

## Blair Athol miners win jobs back Australia's longest industrial dispute ends

The mineworkers' union (CFMEU) has welcomed a ruling by a Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) that 16 coal mineworkers who were unfairly dismissed at Rio Tinto's Blair Athol mine more than five years ago should be given preference of employment at the company's new neighbouring Hail Creek operation.

CFMEU Mining and Energy District General President Tony Maher said the decision should lead to the re-employment of the unfairly dismissed mineworkers and bring to an end Australia's longest running industrial dispute. The Blair Athol mineworkers and their families marked the fifth anniversary of their unfair dismissal on July 21.

"The Commission has thrown down the challenge to Rio Tinto to heal the wounds that have been festering since these 16 mineworkers were victimised five years ago", said Tony Maher.

"The time has come when even the most powerful of multinationals must search its corporate soul, when it must measure the enormous power it wields over the lives of ordinary people against the consequences of the immoral exercise of that power."

Mr Maher said that rather than feeling triumphant, the union was relieved that the years of suffering for these families were coming to an end. "These families deserve

the chance to get on with their lives. They have been through an enormous ordeal and despite the suffering and hardship they have experienced they want to put the bitterness of the past behind them."

Last week's decision follows on from the record \$25 million unfair dismissal settlement at Rio Tinto's Hunter Valley No.1 and Mount Thorley mines in NSW in May last year.

### The dispute

**21 July 1998** – 16 Blair Athol mineworkers sacked. Union launches unfair dismissal application.

**9 April 2001** – AIRC Commissioner Hodder rules that the 16 were unfairly dismissed and the victims of "unfair and unjust treatment" because of their union membership. The Commission also confirmed the existence of a "Secret Black List" used to victimise the 16 and ruled that their retrenchments were not merit-based.



Photo: Common Cause

He describes management treatment of blacklisted employees as a "blood sport". Commissioner Hodder orders the reinstatement of the 16 with full back pay. Rio Tinto appeals but continues to pay the men while refusing to allow them back to work at Blair Athol.

**12 December 2002** – By a majority of 2-1, Full Bench of Commission upholds Commissioner Hodder's finding that the 16 men were unfairly dismissed. In their

decision the Full Bench said: "We find for ourselves that the terminations were harsh, unjust and unreasonable".

However, because the Workplace Relations Act provides for only six months pay as compensation for unfair dismissals, and the men had been paid more than this, the Full Bench declined to order their reinstatement at Blair Athol.

**7 February 2003** – Union lodges exceptional matters ap-

plication under Section 120A of the Workplace Relations Act 1996, for an order requiring Rio Tinto to re-employ the 16 unfairly dismissed Blair Athol mineworkers at the company's new neighbouring Hail Creek mine in Central Queensland.

**25 July 2003** – Full Bench orders that the 16 unfairly dismissed mineworkers be given preference of employment at Rio Tinto's new Hail Creek coal mine. ✪

## It's now or never to save Medicare

**"Whatever the Government says, full insurance will be means tested from now on and there will be GP co-payments for most people. These would be uncapped and unpredictable, and only a fool would believe that they will not rise or eventually extend to other services."**

by Bob Britton

These are the words of John Deeble, Adjunct Professor of Economics at the Australian National University and a chief architect of the original Medicare scheme. They contain a clear warning that the Federal Government's proposed changes to Medicare will destroy universal free health care in Australia by attacking one of its cornerstones: bulk-billing.

Already active organisations have sprung up across the country in defence of Medicare and against the further encroachment of corporate interests into the national health system.

People are angry enough that private health insurers are favoured with a gift of a whopping \$3.6 billion a year via the Private Health Insurance Rebate and other devices.

And, they will be even angrier

if these insurance companies are given the extra opportunity of insuring those who fail the means test for the new "gap" – i.e. the difference between the Medicare rebate paid to GPs and the amount they may choose to charge over and above that amount (the co-payment).

*The Guardian* reported last week that a rally in Sydney attracted a wide range of community organisations and at least 700 participants. Other major events, like the National Health Care Summit to be held in the Old Parliament House in Canberra from August 17-19 will help to maintain the momentum of this emerging people's movement.

However, the importance of what is at stake dictates that this movement must quickly expand to exert the necessary political influence to save Medicare.

Data from the OECD and distributed recently by the ACTU makes the alternatives clear. Figures compare the United States – with its mostly private, managed health system that Howard is pursuing – and Australia and a number of other OECD countries with largely publicly funded systems.

Infant mortality in Australia stood at 5.7 per 1000 live births in 2002. In the USA the figure was 7.1. Life expectancy in Australia is 79 years on average compared

to 76.5 years in the US. There are 3.8 hospital beds per 1000 Australians but only three in the United States.

Examination of the figures for the UK, Germany France and Canada show an unmistakable relationship between health outcomes and the level of public funding.

Perhaps most instructive is the fact that the US spends a higher proportion of its GDP (national income) to maintain its health system (13 per cent) than does Australia (8.3 percent). Health spending per person in the US is US\$4361 per annum compared to just US\$2211 in Australia.

continued on page 3

Alston's ABC  
vendetta  
- p3

Geelong Wool  
Smorgon Steel  
- p4

Canberra's  
"Stupid White Men"  
- p5

Liars for leaders  
- p7

Murders, racism &  
Lockheed Martin  
- p9

**Howard's racist rift**

Last week Prime Minister Howard had a talk with hand-picked members of the Aboriginal community and claimed to be concerned about the extent of domestic violence in the Indigenous community. One newspaper declared in a banner headline: "New era hailed as PM heals black rift". What rubbish!

After stubbornly resisting for years the main needs and demands of the Aboriginal people for employment, health care, housing, land rights, a treaty, their recognition as the original occupiers and owners of Australia, his refusal to say even "sorry" for the stolen generations, refusal to use the word "reconciliation" – one talk with a group of Aboriginal leaders on one question is hardly likely to "heal the rift".

The needs outlined above of Indigenous people were dismissed at the meeting as "old language" by the Prime Minister. Howard's tactic is to divert attention from the failures of the Government's policies and the strong criticism it has received not only from within Australia but also internationally.

That domestic violence is a serious problem cannot be denied. But the solution is not to be found in the feigned sympathy of the PM. Domestic violence – and substance abuse – stems from inadequate employment, lack of housing, education and health services, feelings of hopelessness and racial discrimination.

Nor is domestic violence confined to the Indigenous community where the higher levels are a product of more than 200 years of dispossession, racism and ongoing discrimination – which the Howard Government continues to this day.

At the same time as Howard was "listening" to the "cry from the heart" of Aboriginal women, 12 Liberal and National Party politicians were claiming that Aboriginal people cannot manage money "because of their culture".

Geoff Clark, Chairman of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), responded that "whitefella politicians are talking on behalf of a mob which has overseen multi-billion dollar losses with the collapse of companies such as HIH, OneTel and Enron in the US". Of course, Geoff Clark was not invited to the talks with the PM.

Besides diverting attention from the basic needs of all Aboriginal communities Howard has another agenda. Welfare "reform" is part of it. "Reform" in Howard's hands inevitably means taking something away from those in need.

Right-wing political forces have always opposed government funding for Indigenous programs, no matter what form it has taken or for what purpose it was to be used. Howard and the Liberals/Nationals in government are implementing this agenda. Their policies are modeled on the One Nation party's fascist program to wipe out Indigenous culture and history, and are fundamentally racist and socially divisive.

Howard's ploy also comes at a time when his Government is out to destroy ATSIC, the national Indigenous organisation that has done a tremendous amount under difficult conditions to provide services to Indigenous communities. This is why the Government, through its Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Philip Ruddock, is savagely attacking ATSIC and its leaders.

Aboriginal representatives are being misled if they think that the Prime Minister's "sympathy" will lead to anything but a blind ally.

**Double standards**

Meanwhile, Geoff Clark has been sent a "please explain" letter and threatened with removal from his position as chairman of ATSIC by Philip Ruddock because, at taxpayers' expense, he took his wife with him while attending a conference in Ireland. Time taken – 10 days. Total cost \$31,000. The trip was approved by ATSIC and by Ruddock.

In August of last year Minister Ruddock made a trip to Europe together with his wife. Time taken 18 days. Cost \$122,165.58.

In October he again went to Europe and some Asian countries. Time spent 15 days. Cost \$113,404.67.

Total cost of the two trips was \$235,570.25.

John Howard during calendar year 2002, went tripping with his wife and entourage – cost to taxpayers – \$3,551,035. On one of his excursions he spent four nights in the royal suite at a Rome hotel. Cost \$171,000. This included a \$10,000 late checkout fee.

No-one is sending them a "please explain" letter and threatening their removal from office if their explanations are unsatisfactory. Perhaps they should.

**PRESS FUND**

Howard and Bush are already discussing punishment for Australian captives Hicks and Habib. But neither the charge, nor the country of jurisdiction, has been announced. Such cases aren't covered by Australian or (probably) US law. However, "Justice" Minister Ellison has hinted that the Australian Government would charge them with specially-introduced laws, presumably retrospective, if they're brought home. We'll bring you more on this amazing saga, but in the meantime we earnestly seek your contribution to the Press Fund. Our thanks go to this week's two contributors, as follows:

M Davis \$10, Peter C Reed \$20.

This week's total \$50 Progressive total: \$6600

**Divisions in the Sydney peace movement**

**In September 2002, forces linked to three groups – the Palm Sunday Committee, the Sydney Network for Peace and No War – came together to found the Walk Against the War Coalition.**

The Walk Against the War Coalition successfully organised the mass protests against the invasion and occupation of Iraq. However, behind the successful actions there were a range of conflicts on organisational and political matters.

The political position and behaviour of some groups in the Walk Against the War Coalition provoked increasing anger and frustration among a range of the affiliates. In response, they began in April to discuss how best to continue and develop the anti-war work in Sydney. The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was invited into this process in mid-June. It culminated in the formation of the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition on July 7.

Almost all the members of the Walk Against the War Coalition were invited to participate in the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition. It is incorrect that, as Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) member Nick Everett claims, the new coalition was "kept secret from many affiliates of the Walk Against the War Coalition, including the NSW Greens, Socialist Alliance, Muslim organisations and representatives of local peace groups, solidarity organisations and many individuals who have been active in the peace movement." It is correct that the Socialist Alliance was not one of the groups invited to join the new coalition.

The CPA made it clear that it does not in principle support what amount to organisational bans in a broad movement. They undermine the concept of a broad coalition in which a range of groups, whose policies and approaches may diverge on many questions, come together to work on those issues held in common.

We hold the view that organisational measures do not solve political and tactical differences. Such conflict will continue, although in different forms, and will still have to be fought out politically and over time.

However, the principle of trying

to unite the broadest possible movement should never be treated as an absolute, isolated from other considerations.

Our main concern remains to work with other groups to consolidate and develop the anti-war movement in Sydney on as broad a basis as possible. The new Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition has a far broader base among trade unions, community and peace groups, sections of the ALP and religious bodies than do the ultra-left groups.

We also believe that the composition of the new coalition can provide an effective basis for much more sustained work in the trade unions to make the slogan "peace is union business" real.

The Charter of the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition brings together anti-war and anti-globalisation issues – a move we regard as positive.

The quality of the work of the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition and its popular influence will be determined over time. The degree to which trade unionists, community organisations and younger people, especially on university and college campuses, will become involved will also be determined by the attractiveness and vigour of the activities of the new coalition.

Claims made by ultra-left groups that the changes will undermine the anti-war movement and exclude the left depend on whether ultra-left and Trotskyist organisations are to be seen as genuine left groups and whether they are prepared to take a more constructive approach in the coalitions they join than has often been the case in the past.

There are many experiences in other areas of political work that do not lead us to give a positive answer to this question.

CPA members in the Walk Against the War Coalition had been concerned for some time about the disruptive role of the DSP and some other ultra-left (Trotskyist) groups in the anti-war campaign in Sydney.

While anti-war coalitions in other States issued leaflets and other material explaining and analysing events in the Middle East, in Sydney the Walk Against the War Coalition was generally unable to achieve consensus and was therefore only able to publicise slogans and events. This was a serious weakness.

It became a greater problem, which had the potential to destroy efforts to inform and educate the community, at a time when mass mobilisations were on the wane.

The need to confront new issues – the threats against North Korea (DPRK), Syria and Iran, and the free trade negotiations between Australia and the US are just two examples – as well as the ongoing campaign against the occupation and privatisation of Iraq demand more public education. But they also make the likelihood of political divisions and blocking actions even greater.

There were on-going divisions on the Coalition's attitude to the United Nations, on questions including the number and selection of speakers and the approach to the organisation of street actions.

There was concern about the approach of the ultra left groups to the blossoming local peace groups. The local groups they dominate have focussed on an intensive program of actions irrespective of the ability of communities to cope. The real potential for these groups, in our opinion, lies in them concentrating on community work and drawing previously inactive people into membership of and activity in the local groups.

Many active anti-war groups and individuals in Sydney distrust the DSP, believing that the prime focus of their activities is not to build the anti-war movement but to expand their own party's membership and influence.

For CPA members in Sydney, as elsewhere in Australia, the task remains to link and to build – in the best way possible in the objective circumstances – the anti-globalisation and anti-war movements, reinforcing in every way possible their anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly, democratic features. ✪

**HIROSHIMA NEVER AGAIN****ADELAIDE**

2003 Hiroshima/Nagasaki Commemoration  
Public Forum: A world free of nuclear weapons  
Sun 3 August, 2-4pm  
The Bishop Auditorium  
Trades Hall, 11 South Tce, Adelaide

**PERTH**

Saturday 9th Aug 1pm  
Perth Concert Hall, march down St Georges Tce to  
Forrest Place  
Organised by the No War Alliance

**SYDNEY**

Sat 9th Aug 12 noon  
Assemble Town Hall Square  
march to Belmore Park  
Organised by Hiroshima Day Committee

**WOLLONGONG**

Hiroshima Day Commemoration  
Wed 6th Aug 8am  
Peace Plaque  
Wollongong Mall amphitheatre

Hiroshima Day Rally  
Sat 9th Aug 11am  
Wollongong Mall amphitheatre  
Organised by Wollongong No War

**VICTORIA**

More info from Vicepeace 03 9659 3582

**Moonee Ponds**

Hiroshima Day Vigil  
Wed 6th Aug 6-7.30 pm  
The Point (main road intersection)

**Belgrave**

Hiroshima Day Commemoration  
Wed 6th Aug at 6.30pm  
Belgrave Library, Reynolds Lane  
Info: 9754 8463

**Melbourne**

Nagasaki Day Rally  
Ban all nuclear weapons  
Sat 9th August 12 noon  
State Library

**Geelong**

Sun 10th July  
Stall at the Belmont Market (near K-Mart)  
Fold paper peace cranes  
to be delivered to Japan's Peace Memorial

**BRISBANE**

Hiroshima Day Candlelight Procession  
Wed 6th Aug 5pm  
King George Square

# Alston's ABC vendetta

Enraged at rejection of his latest criticism of the ABC, Federal Communications Minister Richard Alston is considering referring matters to the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), and has recommended the establishment of a special committee to monitor ABC "bias".

by Peter Mac

Alston had attacked ABC for its coverage of the war on Iraq, and in particular for a degree of criticism of the war by ABC Radio's current affairs program *AM*. However, in a 130-page report, the ABC complaints review section rejected 66 of Alston's 68 points of criticism of the war coverage.

The review team's conclusion, which was backed by ABC management, was that only one news item was "sarcastic", and another "speculative". Neither constituted a serious breach of journalistic standards, and the Minister's *bête noire*, journalist Linda Mottram, was not found guilty of any such breach.

The ABC's complaints review executive, Murray Green, stated bluntly last week that the Minister seemed to want the ABC to be either passive or pro-Coalition, in its news reporting.

He accused the Minister of selectively quoting out-of-context passages from ABC broadcasts, and of ignoring the ABC editorial charter's requirement that the pursuit of issues be both questioning and enterprising.

In point of fact, the *AM* program was one of the few sections of the Australian media to adopt such a principled approach during the attack of the "coalition of the willing" on Iraq. Most news and current affairs programs (including, alas, most of the other ABC programs) were either aggressively chauvinistic, or meekly submissive to government claims that the war was justified and necessary.

The Minister is not the only strident critic of the ABC, which now has the most popular news service in Australia. The imperiously conservative chairman of the ABA, Professor David Flint, has frequently voiced contemptuous and highly personal criticism of ABC personnel, and of the organisation's coverage of the war.

However, when push came to shove Alston's attacks on the national broadcaster were not backed by the ABA, which has upheld only two complaints against the ABC over the last three years, as opposed to 20 against the Channel Nine network – hence the Minister's "fall-back" recommendation for an ABC committee of review.

The Prime Minister stopped short of adopting his Minister's recommendation for a permanent ABC committee of review, and stated only that he agreed with "some" of Alston's 68 points of criticism.

In an intriguing sequel to the Alston complaints saga, ABC management has so far resisted pressure from the Israeli ambassador to cancel a planned screening of the program *Israel's Secret Weapon*, which examines Israel's development of weapons of mass destruction. The screening is scheduled for August 21.

An ABC spokesman stated that "The ABC strongly believes that the program in question is appropriate for the scheduled timeslot, and encourages Australians to watch it and make up their own minds". And so do we. ✪



Defend ABC rally in Sydney

Photo: Tom Pearson

## Unthinkable, undrinkable Coca Cola's exploitation and murder

On July 22, tens of thousands of unionists around the world joined an international day of protest against the gross violations by the Coca Cola company of human rights in Colombia. Colombia's National Union of Food Industry Workers, calling for a boycott of Coca Cola products, accused the company of using death squads to get rid of union activists.

Coca-Cola's subsidiary in Colombia, Pan-American Beverage, has been implicated in the killing of nine workers. Two others have been exiled and 48 other workers have being forcibly placed into exile. Other workers have been imprisoned for their union activities.

The boycott has the support of Colombia's main trade union federation, the CUT.

A major protest in Australia was organised by the Victorian Trades Hall Council where hundreds rallied in Melbourne's Federation Square. Secretary of the Victorian

Trades Hall Council, Leigh Hubbard, said the multi-national company should be held to account for the corporate behaviour of all of its subsidiaries around the world.

"The parent company, Coca-Cola in Atlanta in the United States, cannot continue to absolve itself of any responsibility for the violation of human rights by its franchisees in a number of countries around the world.

"This is the dark side of globalisation. The murder and intimidation of trade unionists in countries like Colombia, Guatemala, the Philippines and many others will

not be tolerated by workers and trade unionists", Mr Hubbard said.

At the Melbourne rally Mr Hubbard urged workers in Victoria to refrain from buying Coca-Cola products for a day as a gesture of solidarity with trade unionists in Colombia.

"While we don't endorse an on-going boycott of Coke products, we are supporting this international day of action. We would ask the general public to spare a thought for the working people of Colombia who face daily intimidation and violence at the hands of paramilitary thugs", Mr Hubbard said.

In the US, the United Steelworkers of America and the International Labour Rights Fund have filed a suit in a US court against Coca Cola on behalf of Colombia's National Union of Food Industry Workers. ✪

## It's now or never to save Medicare

continued from page 1

Even with all this spending, millions of Americans go without health cover or insurance companies deny them the medications and treatment they need when they are insured.

Finance capital and other corporate interests clean up every which way in the unfettered private enterprise US system. No wonder that the Federal Government and its corporate backers are keen to go down the American path!

### Cuba a shining example

The example of Cuba is also an important one to demonstrate the benefits of a free universal health care system. Of course Cubans have the additional advantage of real public control over health service delivery thanks to their socialist revolution. On the other hand, the Cuban people also suffer major handicaps in the form of scant natural resources, a criminal economic blockade led by the US and the collapse of the country's major trading partners in the early 1990s.

Cuba's infant mortality rate is seven per 1000 live births – a figure at the better end of the scale for developed countries and light years

away from the situation in nearby El Salvador where 29 die or Haiti where the figure is 91. The figure in Cuba was 60 before the revolution!

Cubans can now expect to live to age 78 while their counterparts in El Salvador live to be just 70 years old and only 49 in Haiti.

Cuba is today the country with the highest number of doctors per capita in the world, with almost twice as many as those that follow closest.

The country's scientific centres are working relentlessly to find preventive or therapeutic solutions for the most serious diseases. Infectious and contagious diseases like polio, malaria, neonatal tetanus, diphtheria, measles, rubella, mumps, whooping cough and dengue have been eradicated; tetanus, meningococcal meningitis, hepatitis B, leprosy, haemophilus meningitis and tuberculosis are fully controlled.

Given Cuba's health record under socialism, Australia's progress under that social system would be spectacular, indeed. However, the reality is that our immediate task is the building of an alliance to stop the Federal Government stripping the good features from Medicare. The future of these crucial services depends on the success of this movement. ✪

## Join the campaign

The Communist Party of Australia is putting all of its energy into building the movement to Save Medicare. Along with health workers and trade unions, pensioner, community and other organisations and individuals, CPA members are involved in the struggle for universal health care based on need, not wealth and privilege.

Visit the CPA's website at [www.cpa.org.au](http://www.cpa.org.au) to obtain a petition, a leaflet and a poster as well as a copy of Dr Con Costa's article "Destroying Medicare and Feeding Insurance Companies".

The petition is directed to the Senate which could block the changes being introduced by the Howard Government. It calls on the Senate "to retain and extend the universal public health insurance system Medicare by:

- restoring bulk billing for all;
- increasing financial support to the public health system;
- switching to the public Medicare system the \$3.6 billion currently used to prop up the private health insurance industry.

It calls on the Senate to oppose the "introduction of cuts to Medicare services, limitations on its coverage and the introduction of up-front fees for GP visits".

Print out a copy of the petition and start collecting signatures. When you have filled a sheet, please mail to CPA 65 Campbell Street, Surry Hills. 2010

### Join the campaign!

Note: If you do not have access to the internet, the copies of the article in booklet form, leaflets and the poster are available from the CPA (address below). The booklet is \$1 (plus 50 cents p&p) and donations towards the cost of the campaign are always appreciated.

# Geelong Wool picket intensifies

On July 18, women and children gathered at the Geelong Wool Combing (GWC) protest line on Friday to show their support for the 90 men and one woman who have been locked out of the workplace since May 11 because they refuse to accept a 25 percent pay cut and the forced casualisation of their jobs.

Wives, partners, children and women unionists from Melbourne and Geelong stood in on the protest line to give the striking workers a break and lift morale on the 68th day of the dispute.

Geelong Wool Combing is a German owned business in which Australian company Elders has a 41 percent share.

The company refuses to shift in its demand that the workers, members of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA), accept a 25 percent cut in pay, a reduction in their hours of work and the casualisation of their jobs.

One of the wives on the protest line, Therese, told the gathering that whole families were suffering as a result of the lock-out.

"We are here to support our husbands and partners who want to work. We are all suffering – the kids have to go without a lot now that we have no regular income. The

company has stooped so low that they deliberately held up our group certificates because they knew most of us would get a return. They don't want us to have an income – they want us to suffer.

"We are going to show them that they can't do this to people. If the guys back down now big companies all over Australia will do the same to other workers and other unions. We have to stay strong – somehow we will get through it", she said.

Jeordie came to the protest line with her twins.

"I've had to go back to work because of this dispute. I wanted to stay at home with my twins but we couldn't afford to eat if I didn't return to work.

"I believe in what my husband is doing. If this company gets away with what it is trying to do here every worker in this country is at risk of losing their basic rights." ❖

*"The company stooped so low that they deliberately held up our group certificates because they knew most of us would get a return. They don't want us to have an income - they want us to suffer."*



## Letter writing campaign

The TCFUA has a letter writing campaign designed to put pressure on Elders Australia and the Futuris Corporation which owns Elders, to take steps to intervene in this dispute.

The union is calling on people to write to Les Wozniczka, the CEO of the Futuris Corporation and board member of both Geelong Wool Combing and Elders Australia, to ask him to demand the company cease their lock out immediately and negotiate with the union.

Download and post a pro-forma letter from the TCFUA's website: [www.vthc.org.au/campaigns/20030528\\_Wool.html](http://www.vthc.org.au/campaigns/20030528_Wool.html)

Or write your own.

Futuris Corporation Limited  
Level 6, 27 Currie Street Adelaide SA 5000  
Tel: (+61 8) 8425 4999 Fax: (+61 8) 8410 1597

Support the workers by sending a protest letter to the company.

## LABOUR NOTES

A new study reported in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* has found that bullying bosses are a health risk to workers. Bullying and control freak bosses push their employees' blood pressure to above average levels, therefore increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. Macquarie Graduate School of Management Professor Peter Steane said, "The things we see too often are issues of bullying, unrealistic expectations on employees and subordinates and unwillingness to deal with the hard issues".

NSW textile workers are protesting against the State Labor Government's shock submission to the Productivity Commission's review into tariffs. NSW State Secretary of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union, Barry Tubner, said, "The submission to the Productivity Commission on behalf of the NSW Government in fact argues for a faster and more complete dismantling of tariffs and industry assistance than advocated by the Commission itself". Textile workers in regional cities in NSW have held rallies in protest against the Government's position.

Max "the Axe" Moore-Wilton is at it again. The chief executive of the Sydney Airport Corporation told airport workers that their benchmarks for success were Brisbane and Athens Airports. A week after announcing a 40 percent cut in airport staff it has been confirmed that 100 maintenance staff and a third of the operations division, responsible for security within the airport perimeter, will go. Mr Moore-Wilton was set a personal benchmark by the major shareholder in the Sydney Airports Corporation, the Macquarie Bank, of a \$380 million profit margin. Airport unions succeeded in forcing the corporation to negotiate the proposed changes after hearings in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

## Smorgon Steel workers More than 150 days and still going strong

Striking Electrical Trade Union (ETU) members at Smorgon Steel in Laverton, Victoria, have set a record of more than 150 days on the picket line.

The 22 workers remain defiant in their campaign for the 36-hour week, a condition that is currently enjoyed by every other contract electrician in Victoria.

The workers, many of whom had never been involved in an industrial dispute before, decided to set up the picket on February 24 after repeated attempts by the company to undermine their enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations by bringing in outside labour.

ETU organiser Gerry Glover said the Smorgon family prided themselves on being community minded yet refused to give their workers family friendly conditions.

"The Smorgons have appealed to this community [Footscray] to bail out our struggling football team yet they are not prepared to

lead by example in the area of generosity or fairness by giving these workers the 36-hour week.

"Many of the blokes on this picket line are paid up members of the Footscray Football Club. Will the Smorgons stop hurting them and their families and show a little bit of community spirit on this issue?"

Striking worker and ETU shop steward Ron Goodfellow said the workers were proud of their record on the picket line but would like the dispute to be resolved as quickly as possible.

"The guys are all pretty committed and willing to hang in as long as it takes but we hope it is over soon."

Mr Goodfellow said being involved in the dispute had made him more community minded.

"I would like to thank the general public and other trade unionists who have supported us. We have regular visits from members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union.

"Two guys from the Geelong Sub-Committee bring us a couple of red gum railway sleepers a week which we cut up for firewood. One of the boys who was with us on the picket line early on but found another job still comes and cooks us dinner every night. Another ETU member from Nestlé turned up the other night with a big box of chocolates.

"Being on a picket line changes your outlook. I was always a member of the union but not very active. Now I will always support other unionists when they have a picket line going", Mr Goodfellow said. ❖

## Arrogant Kodak sacks workers via the media

Kodak workers in Melbourne have been told of plans to cut their jobs via a company media release. The statement says that 6000 of its workers world-wide are about to be made redundant by Eastman Kodak, the world's biggest film and photographic company. In Australia, Kodak employs around 2800 people in its manufacturing and retail outlets.

Kodak workers and their union, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU) will have a stop work of the company's 500 employees at its plant in the Melbourne suburb of Coburg this week to discuss their response to this announcement.

"Using a media release to tell the workforce they are about to get the sack is just not on", LHMU Victorian Branch Secretary, Brian Daley, said.

"When the workers and the union contacted Kodak management today to find out what's behind the media release we were told to sit and wait till August 4 to find out

about our futures.

"We reckon this is a very poor way to treat a workforce which has worked closely and co-operated with management to keep the Kodak name alive in Australia."

The union has put in a dispute notice to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission over the lack of proper consultation by the company.

"In the late 1980s it was only because of the effective lobbying of Kodak's unionised workforce that we were able to save the Kodak plant. In the 1990s we again sat down with the management to protect our jobs", said Mr Daley.

In 1989, the then federal Labor Government gave Kodak \$36 million after its parent company in the US threatened to close down its Australian operations.

"So in 2003 to find out that we are going to lose jobs from a media release, or a small paragraph hidden in the back of the business pages of local media, is really the height of rudeness and arrogance on the part of management.

"And then to be told to sit quietly for 12 days just rubs salt into the wound", Brian Daley said.

Like other transnational corporations, the global capitalist crisis has affected Eastman Kodak's profit bottom line. Its net profit to the June quarter was US\$112 million, a drop of US \$172 million from the previous year. As usual, the company is going to try and make the workers pay, with their jobs, if not their entitlements. ❖

# Canberra's "Stupid White Men" are the problem not the solution

Troops and police from Australian and New Zealand and a sprinkling from several Pacific Island states have landed on Guadalcanal, the principle island in the Solomons Islands. They are set to re-establish "law and order" Australian style.

by Peter Symon

The economic, political and social problems that the people of the Solomon Islands and many other nations of the Pacific Ocean face will not be solved by the policies that the Australian Government intends to impose.

These policies are not the solution, they are the problem. They are the failed policies that have created what are derogatively referred to as "failed states" by Western leaders and the media.

Geoffrey Barker writing in the *Australian Financial Review* (23/7/03) summed it up: "For years Australia has used its regional dominance to push Pacific nations towards the nirvana of free-market economic reforms: tariff cuts, private sector promotion, reduced government spending, more rigorous public accountability and investment transparency".

## Dismal results

Barker recognises the disastrous results. He writes: "The results have been dismal in big countries like Papua New Guinea and Fiji; they have been non-existent in smaller, poorer places like Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Nauru."

Instead of accepting and recognising this truth, the Howard Government intends to continue to foist these policies on the Pacific Island states by military might.

This is the real agenda behind Howard's latest proposal to push for "pooled regional governance" of the Pacific Island nations.

Howard has questioned whether these "countries should have been given independence". Having raised this question it is inevitable that arguments will appear in the media that they should never have been granted independence by the former colonial powers and should not continue to exist as independent sovereign states.

Howard made it clear that acceptance of the Australian Government's plans will be a factor in determining future military intervention in other countries and allocation of overseas "aid".

He is reported as saying ominously that "Every case is different and you can't normally act unless you're asked, particularly as the countries aren't posing any particular immediate threat".

The phrase "not normally act" implies that he would be prepared to act pre-emptively even without any invitation from the target country.

**The arguments used to justify intervention in the Solomons will be recycled when the time comes to occupy Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, Nauru or any other states.**

## The arc of instability

Writing in the *Financial Review*, (23/7/03) Laura Tingle says, "The arc of instability is seen to extend from Indonesia to New Zealand, taking in problem spots such as East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji".

In the eyes of the Australian Government, all of these countries are ripe for intervention and occupation by Australian military forces and administrators.

## Private sector priorities

There are innumerable statements by Howard, Downer and other government representatives which prove that their principle objective is to recolonise and enforce economic rationalist priorities on all the Island states.

In August 2002, Howard said that the Island states must have law and order and security for people if they are "going to attract foreign investment and if they don't attract foreign investment in a globalised economy their living standards so far from rising run the risk of sinking further".

In August 1999, Alexander Downer told an audience at the Murdoch University that "good governance" meant, among other things, "support for sensible market-oriented economic policies...".

In May 1998, the Parliamentary Secretary to Alexander Downer, Kathy Sullivan MP, told an audience of businessmen in Cairns that the role of the private sector "... involves divesting governments of activities which can be better conducted by the private sector". She said, "Many of the activities which Australia funds in the infrastructure and education sectors [in its aid programs], also contribute to private sector development."

Kathy Sullivan said that, "Reducing poverty and encouraging sustainable development are at the heart of all our overseas aid efforts".

The exact opposite is the result of the policies being imposed.

What did the people of Papua New Guinea gain from the BHP gold mine at Ok Tedi? Did their standard of living rise from the devastation of their timber resources by foreign logging companies?

Did the people of Bougainville prosper from the Panguna Copper Mine owned by CRA (Rio Tinto)?

Have the people of West Papua benefited from the huge mines operated by American investment at Westernport?

In all cases the answer is a resounding "NO". Quite the opposite. It meant death and destruction, theft of lands, war, poisoning of rivers and the environment, and the exploitation of people and resources.

## Aid with strings

For some time the Australian Government used aid programs to enforce its economic policies. While continuing to use "aid" as a weapon, it now intends to use military force and the physical takeover of government operations in the Island states as well.

Military and police forces are already being trained for this purpose. At a press conference (22/7/03) Howard gave as an example of "aid" the "proposal that we trained police in Fiji for use in different parts of the region". This is nothing more than the preparation of a police force as mercenaries to be used to do Australia's dirty work "in different parts of the region".

In addition to the military and police forces sent to the Solomons there are also "45 law and justice bureaucrats and 20 other bureaucrats to set up budget and economic systems". (*The Age* 23/7/03)

The military, the police and the "justice" system of the Solomon Islands are to be controlled by Australian commanders and bureaucrats. The finances of the country's government are to be taken over by Australian managers.

## Recolonisation

What is this if not colonialism? Their mission is to make the Solomons "secure" for foreign investors.

We are told that these "failed states" might provide a haven for drug-runners, criminals and terrorists, that their governments are corrupt and they comprise an "arc of instability" to the north of Australia.

The arguments used to justify intervention in the Solomons will be recycled when the time comes to occupy Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, Nauru or any other states.

The chairman of directors of Oil Search Ltd, Trevor Kennedy, writing in *The Australian* (22/7/03), complained that he had not received support for an oil pipeline project running from Papua New Guinea to Queensland.

"Maybe this adventure in the Solomons will change things. Let's hope so because political and economic conditions in the Pacific continue to deteriorate...", Mr Kennedy wrote.

In an attempt to frighten Australians into supporting his project he threatens: "What do you do if half a million of them turn up in their canoes on Cape York peninsula? **A bit more preventive medicine is worth thinking about.**" (Emphasis added)

Obviously Mr Kennedy hopes that Australian troops will soon arrive in Papua New Guinea and make things "secure" for Oil Search Ltd. ❖



Military intervention – Australian troops on Guadalcanal



Like his lying counterparts in the US and Britain, PM Howard's credibility with the public has plummeted with a *Newsweek* survey showing that 67 percent of Australians feel they were misled by the Government over the reasons for the war on Iraq. And like his lying counterparts he's denying everything. "I acted in good faith. I was given intelligence assessments. I didn't massage them." Etc, etc. So, where are the weapons, Johnnie?

And here's why Johnnie lied and committed Australia to an illegal, immoral war. The loot and plunder of Iraq is getting into full swing with international consortiums of banks being formed to lobby for the management of Iraq's oil wealth. The US is to set up the Trade Bank of Iraq and among those rapacious financial institutions scrambling to get their hands on the goodies is the Australian and New Zealand Banking Group. The cheque's in the mail, Johnnie.

The NSW Carr Government's cash grab from the State's community-based clubs is another example of the anti-people nature of right-wing Labor. The club system operates on a democratic basis, with each club by law required to reinvest all surplus revenue in the club for the benefit of the members, or donate to charities and community organisations. The Government's new taxes on club gaming machines will see it rake in an extra \$1.6 billion over the next seven years. As a result many community and sporting organisations will face a loss of funds. And more than 39,600 people are employed by clubs in NSW. On the other hand, the Carr Government is free and easy with taxpayers' money when it comes to corporate welfare. Suffice to recall that it handed over the Sydney Showground to Rupert Murdoch's Fox Studios for a token rent plus \$70 million for refurbishing the site, a project that has now gone bust.

**CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK:** is the tobacco industry. A couple of weeks back the Sydney University Chancellor tried to get the tobacco industry into the institute's hallowed halls via the appointment of British American Tobacco chairman Nick Greiner to the chair of the University's new School of Government. The Chancellor denied there was a hidden agenda and that Greiner, as a former NSW Premier, was appointed based on his political career, such as it was. Strong opposition from the staff and University Senate, who knew a rat when they smelled one, blocked Greiner from taking the position. But big tobacco is a sly and devious power. Donna Staunton, for example, is the director of the National Breast Cancer Centre and is also on the board of the NSW workers' comp authority, WorkCover. It was revealed last week that Staunton was chief executive of the Tobacco Institute of Australia, 1994-95, a former lawyer with Clayton Utz, the legal firm that advised the tobacco industry to destroy evidence that it knew its product was addictive and fatal, and one time head of corporate relations at Philip Morris.

# Resistance to capitalist globalisation

Communist and Workers' Parties from all over the world, including the Communist Party of Australia, met in Athens on June 19 and 20 to exchange views and examine strategies in the fight against capitalist globalisation and war. The conference, which was convened by the Communist Party of Greece, was attended by 59 Parties with written contributions and messages of greeting received from a further 20.

by Dr Hannah Middleton

The Parties at the conference were largely agreed on their analysis of the imminent and great danger to the world as a result of corporate globalisation and the imperialist war drive.

The Communist Party of Canada summarised the components of the Bush offensive as:

- a "socio-economic offensive to impose "free trade" deals and other corporate 'globalisation' schemes on all national economies, forcing some to integrate into one imperialist cartel or another, while excluding others to the very margins of the global economy;

- unprecedented attacks on workers' rights and living conditions through privatization, the destruction of public programs and services, legislative attacks, and state repression;

- wholesale attacks on the democratic rights of the people, especially their right to organize and dissent; and

- the military-strategic offensive of U.S. imperialism and its allies to crush resistance and impose its global domination."

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) said "the process of globalisation itself intensifies these tendencies of war and aggression. This comes precisely because of the fact that in its efforts towards the economic recolonisation of the third world, globalisation has led to an intensification of economic exploitation on a world scale...."

"Further, the sharp widening of inequalities, both between the developing countries and the developed countries and between the rich and poor in all countries, is leading to large-scale deprivation and want. Such large-scale impoverishment of a majority of the world's people means the shrinkage of their capacity to be the consumers of the products that this globalised economy produces. This renders the entire process of globalisation to be simply unsustainable."

The Communist Party of the United States added: "The Bush doctrine is a radical new set of policies marked by overwhelming military superiority, preemptive attack, regime change, first use of nuclear weapons as offensive weapons, the militarisation of space, military occupation, direct colonial rule and elimination of national sovereignty."

## USA cannot win its war

The Communist Party of Denmark commented: "A policy like that pursued by the US provokes resistance. Not only resistance from the broad popular masses, who are against war, but also from other states, whose intentions may be as dirty as those of the US, but who have opposite interests. The more the US persists in this policy, the more resistance it will provoke. Therefore the USA cannot win its war against the world."

The Communist Party of Ireland added that "the American imperialists and their British and Spanish acolytes ... do not have the capacity to control the world, according to their fancy. They can, however, destroy it."

There were some differences on the processes underlying the new level of imperialist aggression and arrogance.

The Sudanese Communist Party pointed out: "What has made this offensive possible is, in the final analysis, the radical change in the world balance of forces that resulted from the collapse of the Soviet Union."

In contrast, the Communist Party United States said: "This policy is not an inevitable outcome of this stage of capitalist globalisation or the balance of power on a world stage. It is a policy of choice connected with the political ascension of the extreme right wing."

## Devastating effects of globalisation

Analysing the impact of corporate globalisation, the Communist Party of India commented:

"People in the South, as well as the poor, working people and middle strata in advanced capitalist countries, suffer from the devastating effects of imperialist globalisation such as increasingly unequal income distribution; worsening working conditions; massive unemployment and underemployment; mass poverty; under-utilisation of immense productive capacity; transfer of wealth from South to North, and from the working people to the big capitalists; growing indebtedness of developing countries; deteriorating terms of trade; growing economic and political power in the hands of MNCs [multi-national corporations]; domination of the financial oligarchies including the new speculative finance capital; degradation of the environment and subordination of developing countries for the interests of developed countries, etc..."

"The general consequence of capitalist globalisation is the increase in poverty and unemployment. The gulf between rich and poor has widened with nations and among nations ... between 1960 and 1989, the countries of the North with the richest 20% of the world's population saw their share of world income increase from 70.2% to 82.7% while the share of those in the South with the poorest 20% shrank from 2.3% to 1.4%. Unemployment and insecurity has led to a decline in health standards, return of epidemics like cholera and malaria, increase in crimes and detriment of the environment... The per capita income in Asia and Africa is much worse than what it was in the 1960."

The Communist Party of the United States added: "The Bush doctrine of unending war also has its domestic expression - to take back every gain won by the working class and people over the past

century. It entails a massive shift in wealth to the rich and a new concentration of monopoly power, including greater concentration of the corporate mass media ...

"The US economy continues to deteriorate. States and cities face the worst budget crisis in 50 years and are deeply cutting social programs. Since the stock market bubble burst in 1999 and Bush became president, over 2.5 million jobs have been lost."

The New Communist Party of the Netherlands pointed out: "Only the United States disposes of a military budget for a world war, amounting to US\$400 billion. Compare this to Russia's \$65 billion (16.3% of the US military budget), China's \$47 billion (11.9% of the US), France's \$29.5 billion (7.4%) and Germany's \$25 billion (6.25%). It is only the US that is extending its military interventions on all continents, is preparing wars of aggression in the whole world and is ready to use nuclear weapons in the coming world war."

## Fascism

A number of Parties discussed the looming threat of fascism.

The Communist Party of Canada said that "capitalism is having more and more difficulties coping with its own intrinsic contradictions, reflected in global relative overproduction, spiraling debt, widespread immiseration of the masses, especially but not exclusively in Third World countries, sluggish economic growth, environmental degradation, and, not least, intensifying inter-imperialist rivalry."

"In such turbulent conditions, the danger of fascism is rising up again in many countries, a dangerous development which must not be underestimated."

The Workers Party of Belgium stated: "Bush is establishing a US-style fascism to reinforce his already established world hegemony and to fight militarily any potential rival on any continent...."

"The Bush administration has been pursuing the fascist theory of 'pre-emptive' nuclear attacks."

The Communist Party of Denmark added: "The similarity between Bush and Hitler is neither a similarity in character, nor a similarity of ideology. It is crisis-stricken capitalism and imperialism manifesting itself in its most brutal, destructive and reactionary form. It is capitalism in a phase of development, where it is no longer capable of creating and building - where war and destruction and looting competitors are the only activities still yielding an acceptable profit."

## Working in mass movements

A major theme of the conference was how communists should work within the anti-globalisation and anti-war movements and the problems they are facing in this task.

In her opening contribution, Communist Party of Greece General Secretary Aleka Papatrifa said:

"In this growing international movement, the constant goal, in our opinion, should be to reinforce its anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly, democratic features, so that it will dispute the present system and be firmly based in the movements that are developing on the national level which constitute its primary well-spring..."

"We believe that the reinforcement of these features in the movement will constitute a substantial contribution to the people's struggles to confront new reactionary measures and wherever possible, to prevent new wars and interventions", she said, "and above all for this movement to become a power for overthrowing the present-day correlation of forces on the national, regional and international level..."

"Our opinion is that we must at all costs avoid the danger of the communist movement becoming diffused in the broader movements that are springing up. Our conviction is that without the distinctive presence of the communists, these movements will either be paralysed or degenerate into harmless movements in terms of the current state of affairs, and will operate as a pretext for perpetuating this system..."

Comrade Papatrifa stressed: "The policy of alliances and co-operation that each party has and the need to retain its independent role are not, in our view, contradictory, but support each other."

## Democratic rights

The Sudanese Communist Party pointed out the significance of the struggle for democratic rights within the new mass movements, saying:

"We are witnessing a qualitative leap forward towards the criminalisation of social protests, of resistance against exploitation and oppression, of the very existence of progressive forces. The decisions by the EU and capitalist governments to enlist parties as terrorist organizations, the increasingly insolent attitude towards Cuba, and the ongoing plans to outlaw political parties, mark a very serious new step in this direction. Imperialism is setting in place the instruments and mechanisms for repression against the working people and popular resistance to its policies."

Discussing some of the problems being faced by Communist and Workers Parties, the Tudeh Party of Iran said: "Communists need to understand the dynamics of the present 'anti-globalisation movement' and some of its inherent weaknesses such as its single issue dimension, distrust of traditional political structures, reluctance to become involved in political struggles."

The Communist Party in Denmark stated: "Many of the movements that we see at the moment are characterised by a lack of understanding of the connections between the capitalist system itself, imperialism, globalisation and war."

"Many of those who are active within those movements, especially those from the younger generations, know little or nothing about Marxist theories. Others either try to revise Marxism or even work deliberately against it."

"When the fundament of these movements is limited to petit-bourgeois theories it very often leads them astray. Either into extremism or into a de facto support of neo-liberalism and by that actually a support to the forces of imperialism."

The Communist Party of Finland said: "Despite the fact that we share many goals with this anti-globalisation movement, there are also those in these movements who resist co-operation with communists."



"... some of this resistance may be explained as a reaction to the work of trotskyites and other groups that have tried to aggressively take over these organisations."

The Communist Party of Greece stated: "Our concern lies in the fact that in this movement, an enormous effort is being made by various forces - especially social-democratic ones - to lead it, and that we, as a communist movement, are not developing our own intervention to the degree required by circumstances."

## Co-ordinating communist work

Most conference participants shared an understanding of the need for and benefits of greater international co-operation among Communist and Workers' Parties to fight the new imperialist order.

However, participants still considered it too early to create some form of a co-ordinating committee, especially as some Parties remain concerned about the danger of repeating past errors made by the international Communist movement.

The final press communiqué states that the distinct presence, consultation and co-operation of Communist and Workers' Parties

and war

# Hundreds of thousands demand probe of Bush lies

While White House officials assert that President George W Bush "is not a fact checker", hundreds of thousands of Americans are demanding that the facts be checked on why the Bush administration went to war in Iraq.

by Judith Le Blanc

In the last three weeks, MoveOn.org, an internet pro-democracy group, gathered 400,000 signatures on a petition to Congress calling for an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration's reasons for going to war in Iraq.

On July 23, the group helped organise events in 12 cities, launching a grassroots campaign to hold the administration accountable for misleading public opinion.

As more US troops die each day, calls for public, bipartisan, and independent hearings are growing.

Kathleen McQuillen, Iowa program director for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), told the *People's Weekly World*, "People are more and more confused and uncertain".

Leading up to the war and once the war started, people wanted to believe Bush, McQuillen said. But confidence in the administration "has been shaken along the way and is all the more shaken right now".

Last week 27 additional members of Congress signed on as co-sponsors of HR-2625, legislation calling for an independent investigation into Bush administration claims about Iraq's alleged weapons of

mass destruction. The Bill now has 52 co-sponsors.

Meanwhile, the White House continued to shift blame to the CIA and the National Security Council for alleged intelligence lapses. But growing questions about the administration's rationale for war and the US\$4 billion a month price tag for the occupation forced the White House to hold a special briefing July 18, where it revealed newly-declassified materials in an effort to bolster its case. But these have only given rise to more questions.

Hany Khalil, an organiser for United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ), a national coalition of 600-plus groups, told the *People's Weekly World*, "The CIA, National Security Council, and State Department officials are slowly documenting that Bush lied to get us into war. We need open, public, televised and broad in scope hearings on the lies that were told to deceive the US public to get support for the war."

While the Bush administration argues that its use of faulty evidence is not important, AFSC's McQuillen counters, "We can't talk about what's next until we understand ... how we went down a path of war without clarity."

The White House, the

*the Bush administration argues that its use of faulty evidence is not important*

should help the process of developing "co-ordination and joint action of broader democratic, anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly and patriotic forces as well as of the multiform movement against capitalist globalisation".

Participants agreed on the need for meetings on the Athens model to continue and increase in number, together with more regional meetings of Parties. A proposal for meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties in connection with large international events was also widely supported.

A suggestion from the Communist Party of Greece for a meeting to prepare the next Athens conference and to help develop a more collective approach among the different parties was endorsed. All parties will be invited to participate in this preparatory work and the results will be forwarded to parties which cannot attend.

The idea of a Solidarity Fund set up by Communist Parties was tabled by the Communist Party of Greece. It was agreed that more consultation should take place in order to clarify the aims and mechanisms for such a fund.

Dr Hannah Middleton is President of the CPA and was a delegate at the Athens Conference. ☪



Republican National Committee (RNC) and the Pentagon have tried to silence any opposition. An ABC News reporter who quoted US troops in Iraq questioning the Bush administration's policies has become the target of an ultra-right attack using the fact that he is gay and a Canadian citizen to cast doubt on his credibility.

The RNC's legal counsel, Caroline Hunter, sent a threatening letter this week to a Wisconsin television station airing a Democratic National Committee (DNC) ad calling for public support for an independent investigation. The letter suggested that the station's FCC broadcasting licence might be revoked. Vowing to fight the intimidation, the DNC announced that it would expand the airing of the ads.

Rep. Waxman and others emphasise the importance of grass-

roots action, including talking to friends and family, writing letters to the editor, and calling elected officials.

"A big part of the problem that Democrats face is that the public is tuning out", Waxman said. "Basically, the Bush administration is banking on widespread apathy as a major part of its re-election strategy. Grassroots efforts can make a difference here."

UFPJ's Khalil told the *People's Weekly World*, "People are becoming energised again. Every day people are calling, e-mailing and coming into our office calling for us to take action against the war and to call out the lies that Bush used to manufacture popular support for the invasion of Iraq and to begin to bring an end to the occupation."

*People's Weekly World* ☪

## Are we content to have liars for leaders?

During a press conference with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and broadcast live by CNN, President Bush was questioned about that yellowcake allegedly bought by Iraq from Niger to turn into nuclear weapons. It has all been exposed as just one monumental lie.

But Bush's response to questioning at the news conference was even more bizarre than usual on this occasion. He said: "The larger point is and the fundamental question is, did Saddam Hussein have a weapons program? And the answer is absolutely. **And we gave him a chance to allow the inspectors in, and he wouldn't let them in.** And, therefore, after a reasonable request, we decided to remove him from power..." (Emphasis added)

So all those TV pictures you saw before the invasion of Iraq of UN weapons inspectors crawling from one site to another in Iraq just didn't happen. It was all a mirage and you

had no right to think that something was being done to investigate all the allegations about weapons of mass destruction pouring from the mouths of Bush, Blair and our own honest John Howard. Everyone now knows that these three have been lying all along but what must concern us all is that many American and Australian people seem to accept the fact that they have proven liars as leaders. (Not all as seen from the article above.)

The daily press runs soft on their lies which have become too obvious to cover up. One US journalist, Dana Priest wrote, "The president's assertion that the war began because Iraq

did not admit inspectors appeared to contradict the events leading up to war this spring".

Only "appeared" to contradict the events? Why not say outright that the President is lying and repeat the facts.

Another said: "I think what people basically decided was this is just the president being the president ... He is under a great deal of pressure".

One wonders what the families of those US soldiers being killed every day in Iraq think about their "president just being the president".

The *National Post's* Kelly McParland writes that Bush's yellowcake lie is but "a small mistake". Are the deaths of thousands of Iraqi children just "small mistakes"?

Do the Australian people really accept the fact that they have an obvious liar as their Prime Minister? ☪

Act now to say:  
"NO".

Write to Prime Minister John Howard, to your local MP and Senators. Write to your local and daily newspapers, join in the radio talk-back shows. Make your voice heard. Show that we are not content to have murdering liars for leaders.

Join your local peace group, and think about joining the Communist Party of Australia to work for a genuine political alternative in Australia that puts people first and does not have to hide the truth.

# The Iraqi Communist Party and the "Governing Council"

Statement from *Tareeq Al Shaab*,  
Paper of the Iraqi Communist Party

The Iraqi Communist Party had identified, over the past weeks, a sensible way out for our people and homeland from the total impasse which our country ended up with when the hated dictatorial regime collapsed but without leading to the creation of the desired democratic alternative.

This way out of the impasse was embodied in the call for convening a broadly-based National Conference, with the participation of our people's political, national and religious constituents, to set up an Iraqi transitional coalition government that undertakes the task of addressing the urgent problems in the daily life of the people and country.

The most important tasks are ensuring security and stability, normalising the situation, securing public and municipal services, employment and means of living for millions of citizens, as well as preparing a draft constitution and providing the prerequisites for free and fair elections under UN supervision, and for entering into negotiations with the occupying powers about the presence of their troops in our country, and putting an end to it.

However, the demand for setting up the transitional coalition government clashed with the resolution of the UN Security Council 1483 (22 May 2003), which legitimised and endorsed the occupation authority, giving the Iraqi people only a consultative role in the political decision-making process.

Over the following few weeks, and as a result of the competing views and discussions dealing with

this issue, it was possible to shift the upper limit for the role played by the Iraqis in running the affairs of the country.

At the end, a compromise formula was found, that is neither a transitional national government nor a "Political Council" of purely consultative nature.

This compromise "Governing Council" is a new framework for action by Iraqi people's representatives to express the people's will and their desire to formulate policies and positions, within the existing complex conditions, and in various fields: political, both internal and external, financial-economic, social etc.

This will be taking place in a developing process aiming to widen the authorities of the Council, so as to bring it closer to accomplishing the process of transition and establishing the independent Iraqi national government that will emerge from legitimate general elections.

The Governing Council is to undertake, in the current conditions, an active role in restoring security and stability, normalising the situation, eliminating remnants of the ousted regime and putting on trial those who committed crimes against the people.

Also participating in putting



together economic and financial policies which promote stability in the economic life as a whole, ensuring the reactivation of the production cycle, and opening the door to embark on reconstructing and developing the country, along with restoring its independence and sovereignty.

Our Party's participation in the Governing Council is based on a careful consideration of the present situation in our country. A main aspect of this consideration is the desire of the majority of our people aspiring to see an Iraqi body that represents people's interests.

It also responds to the desire of broad sections of the people to see

Communists participate, directly and actively in the current political process in the country, within the Governing Council itself, being an arena of work, action, dialogue and struggle, in order to achieve our people's demands and aims.

Of course, this participation by our Party does not mean at all a retreat from its call for and striving to speed up the formation of the sovereign Iraqi national government, and establishing a unified democratic and federal Iraq.

It must be said, on the other hand, that despite all the complexities and difficulties, the work of the Governing Council, prospects of its activity and the effectiveness of

its role, are closely connected, first and foremost, to the unity of its constituent forces, which need to be expanded, in our view, to include other patriotic parties that were active participants in the struggle against the dictatorial regime.

The Council's effectiveness and prospects are also connected to its own vigour, and to what extent it responds to the urgent and immediate demands of the people.

The Council's influence depends as well on the people's support for its work, monitoring its activities in a critical and constructive way, so as to help it to carry out its tasks and move ahead along a correct and sensible path. ✪

## Free speech activist defeats computer industry

Computer giant Intel lost a major lawsuit against a fired employee who sent email protest letters to thousands of his former colleagues, in a court decision that experts say is a major victory for free speech and workers' rights.

by Ted Nace

The California Supreme Court decision last month marks the end of a five-year battle between Intel, the world's largest semiconductor manufacturer and Kourosh (Ken) Hamidi, a 56-year-old engineer, who was let go by the company after nine years of service.

"He no more invaded Intel's property than does a protestor holding a sign or shouting through a bullhorn outside corporate headquarters, posting a letter through the mail, or telephoning to complain of a corporate practice", Justice Kathryn Werdegar wrote on behalf of the judges who ruled in his favour.

Hamidi, who immigrated to California from Iran in 1978, organised a group called Former and Current Employees or FACE Intel ([www.faceintel.com](http://www.faceintel.com)), soon after being fired in 1995.

The organisation claims that Intel's demands on its employees created health problems, stress on families, and even suicide. Using

a company email list that he had received from an anonymous source, Hamidi sent six emails to between 8000 and 35,000 Intel employees, detailing what he claimed were Intel's abusive practices.

Among the practices objected to by Hamidi and FACE Intel were: forced overtime; a ranking system used to routinely winnow the ranks of employees; discrimination against older workers; and unhealthy conditions in the company's fabrication facilities.

In response, Intel first tried to block the emails, then sued Hamidi. Two lower courts ruled in favour of the company. But Hamidi, who now had been forced into bankruptcy and was struggling to support his family of four on odd jobs and disability payments, refused to abandon the case.

In its lawsuit, Intel claimed the letters to its employees constituted a "trespass to chattels". Hamidi's lawyers countered that the emails were the equivalent of "peaceful pamphleteering", a form

of communication protected from court interference by the First Amendment.

Since Intel could not show that Hamidi's emails had actually harmed its computer systems, the "trespass to chattels" claimed by the company could only be the "loss of productivity" caused by the time employees (the "chattels") spent reading the emails.

Historians say that one reason that such feudal patterns are so hard to destroy is that despite the fact that the American Revolution overthrew the colonial power of the British Empire, it barely touched the workplace.

Long after the Revolution, the main legal doctrine that governed the American workplace was the "law of master and servant", a direct carry over from the systems of privilege and hierarchy that shaped the feudal society of the late Middle Ages.

This workplace doctrine was similar to those that applied to husband and wife, parent and child, and guardian and ward.

The power of employers over workers was considered a private relationship, unaffected by the Bill of Rights. For example, it was not until 1843 that American courts stopped allowing employers to beat their employees.

With the emergence of the union movement in the United States, workers have won a number of rights. But to this day that process remains incomplete. Rights as basic as free speech, privacy, and free association remain heavily contested terrain, and victories such as

that of Kourosh Hamidi are more the exception than the rule.

In her book, *Nickel and Dimed*, sociologist Barbara Ehrenreich describes her stints as a low-paid worker for a domestic cleaning service: "You have rules such as no talking to your fellow employees..."

"...you're subject to surveillance; you have no privacy whatsoever. The workplace ... is more like a dictatorship. You really check your civil rights at the door."

Such invasions of privacy are rife across corporate America, and they appear to be on the rise. Companies such as "@thought", based in Tarrytown, New York, specialise in a new field called human-resource forensics, which uses the latest technology to spy on the Web usage and email of employees.

According to a 2001 survey by the Privacy Foundation, a Denver research group, more than a third of all American workers with access to computers were being electronically monitored in some fashion.

Yet workers continue to fight back. Despite being isolated, branded as a crank and forced into bankruptcy, Kourosh Hamidi tenaciously pursued his case against Intel.

Ted Nace is a writer and publisher. His most recent book is *Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power and the Disabling of Democracy* (Berrett-Koehler, 2003). The above article is abridged. The full text and Nace's book can be downloaded from [www.GangsofAmerica.com](http://www.GangsofAmerica.com) ✪

## Puerto Ricans demand release of the Cuban Five

Over the past year, more than 10,000 signatures have been collected in Puerto Rico demanding the immediate release of the five Cuban political prisoners in the United States. According to Milagros Rivera, President of the Cuba Solidarity Committee in the Puerto Rican capital, the group has been collecting signatures on a petition and concentrating on publicising the legal situation of the Five.

The head of the Puerto Rican solidarity organisation with Cuba told reporters that the US Government has reached the point that it is beginning to realise that people all over the world know about the case.

Milagros Rivera noted that the 12th Juan Rius Rivera Brigade is in Cuba once again to express solidarity with the island. Some 80 Puerto Ricans are taking part in voluntary agricultural work and visiting places of historic and cultural interest around the island until they return to Puerto Rico on July 31.

She said they will also attend the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the attack on the *Moncada Garrison*, which will take place in Santiago de Cuba on July 26. ✪



# Murders, racism and Lockheed Martin

**Doug Williams assassinated six co-workers in Meridian, Mississippi, on July 9 and injured eight others before shooting himself. Five of the dead workers were African American. It was the worst workplace shooting in the United States this year.**

by Heather Cottin

Williams worked in a Lockheed Martin plant that made stabilisers for the newest US fighter plane, the F/A-22 Raptor. Williams was a known racist. The company on several occasions had sent him to "anger management" classes.

He recently dressed up in something that looked like a Klan hood. When a Black worker objected, he was asked to remove it or leave. He left. It was well known among his fellow workers that he believed "Black people had a leg up in society". They said he was angry that he had been passed up for promotions at the plant, where he had worked for 19 years. Williams was an angry worker whose understanding of the economic system was twisted by racism. Rather than seeing the bosses as his enemy – as the class that keeps the entire working class separated, in competition, poor and oppressed – Williams thought that Black people were the cause of his poverty and unhappiness.

Legal segregation ended after heroic struggles by the civil rights movement, but Mississippi is still a

racist state. The old ruling class still owns most of it. The Ku Klux Klan still operates openly. And racism has kept both wages and labour organisation low.

In 1998, when 25.4 percent of non-agricultural wage workers were unionised in New York State, only 5.6 percent were organised in Mississippi. Other Southern states like South Carolina and North Carolina had even lower figures (Bureau of Labor Statistics). In 2002, average weekly wages in New York State were US\$909, in Mississippi US\$538. Mississippi has no minimum wage law.

Around the country, women and people of colour have been leading the most successful union organising drives. Organisation is strongest in areas where white workers recognise the need for solidarity against racism and accept the important role of the nationally oppressed.

Racists like Doug Williams fall into the bosses' trap when they reject worker solidarity against big capital. He could have joined the International Association of Machinists (IAM), which had organised the plant. But instead,

Williams built his life around his guns and racist ideology. On the day of the murders, he was carrying his 12-gauge shotgun, 22 magnum Derringer, mini-14.223 semi-automatic rifle, .45 Ruger pistol, and a .22 rifle with a scope and a lot of ammunition.

After the murders, the Lauderdale, Mississippi, county sheriff's office hastened to assure the media that there was no indication Williams's crimes were racially motivated. The coverage of the shootings in the Mississippi newspapers barely whispers the word "racism".

But Hubert Threatt, an IAM union shop steward who had worked with Williams for 15 years, had heard many complaints about him. And Aaron Hopson, a Black employee, told the Associated Press that he had filed a complaint with management in December 2001 after Williams threatened him personally. Hopson said Williams used a racial epithet, threatening to shoot Black workers and kill himself.

Lockheed Martin management was well aware of Williams' explosive racism. But they kept him on.

Lockheed Martin is the largest manufacturer of weapons of war in the United States. It began to produce the F/A-22 Raptor in 2000. This plane was used to murder people of colour in Iraq. Lockheed Martin profits from war and murder of Third World people on a global scale.

This is the company that claims to have taught Doug Williams how to control his violent impulses.

Workers' World ☸



**Rather than seeing the bosses as his enemy - as the class that keeps the entire working class separated, in competition, poor and oppressed - Williams thought that Black people were the cause of his poverty and unhappiness.**

## New US report on Patriot Act abuses

The following article is a timely warning for Australians of what we can expect under the new ASIO legislation which recently passed through Parliament with the support of both the Liberals and Labor.

**WASHINGTON: A report released July 20 by the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) charged that federal law enforcement agencies have abused and even beaten people detained after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack. It was the second OIG report on Patriot Act abuses in as many months.**

by Tim Wheeler

The report said that in the six months ending June 15, OIG received 34 credible complaints of civil rights and civil liberties violations committed under the USA Patriot Act. It included complaints by Muslim and Arab detainees that they had been beaten and verbally abused in federal detention centres.

The OIG received nearly 2,000 complaints, but most were not Patriot Act related. At least 272 complaints within OIG jurisdiction are under investigation. The report suggests that OIG is overwhelmed, stating, that "given ... its limited resources, the OIG does not investigate all allegations of misconduct against Department of Justice employees."

Among those accused were agents of the FBI, Bureau of Prisons guards, Drug Enforcement Administration and Immigration and Naturalization Service.

In one case, a federal prison doctor was accused of telling detainees, "If I was in charge, I would execute every one of you (for the) crimes you all did".

Democrat Representative John Conyers, ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said, "This report shows that we have only begun to scratch the surface with respect to the Justice Department's disregard of constitutional rights and civil liberties".

"The administration's war on terror has misfired and harmed innocent victims with no ties to terrorism whatsoever."

Anthony Romero, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), said, "The recent findings coupled with the earlier Inspector General report show that there is a pattern of violating rights and that policies set at the highest level were responsible for such violations".

This was a reference to Attorney General John Ashcroft, who pushed through Congress the USA Patriot Act with its sweeping expansion of police state powers. Foes of the Bill attached a provision requiring OIG to monitor enforcement of the law for abuses and report back to Congress.

The earlier report exposed physical and verbal abuse of 762 detainees at federal detention centres. The victims were held incommunicado for as long as 18 months, often in solitary confinement, with only one hour each day for exercise in leg and arm shackles.

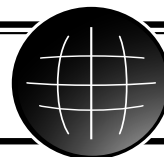
The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee is one of 13 civil rights groups demanding that the Justice Department release the names of the detainees. A federal judge last year ordered release of the names but stayed her ruling pending appeal by Ashcroft.

An appellate court reversed the ruling and the Justice Department continues to withhold the names.

Said a statement by the ADC, "Secrecy invites abuse ... transparency is an indispensable element in the pursuit of justice".

People's Weekly World ☸

**The victims were held incommunicado for as long as 18 months, often in solitary confinement, with only one hour each day for exercise in leg and arm shackles.**



## Global briefs

**USA:** Global financial institutions and banks are lining up to run a bank being set up by the US which will deal with billions of dollars a month from Iraq's oil industry and other Iraqi businesses. A consortium of financiers will be selected by the Bush administration to manage the Trade Bank of Iraq. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, bankers from New York to Sydney are scrambling to form alliances in the huge grab for cash. In one group JP Morgan Chase has teamed up with British-based Standard Chartered, the National Bank of Kuwait, the Australian and New Zealand Banking Group and Poland's Millennium Bank.

**BRITAIN:** Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon is looking the likely fall guy over the death of weapons expert David Kelly. It appears that the Defence Ministry was responsible for publicly identifying Kelly as the source of BBC revelations that the evidence presented by the Blair Government of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq – the trigger used for war – had been falsified. The Ministry's Permanent Secretary approved an order that allowed journalists to identify Kelly as the whistleblower.

**AFGHANISTAN:** As in Iraq, the US continues to experience difficulties in Afghanistan. A further 16 US troops were killed in two separate encounters last week. Groups believed to have connections to the Taliban ambushed a US convoy in the Urzagan area, killing 12 American and four Afghan soldiers, and the same day four US soldiers were killed in an ambush east of Kandahar. Three US troops were also wounded in north-eastern Afghanistan when their vehicle hit a bomb. "It was a deliberately planted bomb", a military spokesman told reporters.

**TURKEY:** Relations between Turkey and the United States have been on the skids since the Turkish parliament rejected an American request in March to allow troops to open a northern front against Iraq from Turkish soil. The relationship hit another low after the recent arrest of 11 Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq, an act that caused friction between the two NATO members. Both governments have now released a joint statement via a Turkish-American fact-finding team that expresses "regret" over the "unfortunate incident". But, as Soli Ozel, professor of international relations at Istanbul Bilgi University noted, "No matter what happens, we should accept that the period of strategic partnership has come to a close".

**PNG:** Mining companies were accused in parliament last week of using "cheap and easy options" to dump their waste. The Governor of Western Province, Bob Danaya, told the Parliament that land owners were becoming concerned about the continued dumping of mine tailings into rivers. He pointed out that 85 percent of Papua New Guineans in rural areas live next to waterways and the dumping of mine waste is life threatening. Mr Danaya named the OK-Tedi mine in Western Province and the Tolukuma Gold Mine in Central Province as "disasters waiting to happen".

## Is the ACTU irrelevant?

**Is the Australian Council of Trade Unions irrelevant? It is so bound up with the ALP that it had begun to sound like a public relations machine for Simon Crean and his parliamentary buddies. By relevant I mean, are they standing up for the people they are supposed to be representing?**

They make many high-sounding pronouncements but behind the words nothing is going on. I checked out two of their more recent press releases, one about the lock out of Geelong Wool Combing workers in Victoria, the other about higher education.

The latter begins, "Working families would benefit from Labor's higher education policies announced today." ACTU President Sharan Burrow trumpeted the ALP's plan to fund 20,000 extra places at universities and to stop increases in HECS fees. Well, which party in government introduced HECS? The Labor Party!

And the alternative they offer to the mob currently in the box seat in Canberra is that they'll stop increases in HECS! A truly alternative party would guarantee to dump the fees, no provisos, no strings attached.

But Burrow goes on, "Families concerned about the educational

futures of their children will have a real choice for more and cheaper university places under the ALP's policies". She also calls on the Howard Government to "re-examine its biased approach".

Cheaper places! The ALP/ACTU's approach is to view higher education as a supermarket.

As for the locked out textile workers in Geelong, they may as well invite the Workplace Relations Minister to bargain with boss for them according to the ACTU, **which has invited the Minister Tony Abbott to visit the workers who have been locked out by the greedy bastards at Geelong Wool – who are aiming at cutting their wages and conditions – for more than 12 weeks.**

The ACTU statement bleats about how the "Howard Government refused to support Labor Party legislation ... requiring employers to bargain in good faith"!!!

Blind Freddy could see what's going on at the moment. In dispute after dispute the Government has got employers on side to use the Workplace Relations Act, the Government's union-bashing laws, to try and exclude the union, cut wages and conditions and have their workers go on individual non-union contracts.

If the ACTU approach is a **tactic** what is it meant to achieve as far as benefiting workers are concerned? If it is part of some grand plan, apart from promoting the ALP, what is the

plan? These are legitimate questions to ask and I don't think the ACTU has an answer that could effectively refute my claim that it has become irrelevant.

**Nathan Barnes  
Brisbane, Qld**

## The knotty question of "freedom"

**I refer to Julie Messenger's letter "Use of death penalty questioned" (The Guardian, July 23). The letter raises some very interesting questions, not least the use of the state as an apparatus for the rule and suppression of one class over another.**

Ms Messenger says that the vast majority of crime is a symptom of capitalist society and that, in line with the Communist Party of the USA's stance, "I ... will continue to campaign for its [death penalty] universal abolition."

The issue arose from a CPA resolution supporting the position of the Cuban Government when it recently executed three people to "defend Cuba's sovereignty". The three were part of a gang which had hijacked a ferry and threatened to drown the passengers.

The Party therefore, says Ms Messenger, appears to support capital punishment, which goes counter to an approach supporting the education and rehabilitation of

those who commit crimes i.e. the approach that says it is the system that is at fault.

In this regard, reading the letter I was reminded of an interview I heard on ABC radio on a program hosted by Terry Lane. The interviewee was a member of that feted crowd called refuseniks from the Soviet Union. This was just prior to the elevation of Gorbachev and his perestroika and glasnost and "universal human values".

The man was a scientist who had spent some time in prison in the Soviet Union and who was travelling around the world calling for "more democracy and freedom" there.

Mr Lane, then, had himself a walking, talking piece of anti-Soviet propaganda, and he approached the interview along those lines. After a while he began asking what it was like inside the dreaded "gulag", and assuming the place was packed with refuseniks, he commented that there must be a close network of contacts amongst those masses of artists, intellectuals and academics all locked up together.

"Oh no", exclaimed the fellow. "The overwhelming majority of the prisoners are fascists and criminals!" He clearly didn't want them out roaming free. You could almost hear Lane's jaw hit the table.

Well, of course soon after there was Gorbachev and all the democracy and freedom you could eat.

But I never did hear what hap-

pened to all those freedom lovers locked away in the Soviet prison system.

**Marcus Browning  
Sydney, NSW**

## Just two or three hundred million

I was overjoyed by John Howard's projected economic cost to the Australian people, of the Solomons Expedition.

It will cost "two to three hundred million a year", John Howard said.

Isn't that a fine piece of economic costing and accounting? – How much Mr Prime Minister? – "Oh, two to three hundred million a year".

Wouldn't it be great if Hospital, Health Care, University, Sports, etc administrators could say – "What are we spending? Oh, two to three hundred million a year!"

**Denis Kevans  
Wentworth Falls, NSW**

## Got something to say?

Then write it down  
and send it to us.

Letters of up to 400 words  
in length are preferred.

## Culture & Life

### The glorious fourth

**The 4th of July was, as ever, the occasion for patriotic US citizens to parade around in front of statues and pictures of George Washington, the "father of his country". And let's face it, there can be few patriots anywhere who can match the fervour of patriots from the US of A.**

*by Rob Gowland*

But while schoolchildren all over the US were being encouraged to recite eulogies to Washington – "first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen" is a popular refrain – the reality of George Washington was being carefully hidden away.

The American Revolution was inspired by the same ideals of liberty, equality and brotherhood that inspired the French Revolution. Both revolutions encouraged the common man and woman to believe that a radically new and better life was about to begin for them.

But the dreams of the masses, of the artisans, farmers and other battlers were not shared by the rising class of merchants, bankers, professional men and rich landowners who controlled the leadership of the revolutionary movement.

This new class needed the support of the masses to achieve their goal, which in France was to replace the rule of the old feudal aristocracy with their own class rule, and in America to throw off the yolk of a British colonial regime so that they could rule themselves.

Although the common people in both France and America displayed great courage in their armed struggle for the revolutionary

cause, their gains were kept to the minimum.

When the leaders of the American Revolution spoke of representative government and the rights of man they did not mean for everyone. The US Declaration of Independence of 1776 was an all-embracing document, from which the subsequent French Revolution took inspiration.

But by the time the US Constitution was drafted in 1787, the rights it was drawn up to protect were limited to those of white, male property owners.

The writing had been on the wall even as the Declaration was drafted. The original provisions that would have made slavery untenable had to be dropped before the colonies where slavery predominated would join the revolutionary push.

George Washington himself was not only a wealthy landowner but also a slave owner. He lived in Philadelphia, where the permanent holding of slaves was prohibited.

But Washington worked his plantation in Virginia with slaves, and contrived to keep eight slaves for his personal convenience in Philadelphia by the simple expedient of periodically sending them back to the plantation so that they could not be counted as "permanent residents" of Philly.

Far from being a beacon of freedom, the newly independent USA with its shiny new Constitution – a much-amended document that US patriots curiously believe to be the envy of the world – continued to participate in and foster the slave trade until 1808.

In the first US census, in 1790, there were almost 700,000 slaves in the country, out of a total population of less than four million.

The Liberty Bell, the symbol behind the slogan "let freedom ring", was actually brought to the US in a ship owned by a consortium of American slave traders.

All US schoolchildren learn the story of Washington crossing the Delaware during the Revolutionary Wars, but only a few children



of colour learn about the slave ships that regularly docked at Philadelphia's Delaware wharves to discharge their human cargo.

Washington became the USA's first President and raised revenue through a tax on the import of slaves.

In 1793, President Washington signed a treaty with the Indian nations of the eastern seaboard, the Seneca, Mohawk, Iroquois and Delaware people.

The Indians thought the treaty would protect their lands and the plants and game they depended on for food and clothing from further encroachment by European settlement. The Whites saw it as guaranteeing they would not get tomahawked as they fenced Indian land for their own farms.

As soon as the inevitable conflict arose, only a year after the treaty was signed, Washington sent General Anthony Wayne to

crush the Indians. Eight of their chiefs lie buried in the cemetery of Philadelphia's St Peter's Episcopal Church, their people massacred or scattered.

US authorities have made a great effort to promote "historic" Philadelphia: Washington's residence, the building where the Constitution was drafted, as well as new museums like the Liberty Bell Centre and the National Constitution Centre.

But sites dedicated to the history of Black America do not figure prominently in the guided tours around Philly's Independence Park. This year, in the week leading up to July 4, there were protest demonstrations in Philadelphia demanding that recognition be given to the African-American history of the USA.

One demonstration took the form of a tour of sites associated with the city's Black history: among

them the sites of slave auctions, Independence Hall, constructed by the labour of enslaved Africans, and the Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The church was founded in 1787 by the Reverend Richard Allen and stands on the oldest parcel of land continuously owned by African Americans in the US.

Not far away an unmarked grave contains the remains of Samuel Fraunces, known as "Black Sam". One of the 50,000 or so free Africans in the American colonies, Fraunces was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, and ironically became steward of Washington's house.

The most telling irony, however, is that the National Constitution Centre, a new building, was built by a construction firm that excluded Black workers.

The American Revolution has a way to go yet. ☹

**Rob Gowland**  
*previews*  
**ABC & SBS**  
**public television**  
**programs**

Sun August 3 ~  
~ Sat August 9

**Question: Are historical dramas improved by using improvisation? Personally, I don't think so, unless you believe that actors can actually make up on the spur of the moment better dialogue than professional writers can produce after hours or days of thought and labour.**

Improvisation is much favoured by a certain type of stage director who thinks it gives a performance the effect of naturalism. But as a play for television production it is much over-rated.

The British historical drama *The Other Boleyn Girl* (ABC 8.30pm Sunday) "was developed through improvisation" we are told as though it was something to brag about.

Philippa Gregory's best-selling novel of the same name is one of those "historical" works that uses history simply as a peg on which to hang a plot, gayly taking liberties with fact to improve the story.

In this case the story is of Anne Boleyn's elder sister Mary, supposedly mistress to King Henry VIII before he married Anne. Although there is no evidence to support it, the novel and the program happily postulate that Mary had at least one child by Henry.

When a novel is described as having been "adapted" for television, you can usually assume that the adaptation is moderately faithful to the original work, allowing for the difference in medium.

If however, the TV production is "based" on the novel, it is often rather less faithful. *The Other Boleyn Girl* is not even "based on" Gregory's novel, but "inspired by" it. If you're a fan of Gregory don't say you weren't warned.

To add to the historical ambience, no doubt, the program has been shot with a lot of the currently fashionable "video diary" style passages, which I find simply jarring. Why don't they have her putting down her thoughts on her trusty sixteenth century computer? It makes as much sense as talking to a sixteenth century TV camera.

To make the "you are there" live Tudor TV camera approach seem more real, they actually resort to wobbly, hand-held *cinéma-vérité* style photography! I ask you.

The combination of gambling with greed and very large amounts of money leads to crookedness. I'm sorry but it almost always does.

And for crooked gambling on a grand scale you can't go past the New York Stock Exchange. Everybody knows this, but capitalists still seem shocked when examples of stock market crookedness actually come to light.

How could this happen, they proclaim, wringing their hands in anguish. And pillars of capitalism like *Time* and the US Public Broadcasting Service can be relied on to produce detailed *reportages* of how this, that or the other financial disaster came about *on this occasion*.

*The Wall Street Fix* from PBS, screening in the *Cutting Edge* slot (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday) recounts the most costly business scandal in American history – the spectacular failure of the telecommunications giant WorldCom.

While analysts and brokers hyped the telecom boom and pocketed enormous profits, millions of investors were taken on a catastrophic ride ending in US\$2



*Outlawed: The Real Ned Kelly attempts to legitimise a ruling class portrait of Ned Kelly*

trillion in losses on WorldCom and other telecom stocks. New York State Employees Pension Fund has sued Wall St banks to recover the US\$300 million the Fund lost on WorldCom.

The program focuses on the relationship between WorldCom, brokerage firm Salomon Smith Barney and Citibank, Wall Street's biggest bank. In 1998, Salomon Smith Barney merged with Citibank, and Travelers, an insurance giant, to create the nation's first "superbank".

It's a corrupt tale, in which Travelers gave WorldCom's CEO Bernie Ebbers a personal mortgage for US\$1 billion which he used to build a personal business empire. In addition Citibank gave Ebbers another loan that he used to finance ownership of a 500,000-acre ranch in Canada.

But these things are inherent in the system, a view that the program is careful not to raise.

My father used to sing in the bath. He only had two songs: one about poaching ("For it's my delight on a starry night in the

season of the year") and one about Ned Kelly.

The latter ended: "But when I look around at the people I know and the prices of things that we buy, I say to myself it just goes to show, Ned wasn't such a bad guy."

Ned Kelly and his family were Irish immigrants, battlers trying to earn a living from a small property in Victoria. Typical bush larrikins, they augmented their meagre income with a bit of cattle duffing, an act of rebellion against the local squatters and the mainly British-officered police (the hated "traps").

Like the slightly earlier NSW bushrangers Ben Hall and Frank Gardner, the Kellies epitomised the downtrodden forced into a life of crime by an oppressive bourgeois state.

They were perceived by ordinary people as being in a continuum with Robin Hood, Dick Turpin and sundry other "good badmen" bandits, highwaymen and buccaneers.

However, *Outlawed: The Real Ned Kelly*, screening on *The Big Picture* (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday), attempts to legitimise a ruling class portrait of Ned Kelly: "little more than a horse thief, a bank robber, a cop killer, a colonial terrorist, a murderous thug".

The fight game, especially in the US, has always been notorious for being crooked. In more recent years, with movies like

*Rocky*, Hollywood has glamourised the grim business of punching people in the head until they fall down.

Some feminists think that having women slug at each other in boxing gloves somehow extends the boundaries of women's rights. Actually it merely extends the opportunities for a damaging "sport" that should be as *passé* as bull baiting.

In the 1940s and '50s there were a number of powerful Hollywood productions that exposed the corruption and general rottenness of the "fight racket". One of the best and most potent was Robert Wise's *The Set-Up* (ABC 10.15pm Saturday).

Made in 1949, it is actually based on a poem. One-time boxer (and superb actor) Robert Ryan plays a washed up boxer who does not realise he's had it. His handlers promise a local racketeer that he'll lose his next bout (they confidently expect him to get knocked out).

Critic Danny Peary comments: "Director Robert Wise matches the 72 minutes of screen time to real time, building tension and authenticity. The world he creates – the boxer's cheap hotel room, the carnival-like street scene, the dingy, overcrowded dressing room, the hostile arena – is atmospheric and believable.

"And you'll not soon forget his portrayal of fight fans, each more monstrous than the other." ❄

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YEARS OF LAND RIGHTS:  
WAS THE LEGISLATION MEANT TO WORK?  
Veronica Graf, Member NSW Aboriginal Lands Council  
Vic Simms, Community Representative  
Olga Havnen, Dir Indigenous Program, Fred Hollows Foundation

**August 8**  
COURAGE AND COWARDICE IN PUBLIC LIFE  
Linda Burney, ALP MP, former Director General NSW Dept of Aboriginal Affairs  
Rick Farley, Managing Director Farley Consulting and Environment Use and Native Title

**August 15**  
NON-VIOLENT AGENDAS – THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE  
Jason McLeod, Co-ordinator Peace Brigades International  
Stuart Rees, Director Peace and Conflict Studies Sydney Uni

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# GE canola should be banned

The licensing last week of GE herbicide tolerant canola for unrestricted release echoes the scourges of prickly pear, cane toads and rabbits approved last century. Australia spends \$3.5 billion a year on weeds and this will increase when GE canola goes feral.

"The Federal Government's Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) ignores the fragile Australian environment and the urgent need to make Australian farming sustainable, to protect the environment and food security", GeneEthics Director, Bob Phelps said.

"GE crops intensify the farming practices that are destroying our capacity to feed ourselves.

"CSIRO warns that in 30 years Australia will be a net importer of food unless we make farm practices sustainable, but GE crops undermine that process.

"Licensing Bayer is also a mistake as we gave the OGTR overwhelming evidence that the company is not suitable to hold such a licence", Mr Phelps said.

"Bayer has been convicted and fined around the world for breaking laws, guidelines and regulations which affect public health and the environment.

"Under sections 57 (2) and 58 of the Act, the OGTR must refuse a licence if an applicant is unfit.

"Six state and territory governments have banned the unrestricted release of GE canola for at least 12 months over its threat to our reputation for clean, green foods, which will close local and overseas markets to Australian grain."

GeneEthics has asked the Gene Technology Ministerial Council which is meeting this week in Perth, to create a national consensus on GE canola by joining Tasmania's ban on commercial GE crop releases for five years.

"Once GE canola is released our GE-free status will be lost forever", Mr Phelps warned.

## Unsuitable to hold a licence

Sections 57 (2) and 58 of the (Commonwealth) Gene Technology Act 2000 require the OGTR to fully assess the suitability of applicants to hold licences.

GeneEthics provided the IGTR with evidence in support of its case that within the terms of the Act Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd is unsuitable to hold licences from the OGTR.

Licence holders are required to meet contemporary community standards of probity, good standing and ethical behaviour. The

GeneEthics submission shows that because of Bayer's past history of:

- persistent non-compliance with the law, regulations and guidelines; and

- being convicted, fined and censured on many occasions worldwide, over the past decade;

the applicant company fails the test of suitability set out in the Act and should be denied the licence.

GeneEthics urged the OGTR to independently and exhaustively exercise its responsibility to investigate and assess applicant suitability. "We question whether the OGTR has yet fully complied with both the letter and spirit of Sections 57 (2) and 58 of the Act when assessing Bayer's fitness", the group said.

The most precautionary step the OGTR could take is to reject the company's application. Bayer has shown itself incapable of protecting the environment and public health, and has not got the will to do so.

In the event of the licence being granted, which is now the situation, despite the body of evidence that the applicants are unsuitable and that the environmental and public health risks are unacceptable, GeneEthics urged that strong conditions be imposed on the licences.

As a minimum, the licences GeneEthics said, should require the corporations to give guarantees and evidence that they:

- fully insure their dealings and accept full liability; or lodge fidelity bonds in trust, to compensate anyone damaged by their dealings;
- fully inform the buyers of the technology of the nature, scope and hazards of the dealings;

- require that neighbouring farmers are informed where GE canola is to be grown so they can take timely evasive action (for example, by growing an unrelated crop).

All of these measures are within the discretion of the OGTR, conferred by the Act.

The following are a few examples that GeneEthics submitted to the OGTR of relevant convictions and penalties against Bayer CropScience:

## Fraud

### USA: 2003

In a fraud settlement, Bayer agreed to pay US state and federal governments US\$257 million and

plead guilty to a criminal charge of fraud after engaging in a scheme to overcharge for the antibiotic Cipro.

The fraud involved secretly selling Cipro to Kaiser Permanente, one of the nation's largest health care organisations, at prices lower than the company was charging Medicaid.

This violated a federal law that requires drug makers to sell drugs to Medicaid at the lowest price charged to any customer. The health of people unable to benefit from Cipro because of its cost is relevant.

### Norway: 2002-3

In September 2002, three companies including Bayer AG were ordered by the Environment Department of Oslo, Norway's capital, to pay total fines of €7 million. The agency told the three companies they were responsible for contaminating the Oslo fjord with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), chemicals which impact the environment and public health.

### USA: 1996

Bayer was fined US\$500,000 and ordered by the US Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) to do US\$2.5 million worth of remediation works for breaches of regulations relating to hazard reduction in the use toxic plastic chemicals.

### Peru: 2002

After a nine-month investigation, a Peruvian Congressional Subcommittee found significant evidence of criminal responsibility by both the agrochemical company Bayer and the Peruvian Ministry of Agriculture in the poisoning of 42 children in the remote Andean village of Taucamarca in October 1999.

The children were stricken after eating a school breakfast contaminated with the organophosphate pesticide methyl parathion. Bayer had continued to sell its most toxic pesticides (classified by the World Health Organisation as extremely or highly hazardous) despite publicly promising to withdraw them in 1995.

Twenty-four children died and 18 others survived, with long-term health and developmental problems.

The pesticide was promoted under the name Folidol to small farmers throughout Peru, the great majority of whom speak Quechua only and are illiterate. Bayer packaged the pesticide in small plastic bags, labelled in Spanish, displaying a picture of vegetables.

The poison is a white powder that resembles powdered milk and has no strong chemical odour. The



labels provided little indication of the danger of the product, and no usable safety information such as pictograms accessible to the majority of users in remote villages.

The Report found that Bayer should compensate the families and surviving children who are still waiting for a hearing date to be set.

## Lipobay deaths

In August 2001, Bayer was forced to withdraw from the market an anti-cholesterol drug, Lipobay (known as Baycol in the US). Fifty people had died and this total is now about 100. Bayer faces 7800 lawsuits over Lipobay and has settled 450 out of court.

A decision in the first Lipobay-related court case, in Corpus Christi Texas, is expected soon. A US pensioner is seeking US\$100m in damages in the case and the outcome is considered a yardstick of Bayer's liability.

## Experiments on students

### Germany-USA-UK: 1998-2000

The US EPA is seeking an inquiry by the National Academy of Sciences into Bayer CropScience's use of students to test an organophosphate classified as highly hazardous by the World Health Organisation.

Students of Heriott-Watt University in Edinburgh were paid US\$1100 to consume fruit juice laced with organophosphate. The research had no medical benefit and its potential hazards were not disclosed. The survey was to gather data to argue that restrictions on the pesticide's use ought to be eased.

Bayer has not subsequently checked on the students' health. The Nuremberg Code, formulated after the Nazi's wartime experiments bans the use of humans for testing poisonous substances without a medical purpose.

### USA: 1997

In an out of court settlement, Bayer was expecting to pay

US\$267.4 million to 6200 haemophiliacs infected by AIDS-tainted blood products between 1978 and 1985.

### USA: 1998

Bayer faced a US\$54,000 penalty from the EPA for clean air violations after they exceeded sulphur dioxide limits by burning high sulphur coal at their polymers manufacturing plant in Anniston Ohio. Exposure to sulphur dioxide is linked to impaired breathing and other respiratory diseases.

### USA: 2002

Bayer was successfully sued by two x-ray technicians who suffered illness because Bayer employees had incorrectly installed a Bayer manufactured x-ray machine: Alder v Bayer Corp No. 20000937 (Utah Nov. 26, 2002).

## Dumping toxic waste

### Argentina: 1996

Bayer is cleaning up 10-12 tonnes of pesticides it buried in 1970 after the government began preliminary legal proceedings against it. Bayer says it has no record of the dumping and is unaware of any other such sites.

"The company has consistently betrayed the public's trust and confidence globally so its licence applications should be rejected. We submit that Bayer cannot be trusted to act in good faith in the public interest, with the precaution, care and diligence necessary to deal safely with GE canola or other GMOs.

"Utmost good faith is required when dealings involve the release of GMOs, especially as the plans for segregation and coexistence of GE and non-GE canola will be largely self-managed by the licensees or their agents."

For more information on GeneEthics and how you can support them, visit: <http://www.geneethics.org>  
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