-stricken cities and towns. But grief is turning to anger as families of the dead vow to file lawsuits against the Bush administration and Mexico's Fox administration for criminal negligence in the suffocation deaths of the immigrants locked inside a semi-trailer in South Texas on May 14.

by Tim Wheeler

Soon after they were elected, Bush and Fox met and promised a sweeping new immigration policy to avoid such tragedies. But that promise faded as Bush and Ashcroft whipped up anti-immigrant hysteria in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

In Austin, Texas, mourners filled the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church for a prayer vigil honouring the immigrant workers and demanding government action to stop the growing death toll along the more than 5000 kilometre US-Mexico border.

The Reverend Lydia Hernandez, executive director of Manos de Cristo, a Presbyterian social justice group, told the congregation that the victims were workers who "risked all seeking a better life in the US." A father held his five-year-old son up to a crack in the airtight door, she said, urging the child, "Hold on! We're going to make it."

She continued, "The child stopped crying. He died and so did his father. It was well documented that people tried to call for help

from inside the trailer and their pleas were ignored. We must give a litany of thanks that somebody finally did answer their pleas for help."

Reverend Hernandez told the *People's Weekly World* this tragedy is a wake-up call to the nation. "We must answer the pleas of those who suffer extreme poverty every day. The government sets up physical barriers at our borders. They give us duct tape to create a false sense of security. It is all baloney. We must work to create a world of real justice and peace."

Javier Maldonado, executive director of the San Antonio-based Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Texas, told the *People's Weekly World*, "It is awful that they were the victims of government policy. The more they tighten the border, the more these tragedies will occur. It is just undeniable that the death toll is increasing."

He pointed out that under NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), trade and the movement of capital across the border has increased "but there is no liberalisation of the movement of workers across the border. I'm

reluctant to endorse a guest worker program that does nothing to protect the rights of immigrant workers. But something must be done."

Two weeks before the tragedy, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), the Service Employees International Union, and the Laborers International Union rallied in Washington to demand passage of the "Freedom Act", legislation that would give undocumented workers three years of legal status and protection under US labour law.

As taxpayers, they would be eligible for Medicaid, food stamps, and other benefits. Their status would be renewable and could ultimately lead to citizenship. FLOC is seeking congressional sponsors for the legislation.

The border death toll has risen since the Homeland Security Department began enforcing "Operation Liberty Shield". The tightened border security has forced immigrants to cross through remote regions like Arizona's Sonora Desert, where many have died of dehydration and heat stroke. In the year 2001, 95 immigrants died trying to cross into California's Imperial Valley, up from 77 who died in 2000.

During the decade of the '90s, an estimated 4000 undocumented immigrants died crossing the border.

People's Weekly World ☘

Protests & splits mark G8 summit

President Bush's effort to win world support for his unilateral, superpower policies ran into resistance in the Group of 8 (G8) meeting and on the streets outside. The G8 represents the heads of the world's richest capitalist countries

by Susan Webb

Prevented from gathering at the heavily-guarded meeting site in Evian, France, near the Swiss border, tens of thousands protested in nearby French and Swiss cities against war, militarism and "neoliberal" globalisation that "destroys the environment and widens the gap between wealthy and poor". Three days of festival-like protests by participants from throughout Europe and elsewhere included marches, teach-ins, and an alternative "Summit for Another World".

The mass outpouring showed the growing convergence of the world movements for peace and for social justice, said Stasy McDougall of the 50 Years is Enough Network, a US-based global economic justice coalition ("50 years" refers to the decades of inequitable policies imposed on developing countries by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund).

The June 1-3 G8 meeting reflected divisions among the leaders of the major capitalist countries – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the US – over the Bush administration's unilateral war on Iraq, its projection of global dominance and its rejection of multilateral diplomacy.

The BBC's diplomatic correspondent termed the summit "a damage limitation exercise." The Reuters news agency noted, "There was no sign of a meeting of minds either on Iraq or on the shape of the post-war world order".

A new world public opinion poll by the Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press shows the image of the US has plummeted since its Iraq war. The Bush administration, along with Britain's Tony Blair, is on the defensive over the use of fake evidence of weapons of mass destruction to justify attacking Iraq.

The US Congress and British lawmakers are launching official inquiries into what the leading French newspaper *Le Monde* called "the biggest State Lie of recent years". The US occupation of Iraq is enmeshed in one difficulty after

another. American troops are being killed almost daily by hostile fire. Former Iraqi government workers and soldiers are demonstrating for pay and jobs.

Cholera has broken out in Basra. And the US refusal to turn over authority to a democratic, representative Iraqi Government is generating mounting anger among the Iraqi people. This was an unspoken subtext for the G8 summit.

A vague final declaration called for "a fully sovereign, stable and democratic Iraq", but avoided any endorsement of the US invasion. Following publication of the statement, French President Jacques Chirac sharply reaffirmed his opposition to the US attack, telling reporters all military action not endorsed by the international community, in particular by the United Nations Security Council, is "illegitimate and illegal".

Bush put his priority on getting the G8 to endorse his endless war on terrorism. The final declaration called for diplomacy, weapons inspections and "if necessary, other measures" to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction. But it did not endorse pre-emptive war and did not mention Bush's proposal to stop and seize ships or planes "suspected" of carrying parts for such weapons.

Chirac and Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi rejected US claims that the declaration implicitly authorised use of force. "This interpretation, my dear sir, seems to me to be extremely daring", Chirac told a reporter. "There was never any question of using force against anybody, in any quarter." Koizumi said efforts to deal with North Korea's possible nuclear weapons must be peaceful.

Directly challenging Bush's go-it-alone sole-superpower doctrine, Chirac told a news conference he had "no doubt whatsoever that the multi-polar vision of the world that I've discussed many times is supported by a large majority of countries".

After Bush left the meeting to attend talks on the Israel-Palestine crisis, the G8 leaders added a line



Globalisation destroys the environment

in the final declaration expressing determination to implement the Kyoto treaty to reduce global warming. Bush pulled the US out of the treaty, turning his back on the international effort to protect the environment.

Brazil's President Luis Inacio (Lula) da Silva was among 12 leaders of developing countries invited by Chirac to an opening session on global issues. Lula challenged G8/WTO trade policies that provide "billionaire subsidies" at the expense of the Third World.

He called for establishment of a fund to end hunger, financed from developing countries' debt payments, a tax on the international weapons trade, or a "Tobin tax" on international financial transactions.

Anti-corporate-globalisation groups criticised the summit for "watered down rhetoric" that failed to seriously address economic inequality and environmental degradation. Friends of the Earth International called the G8's proposals "another list of business-friendly initiatives aimed at restoring confidence in financial markets".

The G8 should comply with promises previously made to reduce the growing gap between rich and poor nations, McDougall, of 50 Years is Enough, told the *People's Weekly World*. But she pointed out that the G8 members are capitalist countries with corporate interests to protect.

People's Weekly World ☪



Global briefs

KOSOVO: Demonstrating once again that the UN often sees itself as part of the US corporate system, it has decided to put up for sale later this year the Kosovo ferro-nickel complex located at Glogovac about 30 miles from the Kosovo capital Pristina. Kosovo is still legally part of Serbia and Montenegro but is under the control of the United Nations. A Kosovo Trust Agency was set up by the UN administration to sell off some 400 enterprises in Kosovo that had been socially-owned when the government of the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia was in power. Far from revitalising the economy of Kosovo the NATO occupation forces are still maintaining a majority of the people of the province on international aid.

BANGLADESH: Responding to a militant campaign by the trade unions of Bangladesh the Supreme Court has overturned a government decision to allow a US firm to set up two private shipping container terminals at the country's main port city of Chittagong and near the capital city of Dhaka. The US company concerned was the Stevedoring Services of America (SSA). Trade unions had paralysed port activities with a string of protest strikes, held rallies and threatened a national strike. As well as threatening jobs, the trade unions said that the SSA terminal would choke a river channel linking the port to the Bay of Bengal. Furthermore, the SSA terminal would compete with the existing ports operated by the Ministry of Ports and Shipping.

PERU: Trade unions are continuing their vigorous protests against the nationwide 30-day state of emergency proclaimed by Peru's government on May 27. Several demonstrators have been killed and many more injured in attacks by police and soldiers. Teachers have been joined by court workers, health workers, farmers, students and others in protesting against the economic rationalist austerity policies of President Alejandro Toledo, a Stanford University graduate and former World Bank advisor whose approval rating has now sunk to 14 percent. The Peruvian Communist Party has demanded "complete restoration of constitutional guarantees, unrestricted respect for the rights of workers and the people, and opening of dialogue to find solutions to the conflict".

NEW YORK: Leaders of the world's 350 million Indigenous peoples gathered at the UN on May 17 to discuss ways to protect their culture and environment. They demanded that transnational corporations accept legal responsibility for practices that destroy their people's lands and lifestyles. Participants told how oil, gas, lumber and mining projects by the transnationals, and sometimes by national governments, threaten their communities' survival. Indigenous leaders branded a US\$700,000 fund launched by the World Bank "a cruel joke" because many World Bank officials are paid more than that each year. Furthermore, the WB has loaned millions for projects that have destroyed indigenous communities and their environments. They demanded that the World Bank also address the issue of compensation for that devastation.

Students on hunger fast

At 2pm on May 28, students at California's Stanford University began fasting in protest over the University administration's refusal to address the growing labour crisis on Stanford Campus. The fasting students are calling on the administration to create a comprehensive labour policy – a "Code of Conduct" – that would address the issues raised by this crisis.

Students point to administrative misuse of temporary workers as indicative of the crisis. These "temporary" workers are shifted from job to job on campus just as they are about to qualify for full-time benefits and wages. One temporary worker on campus lives with 11 people in a two bedroom apartment, and cannot afford health coverage for his children. Consequently, each time his children get sick they must go to the ER and wait for at least two hours to receive attention.

The students want the university to address this and other labour

issues through a policy that would provide living wages and benefits, the right to organise, and educational opportunities to all workers at Stanford including subcontracted and temporary workers.

Before the fast began, a press conference released a report documenting the abuse of temporary workers on campus. Following the press conference, students, workers, and other community members joined in a rally supporting these workers.

"The University must recognise all members of its community as playing an integral part

of Stanford's success. Workers have been an invisible part of the community too long. As the bay area's largest employer, Stanford cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the needs of its own community, specifically labour practices and the plight of its workers.

"The administration must give its workers the respect and dignity they deserve, starting with the creation of a comprehensive code of conduct that would increase workers' rights and visibility on campus", said student Linda Tran, one of the students fasting.

The students who are fasting come from a wide range of organisations and communities on campus. Other students will demonstrate their solidarity by joining throughout the duration of the fast.

Student Labor Action Project ☪

We urge you to choose peace

Dear President Bush, President Kim Jong-Il, President Hu Jintao, President Putin, Prime Minister Koizumi, Prime Minister John Howard, Secretaries of State and Foreign Ministers,

The undersigned organisations, representing millions of people, are writing to you to urge that a peaceful solution be reached to the problems posed by the possible existence of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula.

We believe strongly that talk of military solutions and "regime change" must be firmly removed from consideration, and a solution arrived at that promotes the well-being and security of all parties on an equal basis, and that contributes to the elimination of tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

It must also be borne in mind that whatever the size and capabilities of the DPRK nuclear arsenal, it in no way remotely compares with the 8-12,000 warheads of the US arsenal, the approximately 22,000 warheads of the Russian arsenal, the roughly 400 warheads held by China and France, the 200-400 held by Israel, the 150-200 held by the UK, nor even with the arsenals held by India and Pakistan.

The DPRK has from at least 1956, faced the threat of US nuclear weapons and up to 100 tactical nuclear warheads were stationed south of the DMZ [demilitarised zone between the north and south] until at least 1991.

The desire of the DPRK to defend itself may be understandable. Nonetheless, a DPRK nuclear capability could lead to the early pursuit of nuclear capabilities by the RoK, Japan and Taiwan, putting the global framework of nuclear non-proliferation in grave jeopardy.

Further nuclear proliferation must be prevented. A return to a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula is not at all an empty dream, but a vital necessity.

However it is the strong belief of the undersigned organisations that attempts to use force, sanctions, threats of sanctions, "regime change", or talk of such measures not only bear no possibility of producing a peaceful and nuclear free Korean Peninsula, but run a real risk of complete catastrophe.

Threats of this kind, as the DPRK itself has repeatedly made clear, will induce the DPRK not only to retain and to augment its nuclear arsenal, but may induce it to actually contemplate its use.

Even a conventional war on the Korean Peninsula, which would almost certainly result from military action, would be catastrophic. Some four million people are said to have died in the 1950-53 Korean War, while up to 10 million people are unable to visit families because of the border.

The existence of a large number of nuclear power plants in the RoK would mean that even a conventional conflict could be catastrophic in its consequences.

The undersigned organisations believe that the only way to solve the proliferation problem is for the US and the other nuclear weapon states to finally make good on their

nuclear disarmament commitments under Article VI of the NPT.

The double standard regarding their ownership must be eliminated along with the weapons themselves. The ownership of nuclear weapons by the US is in itself the most powerful motivator for a DPRK arsenal, whatever its real capabilities. It is vital, not only that the DPRK uphold and not withdraw from the NPT, but that the US abide by its NPT obligations.

The US cannot ask the DPRK to respect the NPT when US plans to develop new nuclear weapons types violate its clear Article VI obligations.

Estimates of DPRK capabilities vary, but it seems reasonable to suggest that if it does not now have at least a rudimentary nuclear arsenal, it soon will have. It is prudent to make the most pessimistic assumptions in assessing the risks of any course of action, and not to assume that DPRK claims are "bluff".

Accordingly, we can only conclude that the risk of nuclear weapons actually being used, is such that military options, or options that could eventually lead to military options, should be decisively removed from consideration and be demonstrably taken off the menu of possibilities.

In this case even the very contemplation of such options creates a very real risk of a "pre-emptive strike".

We absolutely urge the US administration to desist from the contemplation of military options or of any option that might lead to military action.

We urge the US administration to signal to the DPRK by its own actions, that will encourage the

DPRK to enter into real engagement with the RoK, with Japan, with Russia and China, and with the US itself, that will lead to an overall reduction of tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

The DPRK has asked the US for a non-aggression pact. We believe this is a reasonable request that would lead to a genuine reduction of tensions in the peninsula.

We are firmly of the belief that this is not merely a realistic option, but that it is the ONLY realistic option.

If the US is serious about discouraging nuclear proliferation worldwide, the single most vital thing it must do is live up to its own obligations under article VI of the NPT, to accomplish the total and unequivocal elimination of its own vast nuclear arsenal.

There is a clear choice:

On the one hand, peace on the Korean Peninsula.

On the other side, a continued increase in tensions, a continued increase in both conventional and nuclear arsenals, and finally a disastrous resort to military action that risks the use of nuclear weapons against Korean, Japanese, or possibly US, cities.

The choice is clear. We urge you to choose peace.

Signed by a number of international and national organisations.

For list of signatures and to sign on write to nonukes@foesyd.org.au or fax 61-2-9567-7166, and include your name, position, name of your organisation, and non-cyberspace address including country and city.

Little resistance

The Security Council decision lifting the economic blockade of Iraq was intended to serve as an action of international generosity, but in reality and in the context it was made it only legitimised the invasion and occupation of Iraq by USA and UK.

France and Russia, which had effectively kept the United Nations out of the war, now caved in without demur. Of the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council Syria to its credit abstained from voting.

The nine others supported the resolution. It is well known that all of them were cajoled by the US and bought over with promises of economic aid and trade agreements.

(The Chilean ambassador, who offered some resistance to the resolution, was recalled by his government.)

One of the most disappointing features in this sad business was that China, which declares itself a Communist state, helped the US in getting the resolution through.

It is clear now that we cannot expect China to follow in the footsteps of the Soviet Union and systematically thwart the autocratic and imperialist policies of the US in the United Nations.

Vernon Abeysekera
Melbourne, Vic

Got something to say?

Then write it down and send it to us.

Culture & Life

Paranoid in America

In *Bowling For Columbine*, Michael Moore identifies the all pervading paranoia and fear that seems to afflict so many Americans as a major contributor to their sky-high murder rate. Since September 11, the Republican Right and the Bush administration have done everything possible to aggravate that fear and paranoia and turn it to their political advantage.

by Rob Gowland

Police, army and immigration agents – even store security guards – have been outrageously hyped up by patriotic propaganda and dire warnings about the "terrorist threat".

In fact ordinary Americans are finding themselves treated like the enemy in an occupied country. (Mind you, that's how the police in some US cities, notably New York and Los Angeles, have always treated the public.)

A woman trying to fly to New York for a peace rally, and wearing a peace badge, was refused passage on any flight, on the grounds that she might be a terrorist. She not only could not get a flight, but had teenage army guards, there to "protect" the airport, scream abuse in her face. They became near hys-

terical at their inability to make her understand that "this country is at war!".

A man visiting a store with his small son, both wearing Stop the War T-shirts, were ordered to remove their shirts by store security. When the father refused the gung ho security staff called the police who arrested him!

What I like about this particular story is that the next day some 70 people went to the store all wearing anti-war T-shirts and really did create an incident. An act which reminds us that the loopiness and outright insanity that the Bush regime is trying to promote within the US population is not in fact shared by everybody.

This too is reflected in Michael Moore's splendid film, as ordinary Americans take to the streets to protest against the gun nuts of the National Rifle Association. (Moore also shows us the insanity – boy does he show us the insanity, like a bank that gives a loaded gun as a gift to everyone opening an account!)

US civil rights activists are reporting numerous abuses of democratic rights and legalities by police who have enthusiastically embraced the opportunities afforded them by Bush's terrorism ("Homeland Security") laws.

Humiliating the innocent, abusing witnesses, threatening to shoot all and sundry and generally behaving like the Nazi goons they dress to resemble, US police and other "law enforcement agencies" are revelling in the fact that the Bush administration has given them a virtual free hand – as long as they throw in the magic word "terrorists".

Despite the anti-war demonstrators and the anti-gun-nut demonstrators that Moore shows us, what strikes you forcibly about these recent outbreaks of paranoia

in the land of the free (what a joke that is these days, eh?) is the hold it has taken on some members of the US public.

This is hardly surprising. The US ruling class has worked hard and skilfully to develop a culture specifically for working class and lower middle class people, a culture that avoids reality while appearing to embrace it.

Their prime tool is the mass media, which the ruling class endeavours to own or at least control. Shows about sport and show business personalities are presented as though these were really important; *Jerry Springer* and *Big Brother* are promoted instead of investigative journalism or genuine documentary.

Fed a diet of programs that reinforce in various ways the basic concept that the world is dangerous and irrational, it is small wonder that so many Americans accept the right wing's line and look for terrorists behind every incident, no matter how small.

In the latest incident, a Canadian woman, Deborah Wolfe, flying back to Vancouver from Florida by way of Houston on Continental Airlines, offended a male US passenger by changing her four-month-old baby's nappy and breast feeding the infant in her seat.

She reported subsequently that the man got out of his seat, walked over to hers and stood staring at her. Afterwards she approached him and twice asked if he had a problem with her feeding her son.

"He marched past me and to the very back of the cabin to talk to the flight attendant. He told her, 'This woman just assaulted me'."

"He then explained that the asking of two questions by a 'foreign national' in international airspace made him feel the victim of terror and as such he wanted to file an assault charge."



Ms Wolfe reported that the US flight attendants then began to call her and her Canadian travelling party "foreign nationals in international airspace on an international flight during a time of war".

The cabin crew threatened to

lodge a Level 3 crew complaint against her which meant possible mandatory detainment by US authorities for 24 hours, police involvement and criminal charges for an act of war upon an American! Paranoia? You bet! ☛

Rob Gowland
previews

ABC & SBS public television programs

Sun June 15 ~
~ Sat June 21

The quartet of young Cambridge undergraduates, Philby, Burgess, MacLean and Blunt, who took the threat of fascism and war in the 1930s so seriously that they first became Communists then Soviet Intelligence agents, were heroes that the British ruling class has been trying to live down ever since.

It is not just that Blunt rose to become Keeper of the Royal Pictures or that Philby became head of British counter-intelligence. It's the fact that they betrayed their class, the fact that they threw in their lot with the world's workers totally and completely, without reserve and without concern for their personal lives.

That is what the British ruling class cannot forgive. And they have over the years sought to besmirch the reputations of these courageous men in every subtle way they can.

Now we have a clever four-part dramatisation of their lives, *Cambridge Spies* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays). I say clever, because it is sufficiently close to the truth to make it hard to catch the snide propaganda. But it is there, all the time.

Two programs this week deal with the same stage in the pre-history of the human race. *Exodus*, this week's final episode of *Ape Man: Adventures In Human Evolution* (ABC 11.40pm Sunday), explains why early African beach-dwellers left their homeland to colonise other continents.

It will be interesting to compare its take on this question with *Savage Family*, this week's episode of *Walking With Cavemen* on *Catalyst* (ABC 8.00pm Thursdays).

The episode deals with Homo ergaster, who flourished in southern Africa one and a half million years

ago. Ergaster were the first ape-men to have our complex understanding of the natural world, and to use their big brains for understanding other people.

Their new found social bonds and understanding of the world equipped them with skills that enabled them to move away from their ancestral home in Africa. Over thousands of years they spread throughout the Middle East and Asia, reaching as far as China and are now known in their Asian home as Homo erectus.

But for all their sophistication, in a million years they made no technological advances.

Mutual Assured Destruction, the concept of being able to deliver a retaliatory strike that would destroy a nuclear aggressor, may have been cold comfort to the world's people but it did keep the war hawks in the Pentagon in check, albeit reluctantly.

Known appropriately by its acronym MAD, the strategy encouraged the development of overwhelming arsenals. It also encouraged the Pentagon to look for a way to neutralise that all important counter strike.

And thus was born the "nuclear missile shield", the "roof over America" concept that would keep the incoming missiles at bay and allow the US to fire at will without fear of reprisals.

Over the past 50 years, the US has poured more than US\$150 billion into the quest for a defence against enemy missiles, as SBS puts it, "the ultimate circling of the covered wagons to protect the people from marauding outsiders".

Or, as the documentary *Star Wars*, screening in the *As It Happened* slot (SBS 7.30pm Saturday), puts it: "The beliefs that lie behind both the War on Terror and the obsession with Star Wars, the vision of America's exceptional role in the world, are rooted in religious ideas conceived more than 150 years ago in an age of pioneers and covered wagons ... a belief that the US has been covenanted by God to secure a better world".

Although these ideas may not lie behind Star Wars or the so-called War on Terror, they are assuredly



Philby (Taby Stephens) and Maclean (Rupert Penry-Jones) in *Cambridge Spies*

used to drive those policies forward. "There is a strong ideological commitment to missile defence", says Joe Cirincione of the Carnegie Peace Foundation.

"It would be a mistake to look at this program and think that it is being driven by a mounting threat or great advances in technology. It is politics that drives it forward and always has been."

Ronald Reagan, in his Star Wars speech, spoke of a "spiritual revival" and a "moral renewal". Now President Bush declares the deployment of a missile defence is a "moral imperative".

Reagan based his obsession with Star Wars on the movies. Even Gorbachev admitted that Reagan "sometimes described movie scenes as if they had happened in real life".

In the 1940s spy film *Murder in the Air*, Reagan played an America secret agent charged with destroying enemy planes in the air. In Hitchcock's risible cold-war thriller *Torn Curtain*, a US agent played by Paul Newman declares, "We will produce a defensive weapon that will make all nuclear weapons

obsolete, and thereby abolish the terror of nuclear warfare".

In the 1930s Dick Powell was the cheery, light-voiced crooner who sparked Ruby Keeler or Joan Blondell in a string of Warners musicals. But Powell apparently hated these lightweight efforts and when his Warners contract ran out in 1939 he struck out in search of better roles.

He did not really find his forte however until 1944, when he persuaded RKO to cast him as Raymond Chandler's popular private eye Philip Marlowe in an adaptation of Chandler's *Farewell My Lovely*.

The influence of *film noir* was about to be added to the movie detective thriller to produce a more cynical, world-weary and worldly-wise shamus. Within 18 months or so, two other studios would also produce Philip Marlowe movies: *The Big Sleep* with Bogart at Warners and *The High Window* (*The Brasher Dubloon*) with George Montgomery at Fox.

Notwithstanding the undoubted attractions of Bogart's performance under Howard Hawks' direction as Marlowe, it was Powell's more vulnerable interpretation under Edward Dmytryk's direction that Chandler himself preferred.

Farewell My Lovely had already been filmed (without Marlowe!) as one of RKO's *Falcon* series (*The Falcon Takes Over* 1942), so they released the new film as *Murder My Sweet* (ABC 10:25pm Saturday).

Its seedy atmosphere, atmospheric photography and especially its Chandlerish narration were just right (when Marlowe is coshed Powell's voice relates, more in sorrow than in anger: "A black pool opened at my feet. I dived in. There was no bottom.").

The story has Marlowe hired by ex-con Moose Malloy (an excellent Mike Mazurki) to find his old girl friend. In the original book the bar where she used to work has become a negro bar, allowing Chandler to demonstrate the racial prejudices of Moose and the cops who are called to deal with the trouble he causes the patrons.

In the film, all references to persons or matters of colour are gone. There's also a love affair for Marlowe that's not in the book, but hey, this is Hollywood in its heyday, when fidelity to the book was the least of Tinseltown's concerns.

Personally, I think this is one of the best private eye movies ever. And Powell is quite simply splendid. ☺

Sydney
Exhibition: Isle of Refuge
Highlights the plight of asylum seekers in detention centres in Australia and the South Pacific.
Ivan Dougherty Gallery
12 June - 19 July
Artists: Gordon Bennett, George Gittoes, Tim Johnson, Karma Phuntsok, Chris O'Doherty aka Reg Mombassa, Sue Saxon, Anne Zahalka, Laurens Tan, My Le Thi, Albertina Viegas, Savanhary Vongpoothorn, Guan Wei, Mahmoud Yekta
Opening by David Bitel, President, Refugee Council of Australia:
Thursday 12th June 5.30-7.30pm
Exhibition Talk: Thursday 12th June 1.00pm

Melbourne
St Kilda Historical Society Saving Port Phillip from the Developers
Leading community activists discuss the history of successful campaigns to preserve heritage sites.
Sunday 15 June 3 pm
St Kilda Library Community Room
150 Carlisle St St Kilda
For more info contact: Myer Eidelson
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Surry Hills NSW 2010
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65 Campbell St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Printed by Spotpress
105-107 Victoria Rd
Marrickville 2204
Responsibility for electoral comment is taken by T Pearson,
65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, 2010

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David Thompson, Chief Exec Officer Jobs Australia, Chair National Employment Services Association;
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A people's budget

Forget for a moment the Federal Costello/Howard Budget and imagine a budget that puts the health and educational needs of people before those of big business, a budget which redirected the Australian economy to job creation, to environmentally sustainable development and to world peace. What would such a budget look like? Where would the funding come from? Who could deliver such a budget? Is it possible?

by Anna Pha

The main thrust of the Howard Government's budget is the government's withdrawal from its responsibilities for the well-being of society and away from the provision of basic services. It shifts its emphasis from public to private and from centrally funded services to self-provision and user pays. It continues the ongoing process of transferring wealth from working people and small business to the powerful transnational corporations and the rich.

It does so through such mechanisms as privatisation, deregulation, tax cuts for the rich, huge hand-outs to the private sector, the introduction of fees for previously free services, cuts to social welfare, massive amounts of military spending, all backed by anti-democratic measures to repress opposition to its unpopular policies.

Privatisation and contracting out have resulted in rail tracks, roads, water plants, airports, ports, telecommunications and other important public infrastructure being handed over to the private sector for their profit.

Cost-cutting, short-cuts and shear neglect by the private operators have already begun to take their toll. In 20, 30 or 40 years those operators will have taken their profits and run, with no responsibility for the mess they leave behind.

A people's budget would reverse these policy directions, put money into ordinary people's pockets, rebuild and strengthen the public sector, address the many social issues, create jobs and protect the environment.

Defend and extend the public sector

Such a budget would commence the return to full public ownership of public services and enterprises, including transport, health, education, social welfare, telecommunications, banking, insurance, water and electricity, and other key industries and public services.

The question of government planning and the public sector is central to any budget that is going to tackle economic development and job creation.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) calls for the adoption of such a budget together with a national investment policy with

controls over foreign investment and capital flows in and out of the country.

Education

Education is a basic right. Free, secular and universal education from elementary school to university should be provided.

HECS and HECS debts would be abolished and replaced by free university studies, with entry based on merit and not ability to pay.

Public money should be used to improve resources, increase teacher numbers, ensure adequate salary increases, and ending contract employment and the exploitation of casuals.

State funding to private schools and colleges should be phased out. Funding would be provided to create the additional student places and staffing that are urgently needed in TAFE.

No public education institution would be required to rely on corporate funding.

Health

Medicare is another priority. Medicare should be fully funded through the taxation system, with dental services included. Bulk-billing should be universally available by increasing the rebate to doctors so that all people have access to the same high quality services according to need and not ability to pay.

The public hospital system should also be centrally funded from tax revenues and available on the basis of need. Health is a government responsibility.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme would be fully restored, with the cost of scripts reduced and essential medications put back on the list.

Housing

One of the main drains on household income is the high cost of housing. A People's Budget would give priority to increasing government funding for public housing to provide housing for cheap rental and for purchase.

Governments should use their powers to establish rent controls.

It is a disgrace that in such a resource rich country so many people are homeless and driven into poverty by the high cost of market-driven private housing prices and high rents.



Jobs & incomes

Legislation would be passed to introduce a 35-hour working week without loss of pay, with a view to eventually reducing the working week to 32 hours. Such a measure would improve the quality of life and the health of workers and create more jobs.

Legislation is required to end the use of casual and part-time labour. The provision of full-time work for all who need it would be a priority of a people's budget.

Social security payments should be increased to bring all recipients to not less than 35 per cent of the full-time average male wage.

"Mutual obligation" and the stringent testing and harassing of recipients should end; the government should concentrate its energy and resources on job creation and genuine support for the unemployed.

Legislation to ensure that the superannuation and other entitlements of workers will be set aside by employers and guaranteed to workers on retirement or on becoming redundant. At present thousands of workers are seeing their future incomes go up in smoke as companies crash and wealthy employers cheat them out of their legal entitlements.

A publicly administered pension fund would guarantee the security of workers' retirement income.

Funding the people's budget

Where would the money come from?

There are a number of sources. By simply reversing the Government's previous corporate tax cuts and restoring the rate to 36 cents in the dollar, the government

would have another \$3 billion or more at its disposal.

Abandoning the Howard Government's present tax cuts which mainly benefit the wealthy (only a \$4 cut for the average worker) would free up an estimated \$10.7 billion over four years.

If negative gearing were abolished it would add \$2 billion to the public purse, and if tax-avoiding trusts were treated the same way as business entities (as previously promised by the government), then there would be \$700 million more for public infrastructure and higher social security payments.

In the health area, close to \$4 billion a year could be retrieved for the public sector by abolishing the 30 percent private health insurance rebate and other related revenue forgone or spent on government promotion of private health insurance.

The many families who have been panicked into private health insurance would save \$2000 a year or more as they dropped the insurance and returned to a public hospital system free of waiting lists and nursing shortages.

If the government just halved the planned \$16 billion handout to private schools over the next four years that would give a considerable boost to public education.

With adequate funding teacher shortages, school closures and other present difficulties could be overcome and many more parents would confidently turn to the state system, which is what the overwhelming majority prefer.

Many billions more dollars could be raised from the profits of public enterprises over future years if the government were to re-nationalise the Commonwealth Bank and other privatised services and restore Telstra to full public ownership.

The \$14 billion plus expenditure next year and even more in the years to come on military and the "war against terrorism" is obscene.

Think of all the childcare places, migrant English classes, sports and arts grants, community work and other social and cultural needs that even 10 per cent of this could provide.

It would go towards restoring our environment, funding desalination and re-forestation programs,

developing alternative energy sources and research into sustainable development.

If all of these measures did not raise adequate funds for a People's Budget, then there is always the possibility of running a deficit. There is nothing wrong with borrowing, as long as care is taken not to over-stretch the limits of what is necessary to service and repay borrowings.

With an expansionary budget that put hundreds of thousands more in work, the savings on social security along with the additional taxation revenue from those in work, would very soon see the budget back in the black.

A new type of government

The above policies are realistic. It is what people want, need and expect from governments – and there is enough money.

The question is what sort of government would be prepared to introduce them. Liberal? Labor? Hardly likely! Their track record over many years and many governments show that they do not have the policies or the will to adopt such a course. They have always given priority to the needs of the big end of town.

But what if Australia had a government of a new type, truly representing the interests of the people – a People's Government?

A government that encourages the participation of people in their own government by creating community and neighbourhood committees.

Such a government would be made up of the candidates of the left and progressive political parties, representatives of the trade unions, environmental, women's, youth, peace, education and other community organisations.

The CPA is proposing just such a government to bring a new direction in Canberra.

Copies of this proposal – A People's Government for a New Direction in Canberra – are available for \$2 (plus \$1 pp) from 65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 or cpa@cpa.org.au or on the CPA website www.cpa.org.au

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