

Join the campaign to SAVE MEDICARE

A vigorous campaign in defence of Medicare is developing across the nation as new figures indicate that, at current rates of decline, bulk-billing will entirely die out in less than 14 years. The proportion of doctors bulk-billing has dropped from nearly 80 per cent in 1996 to 70.4 per cent at the end of the September quarter last year, and that's according to the Government's own figures!

by Bob Briton

A Senate Select Committee is currently examining the Federal Government's "rescue package" for Australia's ailing health system. Labelled "Fairer Medicare", the plan was announced by Health Minister Kay Patterson in April and set in train by the Federal Budget in May. It is a response to alarm in the community at the rapidly declining number of GPs that bulk-bill their patients.

Prime Minister Howard and his Health Minister initially denied that any problem existed with bulk-billing rates.

However, according to the Health Department's own figures, centres such as Ballarat, in Victoria, have seen a dip of nine per cent in just three months. In some centres no doctors bulk bill their patients.

Rather than go to the core of the problem – which remains the inadequacy of the rebate paid to doctors by the Commonwealth under the Medicare arrangements – the Government chose instead to advance its pro-private health agenda. Doctors will continue (with a few exceptions) to receive a \$25 rebate when they bulk bill a standard consultation, a consultation valued by a Government inquiry at closer to \$50.

While making much of some uselessly small financial incentives for doctors to maintain bulk-billing – ranging from \$1 to \$5.95 according to geographical and other factors – the Government quietly set about advancing a two-tier health system.

Under the proposed legislation, Health Care Card holders would be the only patients who could be bulk-billed. These patients can expect "back of the queue" treatment.

Currently, holders of these cards must earn less than \$17,000 as individuals or \$32,000 for families. Incomes just \$1 over those paltry

thresholds put low income earners in the same high cost bracket as millionaires.

Co-payments

The restraint on doctors' fees built into the Medicare system would be jettisoned. GPs would be free to charge patients a co-payment above what they could recover from Medicare. Providers of other services – such as pathology – are already talking about charging co-payments.

Private health insurance monopolies – already favoured by the Lifetime Health Cover and the Private Health Insurance Rebate (PHIR) policies of the Federal Government – are waiting in the wings to offer insurance for the "gap" between the \$25 Medicare payment and what the health practitioner chooses to charge.

Readers of *The Guardian* would already know that such changes would spell the end of Medicare as universal access to free medical care, a hard-won democratic right. This awareness is growing in the community and giving rise to a movement in opposition to plans that would effectively scrap Medicare.

Of course, the opposition political parties have taken up their various positions. Labor proposes to reverse the devaluing of the rebate paid to GPs, but over time and starting in areas where bulk-billing rates have been worst affected. The ALP, for its own closely shielded reasons, would not scrap the Private Health Insurance Rebate (PHIR) – valued at a whopping \$2.3 billion – but would probably ditch the 30 per cent rebate on "ancillary items" (Physio, dental, naturopath etc).

The \$640 million saved would then be used to provide Commonwealth funding of dental services and the like. It remains to be seen if the new Shadow



Health Minister, Julia Gillard, will strengthen or water down these undertakings.

The Greens would expand services across the board by scrapping the PHIR. The Democrats might come to some compromise with the Government on the "gap" that GPs and other providers could charge over and above the standard Medicare figure. Senator Meg Lees of the recently formed Australian Progressive Alliance is also reported to be willing to negotiate.

Unfortunately for the compromisers, the Government is not interested in compromise, as a memo from the first assistant secretary of the Health Department's Primary Care Division instructing bureaucrats to avoid the use of the term "bulk-billing", demonstrates. Such is the depth of this Government's "reforming" zeal! The Government's reaction to findings of the Senate Inquiry (due in August) will underline this fact.

Community campaign

In the community, a number of groups have sprung up in defence of Medicare. While a range of organisations, like the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, have come out on their own in strong defence of universal access to free health care,

others have pooled their resources to launch very active campaigns.

The Save Medicare Alliance in NSW has staged rallies, hosted public forums, collected signatures to a petition and is leafleting Federal electorates on the issue. Put yourself in touch by contacting MedicareAction@hotmail.com.

There is also a National Medicare Alliance, which is a coalition of peak community and health groups including ACOSS, the Australian Consumers Association, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Health Issues Centre, the Australian Nursing Federation and the Doctors Reform Society.

For its part, the trade union movement has devoted considerable time and effort to the campaign to save Medicare. The ACTU has launched a specific campaign on the issue and hosted a national meeting in Melbourne attended by opposition politicians and the many health, welfare, church and other groups concerned at the proposed changes.

As it turns out, however, it is the union movement that is the source of the most worrying notions held by some members of the popular movement growing around the defence of Medicare.

Some union spokespersons have pointed out that sharply increased health costs will have to be factored in to wage claims in future. This is

logical and reasonable. Even under current arrangements, health costs have increased by 7.2 per cent to March this year. This is the biggest increase of any CPI group including food, which at least has a drought to explain part of its price hike.

The Australian Nursing Federation's Victoria Gilmore correctly explains the future shock that is contained in the "Fairer Medicare" package:

"Working Australians on low to medium incomes will be hit very hard by this package. They will be asked to pay just as much as the wealthy but will not be able to afford the private health insurance cover for the co-payments. Wage rises will be quickly eroded by rocketing health costs."

Others, including the NSW Labor Council, draw other conclusions from developments, warning that, if the Federal Government goes ahead with its proposed "reforms", the union movement will have to accommodate the changes with "significantly higher" minimum wage increases to protect lower paid workers.

"Universal health care is an integral part of the social wage and was something workers invested in by trading off wage rises during the Accord years", said a Labor Council statement on *Workers Online*.

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Things to come

The new Governor General, Michael Jeffery, is already making his conservative and militarist views known even before he has formally assumed the office. He has taken the Chief of Defence Forces, General Cosgrove, to task for expressing his opinion that the Vietnam War was a mistake. The new G-G declares that the Vietnam War was not only a strategic and moral necessity, but a military victory as well.

Michael Jeffery was a commander of Australian troops in Vietnam and seems to have been impressed by the shooting of a Vietnamese soldier by a unit under his command. The Vietnamese soldier was in his own homeland, defending it against the invading US and Australian armed forces. The US and Australia were the aggressors. The Vietnamese soldier was not trespassing on Australian soil or killing Australian citizens, nor did the Vietnamese Government have any such thoughts or intentions.

Yet the G-G elect has the audacity to talk of "morality" and to parade his "Christian" views. It is appropriate to recall the tons of Agent Orange sprayed over Vietnamese forests, villages and farms by the "civilised" Americans and their Australian allies. Agent Orange is still poisoning the Vietnamese countryside and killing Vietnamese citizens and deforming countless children being born today. Morality! Christian?

The Vietnamese soldier and the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese civilians killed in the war also had mothers and fathers, wives and children but it seems that to Michael Jeffery and Paul Sheehan (a *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist who echoes Jeffery's thoughts (*SMH* June 28-29 and again on June30)), they are merely nameless and faceless Vietcong – the enemy.

Perhaps the most outlandish claim is that the Vietnam War was a military victory. Do you remember those final scenes in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) as the remaining US troops and diplomatic staff madly scrambled to get on to the fleeing US helicopters.

In justification of this claim, Paul Sheehan quotes a book titled *Unheralded Victory* by Mark Woodruff. He claims that "the US military campaign defeated the Vietcong and decimated the North Vietnamese army, but lost the propaganda war".

Paul Sheehan claims that the Vietnamese Army was "a spent force". He draws comfort from the fact that, "The war also exhausted the Vietnamese communists for a generation". He claims that Vietnam has become "a political, military and economic backwater". Sheehan claims that "In the broader sweep of history, the US crushed Vietnam as a regional power".

The fact that Vietnam had been a French colony before the US invasion is, of course, not mentioned. Vietnam had been savagely exploited by French colonialism and that was the reason for the long and courageous struggle of the Vietnamese people for independence – from the French and then the Americans and Australians. Their independence struggle was led by communists.

The new G-G is also on a crusade to bring "spirituality" back into society. He believes that "The deletion of religious studies from the curriculum denied young people the opportunity to study the philosophies behind the great religions or to see themselves as potential spiritual beings".

The reality is that the rapid developments in all branches of science have made a belief in a god more and more irrelevant and demonstrable nonsense. This is a process that will continue irrespective of the attempts of Michael Jeffery and others to turn the clock back.

Did Jeffery's God tell him to kill the Vietnamese soldier in cold blood? In similar vein George Bush is reported to have recently told the new Palestinian Prime Minister that "God told me to strike at al Qaida and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did..."

In a grim warning of things to come the new G-G believes Australia will have "redefined our primary area of [foreign policy] focus to an arc encompassing India and China" in the future.

John Howard will have a staunch ally as he crusades not only to re-establish colonialism in the island states of Oceania but to then go on to re-establish western imperial domination over the two most populous nations in the world.

Paul Sheehan comments on this perspective, "This Governor-General may go on the front foot and fly the flag in places he thinks the flag of Australian interest has not been flown enough". Interesting times ahead!

PRESS FUND

This week comrades in South Australia are celebrating veteran communist Laurie Kiek's 85th birthday. Congratulations Laurie! *The Guardian* is also celebrating, in more ways than one. We wish Laurie a Happy Birthday and many years of good health and struggle. We also thank all those who celebrate his birthday with a contribution to the Press Fund. What better present could you give someone than supporting the workers' weekly! Our sincere thanks go to all who have contributed this week:

Laurie's 85th birthday (B & FG) \$30,

\$50 given by comrades on the occasion of Laurie Kiek's 85th birthday,

Bert Appleton \$40, Anne Junor \$12, D McL \$4, LM 50c, H North \$55,

"Round Figure" \$9.50, June Ayres \$10, DD \$50.

This week's total: \$261. Progressive total: \$6056.

Rokke condemns depleted uranium

Ex-US Major, Doug Rokke, a former head of the Pentagon's Depleted Uranium project, condemned the use of depleted uranium (DU) at a public meeting organised by the Anti-Nuclear Alliance at Fremantle, WA, last week.

by Vic Williams

The meeting, at Fremantle Town Hall, was chaired by MP Carmen Lawrence. Rokke outlined his experience with DU. He pointed out that the purpose of war is to destroy and kill and for this armies wanted the most advanced weapons.

Armoured tanks are the most decisive weapons for land fighting and the US has found projectiles of DU are the hardest and most effective weapons for penetrating armour. They have thus found a use for U238, which is the 99 per cent waste left when U235 is extracted for the production of nuclear weapons.

When a DU shell hits a tank 40 per cent of the DU is spread as dust and the remainder scatters as radioactive particles, fine enough to go through a gas mask. It can incapacitate and kill and also contaminates water supplies.

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Doug Rokke made many reports condemning DU to the US military. He quoted the US Deputy Surgeon who in 1943 said that there was no way people could be protected from uranium.

In 1991 in a memorandum Rokke opposed the use of DU but was told it had valued combat capabilities and that they would sustain its use no matter what.

In 1991 he was also given the job of cleaning up the DU mess left by the US in Iraq. To do this he was given a crew but no budget and no assistance.

They buried the tanks and other vehicles destroyed by DU shells, and collected and buried the scattered pieces of shells. He asked, "How do you bury Iraq in a hole?"

Doctors and nurses didn't know how to deal with the problem. The army doctors considered there was no compelling evidence of danger. DU shrapnel was left in soldiers to test for its effect.

In 1999 Rokke was called up for a medical program and examined. He was given a 40 per cent combat disability.

DU was used in Bosnia in 1993-94, and in Okinawa in 1995-96, but the residents of Okinawa were not told for a year, and it was used again in even greater amounts in Iraq in 2003.

Rokke welcomed the actions of peoples and governments which had forced the closure of bombing and firing ranges. He warned Australians of the current bombing and shelling in the Lancelin range.

"I have saved lives and tried to save lives", he said. "War is obsolete and peace must reign. Each of us should plant the seeds of peace." ✪

Sydney District Conference (June 19, 2003) Resolution in support of Cuba

Since the accession to power in the White House of George W Bush, the US has escalated its hostility and preparations for war against the socialist island of Cuba.

In addition to the continuing US trade embargo and US economic reprisals against other countries that dare to trade with Cuba, the US has launched a series of hostile acts. The US has abrogated the US-Cuban Agreement under which entry visas are granted to Cubans wishing to emigrate.

Proven terrorists responsible for the indiscriminate killing of Cuban civilians have been freed from US prisons or welcomed into the US after US agents secured their release from third countries.

Bush's appointee as head of the US Special Interests Section in Havana is James Cason, a man with a long history of subversion against Latin American governments. Cason's staff have been blatantly flouting normal diplomatic behaviour, providing cash to anti-government groups in Cuba and helping them to plan and carry

out acts intended to destabilise the government of Cuba and thwart its efforts to improve the life of the Cuban people.

Cason himself has been photographed engaging in acts of subversion in Cuba.

At the same time, a wave of hijackings of planes and ferries was initiated. Contrary to all international norms, and to the United States' own previous policies, the Bush administration has freed the hijackers, imprisoned the hijacked travellers and impounded and sold the hijacked planes.

The US has clearly embarked on a campaign to "soften up" world public opinion to accept some form of US military intervention against Cuba with the intention of replacing the existing government and social system chosen by the Cuban people with a government and system amenable to US interests.

Aware of the danger, the Cuban Government took decisive action to stop the hijackings and to defend Cuba's sovereignty. Thwarted in their aggressive schemes by the summary execution of a number of convicted hijackers in Cuba, the Bush administration has launched instead a campaign of "disinformation" (deliberate misinformation) about the executions as "breaches of human rights".

This Sydney District Conference of the Communist Party of Australia declares its support for the actions of the Cuban Government to defend their sovereignty and independence, to nip aggression in the bud and to defend their socialist homeland.

The Conference condemns the hostile acts against Cuba undertaken by the USA and demands that the United States Government lift all restrictions on trade and travel between Cuba and the USA currently imposed by the Torricelli Act and other US legislation. ✪



Lunch for Cuba

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Asylum seekers forcibly sent to Christmas Island

An asylum seeker boat with its passengers and crew of 28 men, 17 women and nine children, was forcibly transferred to Christmas Island last week by the Australian Navy. The vessel was within sight of the Australian mainland off Port Headland.

by Peter Mac

The Howard Government formerly excised Christmas Island from Australia's immigration zone as a legal dodge (not exactly within international law) to get out of its humanitarian responsibilities for asylum seekers. Refugees arriving there are denied legal rights that are available to people arriving on the

Australian mainland, particularly the right to appeal against adverse decisions for refugee status by immigration authorities.

The Navy's action in taking the refugees almost 2000 kilometres off shore, when they were in sight of the mainland, has highlighted the cruelty and wastefulness of this policy.



Howard Government report says: "Let the elderly pay"

The Productivity Commission's submission to the Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care identified serious deficiencies in the provision of health care services. They include inconsistencies in funding and delivery, inequities in fees for high and low level residential care, regulatory obstacles, concerns about the financial sustainability of aged care, and limited access to high-level care and to care in rural areas.

by Peter Mac

Rather than advocating improvements in the current system of government subsidies for aged care, the report presents a range of options, most of which place the burden of funding aged care on the aged themselves, and their families.

The Federal Government is sure to welcome the recommendations in the Productivity Commission's submission.

The report advocates that serious consideration be given to removing the current bar on health insurance funds offering voluntary residential care insurance. This would open the doors to the private health insurance funds, which would be almost certain to "raise the bar" with regard to premiums for the elderly, especially those who do not at the moment have health cover.

It also suggested that users (patients) should bear more of the cost of some residential aged-care services, including accommodation and other components, on the grounds of "equity". This implies that tax revenues should not have to shoulder the burden of funding aged care services since those requiring such services (26 percent of those over age 85) are a minority of the population!

This flies in the face of the humanitarian view that the aged are a "national treasure", and that caring for them is a national responsibility.

The report noted that the responsibility for caring for the aged is largely borne by "informal carers" such as friends and relatives. However, the report offers little comfort to them. Rather than recommending that the often-crippling burden of care be assumed by the government, it notes that fully subsidised residential care would discourage the aged from relying on

these "informal, family and community" carers, and would "add to existing disparities in the funding of these different forms of care".

The report seems to advocate that people should simply save over their lifetime to cover the costs of aged care in their twilight years. As one commentator put it, with regard to the report: "A subsidy for personal care could lessen the incentive for individuals to make provision for aged care costs..."

Minimum level

The report advocates that government subsidies should be provided only for a minimum level of care, with the patient paying for anything over this level. It also suggested that consideration be given to "entitlement" payments to patients, as an alternative to the current system of subsidies for aged care providers (i.e. nursing homes and hostels).

This is perhaps the most serious recommendation in the entire report. Its implementation would allow the government to gradually wind back its contribution and transfer ever more of the financial burden to the patient. It would, in effect, return the system of aged care for the average person back to the Victorian era.

The Howard Government's last foray into radical change for aged care was its disastrous proposal for the aged to sell their homes as a condition for moving into aged care. That proposal was dropped after the aged rose in righteous indignation, and some of their members verbally savaged the Federal Minister for the Aged at a televised public meeting.

The Government has not yet announced its response to the current report, but given their attitude to date it seems most likely that it will welcome its recommendations with open arms ☺

The Executive Director of the Refugee Council of Australia, Margaret Piper, commented: "Here we have people who could almost wade ashore to an established processing centre, being taken at taxpayers' expense thousands of kilometres to get them outside Australia's migration zone."

Questions were immediately raised about the legality of the Government's actions since the boat was well within the migration zone. Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock has now reluctantly acknowledged the refugees as "onshore" arrivals, and will process them accordingly.

He nevertheless hastened to justify the decision to remove the refugees by alluding to a revival of people-smuggling, declaring: "We are sending them to Christmas Island to make it abundantly clear that people are not reaching the Australian mainland".

He was contradicted by one senior immigration official, who demonised the refugees as "opportunists who make these arrangements themselves."

The situation is complicated for the Howard Government by the fact that one of the refugees is reported to be an Australian citizen.

The Government has also been severely embarrassed by revelations of a major contribution to

Ruddock's re-election fund by convicted Philippines criminal Dante Tan, who was subsequently granted citizenship. The scandal has raised allegations that some would-be immigrants have paid for the privilege of citizenship in this way.

The issue has particular implications for the processing of applications for visas by people claiming to be seeking asylum from persecution in their country of origin. Decisions on such applications are made by the Refugee Review Tribunal, but the Minister for Immigration has the ultimate power to overturn Tribunal decisions.

A former member of the Tribunal has revealed that it has traditionally worked in a mechanistic rather than humanitarian way, with an unofficial "upper limit" of 20 percent of applicants to be granted refugee status.

The result of this approach has been tragically illustrated by the case of two young Iranian seamen, who were involved in the opposition to the Iranian Government. They applied for visas as asylum seekers but were rejected by the Tribunal. They were then forcibly returned to Iran, where they immediately disappeared. They never managed to make contact with friends or relatives, who now believe them to have been executed by the government.

According to Mary Crock, lecturer in law at Sydney University, the implementation of the immigration legislation has become even more "rule-oriented", with the result that the decision-making power has shifted increasingly from the Tribunal to the Minister's office.

Ms Crock said: "The focus of so much power in one person inevitably creates problems of perception and leaves the system vulnerable to manipulation."

Research at the Australian National University into the Howard Government's immigration record has revealed that most applications for refugee visas are made by people from Iraq and Afghanistan, but that these countries do not make the "top 18" countries of origin in terms of successful applicants.

On the other hand, the disproportionately high number of successful visa applications supported by Sydney businessman Karim Kirsani, a close friend of the Minister, has aroused suspicions that visa favours are being made at Ministerial discretion.

Greens leader Bob Brown commented bitterly: "Millionaires and businessmen can queue-jump to enter Australia as 'skilled' migrants. It's one law for the rich and another for the poor." ☺

Bookshelf

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Victory for Morris McMahon workers

After 15 weeks on the picket, Morris McMahon workers at Arncliffe in Sydney have returned to their jobs, thanking the union movement for "crucial support" and singling out embattled Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) National Secretary John Sutton for special mention.

Representatives of Morris McMahon workers – members of the Australian Manufacturers Workers' Union (AMWU) – addressed the NSW Labor Council after winning their battle for a collective agreement.

AMWU State Secretary Paul Bastian said the dispute centred around issues fundamental to Australian workers: the right to belong to a trade union, the right to have a union bargain on their behalf and the right to a decent wage.

Morris McMahon management had used the Howard Government's anti-union legislation to try to impose individual contracts on its workers, who with the support of other unions and members of the community maintained a

seven-day-a-week, 24-hour picket outside the plant.

The company push included a \$1000 bribe offer to abandon the union and sign a contract and the use of a body hire company to bring in labour to replace the picketing workers. At the time the workplace union delegate at Morris McMahon, Keith Brown, warned, "This is a dispute that affects every worker".

"This dispute will be used as a blueprint, if we lose it, for other employers to use the same tactics and attack the conditions of workers all over the place."

And they stood together solid, and in solidarity. At the Labor Council delegates thanked all unions who supported the picket

including the MUA, CFMEU, ETU, RTBU, NUW, LHMU, NTEU, IEU, Teachers Federation, PSA and CPSU, saying their support was "indispensable in the final victory".

The key points in the settlement are:

- a legally enforceable, certified union agreement;
- a reasonable pay increase;
- recognition of their union;
- rights for union delegates;
- limits on the use of casual contract labour;

- the establishment of a grievance procedure;
- a nationally-recognised training scheme;
- a rostered day off for all workers.

Importantly, the workers have not signed individual contracts.

The media latched onto an incident involving John Sutton in order to attack him as an individual and to cast a slur against the union solidarity that played such a crucial role in winning the dispute.

The CFMEU National Secretary apologised unreservedly for aggressive picket line actions, caught on video, which had diverted attention from the longest-running picket in recent memory.

The Morris McMahon workers singled Mr Sutton out for special recognition.

Keith Brown expressed their sentiment: "John Sutton came down on numerous occasions; he's been a big supporter of ours and we're very sorry he's been singled out".

Electrolux tries to rub out union

The corporate lawyers employed by white goods manufacturer Electrolux have pounced on a proposed community fund-raiser to accuse a senior union official of using threats and intimidation. The lawyers are part of the company's push to de-unionise its workforce in Orange, west of Sydney. Electrolux is the town's largest employer.

Australian Workers' Union (AWU) President Mick Madden was stunned by the personal attack which, he said, showed that the Swedish multinational and its city law firm, Cutler and Harris, don't have any idea about rural Australians.

Cutler and Harris wrote to the AWU urging that Madden be disciplined for using "veiled threats" and "intimidation" after he wrote to Electrolux's human resources chief at Orange suggesting the pair don boxing gloves at an up-coming function to raise funds for local charities.

"I still think it was a good idea. People out west would have loved it and we could have raised some decent money for the community", Madden said. "Other than the fact that he is bigger and heavier than me, it was an offer he could accept or decline."

Madden revealed the lawyers' letter after 1000 employees at the fridge-freezer manufacturer voted to reject the company's campaign to eliminate unions from their enterprise bargaining negotiations.

But, with a majority of just five, Madden is certain the company will come back and try again, rather than making any effort to conclude a deal.

He pointed to a number of unusual elements in the Electrolux campaign to back his prediction:

- it hired corporate accountants, KPMG, rather than the neutral Industrial Relations Commission, to conduct the secret ballot on whether to have a collective agreement at the plant;
- dozens of people who would not be covered by the document, including human resources staff, were allowed to vote;
- at the height of campaigning, more than a month ago, Electrolux had police remove union officials from the property;

- they have not been permitted to return since, other than to talk to workers in a tiny room, under company surveillance, during lunch hours;

- for the first few hours of the ballot workers were required to use pencils. Only after delegates identified management personnel with erasers in their pockets, were staff provided with pens to indicate their preferences;

- whilst the company surrounded the polling area with "Vote Yes" materials, when a union member put a "Vote No" poster on the wall he was threatened with disciplinary action and the poster was removed.

Members of the AWU, AMWU, NUW and ETU at Orange are particularly angry about the Electrolux campaign because they rallied and lobbied the State Government to get the company into the town when it seemed the facility, originally owned by Email, would close.

Madden said company determination to press ahead with another ballot was demonstrated by its refusal to budge from claims by employer body Australian Industry Group that "pattern bargaining" was being forced on the workers.

With the exception of a few words in a stand-down clause, he said, it had moved on nothing during negotiations. Still, there was agreement on everything but an Electrolux demand for longer hours to be paid at less than award.

"We have moved as far as we can to accommodate them but now they are pushing to extend the working day by an hour over summer and pay people less than the award prescribes. We can't sign off on that and they know it."

"They don't want an agreement at all, they just want to keep coming back and putting their proposal for a non-union agreement", Madden said.



Photo: Tom Pearson

SAVE MEDICARE

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Dangers for workers

Another union leader already considering a political landscape without Medicare in the accepted sense is Sharan Burrow, President of the ACTU. In the lead-up to May 2 national Medicare meeting hosted by the ACTU, Ms Burrow said that while Australian unions were loathe to write health costs into employment contracts, they may yet be forced to consider it.

"No Australian employer will want to see unions bargaining for medical cover, US style, but if we go down the American track, we will be forced to look at an American response", said Ms Burrow.

To even be canvassing such an idea while, at the same time, trying to show leadership to a national campaign to save Medicare is counter-productive, to say the least.

In making those comments, Ms Burrow herself went on to give some details of the US system. In an attempt to win the bosses to the side of Medicare, she pointed out that the cost of medical insurance accounts for up to 20 per cent of the wages bill in that country.

This is the least of the problems. The US system costs taxpayers 13 per cent of GDP after the various corporate parasites have been fed. Australia's arrangements take just 8.3 per cent.

The results of the two approaches are revealing, also. Australia has a 36.6 per cent lower

infant mortality rate and a life expectancy two years higher than the US. We have 30 per cent more acute beds available.

In the US, despite the best efforts of the union movement, 40 million Americans including six million children, have no health cover at all.

A survey of health systems in developed countries shows a direct relationship between indicators like infant mortality and the share of the health cost being born by the state – the greater the state share of responsibility, the better the outcome.

Unions have all sorts of additional reasons to avoid putting the US model on the agenda. The results of a recently concluded struggle between Kennecott Utah Copper Corp (KUC) and its workers contain a number of important lessons for those looking at the American system.

In this better than average outcome, the United Steelworkers of America were able to win continued health insurance for retirees from jobs with the corporation. A union spokesperson summarised it thus:

"Only a few weeks ago, company officials sent around letters to our retirees, telling them that they had no right to health insurance, and maybe the company would not provide any, or maybe they would. It was an absolutely outrageous and cheap fear tactic. But our retirees stood up, and our union stood up, and we won a continuation – and

even improvement of – retiree health benefits." (See story page 9)

How would Australian workers like their access to health insurance to be on the table every time an EBA expires and with the boss pleading all sorts of hardship? What happens if you're not as strongly represented as the retired steelworkers mentioned in the above example? What happens if the boss prevails? What happens if "your" company goes broke? You would be in the same boat as 40 million US citizens quoted previously that have no health cover at all.

Health care would become one more entitlement that could be lost.

For Australian unions to be even contemplating adding another tier to what is already being proposed for the health system – this time with a divide between those in well organised jobs and those who are not – is not on!

In general, the efforts of the unions within the movement to save Medicare are to be applauded, but the floating of more ideas from US labour relations books introduces a defeatist tone and an unacceptable "fallback position" for the Australian labour movement.

Medicare must be saved and properly funded as a universal, bulk-billing national health insurance system. The money is there. The rebate and other subsidies to the private health system – which are a criminal appropriation of public monies – must be ended.

Labor green-lights ASIO Bill

The Howard Government's draconian legislation to change the role of the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) was passed on June 25 after the Government accepted a series of amendments from the ALP. The ASIO Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill will change the role of ASIO from an intelligence gathering spy organisation to, in effect, a secret police.

by Peter Mac & Tom Pearson

The Greens, Democrats and independent Senators had objected to the Bill's reintroduction into the Senate.

For the first time since its formation following World War II, ASIO will have the power to arrest and detain citizens. People may be held for seven days (or longer if another reason can be given for further detention) simply on the basis that they might have information about terrorism (or matters that the Federal Government cares to label terrorism).

In this respect the Bill has overtones of government dictatorial powers: even the laws passed by the US and British Governments are not as punitive and sweeping as the ASIO legislation.

The Bill also deprives those detained of the right to remain silent, i.e. it removes the presumption of innocence. A person who refuses to answer questions faces a penalty of five years in jail.

The Bill also violates the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. Children detainees from 16 years of age, can be strip searched (the original allowed for the detention of 10-year-olds) and although the Bill now allows those arrested access to legal representation, any contact between the legal representative and the detainee can be monitored by ASIO.

Further, the legal representative can only give advice during breaks in questioning, and may not intervene in an interrogation except to seek clarification of a question. The interrogation may last for a total of 24 hours divided into three blocks of up to eight hours at a stretch.

Legal representatives are prohibited from divulging information about the questioning except in the Federal Court, and if ASIO interrogators consider that the legal representative's conduct is "disruptive" he or she may be removed from the Court.

Under the legislation, ASIO is allowed to detain anyone who has

had contact with a person deemed by ASIO as a terrorist suspect, or even someone whom ASIO thinks might have inadvertently overheard a conversation involving a suspect. Included among those who are likely to be caught up in this broad net are lawyers and journalists.

The Bill's definition of "terrorist" groups is extremely vague allowing the label to be put on unions, protest groups, political parties and organisations that support liberation from dictatorial regimes.

The ability of the federal Attorney General to simply nominate organisations as terrorist-oriented leaves the way open for widespread discrimination and victimisation. Moreover, the collecting or making of documents connected with any action deemed terrorist, or the possession of things connected with them or financing them (even when this involves making a contribution to an organisation which later becomes involved in such an act) are all punishable by a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Real opposition

The ALP's support for the ASIO legislation has prompted the Greens to question the role of Labor. "What is the point of having an Opposition to this Howard Government if you are left with the ALP?", asked Greens Senator Bob Brown. "It is an astounding and astonishing sell-out by the Labor Party."

The possibilities for violation of civil and democratic rights are open ended. One commentator observed:

"If your 16-year-old ... decided to write an essay for a class assignment and it contained fictional details of terrorist action, if reported to ASIO the student could be removed clandestinely along with the teacher and any classmates for interrogation. There would be no requirement to inform parents or the school hierarchy, the Department of Education or anyone else."

The ASIO Bill has particular implications for journalists, who could be held and even jailed for

five years for failing to divulge their sources. One newspaper editorial noted that "... this bill places all journalists in the invidious position of breaking their professional bond and code of ethics, or defying legal authority and risking severe penalties for doing so".

The Bill may be unconstitutional.

The Bill allows for the detention of people for up to a week, with detention warrants issued by the Attorney-General (at his sole discretion). The questioning in three eight-hour blocks, one per day, could be completed in three days, allowing the detainee to be held for a further four days, with further detention periods permissible under the issuance of rolling warrants.

In contrast, under the "separation of powers" provisions of the current Constitution, only the courts (not the government) can decide whether a person may be detained beyond the period needed for questioning.

Claire Mahon, of the Law Institute of Victoria, raised concern over the treatment of minors under the legislation, that they can be detained, interrogated and strip searched. "The Government has, for a long time now, shown with its policy of detaining children asylum seekers that it does not intend to protect the rights of young people and does not take seriously its obligations under the [UN Rights of the Child] convention."

Amnesty International's Nicole Bieske warned of the new laws' impact on the general public. "Amnesty International is concerned that ... innocent people could be detained simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time."

"For example, you go out for dinner at a restaurant. Somebody next to you, at the next table, is being surveyed by ASIO. You get picked up the next day because ASIO suspects you may have overheard something, and you can be detained for up to seven days."

The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) is concerned that the legislation is being introduced at a time when the Islamic community is being marginalised and treated and labelled as terrorist.

"It is quite clear from the readings of the bill that the word 'terrorism' is a non-neutral term and already there are those stereotypes that are in fact making the connection between terrorism and Islam", said the ICV's Goolam Laher. "Yet the Government has not addressed those issues and have not approached the community on the need to address these issues".

"How would Islamic women be treated? Will they be undressed in the absence of another woman? Will they be touched?" ❖



Late last month the spiritual leader of Australia's Muslim community, Sheik Taj el-Din Al Hilaly, was subjected to what he described as "intentional racial targeting" when he arrived at Sydney Airport from an inter-faith conference in New Zealand. Asked by customs officers if he was the "Mufti from Lakemba", he was quizzed about his recent activities, about the people who had attended the New Zealand conference and his plans for future "activities". As a spokesperson for the Sheik put it, "It was more like an ASIO interrogation than a customs inspection". You may recall that in December last year 11 NSW police officers, under instructions from ASIO, accosted the Sheik in a Sydney suburban street, assaulting and searching him. They said they had information he had a gun under his robe. In the USA it's called racial profiling. Let's call it what it is - racism.

Marking the July 1 anniversary of the GST, the National Tax and Accountants' Association noted how absolutely false the Federal Government's claim has proven to be that their restructuring of the tax system with its GST is a better system. Small business people surveyed by a *Herald Sun* poll asking the question, "Has the GST proved itself to be a better tax system?" responded resoundingly in the negative: 87 per cent stated they believe the GST is not a better system. The Association points to the mountain of paperwork involved that puts huge pressure on the small businesses, and the increased costs in accounting fees.

Being tax time working people can also luxuriate in the Government's generous tax cut of \$4 a week (\$208 a year), that's if you earn between \$20,000-\$50,000. Under that amount you get nothing. If you earn \$62,500 you get \$11.02 a week (\$573 a year). Of course, the GST has triggered price increases across the board for all the fundamentals such as food, books, telephone calls and clothing. And if the Government succeeds in destroying Medicare that'll be more money out of people's disposable income.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: has to be Immigration Minister Commandant Adolph Ruddock. Last week's effort of sending asylum seekers to Christmas Island even though they had officially entered Australian waters was in itself enough to earn Ruddock a Hog. But the Government's viciously punitive immigration laws have the added attraction of corruption, so that both Labor and Liberal have been found to be taking cash for visas, while immigration officials have been taking bribes. It is only a small leap of the imagination to now see that when Ruddock opens his mouth to spit the usual epithets to dehumanise asylum seekers - "people smugglers", "illegal arrivals", "queue jumpers", "these people" - instead out spew crisp cash denominations with visas attached.

The Bill's definition of "terrorist" groups is extremely vague allowing the label to be put on unions, protest groups, political parties and organisations that support liberation from dictatorial regimes.

Are you being bullied at work?

The Workers Health Centre in Sydney is starting a pilot support group for victims of workplace bullying. The purpose of the support group is to create an accepting and trusting environment in which the victims of workplace harassment and bullying can share their experiences with others who are in a similar position.

The group will be led by a trained counsellor and will consider ways of managing the feelings aroused by workplace bullying and what to do about it.

The Workers Health Centre will be holding an **information session** for people wishing to be involved in the pilot support group.

Date: Friday July 25
Time: 4.00pm - 6.00pm
Venue: Workers Health Centre
Level 2, CFMEU Building
12 Railway Street
Lidcombe NSW 2141

If you are interested in attending the **information session** please contact the WHC on ph: 02 9749 7666 to register.

Out of their own mouths (Part 1) Iraq, a battle in a long

Dig a little deeper than the rhetoric and lies of politicians and their propagandists, and one will find the advisers and ideologues who develop and dictate policy on behalf of the corporate sector. They are to be found in the various think-tanks, on government advisory bodies, in the corridors of academia and in the corporate board rooms. This is the third and final article in a series looking at what some of these power brokers are saying and their plans for a new US imperial order. The first two articles and some background details on the power brokers quoted in the series can be found in the previous two issues of *The Guardian* (25-6-03 & 2-7-03).

by Anna Pha

"With Saddam Hussein condemned to the ash-heap of history ... The real question now is how the United States can leverage its victory in Iraq to uphold, expand, and institutionalize Pax Americana." (Thomas Donnelly, "Preserving American Primacy, Institutionalizing Unipolarity", American Enterprise Institute (AEI), April 22, 2003)

"Institutionalizing unipolarity" is not an unachievable aim. To begin with, Americans have the experience of creating the international institutions that helped manage the crises of the cold war; despite their recent failures ... NATO and the United Nations have generally proved to be very useful tools of US statecraft", says Donnelly.

The agenda is global domination by US imperialism in a post-Soviet world, where all states accept US leadership and "values", adopt "free markets" and other IMF and WTO policies or are deemed to be enemies requiring regime change and disciplining.

Iran, Syria, Libya, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), the People's Republic of China and Cuba head the list of "rogue states" in line for US treatment. They are portrayed as being governed by despotic dictatorships, assisting terrorists, possessing weapons of mass destruction, selling weapons to failed states, and as posing a danger to the freedom loving, democratic, civilised world led by the US.

September 11 and the Bali bombings served them well as excuses to wage "war on terrorism". But the Bush administration is now running into difficulties with its plans for future wars and conquests as more people come forward with information exposing the lies that were used to justify the war against and occupation of Iraq. (See page 12 for a few of these lies.)

The British Government is also facing difficulties as its own MPs and many others question the principal reason given for going to war: weapons of mass destruction.

"Mother of modern terrorism"

The preparatory work of softening up the public, particularly in the Murdoch media, is well under way for future operations in Iran, Syria and other countries on the hit list.

"Support for terror is an integral part of both regimes [Iran and Syria], and it is impossible to win the war on terrorism so long as the two regimes are in power. The good news is that both are very vulnerable to political attack", says policy adviser and AEI member Michael Ledeen, ("The End of the Beginning", *The Spectator*, June 28, 2003)

"And if you're going to be serious about that, then dealing with Iran and bringing down the regime in Iran is the central act because Iran is the world's most dangerous terrorist country. It's the mother of modern terrorism. It invented jihadism. It created Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. I mean, Iran is the centerpiece of the war." (Michael Ledeen, AEI transcript March 21, 2003)

Bombs and missiles are not the only option open for bringing down the regime. There are other methods such as covert work, assassinations, coups, organising and assisting opposition forces. There are differences in the US administration as to the best method of achieving a compliant regime in Iran that is to the US's liking.

Former Minister in the Polish Government and leader in Solidarnosc Radek Sikorski says: "I have been contacted by Iranian students who want to know how we formed Solidarity and how Solidarity worked to overthrow the communist regime. Therefore I think Mike [Ledeen] is right." (AEI transcript, March 21, 2003)

"In the case of Iran, you really see us more in a diplomatic, psychological, political offensive, trying to ally ourselves with younger Iranians, rather than in the kind of military operation that we might need, say in Baghdad." (arch-reactionary Newt

Gingrich, Fox News Channel interview May 10, 2002)

Israel

Possession of and development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are used as an excuse for economic sanctions, intervention or pre-emptive strike. But not when these weapons are in Israel's hands. The US and other Western countries have remained deadly silent about Israel's possession of such weapons, including nuclear weapons.

Gingrich has no problem in handling that contradiction: "My only comment on possession of weapons of mass destruction would be that whether or not Israel has them – and everyone agrees they do have them – they clearly have refused to use them, and they clearly exist for the purpose of deterrence.

Reuel Marc Gerecht of the AEI goes further in defending Israel's possession of nuclear weapons. He says "the Israeli nuclear arsenal is I think the primary check on the Iranians engaging in what you might call open, naughty, aggressive behavior ..." (AEI transcript, May 6, 2003) His admission of their existence is rare among US and other Western leaders or media.

North Korea

The power brokers have their own plans regarding the reunification of Korea.

"While Korean unification might call for the reduction in American presence on the peninsula and a transformation of US force posture in Korea, the changes would really reflect a *change* in their mission – and changing technological realities – not the *termination* of their mission.

"Moreover, in any realistic post-unification scenario, US forces are likely to have some role in stability operations in North Korea. ... it is not too early to recognize that the presence of American forces in Korea serves a larger and longer-range strategic purpose." (Project for New American Century (PNAC) *Rebuilding America's Defenses*)

Radek Sikorski does not mince words on North Korea either. He is not interested in the technical details of its warheads and missiles. "It is the nature of the North Korean regime, and not its armaments, that threaten us. And that regime is beyond evil. We can only be secure when it finds itself on the ash-heap of history where it belongs."

North Korea is both an ideological threat with its socialist path of



development and also of strategic importance to the US because of its border with China.

China

"China is not yet powerful enough to be a challenger to the American empire, and the goal of the United States is to prevent that challenge from emerging. China will be a major economic and military power in a generation", says Stephen Rosen. (*Harvard Magazine*, "The Future of War and the American Military", May-June 2002)

"If Chinese political reforms are successful, and the Chinese government ceases to be a dictatorship ... the government of China will concentrate on improving the lives of its own people, and participating in the world order led by the United States", says Rosen.

"Raising US military strength in East Asia is the key to coping with the rise of China to great-power status. For this to proceed peacefully, US armed forces must retain their military preeminence and thereby reassure our regional allies." (PNAC *Rebuilding America's Defenses*)

Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Japan play a part in providing forces, weapons, communications facilities and bases in the plans of the US to defeat China.

Cuba

Tiny Cuba only 90 kilometres off the coast of the USA is one of the biggest thorns in the side of the Bush administration. It spreads "poison" across the Americas by providing free education and health services to its people. Its socialist

ideology and genuine people's democracy is an anathema to everything these right-wing forces stand for.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell challenged the Organisation of American States on June 9, 2003, at an annual meeting of Foreign Ministers to join the US in finding ways to "hasten the inevitable democratic transition in Cuba".

Mark Falcoff, writing for the AEI, speculates on the future of Cuba: "in the near and perhaps even the medium term, Fidel Castro has nothing to worry about. His control of the island is all but absolute, and he enjoys a remarkable degree of support in the foreign press and in the so-called international community.

"In the long run, however, his country's future is very problematic indeed ... its entire national identity is based on its being the most aggressive and intransigent enemy of the United States at the United Nations and the so-called non-aligned movement." (June 3, 2003)

United Nations

The US has taken the law into its own hands (not the first time by any means), and makes no pretence of respecting international law – except when it gets what it wants.

"In the heady aftermath of the Allied victory in the second world war, the hope that security could be made collective was reposed in the United Nations Security Council – with abject results." (Richard Perle, "United they Fall", *The Spectator*, March 29, 2003)

"The Bush administration went to the UN. They tried to get

"China is not yet powerful enough to be a challenger to the American empire, and the goal of the United States is to prevent that challenge from emerging.

Part 3) War



the support. They couldn't get the support. They said, fine, you chose not to support us, we're going to go ahead and get the allies we can and do what we think is necessary." (Kristol, AEI transcript March 21, 2003, on going to war against Iraq)

Perle also has little time for the UN: "Now, for world health and agriculture and other things, it's fine, and for peacekeeping, it's fine. But ... we need either new institutions or a radically reformed approach to the United Nations if the UN is going to be relevant to the security concerns that we now face." (Perle, AEI March 21, 2003)

Ledeer also weighs in: "... one of the great accomplishments of the Bush administration [was] showing that we don't need the United Nations for serious international operations ... actually it was Clinton who showed that because that was Bosnia. Right? The UN voted against Bosnia, and we went ahead and did it anyway."

"Sometimes we seem to forget that, you know, as if Bush acting, as the rhetoric puts it, in contempt of international opinion and the United Nations is something new. It's not new." (Ledeer, AEI, March 21, 2003)

Warning to others

"So what we have produced, I think, is a revolution in military doctrine, a revolution in national security doctrine, and also a revolution in the region and the world in understanding what the power of the United States is and what it is capable of doing ... So we ought to do what we have to do, alone if we have to ..." (Krauthammer, AEI April 22, 2003)

To return Iraq to real life

The following interview on June 6 with the General Secretary of the Iraqi Communist Party, Comrade Hamid Majeed Mousa was published in the left Italian daily *il Manifesto*.

The *il Manifesto* correspondent opened:

Iraq is living through a situation which is anything but peace. What happened last night in Falluja was a real war. The Americans are trying to play down the incident...

In the Andulus square (in Baghdad) I met a comrade who was distributing *Tareeq Al-Shaab*, the newspaper of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), which was published openly immediately after the fall of Saddam.

Close by is ICP's headquarters. Statements, calls, comrades going in, others leaving. After years of clandestine work, Communists are showing their faces openly without fear of being murdered. Their newspaper has published a list of names of party members and cadres who were physically liquidated by Saddam's regime.

It includes 167 names, "but we have other lists and we intend to publish them", said party leader Hamid Majeed Mousa when he received us in his office. He is 60 years old, from Babel province, and had lived for long years in (Iraqi) Kurdistan where the party operated legally.

Q: Now you can work openly, but the country is under occupation. How do you feel about this?

A: The majority of the Iraqi people are happy for the demise of Saddam's regime. But we are not happy with this situation because this change has come with occupation, and not in a peaceful way.

As a party, we had hoped that this change would take place with the efforts of Iraqis, without war and without occupation. But we have now to confront this situation, shouldering once again our responsibility. We can now operate openly in order to enable our people to overcome fear, become involved in political work and take fully into their hands deciding the country's future.

This phase is extraordinary. It is a state of national catastrophe. Not only has the regime collapsed, but also the state with all its institutions.

This has given big powers to the occupiers on the level of institutions but not in popular areas and the countryside, in the poor areas of the country. The power there is in the hands of local religious groups or being run by tribal leaders.

What is missing at the moment is a patriotic government with real powers. As Iraqis, we must find a solution to this chaos, and exercise our right by establishing our own government. It has to be a government with real authority, not like the one referred to in the recent UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR 1483) which gives total powers to the occupiers and a consultative role to the Iraqis.

It has to be a government that is backed by the people and recognised by the Americans who are obliged to give help. They have destroyed the country and they have now to help in rebuilding it in accordance with the Geneva Convention and under UN supervision and monitoring.

Q: It seems that the Americans are not thinking of leaving. Are you sure that you can launch

this process of change under US occupation?

A: I am not talking about what they are thinking of. They did not come for the sake of Iraqis, but on the basis of a strategy which is in line with their objective and desire to impose their control over the world.

I am talking about what the Iraqis want – a broad government that is born out of a national conference representing the whole spectrum of Iraqi society and Iraqi political parties which fought against dictatorship and tyranny.

We are working to establish a front of political forces which have a common position with regard to setting up the government. The agreement with regard to this provisional government would deal with [the tasks of] eliminating remnants of the dictatorial regime, striving to rebuild Iraqi institutions and the whole country after the destruction caused by the war, working to formulate new laws and preparing for free elections under the auspices of the UN, preparing a draft constitution and putting it to a national referendum and then conducting negotiations about the presence of foreign forces and their departure from the country.

In this way, the country can return to real life.

Q: Which are the parties that agree with this program?

A: The Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Group of Democratic Independents, the Dawa party, the Arab Socialist Movement, Iraqi Islamic Party, Assyrian Democratic Movement (Christians), the Iraqi Communist Party, and other patriotic organisations and personalities.

We are all in agreement on this program, but not on the form of government.

Q: But the Americans have another plan, which is to set up a government from foreigners in the occupation forces.

A: We know very well that the Americans want a government which is in line with their interests. The UN Security Council Resolution 1483 is in the final analysis an American-British plan which establishes the authority of occupation but only refers to a consultative role for the Iraqis.

The Iraqi and American plans constitute two different alternative plans. If the US wants stability for the country, then it should accept our solution.

Q: And if they don't agree, would you then be ready to fight?

A: We are now acting in a legitimate and peaceful way. Our program is backed by the people, and this is the path to achieve stability and freedom for our country.

The Americans have the power, but they do not have the solution. All the Iraqi parties have rejected the UN Security Council resolution and we must work to change the situation also on that level.

In the US, there are many who are against the occupation. Arab countries prefer an Iraqi government. Some of the European countries which were against the



Occupation is not liberation – a rally in Basra against the occupying forces

war and have accepted the UN Resolution are prepared to accept a patriotic government.

Q: Everyday there are attacks against the American occupiers, with victims falling. Is there an organised resistance?

A: There is no organised armed resistance. They are individual acts, and the clashes always occur for the same reasons. This does not mean that the Iraqis accept occupation.

Some people are reacting to arrogance displayed by the Americans who do not respect the traditions. In some occasions, these clashes are reportedly instigated by supporters of the previous regime. But in the area of Hit (north-west of Baghdad), it happened that some elements of the regime helped the American forces.

We warn the Americans that if occupation continues, then there will be resistance.

Q: Among those who have benefited are the religious, especially the Shi'ites. Is there a danger of establishing an Islamic state?

A: The Shi'ites in Iraq constitute 60 percent of the population but not all of them are included within the Islamic parties. Also inside the religious parties, there are extremists and moderates.

Some of the Shi'a parties, and also Sunni ones, want an Islamic government, but they differ about how to achieve this and when. There are those who think that the way to achieve this is through elections and there are others who believe that it must be imposed by force.

Q: What is the extent of Iranian influence?

A: Some of the religious parties have spiritual, ideological and political relations with Iran, but all of them have to take into account the will of the Iraqi people.

Q: After having operated in a clandestine way, how are you working now to rebuild the party?

A: In Iraqi Kurdistan we were able to work openly, but in the rest of the country there were a lot of dangers. Life was extremely dangerous, but we always remained a party that existed inside the country.

Since the moment we opened [our] headquarters people have been coming from all over Iraq – young and old, workers, peasants, and intellectuals, Kurds, Shi'ites and Sunnis, Assyrians.

We are a democratic and secular party. There is enormous work ahead of us.

Israeli "refuseniks" go to trial

TEL-AVIV: The court room at the central military court here was packed with families, friends and others in solidarity with the five conscientious objectors, who had been dragged to stand trial on June 24.

by Hans Lebrecht

But instead of being accused, the defendants became accusers and called the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories a brutal, human rights-violating policy. Knesset Members of the (Communist-led) Hadash Front and one of the Zionist Meretz Party (a left-wing party), and other prominent personalities were seated in the court's front row. The media was there too.

Many waited outside, staging an impressive vigil with such slogans as "Occupation is terrorism – The Objectors are heroes!"

The five objectors are the first of a group of 62 teenagers who were indicted after signing a letter to Prime Minister Sharon and the army's General Staff in 2001. They refused to serve in an army, which was violating human rights and occupying territories. Instead of serving as army conscripts, they announced, they would do alternative civilian service. Now, hundreds more have joined that movement.

Israeli law allows only relig-

ious women to serve in civilian service. Tens of thousands of ultra-orthodox Talmud "students" are also exempted from army service, but not pacifists or other conscientious objectors.

In his opening for the defence, attorney Dr Dov Khenin said, "This trial is not about some technicalities or obscure legislation points, mentioned in the indictment sheet. It is a trial about a major constitutional issue, which until now no Israeli court has dealt with."

He explained that the conscience was the most basic part of human dignity, which if broken, would break one's personality entirely. It is the contention of the defense that "Freedom of Conscience" is already enshrined in the Israeli legislation.

Ever since the Knesset passed the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty over a decade ago "freedom of conscience" is guaranteed, Khenin said. He added the army brass and the prosecution of the objectors are defying this basic law.

Following the opening remarks,

three defendants took the witness stand. (The other two will be heard at the next session in July.) Each of the three related, in dramatic and moving words, why they have come to the conclusion that their conscience would not allow them to serve in an army.

They told about their personal experience and meetings with Palestinian victims of the occupation army's brutality.

Some defendants also witnessed armed, ultra-right Jewish settlers attacking peaceful Palestinian olive pickers, pointing out the settlements help perpetrate the criminal occupation policy.

In a press statement, Gush-Shalom Peace Bloc, which is organising solidarity actions with the conscientious objectors, said it should be noted, that precisely at the same time these five objectors were indicted, an army committee, granted discharges to some other conscientious objectors.

It seems that while the court martial proceedings are on, which is drawing much public sympathy and solidarity with the accused, the army is trying to get rid of that wave of support, the statement said.

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



Israel's occupation is brutal

Israel's savage attack on BBC

The Israeli Government has launched a savage attack on BBC TV for exposing what everyone already knows – that Israel has been manufacturing and storing nuclear weapons for many years.

The BBC TV program opened by asking some pertinent questions – Which country in the Middle East has undeclared nuclear weapons program? Which country has secret biological and chemical capabilities? Which country in the Middle East does not permit international inspection of its nuclear sites? Which country in the Middle East sentenced one of its citizens to 18 years after he divulged secrets of its nuclear programs?

The BBC program says that Israel has "the world's sixth largest nuclear arsenal with small tactical nuclear weapons ... as

well as medium-range nuclear missiles launchable from air, land or sea".

The program also said that Israel has undeclared biological and chemical capabilities and used an unknown gas against Palestinians in Gaza in February 2001 that sent 180 people to hospital with severe convulsions.

An Israeli citizen and a former nuclear technician, Mordechai Vanunu, was charged with treason and espionage when he gave pictures of Israel's nuclear facilities at Dimona to a London newspaper. He has served 17 years of his

sentence, 11 of which were in a minute solitary confinement cell.

In denouncing the BBC TV for its exposure, the Israeli Government's Press Office said that "The accusations are very reminiscent of the most horrible anti-Semitism. This is very reminiscent of *Der Strumer*", an anti-Semite newspaper from the era of Nazi Germany.

This is seen as a typical reaction of the ruling Zionists, when some dark secret is exposed that they wish to keep secret – they charge the critics with anti-Semitism to divert attention from their crime and attempt to gain sympathy.

Not content with denouncing the BBC the Israeli Government

has threatened that visa restrictions will be imposed on BBC staff in Israel and that the Government will refuse to make officials available for BBC interviews.

The BBC has refused to bow to Israeli threats and is standing by its program.

By imposing a veil of silence on Israel's nuclear weapons the Western media has for many years shielded Israel from the sort of condemnation heaped on Iraq, Iran, North Korea and other countries that may develop even peaceful nuclear programs.

Israel has also refused to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty because it objects to international inspections. It is yet another sad commentary on

the International Atomic Energy Agency that it refuses to do anything about the Israel nuclear facilities while carrying out the American agenda against North Korea, Iraq and Iran.

A recent application for bail by Vanunu was refused. The Israeli prosecutor had a new argument: the imminent war with Iraq. The real force blocking Vanunu's release is Israel's powerful military intelligence agency, its head is Yehieyl Horev who is beyond scrutiny or accountability even to Israel's Parliament.

Australia is now also going down the path of secrecy and unaccountability having turned ASIO into a secret police organisation. ☪

Workers tell Bush: "Hands off overtime"

WASHINGTON: Hundreds of angry workers from across the nation picketed the US Labor Department June 30 to protest a new Bush administration regulation that could terminate overtime pay for eight million workers.

by Tim Wheeler

The Labor Department claims employees engaged in an "executive, administrative, or professional capacity" would lose overtime protection. But the protestors countered that workers earning as little as US\$22,100 per year could be exempted from the overtime law.

At least 42 Democratic Senators and 100 Democratic House members sent letters to Labor Secretary Elaine Chao demanding that she rescind the new work rules.

"Our grandparents died for the 40-hour workweek. Don't let the government take it away", said a hand-lettered placard carried by one union picketer. Another proclaimed, "May 1886: 15 killed marching for the eight hour day", a reference to

the 1886 Haymarket Massacre in Chicago commemorated by workers every year on May Day.

"Overtime pay for work beyond 40 hours a week is a legacy of a century-long fight by workers for dignity and respect", thundered AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka at a sidewalk rally.

The American working class is not going to allow them to turn back the clock."

Crews from at least 15 network and cable news crews covered the event. Morton Bahr, President of the Communications Workers of America (which includes the Newspaper Guild), told these workers they will be among the first denied coverage under the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor

Standards Act which requires time-and-a-half wages for every hour worked beyond 40 hours in a given week.

"There is a sleeper in these rules that would permit employers to apply these regulations to twenty million or more workers", Bahr told the *People's Weekly World*.

"This is a juicy incentive for the enormous greed we have seen from corporate leaders in recent years. Workers across this country will make their voices heard when they march to their polling places in November 2004 and cast their ballots."

Judith Conti, Legal Services Director of the DC Employment Justice Center, said that "far and away the biggest problem we see is unpaid wages, unpaid overtime... These regulations will give employers added incentives to chisel on wages. This is a dangerous, slippery slope."

Bob Adams, a bakery manager with a supermarket chain in Minneapolis-St. Paul, told the crowd that he could be forced to work 56 or 60 hours at straight time pay. "This is part of a systematic assault on working Americans", he said.

"If we don't stop it now, it will spread to all workers."

Tim O'Brien, a reporter at a newspaper in upstate New York, said starting salaries at his newspaper are \$28,000. "These are clearly working class jobs. I can barely pay my bills. Overtime is not for luxury items. It pays to fix the roof."

John Garrity of Philadelphia said he represents 2000 civil service employees. At least 500 face loss of overtime protection, he said. "This is a pay cut for 500 public employees", he said.

"We saw the greed and corruption of Enron and WorldCom. This is the same thing. I want to see a million people in Washington pro-

testing these cuts. It's a disgrace!"

Jered Bernstein and Ross Eisenbrey of the Economic Policy Institute exposed the new regulations in a 17-page report. "The Administration's proposal would create, in effect, a massive subsidy to employers paid for by their employees", the report charges. "It will create a rush-to-the-bottom pressure that will eventually force even reluctant employers to participate to keep their labor costs competitive."

In their letter to Chao, the Senators charged, "Our citizens are working longer hours than ever before, longer than in any other industrial nation. At least one in five employees has a workweek that exceeds 50 hours. Protecting the 40-hour workweek is vital to balancing work responsibilities and family needs."

Abridged
People's Weekly World ☪

US unions win bitter struggle against Rio Tinto

A coalition of unions in Salt Lake City have ratified a new six-year labour agreement with a subsidiary of Rio Tinto. The agreement was achieved after a bitter dispute that dragged on for more than eight months, but did not result in any work stoppages. Just two days after signing the agreement Rio Tinto began to violate it.

Despite the "last, best and final offer" company bargainers attempted to force on the workers last October, the new agreement signed in June achieved significant improvements over the company's proposals and previous labour agreements.

Rio Tinto subsidiary Kennecott Utah Copper Corp (KUC), based in Magna, Utah, employs about 1900 mineral mining, processing and support workers at its Salt Lake City area facilities.

The Kennecott Coordinated Bargaining Committee (KCBC) – a coalition of local unions affiliated with five international unions – negotiated the master agreement on behalf of 1300 KUC workers.

The improvements include:

- Wage gains that average US\$2.40 per hour over the life of the agreement, depending upon seniority and job classification;
- Continued health insurance for retirees with improvements (a hotly-contested issue);
- Improved health insurance for active workers;
- Doubling of retiree life insurance and improved life insurance for active workers;
- Strengthened arbitration language that especially affects the company's ability to contract out work, and prevents permanent replacement of union jobs by outside contractors;
- US\$6000.00 early retirement bonuses for qualified workers and US\$500.00 ratification bonuses;
- Significant money to settle outstanding grievances (which will be dropped upon signing, along with litigation surrounding charges filed at the National Labor Relations Board)

"A great victory"

"This agreement is by no means perfect. No labor agreement ever is", said Terry Bonds who led the negotiations for the KCBC.

"But when we began our strategic 'Campaign for Justice' more than eight months ago, we knew that we were not dealing with Kennecott Utah Copper Corp – we were really engaged in a life or death struggle with a giant multinational conglomerate named Rio Tinto.

"And we knew, and know, that union-busting is one of the primary aims of that company, wherever it is located in the world.

"So these hundreds of KUC workers who belong to the

Steelworkers, the Operating Engineers, the Machinists, the Electrical Workers and the Office and Professional Employees Union – they and their families and their communities should know that they won the jobs that they have a right to, and they successfully fought for union representation that they have freely chosen.

"To me, that's a great victory to celebrate, any way that you cut it.

"And we also know, that with our weak labour laws and a right-wing, anti-worker administration in Washington, it is going to be up to us to enforce this agreement, in the workplace, in the courts and in the court of public opinion.

"During our campaign, we created 'Contract Action Teams' in the workplace to increase communications and take actions when necessary. They will now become 'Contract Accountability Teams,' to nip company violations of our rights in the bud."

Standing strong

Dale Cox of the Operating Engineers added: "Only a few weeks ago, company officials sent around letters to our retirees, telling them that they had no right to health insurance, and maybe the company would not provide any, or maybe they would.

"It was an absolutely outrageous and cheap fear tactic. But our retirees stood up, and our unions stood up, and we won a continuation – and even improvement of – retiree health benefits.

"People say that unions are dying. They say that we can't work together in our mutual interests, that we are greedy. Well, we are alive and well and standing strong. And not only that, by upholding industry standards in our community, we protected and raised the economic standards for the entire Salt Lake region. Everybody benefits, union and non-union alike."

USWA International President Leo Gerard concluded: "In the mid-1990s, unions that represent workers at Rio Tinto operations around the globe united to form the Rio Tinto Global Network to defend workers against the company's union-busting in Australia, southern Africa and elsewhere.

"We also began cooperating with environmental groups and human rights groups to stave off Rio Tinto's worst abuses against the environment and indigenous

communities in the less-developed world. This struggle has only strengthened those ties.

"Our network has become an active, effective global network that is playing, and will continue to play, an important role in the operations of a global corporation in a global economy."

Targeted retaliation

Unfortunately Bond's warnings were proven correct when two days after ratification of the agreement Rio Tinto announced that it would lay off at least 120 workers.

"Judging by the manner and timing of these layoffs, we can only conclude that this company has exercised targeted retaliation against union members and union-represented workers for exercising their legal and constitutional rights: in violation of the two-day old agreement, in apparent violation of labor law, and in violation of the most basic rules of human conduct and decency", said Leo Gerard.

According to members, long-time workers were taken off their jobs and escorted from the facilities by Rio Tinto security guards. Among the laid-off workers are union activists with high seniority. (It is against the law to discipline people for exercising their labour rights.)

Local union officials, high seniority workers eligible for a voluntary retirement bonus under the new agreement, and injured workers who are receiving workers' compensation were also amongst those to be sacked.

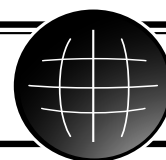
The layoff, executed without notifying any of the KCBC unions, even targeted at least one worker who is reportedly on active duty with the U.S. occupation forces in Iraq, as well as many military veterans.

"Clearly", Bonds said, "The layoff was designed to frighten the Utah Rio Tinto workforce into submission, so that workers and their unions won't enforce or benefit from the many advantages of the newly-ratified labor agreement. All the while, no contract workers or managers have been touched so far.

It is not as though Rio Tinto, which employs 60,000 people globally, is short of a dollar. In 2002, Rio Tinto reported US\$10.8 billion in gross revenues and US\$2.4 billion in gross profits. KUC claimed US\$755 million in revenues and US\$78 million in net profits.

"The unions in the KCBC, the Utah AFL-CIO, the national AFL-CIO, our allies in religious communities, in Jobs with Justice, in NGOs, in the Rio Tinto Global Network – in the US and around the globe – will join together to reverse this low-down, back-stabbing move, as we have joined together to win a fair labor agreement", concluded Gerard.

"And the managers at Rio Tinto's Utah facilities will not stop feeling our united power until they learn to operate within the agreement, the law and the clear bounds of basic human decency." ✪



Global briefs

LONDON: More than 80 non-government organisations in Indonesia called for a global arms embargo on the country as the British Government approved a further increase in arms sales. Despite government guidelines which state UK firms must not sell arms to countries where they may be used for internal repression, British arms sales to Indonesia have risen 20-fold in just three years, from A\$5 million in 2000 to \$100 million in 2002.

MEXICO: A retired Argentine naval officer accused of human rights abuses in Argentina during the military dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s is to be extradited to Spain for trial. Ricardo Cavallo has been in jail in Mexico City for three years. He is being extradited under the terms of a bi-national treaty, rather than the international rights agreements unsuccessfully used by the same court in 1998 in an attempt to bring former Chile dictator Augusto Pinochet to trial.

USA: The Bush administration has threatened to cut off military aid to governments that refuse to sign agreements giving US citizens immunity to prosecution by the International Criminal Court. More than 35 countries have been put on notice by the administration to comply with US demands which would prevent members of the US administration, government officials and military personnel being brought to trial in the Court on war crimes and human rights abuses. Already 44 countries have signed such agreements with the US.

INDIA: Left Front candidates have had crushing victories in two recent by-elections, one in the state assembly of Bengal and the other for the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian national parliament). In the Lok Sabha seat of Nabadwip the Left Front candidate from the Communist Party of India (M), Alakesh Das, won by 98,900 votes.

USA: The grasslands of the Little Bighorn now have a memorial to the warriors who defeated General George Custer there 127 years ago. For more than a century the battlefield, on the Crow Indian Reservation in the state of Montana, has had a memorial and grave markers for Custer and his men. Late last month the grandsons and granddaughters of the Lakota, Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow and Arikara marked the dedication of a memorial to the fighters who persisted in the face of oppression and genocide. Said Geofredo Little Bird of the Northern Cheyenne: "They were trying to exterminate all the tribes from the face of the earth. But we are still here."

CZECH REPUBLIC: In a referendum held last month, 55 per cent of those voting supported joining the European Union in 2004, despite the unfavourable terms of membership being offered. The Communist Party of Moravia and Bohemia recommended a "No" vote.

Sydney

HIROSHIMA NEVER AGAIN

Saturday 9th August 12 noon
Assemble Town Hall Square March to Belmore Park

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, incinerating 140,000 men, women and children. On August 9, a second American atomic bomb killed 74,000 men, women and children in Nagasaki.

Henderson his usual self

Gerard Henderson, who writes feature articles for the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) can always be counted on for a blood-curdling anti-communist diatribe.

He has excelled himself in his attack on the BBC for its TV drama "Cambridge Spies" which is a pretty lousy series anyway. (SMH 1/7/03).

The fact that all countries, including Australia, has a network of spies and that it is inevitably a pretty seedy business, does not stop Henderson from giving the BBC a whack for allegedly portraying the Cambridge four as "idealistic or heroic".

Henderson trots out the usual anti-communist stuff that he thinks the BBC should have peppered its program with – Lenin installed the basis for the "police state", the "brutal" Soviet land collectivisation program of the 1930s, the "notorious" Soviet-German non-aggression treaty of the 1939, the "evils of Soviet totalitarianism", etc, etc.

What does not even rate a mention in Henderson's paranoid article, dripping with hate, is the "little" fact that the Soviet Union was Britain's (and Australia's) ally in the war to defeat the attempt by Nazi Germany to dominate the world. But that is how history is rewritten.

The fact that the Soviet Union lost 25 million of its soldiers and

civilians (more than all the other allied forces put together) and that their sacrifice saved the miserable hide of Henderson and his ilk also passes him by.

Henderson uses a device that is often trotted out by such falsifiers of history – that Nazism and Communism are one and the same thing. The truth is that there have been no stauncher opponents of fascism and Nazism in all countries than the communists. It was the Communist-led Soviet Union that played the main part in the destruction of Nazism in WW2.

Gerard even attacks the BBC over its exposure of Tony Blair's (and John Howard's) lies justifying the invasion of Iraq. In Henderson's eyes, those who expose lies are to be condemned and those who tell them are to be protected – when they are his ideological mates, of course.

One can only feel contempt for Gerard Henderson or should one feel sorry for someone who is desperately trying to defend a rotting system that is relying more and more on lies to cover its nakedness.

**Bruce Gillman
Sydney, NSW**

"Capitalist Democracy"

There are two comments that occur quite frequently and which always cause me sardonic amusement.

The first is in regard to "western

democracy" as if it was the very pinnacle of government.

However, as western countries are all capitalist in nature I must assume that which is being spoken of is "capitalist democracy" – which is in itself a contradiction straight away.

So let's look at this "western/capitalist democracy" more closely – an opportunity every three or four years to vote for a Capitalist Party A or a Capitalist Party B.

Minor parties are allowed to run to give an appearance of choice, but let any party look like making an impression and Party A and Party B will combine to make sure it does not get very far.

And once you have "voted" then you can go back to your sports and soapies until the next election time comes around. I am inclined to refer to it as "western demockocracy".

Item two is the comment that "if you break the law then you have to pay the penalty".

Now if you live under a system to which you are opposed then it is odds on that sooner or later you are going to break a law. I am not a lawyer – in fact I know bugger all about laws – but I would not be at all surprised to find out that the majority, if not all, our laws were for the protection of the capitalist class and the strengthening of the capitalist system.

But the again it is probably just me – old, cynical, suspicious and paranoid.

**Bert Appleton
Killcare Hts, NSW**

People's government a realisable aim

I totally agree with B Appleton (*Guardian* 25/6/03) that a people's government is not a pipe dream but a fully realisable aim. However, a word of caution, the booklet points out that the proposals are not a policy for Socialism.

Marx said the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made instruments of the state and use them for its own ends.

We saw how easily a government of mild reform was overthrown in 1975.

The proposals in the booklet go much further than Whitlam could

ever have dreamed of. So progressive forces must formulate a plan now for dealing with an uncooperative public service, to counter any measures the bourgeoisie think up to destabilise a people's government and to keep an eye on the military.

As we have seen, international imperialism is far more belligerent now than it was in '75. We do not want B52s over Sydney or the rise of a home grown Pinochet.

But the possibility of such threats should not deter us in the struggle for a people's government. Coming as it did after the Kim and Simon show, this booklet is a breath of fresh air and should be an inspiration to us all.

**Ron Barrett
Mt Druiett, NSW**

Sydney Exhibition Isle of Refuge

Highlights the plight of asylum seekers in detention centres in Australia and the South Pacific.

Ivan Dougherty Gallery
until 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, Savanhdry Vongpoothorn, Guan Wei, Mahmoud Yekta



Gordon Bennett Watch Tower 2002

Culture & Life

History and the GG

Can history be objective? If by history you mean the scientific law-governed process whereby various social forces struggle to resolve contradictions within and between certain phenomena affecting human society, then Communists must answer yes.

by Rob Gowland

What actually happened in the past, happened. That is axiomatic.

The same scientific processes that govern other phenomena underlie the development of social phenomena, whether trivial (the adoption of the bustle) or earth shattering (the outbreak of WW2). Marxist-Leninists know this by the philosophical term Historical Materialism.

How we present and interpret what happened (history in books and on television) depends on our class interest. Objectively, history is not kind to the various oppressive ruling classes at the different stages of human development.

For their part, the ruling class has a vested interest in ensuring that the people they oppress do not discover the truth about their relationship to the ruling class or the dirty tricks the ruling class use to maintain their rule.

So they falsify the accounts of history, and concomitantly the interpretations of it. Not just this bit or that bit, but on a grand scale.

The whole of history is broadly falsified by the bourgeoisie, in that it eschews any class analysis: class struggle, the motor for historical

change, is ignored or actively discounted in favour of the whims of individual temperament or psychology.

This great man or that great woman did it, for reasons peculiar to them. So it is useless to look for patterns or attempt to draw universal conclusions. Or so we are meant to believe.

By using various subtle (and some not so subtle) pressures and lavers, the ruling class maintains its dominance over university history departments, over popular publishing and of course over the mass media. Even when Marxist-Leninist historians are able to successfully get their works published, they will be ignored or rubbished in the bourgeois media (or, worse, damned with faint praise).

And they will be totally swamped in the mass media by articles, books and television programs all presenting variations of the bourgeois version history, especially recent history.

Regular readers of this paper will know that I have on numerous occasions in either this column or *Worth Watching* taken some article or program to task for falsifying history. There was a time when this falsifying occurred only every few weeks. Now it seems to occur every few days.

At the end of June beginning of July we had a veritable avalanche of rewriting history, or at least promoting the bourgeois version at the considerable expense of objective truth.

First there was the Governor-General designate, Major-General Michael Jeffery, who did not hesitate to display his reactionary credentials (which no doubt got him the job) by proclaiming that the Vietnam War was "justified".

This blatant attempt by US capitalism to crush a colonial people's struggle for their freedom was one of the most universally condemned wars of modern times, on



G-G in waiting – Jeffery with Prince Charles in 1975

a par with Fascist Italy's invasion of Abyssinia.

The Vietnamese had already kicked the stuffing out of the original colonial power, France. The US, fresh from being fought to standstill in Korea, was not going to allow the "Reds" in Vietnam to upset US plans for the containment and overthrow of "Red China" and the USSR.

Michael Jeffery took part in the Vietnam War. His justification of it is of course partly an attempt to justify himself, for having been an enthusiastic participant in one of the dirtiest and least creditable wars of the 20th century.

The action of the Whitlam Labor Government in withdrawing Australia from the war presumably saved Jeffery from being part of the US side's ignominious defeat. The scenes of helicopters lifting US personnel and hangers on from the roof of the US Embassy in Saigon as the Vietnamese people's forces rolled inexorably towards them remains

one of the great, heartening images of the last century.

Scarcely had Jeffery used his position to try to reshape the past than reactionary journalist Paul Sheehan rushed in to back him up, in a piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* headed "Truth still the casualty of a just war". The theme of the article was summed up in the lead as: "Look behind the lies" [of the anti-war lobby] "and you'll see Michael Jeffery is right about Vietnam".

Hard advice to follow, since what Jeffery and Sheehan mean by lies, the rest of the world knows to be objective truth. Sheehan does however give us a further example of the new GG's political thinking:

"If the North Vietnamese Army had been allowed to march unhindered into South Vietnam, the repercussions would have been felt through Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Burma", Jeffery told Sheehan.

This is just the tired old domino

theory, so totally discredited one is amazed to see it trotted out again in apparent seriousness.

Of more importance for this article is the way Sheehan and Jeffery simplify the Vietnam War into a straightforward invasion of South Vietnam by North Vietnam.

The previous 20 years or so of fighting by the Vietnamese (north and south) against the Japanese and the French is simply forgotten about, as is the Paris Peace Agreement, the temporary division of the country into North and South, the intervention by the USA, the sabotaging of the elections, the installation of various puppet military regimes, etc.

Next week we will look at some of the other historical rewrites that occurred at the end of June. And also at how Sheehan and Jeffery's falsifying of history to justify colonialist intervention in Vietnam has less to do with Vietnam itself than with justifying colonialist intervention by the Australian military in the Pacific. ☘

Rob Gowland
previews
ABC & SBS
public television
programs

Sun July 13~
~ Sat July 19

Great men and women do not make history; history is made by the contending of social and economic forces in response to the economic conditions prevailing at any given time and place.

The clash of different class interests creates conditions in which outstanding individuals can come to the fore, propelled by specific class forces and aided or constrained by objective conditions.

For British imperialism, one such individual was Arthur Wellesley, better known as the Duke of Wellington, the military commander who defeated the bid by French imperialism, in the form of the Emperor Napoleon, to conquer Europe.

The Granada Bristol series *Wellington: The Iron Duke* (ABC 7.30pm Sundays) began last week. It resolutely pursues the "great men make history" thesis. You'd think Napoleon's conquests were the result of some personal whim of Boney's rather than the inevitable result of the French bourgeoisie's drive to replace feudalism in Europe with a capitalist empire.

Aside from that rather fundamental flaw, the series, as presented by military historian Professor Richard Holmes, is well done. Using a mixture of documentary and dramatic re-enactments, Holmes makes the tactics of the contending military leaders clear and compelling.

A similar approach is to be found in the series *Chiefs* which begins this week on SBS at the same time (SBS 7.30pm Sundays). It too uses a blend of

documentary and dramatic re-enactment to tell the story of the Native Americans' wars of resistance to the white invasion of their lands.

The series focuses on five of the more famous chiefs of the First Nations of North America: Sitting Bull of the Sioux, Plains Cree leader Poundmaker, Black Hawk of the Sauk and Fox nations on the Mississippi, and from the 18th century Joseph Brant of the Mohawks and Pontiac of the Ottawa.

Through the stories of their various campaigns, uprisings and rebellions, the series shows the power, spirit and struggle of the Native Americans.

The first two episodes deal with the period following the Civil War, when the victorious capitalist North set about adding all the riches of the Indian lands in "the West" (including vast areas of agricultural land and most importantly gold) to the USA.

A hard-fought Sioux resistance to this western expansion, led by warrior and healer Sitting Bull, was briefly successful: a treaty was signed in which the United States gave the Sioux control of their territory for all time. However, the lure of wealth meant that breaking their word would soon be the least of the crimes that the capitalist USA would commit against the American Indians.

As McDonald's and other AUS-style fast food outlets proliferate across our land, the Howard Government seems intent on pushing forward US-style deregulation or "self regulation" of food standards. If government regulators lose their teeth, we will be left at the mercy of the commercial interests of manufacturers and distributors.

In the US, since 1998 more than 100 million pounds (over 45 million kg) of meat has been recalled due to suspected bacterial contamination. As recently as the middle of last year, the USA's largest meat processor had to recall 500,000 pounds (227,000 kg) of beef contaminated with e. coli bacteria.

As *Cutting Edge: Modern Meat*



Taut, idiomatic thriller (*Crossfire*)

(SBS 8.30pm Tuesday) points out, in a country where the hamburger has become the food of choice, today's highly-industrialised meat business has fundamentally changed the composition of the typical American burger.

Modern Meat takes viewers inside the US meat industry, beginning at the cattle ranch and then moving on to the "feedlot" – a huge industrial holding pen where as many as 100,000 cattle are held together until they are fat enough to be slaughtered. Then the carcasses are sent down an assembly line where modern advances have enabled some meat companies to strip as many as 400 carcasses an hour – nearly three times as many as in 1970.

With such enormous numbers of cattle now being herded, fattened, slaughtered, and ground up together, it's virtually impossible to determine how many beasts contribute to any individual burger.

But "cows tend to produce faeces (and) faeces is pri-

marily bacteria", says Glen Morris, a microbiologist at the University of Maryland and a former US Department of Agriculture (USDA) official. "When those bacteria are spread around, there's ample opportunity for bacteria to be spread from one cow to the next."

There is also increasing evidence that the modern meat industry's widespread use of antibiotics to promote growth and keep livestock healthy may result in the development of bacteria strains that are resistant to antibiotic treatment.

Through interviews with current and former USDA officials, meat inspectors, food safety experts, and industry representatives, *Modern Meat* reveals how the powerful US meat industry attempts to resist government regulations aimed at preventing contaminated meat from ending up in supermarkets and fast food chains.

"I think what the [meat] industry is saying is that they don't want to be accountable for the product that they're selling", says Eric Schlosser, stating the bleeding obvious. Schlosser is author of *Fast Food Nation*, an exposé of the American meat and fast food industry. "This industry has fought against food safety inspection for a hundred years."

Laurence Olivier dismissed Marilyn Monroe as "a model" rather than an actress, but in

the hands of a sensitive director she would take direction perfectly and the camera loved her.

Famous Faces: Marilyn Vs Marilyn (ABC 9.30pm Saturday) deals with the period between her divorce from Joe Di Maggio and her marriage to Arthur Miller, when she tried to shape her own destiny, taking lessons with Lee Strasberg and setting up a production company with photographer Milton Greene.

The program uses hitherto unpublished photos from the Greene archives to present an in depth look at one of the most tragic victims of the rapacious (but "glamorous") movie industry.

This week's RKO movie is *Crossfire* (ABC 10.30pm Saturday). Made in 1947 and directed by left-winger Edward Dmytryk (soon to be jailed and blacklisted as a Communist), the film is a taut, idiomatic thriller.

Definitely made in the tough '40s thriller tradition, it also broke new ground by making its killing a hate crime (the victim in the film is Jewish, in Richard Brooks' original novel he was homosexual).

Robert Young is excellent as the detective, but it's Robert Ryan who stands out with a powerful performance as a psychopathic bigot.

Gloria Grahame and Robert Mitchum are also in the cast of this first rate movie. ☺



Sydney
CELEBRATE
The election of
Warren Smith
to the position of
Assistant Branch Secretary
Central NSW Branch
Maritime Union of Australia

Saturday 12th July 6.30pm
NSW Teachers Club
33 Mary St, Surry Hills

Buffet \$20
Refreshments available
Bookings appreciated

Contact:
Ina Heidtman 0419 407 907
Dave Hauser 0403 994 099
(Maritime Branch CPA)

Sydney
Dr Drew Cottle
Speaking on
the Brisbane Line
Sunday 27th July, 2-5pm
PSU House
Level 7, 191 Thomas Street, City

All welcome No charge
Afternoon tea provided

Organised by
the Sydney Branch of the Labour History Society

Dr Cottle has carried out extensive research on this question, the subject of his recent book
THE BRISBANE LINE: A REAPPRAISAL
(Upfront Publishing, Leicestershire)
The book is available from www.amazon.co.uk

Sydney
Politics in the Pub
Every Friday night 6pm – 7.45pm
Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills
(across from the Chalmers St exit and Devonshire St tunnel at Central Station)
Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

July 11
THE US FREE TRADE AGREEMENT – WILL IT THREATEN AUSTRALIA'S INDEPENDENCE?
Pat Ranald, Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Convenor AFTINET;
Richard Harris, Head of Australian Screen Directors Association;
Jose Borghino, Australian Society of Authors

July 18
MODERNISATION OF CHINA – THE WAKING PANDA
Hans Heindrichke, Ass Prof Uni NSW,
Chinese & Indonesian Studies;
David Goodman, Director International Studies, UTS;
Peter King, Dept of Govt, Sydney Uni

July 25
THE IRAQ QWAR – DESTABILISING THE WORLD?
Prof Ahmead Shboul, Semitic Studies Uni Sydney;
Dr Michael Humphreys, School of Sociology Uni NSW

The Gaelic Club, like all clubs, is required to have non members sign in.
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Ten appalling lies we were told about Iraq

"The Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons." – George Bush, October 7, 2002.

There is a small sombre box that appears in the *New York Times* every day. Titled simply "Killed in Iraq", it lists the names and military affiliations of those who most recently died on tour of duty. One Wednesday's edition listed just one name: Orenthal J Smith, age 21, of Allendale, South Carolina.

by Christopher Scheer

The young, late OJ Smith was almost certainly named after the legendary running back, Orenthal J Simpson, before that dashing American hero was charged for a double-murder. Now his namesake has died in far-off Mesopotamia in a noble mission to, as our President put it on March 19, "disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger".

Today, more than three months after Bush's stirring declaration of war and nearly two months since he declared victory, no chemical, biological or nuclear weapons have been found, nor any documentation of their existence, nor any sign they were deployed in the field.

The mainstream press, after an astonishing two years of cowardice, is belatedly drawing attention to the unconscionable level of administrative deception. They seem surprised to find that when it comes to Iraq, the Bush administration isn't prone to the occasional lie of expediency but, in fact, almost never told the truth.

What follows are just the most outrageous and significant of the dozens of outright lies uttered by Bush and his top officials over the past year in what amounts to a systematic campaign to scare the bejezus out of everybody:

LIE #1: "The evidence indicates that Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program ... Iraq has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminium tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons." – President Bush, Oct. 7, 2002, in Cincinnati.

FACT: This story, leaked to and breathlessly reported by Judith Miller in the *New York Times*, has turned out to be complete baloney. Department of Energy officials, who monitor nuclear plants, say the tubes could not be used for enriching uranium. One intelligence analyst, who was part of the tubes investigation, angrily told *The New Republic*: "You had senior American officials like Condoleezza Rice saying the only use of this aluminum really is uranium centrifuges. She said that on television. And that's just a lie."

LIE #2: "The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

– President Bush, Jan. 28, 2003, in the State of the Union address.

FACT: This whopper was based on a document that the White House already knew to be a forgery thanks to the CIA. Sold to Italian intelligence by some hustler, the document carried the signature of an official who had been out of office for 10 years and referenced a constitution that was no longer in effect.

The ex-ambassador who the CIA sent to check out the story is angry: "They knew the Niger story was a flat-out lie", he told the *New Republic*, anonymously. "They [the White House] were unpersuasive about aluminum tubes and added this to make their case more strongly."

LIE #3: "We believe [Saddam] has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons." – Vice President Cheney, March 16, 2003 on *Meet the Press*.

FACT: There was and is absolutely zero basis for this statement. CIA reports up through 2002 showed no evidence of an Iraqi nuclear weapons program.

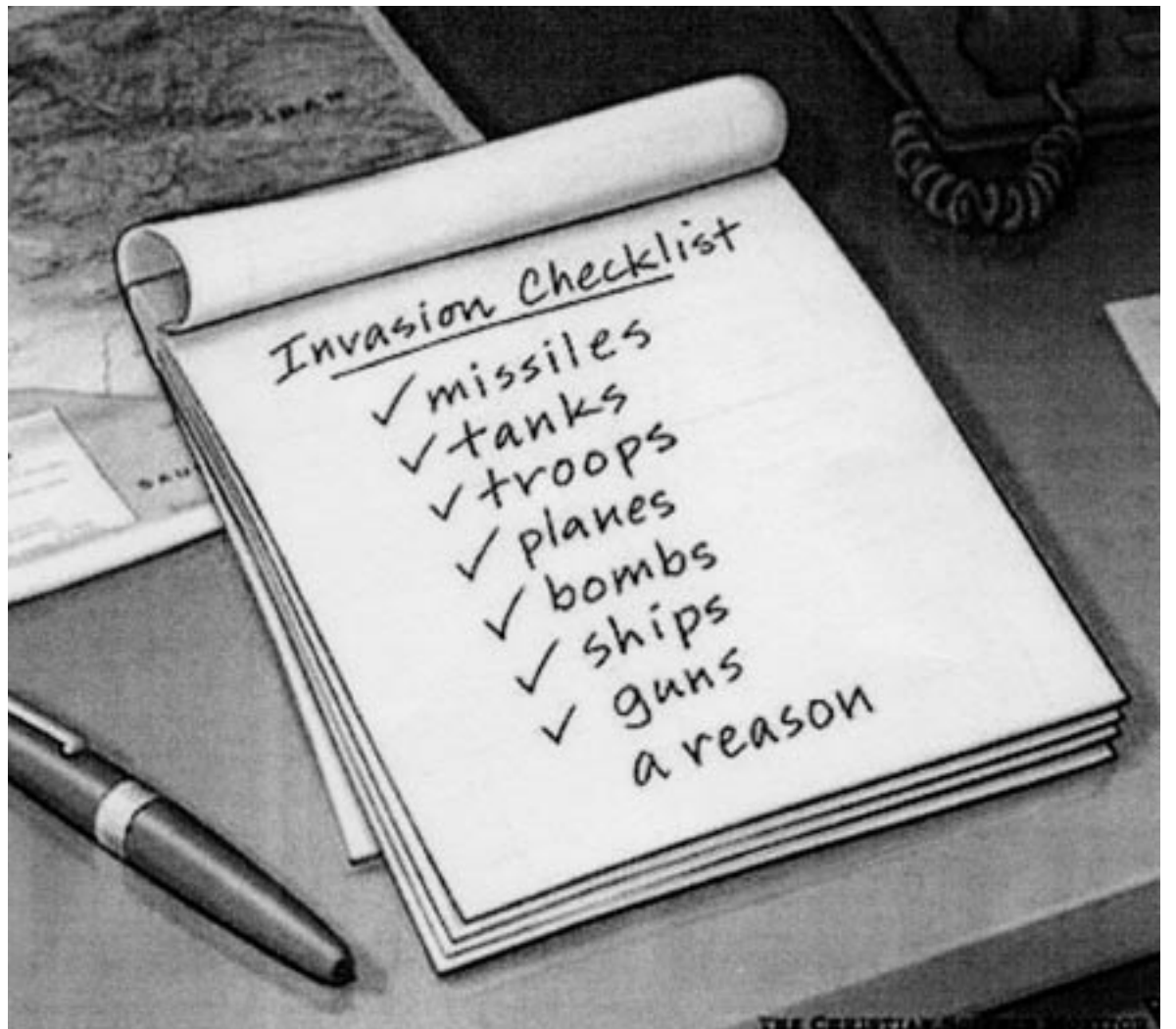
LIE #4: "[The CIA possesses] solid reporting of senior-level contacts between Iraq and al-Qaida going back a decade." – CIA Director George Tenet in a written statement released Oct. 7, 2002 and echoed in that evening's speech by President Bush.

FACT: Intelligence agencies knew of tentative contacts between Saddam and al-Qaida in the early '90s, but found no proof of a continuing relationship. In other words, by tweaking language, Tenet and Bush spun the intelligence 180 degrees to say exactly the opposite of what it suggested.

LIE #5: "We've learned that Iraq has trained al-Qaida members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases ... Alliance with terrorists could allow the Iraqi regime to attack America without leaving any fingerprints." – President Bush, Oct. 7.

FACT: No evidence of this has ever been leaked or produced. Colin Powell told the UN this alleged training took place in a camp in northern Iraq. To his great embarrassment, the area he indicated was later revealed to be outside Iraq's control and patrolled by Allied war planes.

LIE #6: "We have also discovered through intelligence that Iraq has a growing fleet of manned



and unmanned aerial vehicles that could be used to disperse chemical or biological weapons across broad areas. We are concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using these UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles] for missions targeting the United States." – President Bush, Oct. 2002.

FACT: Said drones can't fly more than 600 kilometres, and Iraq is more than 12,000 kilometres from the US coastline. Furthermore, Iraq's drone-building program wasn't much more advanced than your average model plane enthusiast. And isn't a "manned aerial vehicle" just a scary way to say "plane"?

LIE #7: "We have seen intelligence over many months that they have chemical and biological weapons, and that they have dispersed them and that they're weaponised and that, in one case at least, the command and control arrangements have been established." – President Bush, Feb. 8, 2003, in a national radio address.

FACT: Despite a massive nationwide search by US and British forces, there are no signs, traces or examples of chemical weapons being deployed in the field, or anywhere else during the war.

LIE #8: "Our conservative

estimate is that Iraq today has a stockpile of between 100 and 500 tons of chemical weapons agent. That is enough to fill 16,000 battlefield rockets." – Secretary of State Colin Powell, Feb. 5, 2003, in remarks to the UN Security Council.

FACT: Putting aside the glaring fact that not one drop of this massive stockpile has been found, as previously reported on AlterNet our own intelligence reports show that these stocks – if they existed – were well past their use-by date and therefore useless as weapon fodder.

LIE #9: "We know where [Iraq's WMD] are. They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south, and north somewhat." – Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, March 30, 2003, in statements to the press.

FACT: Needless to say, no such weapons were found, not to the east, west, south or north, somewhat or otherwise.

LIE #10: "Yes, we found a biological laboratory in Iraq which the UN prohibited." – President Bush in remarks in Poland, published internationally June 1, 2003.

FACT: This was reference to the discovery of two modified truck trailers that the CIA claimed were potential mobile biological weapons laboratories. But British and American experts – including the State Department's intelligence wing in a report released last month – have since declared this to be untrue.

According to the British, and much to Prime Minister Tony Blair's embarrassment, the trailers are actually exactly what Iraq said they were; facilities to fill weather balloons, sold to them by the British themselves.

Rhetoric, but no proof

So, months after the war, we are once again where we started – with plenty of rhetoric and absolutely no proof of this "grave danger" for which OJ Smith died.

The Bush administration is now scrambling to place the blame for its lies on faulty intelligence, when in fact the intelligence was fine; it was their abuse of it that was "faulty".

Rather than apologise for leading us to a pre-emptive war based on impossibly faulty or shamelessly distorted "intelligence" or offering his resignation, our sly madman in the White House is starting to sound more like that other OJ.

Like the man who cheerfully played golf while promising to pursue "the real killers", Bush is now vowing to search for "the true extent of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs, no matter how long it takes".

On the terrible day of the 9/11 attacks, five hours after a hijacked plane slammed into the Pentagon, retired General Wesley Clark received a strange call from someone (he didn't name names) representing the White House position: "I was on CNN, and I got a call at my home saying, 'You got to say this is connected. This is state-sponsored terrorism. This has to be connected to Saddam Hussein'", Clark told *Meet the Press* anchor Tim Russert. "I said, 'But – I'm willing to say it, but what's your evidence?' And I never got any evidence."

And neither did we. Christopher Scheer is the Managing Editor of AlterNet.org

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