

DANGER: NEW POLICE STATE POWERS

The House of Representatives has passed legislation that would give the Federal Government the power to cut off the internet and phone services of groups and individuals involved in organising protest actions. The Government will be able to order communication companies to stop supplying services to groups or individuals labelled by ASIO and the Federal Police as being a "threat to national security" and "contrary to the interests of national security". Also, people running such targeted web sites, and those with links to it, could be jailed for two years under the proposed laws.

by Tom Pearson

The claim by the Government that the new laws are an anti-terrorist measure is utterly without truth. The clear intention of the legislation, which will now go to the Senate, is to suppress and silence public dissent and protest against government policies. It follows the passing of draconian laws during the past three years giving ASIO, the Federal Police and the military unprecedented powers for use against the Australian people.

The ALP supports the Bill and is set to pass it with lame amendments in the same way it gave

the green light to the ASIO Bill, Labor's Lindsay Tanner saying the ALP backed "the thrust" of the aim to cut people's telecommunications services.

Those who have their telecommunications cut off will not have to be told beforehand that they failed a security check. The Attorney-General will also be able to order the Australian Communications Authority to refuse a licence to any telecommunications service provider and the Authority would be required to get permission from the Attorney-General's office before granting a licence to any provider.

The Australian Council of Civil Liberties warns that the legislation gives wide discretion to the government of the day based on vague terms such as "national security" to deny what is a basic right, the ability to access telecommunications services.

"It is not about dealing with crime", said Council of Civil Liberties spokesperson Ian Dearden. "It's about dealing with politics. It's a classic authoritarian step." Keysar Trad, a spokesperson from Sydney's Muslim community, said the proposed new laws were "extreme measures" and that the Government had failed to provide proof that there was a terrorist threat to Australia.

The threat of a terrorist attack, if one exists at all, comes from Australia's involvement in the war on Iraq and ties to the US: it is the actions of the Howard Government that threaten Australia's security.

The creation of a police state has taken a number of "authoritarian steps". Australia's secret police, ASIO, now has more agents than at any time in its history. The Government has

put the reintroduction of the death penalty on the political agenda with Howard promoting a "debate" on capital punishment as part of the coming federal election campaign. In response, the Queensland and Northern Territory branches of the Liberal Party have publicly supported a return of capital punishment.

Added to this are the new powers given to ASIO in laws passed in July. ASIO now has the power to arrest and detain citizens. People can now be held indefinitely on the basis that they might have information about terrorism or matters the Government can label terrorism.

The definition of "terrorist groups" is so vague and sweeping that they allow the label to be put on trade unions, protest groups and political parties. The power of the Attorney-General to simply nominate groups as terrorist-oriented leaves the way open for widespread discrimination and victimisation.

It should be recalled that the Australian military, under legislation introduced in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics, now has the power to shoot down

civilians in the streets. The Defence Legislation Amendment (Aid to the Civil Authorities) Bill established the legal and political basis for using troops to "suppress political disturbances".

The measures allow for the use of "reasonable and necessary force", in essence the right of military personal to shoot to kill.

All these fascist powers were introduced under the cover of "anti-terrorism" measures, but that cover, never having any substance, is now transparent. In the name of fighting terror, during just the past eight months the Australian people have witnessed the Howard Government:

- commit them to a terrorist war on the people of Iraq that slaughtered more than 10,000 innocent people;
- lie to the public to do so; resume ties with the terrorist arm of the Indonesian military, Kopassus;
- occupy the Solomon Islands as part of a broader plan to become colonial overlord in the Pacific (see story page 2); and now
- add to a raft of powers aimed at imposing a police state. ✪



Who benefits?

Many theories are being advanced as to who might have carried out the fatal bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad – this or that “terrorist” organisation, fighters from outside Iraq, al Qaida (of course), remnants of Saddam Hussein supporters, etc.

In investigating any crime, any good detective will consider the question of motive and there are many reasons why Iraqis should express hatred towards the United Nations. It sanctioned the war against Iraq in 1990. It imposed the tragic 12-year long sanctions on Iraq that led to the deaths of at least 500,000 Iraqi children. It did nothing to stop the illegal and continuous bombing of Iraq by the US and British bombers for the last 10 years. It failed to stop the US and British invasion and occupation of Iraq this year and has now, despite earlier opposition, actually passed a resolution legitimising the invasion and the authority of the US in its occupation. At the same time, the UN has failed dismally to carry out its repeated resolutions regarding Israel. There is a justified opinion that the UN is hypocritical.

That some Iraqis carried out the bombing of the UN headquarters is, therefore, a possibility. But they are not the only ones who have an interest in removing the UN from Iraq, despite its willingness to play second fiddle to the US occupation.

It is evident that for the US, the situation is spinning out of control. The number of dead and wounded US troops is mounting but more importantly, other countries are refusing to come to the assistance of the US by providing troops. Another growing problem for the US Government is the restiveness of its own troops in Iraq who are voicing a demand to be sent home.

It is significant that immediately following the bombing of the UN headquarters, Colin Powell moved to get the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution that would encourage some other countries (India for example) to send sizeable numbers of troops to help the US “pacify” Iraq.

Furthermore, some UN staff are pressuring the US to carry out its stated intention – to establish a free and democratic Iraqi Government and get out of Iraq. In a recent interview, Hans Von Sponeck, former Assistant Secretary General of the UN, in Iraq said, “President Bush again today repeated that they [the US] brought freedom to Iraq. This is not freedom. An externally imposed rather than an Iraqi made freedom is no real freedom...”

Von Sponeck quoted Sergio Vieira de Mello, the UN representative killed in the bombing, as saying that the first fiddle in the reconstruction period must be played by the Iraqis themselves.

Von Sponeck said, “I do not mean that the international community should pick up the cost of damages that were created by two ill-directed governments that decided to go to war against Iraq.”

Salim Lone, spokesperson for the UN in Iraq, said as he emerged from the rubble caused by the explosion, “the mission of the UN is to end the occupation”.

With such sentiments being expressed and with the arrogant intention of the US and Britain to remain in command of all troops in Iraq and the “reconstruction” efforts, there are good reasons for the US and British Governments to want the United Nations either out of the way or acting under US direction.

Whether the UN gets out or helps out, the US has made it clear that it and it alone will remain in complete control and that the UN would be no more than a sub-agency of the US Defence Department.

It should also be recalled that only a few weeks ago a similar bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad took place. Why should any Iraqis want to bomb the Embassy of another Arab country? But it could have been an attempt to drive a wedge between Muslim countries as part of a “divide and rule” policy.

It also has to be recalled that the Israelis bombed a UN-run refugee camp in Lebanon in the 1980s.

Who benefits from the bombing of the UN offices in Baghdad? A most obvious beneficiary could be the United States.

PRESS FUND

So having invaded Iraq, the US now wants the UN to bear part of the cost of reconstructing the country – with the US still running things, of course. Contributions to *The Guardian* Press Fund will in turn contribute to exposing the lies and intentions of the US while at the same time contribute to the struggle against US imperialism. The Fund is falling behind target. It should have reached \$8000 by the end of this month. So please, dig deep for the workers’ weekly. We have no corporate sponsors. sincere thanks go to our two contributors this week, as follows:

S Allen \$30, Figment Productions \$5.

This week’s total: \$35. Progressive total \$7145.

Australia’s dictatorial agenda

Australia’s intention of sending a “flying squad” to Papua New Guinea to oversee the spending of Australian aid monies is another arrogant little-dictator act, following on the heels of the Howard Government’s hijacking of the recent South Pacific Islands Forum.

by Tom Pearson

Officials from Australia will go to Papua New Guinea periodically to dictate the use by the Papua New Guinea Government of Australia’s \$330 million aid program to “ensure it is not abused by corrupt government officials”. That is the plan outlined by Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, anyhow.

Papua New Guinea has other ideas, Prime Minister Michael Somare saying he was fed up with hearing that Papua New Guinea and other Pacific nations were corrupt and had poor governance i.e. the “failed states” jargon. As far as the aid program was concerned, he said: “Yes, review it. If they want to remove, remove it for God’s sake.”

Papua New Guinea Planning Minister Sinai Brown was also blunt and to the point. “I think Papua New Guinea must free itself from being dictated to by Australians and [official aid body] AusAID.” In fact he called for direct government-to-government communications instead of through AusAID and its offshoots so as to stem the flow of the estimated 70 percent of aid money that returns to Australia via Australian-based consultancies.

“There are so many Australian agencies in Papua New Guinea working for AusAID and directing and telling Papua New Guinea what we should do. This has to stop.”

He added that “corruption is far worse in countries like Australia where huge corporations are closing down [and] billions of dollars are involved in corrupt dealings, yet they come here and try to dictate to us.”

In the broader scheme of things the aid is a measly amount in terms of Australia’s responsibilities toward its former colony and WW2 ally.

The aid is not a gift handed over on the whim of government: historically Australia has been behind the ruthless exploitation of Papua New Guinea labour by Australian corporations and the rape of Papua New Guinea’s natural resources by mining and logging companies.

Pacific union

Papua New Guinea’s stance reflects a growing anger amongst Pacific island nations who rightly see the aggressive interventionist hype coming out of Canberra – including the Howard Government’s push for a pan Pacific union dominated by Australia – as neo-colonialism.

According to a government-commissioned Senate report the Pacific union would entail Pacific nations adopting the Australian dollar, amalgamating key services, the setting up a “regional unit to fight transnational crime and terrorism”, a regional central bank and a currency board.

Privatisation is high on the report’s (and government’s) agenda: “Millions of dollars have been allocated from small national budgets to support chronically loss-making public enterprises.” There would also be a “regional approach to monetary and exchange rate policy”, under Australian control of course.

There is to be a Pacific police training college set up in Fiji with a \$15 million contribution from Australia. Its training program is to form the basis of a regional police force.

The South Pacific Islands Forum is to be the platform for the running of this bogus union, which is why, with threats and vote buying, Greg Urwin became the first Australian

Secretary General of the Forum, held in New Zealand earlier this month.

Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands interventions are examples of how this union is to come about. The economic and military threats are the first festering germs of Australian absolutism. As is already clear, this is not to be a union of equals, but the creation of an Australian colonial empire in the Pacific.

As such it involves intimidation, meddling in the affairs of other countries, outright military intervention and the disarming of island nations, where possible with the complicity of governments in the pocket and pay of Australia.

And by logical extension it will also involve the bringing down of non-compliant governments by force where conditions necessitate, or through the organising of coups, the exiling of leaders, or their imprisonment or assassination, the latter better known as “regime change”.

As none of the Pacific nations Australia is now standing over and bullying pose a threat to Australia’s security, the fundamental policy of Pacific union is a form of pre-emptive strike. Whereas the war on Iraq and the threatened war on “rogue states” are based on the bogey of “weapons of mass destruction”, the pretext for the Howard Government’s dirty little exercise in domination and occupation is “failed states”.

It will be a union based on exploitation and plunder – control of the Pacific for the transnational corporations – under an Australian – administered jackbooted colonialism.

Countries will either fall in line, allow military bases to operate from their soil if so ordered, and participate in the policing of their neighbours, or they will be deemed “failed states” that threaten regional security and so be the subject of “regime change”. ☺

Nailing Howard’s lies

At the Senate inquiry into the Government’s spin on intelligence reports in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq, Andrew Wilkie the former intelligence agent who resigned rather than go along with the lies, said the Australian Government “skewed, misrepresented, used selectively and fabricated” the intelligence. “Sometimes the exaggeration was so great it was clear dishonesty”, he said. Words and phrases qualifying

intelligence assessments, such as “probably”, “could” and “uncorroborated evidence suggests” were frequently dropped from reports. “Words like ‘massive’ and ‘mammoth’ were included [instead]”. The reality is that no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq, either before or after the invasion. Howard, Blair and Bush are now attempting to blame the intelligence community to cover up their lies.

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More lessons from US electricity debacle

The more civic-minded of Australia's planners should have heeded the warning signs three years ago when California's electricity system lurched into crisis. During the 1990s, economic "rationalists" were given free reign to transform the public electricity utilities of the eastern states of Australia into a National Electricity Market.

by Bob Briton

SA experience

All-wise market forces would, step-by-step, replace charters from the public authorities as the guiding principles for the provision of this essential service. The US was the first to head down this path and has been the first to meet with its inevitable consequences.

California was the most widely reported casualty of the policy. Spiralling electricity charges, rolling blackouts, company failures and the loss of US\$25 billion in Enron-style wheeling and dealing in just 15 months left the state's consumers bloodied and bruised.

Re-regulation was put back on the agenda in California and half a dozen other states to overcome the crisis. Policy makers in Australia kept their nerve.

Now there has been the spectacle of a blackout of unprecedented proportions across six states of the US and parts of Canada. It seems from early reports that relatively routine technical problems were beyond the capacity of the deregulated, interconnected, privately owned network to overcome.

The Bush administration is now calling for an upgrading of the network and more federal involvement in the running of the grid – though, no doubt, with the same profiteering corporations actually in charge.

The embarrassing observation is being made on all sides that, despite promises of huge private investment, the largest first world economy has a lot of neglected public infrastructure built to third world standards.

An 84-year-old North Adelaide woman had her bill rise from \$64.41 in September to \$440.74 in March

And still the ideologues in Australia are standing firm.

South Australians have already experienced increased numbers of blackouts since the ETSA utility was privatised in 1999 and, despite the election promises of the Rann Labor Government to fix up the state's electricity woes, it seems that SA is headed for more supply chaos this summer. A number of classic "free enterprise" causes are behind the predictions.

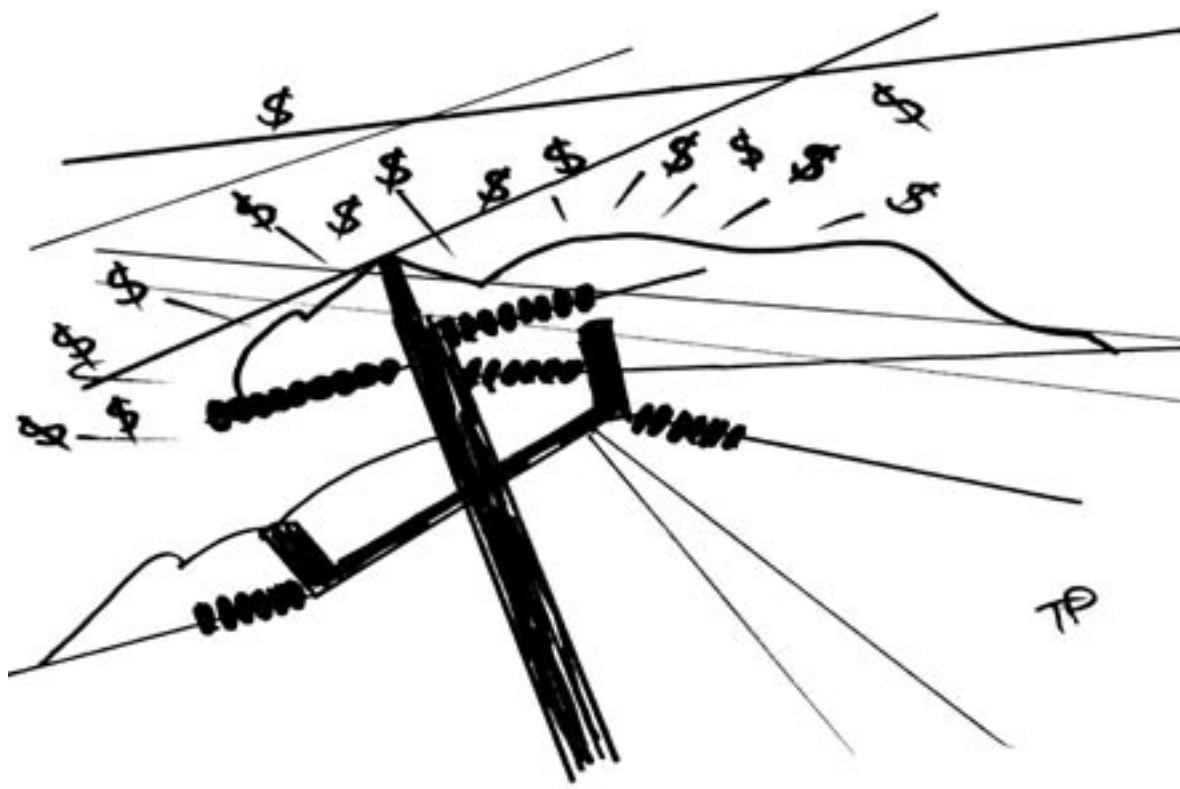
Electricity Week reported recently that a number of generators are not listing their capacity with the market co-ordinating company, NEMMCO. That is because, while consumers pay record high prices for their power, wholesale electricity prices are currently among the lowest on record at around \$22MW/h. The companies involved are waiting for summer with its increased demand when prices can be forced up to something closer to the maximum limit of \$10,000MW/h.

"The politics of that is that they are probably waiting to be called in by NEMMCO and bid at the highest possible price", magazine publisher Laurel Fox-Allen told the media last week.

Increased demand and a lack of new generating capacity in New South Wales are other likely reasons for generators to be coy about their capabilities.

At the same time, access to any scraps of surplus capacity in the NSW grid will be denied to South Australians because of a tense struggle between two powerful industry players. NEMMCO has decided to allow the Murraylink interconnector – running from Red Cliffs in Victoria to Monash in SA – into the club that is the National Electricity Market at the expense of the projected SNI interconnector. SNI has been on the drawing board for six years now and was designed to link SA to the NSW grid.

It appears that Transenergie – the operators of Murraylink – convinced NEMMCO that the SNI scheme would duplicate part



of its operations and introduce an unwanted rival for its facility. So much for competition!

The granting of "regulated" status to Murraylink (and the overturning of a previous decision to grant such status to SNI) means that Murraylink can also pass on transmission costs of around \$12 million a year to consumers in Victoria and SA. The ACCC has given its stamp of approval to the arrangement.

SA Energy Minister Pat Conlon is said to be fuming at the decision, which leaves South Australia in a vulnerable situation as the weather heats up and the air-conditioners are switched on.

Still, it would be silly to be surprised. As US experience can attest, financial analysts and not engineers are in control of the show nowadays and infrastructure is built – not where it can assure reasonable prices and reliable service – but where the juiciest profits can be made by the strongest contenders.

Other signs of stress are appearing in the operations of the various corporations in charge of delivering our electricity. In SA a bill for \$147 was delivered to a half-built, unoccupied house. Elsewhere, an 84-year-old North Adelaide woman had her bill rise from \$64.41 in September to \$440.74 in March.

She had resorted to switching off her fridge and eating raw or canned food to cope with the huge bill. When her friend contacted AGL for an explanation, it

seems that the elderly resident had received an estimated account.

AGL explained that this is done when company employees are unable to access the metre. The problem, however, is that the estimate is made from the average consumption of residents in the area, not the particular customer's own previous (and very frugal) consumption. Such an estimate would have brought the bill down to around \$70 in this instance.

"There is nothing wrong with the estimating system. AGL is acting in accordance with the retail electricity code", company spokesperson Jane Counsel said.

In Victoria, the Financial and Consumer Rights Council has revealed that Victoria's new electricity sales system is still having problems more than 12 months after customers were able to choose their own retailer from between TXU, AGL or Origin Energy. Householders switching their electricity company are waiting up to eight months to receive their first bills.

Ms Adams was a TXU customer before moving to Wyndham Vale and wanted to stay with the company. For some reason, because her new neighbourhood is mostly served by Origin Energy, the changeover took a long time. "They couldn't even tell me over the phone what I owed, so am I now going to get a bill for \$700?", she wonders.

Many consumers are getting into difficulties and finding it hard to budget for the mounting – but elusive – electricity bill. It is not that long ago that companies were promising a brave new world of "smart metres" that would automatically sniff out the best power deal on offer from fiercely competitive rivals. The reality is shaky supply and poor service from retailers offering the same expensive product.

Meanwhile, AGL celebrated a 30 percent jump in profits in the past 12 months by buying Victoria's largest power generator, Loy Yang. Australia's largest energy retailer and the Tokyo Electric Power Company will own about 35 per cent each of the once publicly owned facility with the Commonwealth Bank and the Great Energy Alliance Corporation sharing the rest.

Origin – Australia's second largest electricity retailer – posted a 38 per cent increase in revenue to \$3.35 billion, which helped lift net profit 25.9 per cent to \$161.95 million for the 2003 financial year.

All in all, these are happy days for companies already involved in the National Electricity Market but very gloomy ones for consumers, especially cash strapped working class ones. What is more, it is surely only a matter of time before a New York style collapse into darkness is added to the "free enterprise" mix. ☘

Legislating for loggers

With a federal election looming the Howard Government has introduced new legislation that will open huge areas to logging, delisting 20,000 places that until now have been protected under the National Estate Register. The independent Australian Heritage Commission has been abolished: Environment Minister David Kemp will have complete power to decide what is and what is not protected under heritage listings.

Playing the nationalism card the Government will also approach other countries to have certain sites, such as Anzac Cove in Turkey and the Kokoda Trail in PNG, listed.

National icons such as the Sydney Opera House will also be listed, although there are no mineral resources or old growth forests at Circular Quay.

The legislation, opposed by the Greens and Labor, passed through the Senate with the support of the four independents.

Kemp sang their praises, with special mention for ex-Democrats leader Meg Lees: "Without the ... independent senators, in particular

Meg Lees ... this would not have been achieved."

Calling the legislation a "green-wash", Greens Senate leader Bob Brown said, "The bills not only leave iconic Australian forests and wildlife to the woodchippers, they impose multi-million dollar penalties on any federal government that protects forests like Tasmania's Styx Valley of the Giants."

Senator Brown said that as the election approaches Prime Minister Howard will announce easy listings, but "we will remind voters that for each place announced he has taken 40 places off the existing National Estate Register". ☘

Toxteth Talks

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For more info. ring 0418 290 663

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Protest for
Peace and Justice

Tuesday, 2nd September
5-6.30 pm
Sydney Town Hall Square.

Organised by Australian Anti-Bases Coalition for
Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition

Contact Denis on 0418 290 663

A peace-loving crocodile will join the protest

War on Qantas workers

Corporate greed knows no limits. In order to boost its profit level Qantas has effectively declared war on its workforce, despite creaming off a massive \$343 million from operations last financial year.

by Peter Mac

Qantas chief executive Geoff Dixon, announced the company's intentions with unabashed arrogance last week.

The company's aim is to convert up to a quarter of its workforce from permanent to casual, part-time or contract employment. Qantas management indicated that its target figure is 45 percent casual. It also intends to establish a cut-price airline to compete with Virgin Blue and, if this comes off, it is likely that most of the new company's employees will be casuals and, if possible, non-union.

On Tuesday of last week Qantas made the first attempt to introduce workers provided by a labour hire company. It was met by immediate strike action which forced Qantas to withdraw the labour hire workers. Round one to unions! But Qantas management will not give up its anti-worker and anti-union plans.

If realised, the plan would affect

between 8000 and 15,000 existing jobs.

Echoing the plans of Patrick on the waterfront in 1998, Geoff Dixon made it clear that the company intends to break the unions.

"We reserve the right to ensure that our customers are not disrupted by industrial action ... we have contingencies to maintain our operations, including the training of some Qantas staff in Los Angeles", he said. The waterfront strike breakers were trained in Dubai!

A statement authorised by the ACTU and a number of other unions reported that a meeting of Qantas delegates resolved to work together to support all Qantas workers in opposing the contacting out of Qantas jobs. It went on to say that "In the event that Qantas takes further provocative action against Qantas employees, all Qantas unions resolve to protect jobs and working conditions".

The statement said, "We have

two options; we can buckle in the face of corporate thuggery or we can show Qantas we are determined to fight for our jobs, our families and our future.

"We must come together as a movement to support the Qantas workers. An attack on one is an attack on all", said the unions.

ACTU Secretary, Greg Combet said "Casualisation will inflict lower living standards on Qantas workers and leave them without entitlements such as holiday pay and sick leave".

However, in what can only be described as an extraordinary action, Qantas Chairperson Margaret Jackson was invited to address the delegates at the ACTU Congress at precisely the time Qantas attempted to introduce labour hire company workers and was declaring that it had already trained its team of strike breakers.

Margaret Jackson is said to be "one of Australia's foremost women in business" and is a director of ANZ Banking group. She was addressing the ACTU Congress in a "Future of Work" panel.

The anti-union actions of Qantas management must once again show that corporate managers owe their allegiance to their shareholders and to profits, not their workforce who work to produce those profits.

Qantas requires the casualisation of its workforce to fund its aggressive expansion plans and make even larger profits. These plans include gobbling up a large part of Air New Zealand, as well as establishing the cut price airline to compete with Virgin Blue – preferably to eliminate it altogether. It has already established the cut-price Australian Airlines, flying between Australia and Asia, and Jet Connect, which flies within New Zealand. It also has plans to move more of its jobs offshore.



Qantas wants to casualise its work force to fund its expansion

Qantas has so far refused to negotiate with the unions on the employment issue. In response to an Industrial Relations Commission directive, Qantas baggage handlers last Thursday postponed industrial action over the introduction of labour-hire staff, pending a mass stop-work meeting. (Qantas had threatened to take legal action against its staff and to forcibly remove some of them from the airport).

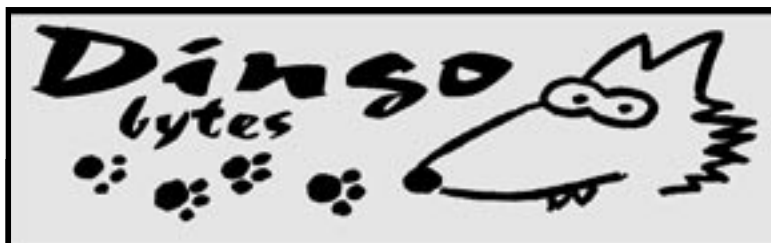
The ACTU and other unions are now discussing a major industrial campaign intended to defeat the casualisation plan and retain permanent employment among the company's workforce.

The company's position is strik-

ingly reminiscent of that taken by the stevedoring firm Patrick's prior to the major waterfront dispute of 1998. That dispute was also intended to break the unions involved, but it failed.

The flying kangaroo is no longer a symbol of Australia's achievements in building a national airline. It is just another greedy corporate employer determined to squeeze everything possible out of its workforce, to slash jobs and reduce working conditions to serve its shareholders.

It can be defeated as Patrick Stevedores was defeated by united trade union campaigning which includes winning the support of the travelling public. ✪



Western Australian Premier Geoff Gallop let fly last week with a load of racist, moralising claptrap after a 12-year-old Aboriginal boy was killed in a car he'd stolen for a joy ride, when being pursued in a high speed chase by police. Gallop took the road straight to racist incitement, blaming individual parents for the problems faced by Aboriginal youth while rejecting social and historical marginalisation, discrimination and deprivation. He lectured Aboriginal people, saying they were "trying to pretend there are some historical reasons that justify this behaviour". As such he was in step with Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister, that fascist-minded Philip Ruddock, who applauded from the sidelines. "You have to deal with substance abuse and take responsibility for your own actions", intoned the man responsible for the indefinite imprisonment of asylum seeking children. Said the boy's mother, "They're blaming us instead of asking why the police chased them".

And while on Commandant Ruddock, it turns out he's quite the little fund raiser for the Liberal Party with a "personal network of generous party donors", according to submissions to a Senate inquiry into an alleged visas-for-cash scam. According to the former President of a Liberal Party branch in Ruddock's electorate, Ruddock "always had enough funds to support other electorates at election time", but whenever he was asked to produce the branch financial statements "these were, for some reason, continually not available".

Then of course, there's the Federal Minister for Territories, Wilson "Iron Bar" Tuckey, a racist windbag who's been exposed as using his ministerial letterhead to try to get his son off a \$193 fine. Iron Bar junior got booked for failing to carry a log book when trucking a shipment of seedlings across state boundaries. Tuckey wrote to the SA Police Minister, playing a game of make-believe by saying he was writing in regard to "the normal context of a constituent matter", then identifying the constituent as his son, for whom "a warning would have been appropriate". He told the Police Minister he wanted the matter "reconsidered". When Tuckey's son was subsequently convicted, Iron Bar dashed off another official ministerial letter to the Police Minister, who wrote back that it was illegal for him to overturn a fine.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is the Metro Group of companies, which shifted 80 of its workers from Metro Sales to a bogus offshoot with no assets called Metro Products in order to dodge tax and workers' compensation premiums. Of course a few months later Metro Products announced it had gone under, so the company directors dodged paying the workers' entitlements as well.

Did Goebbels write the Bush administration's speeches?

Bush, 2001:

"Americans are asking "Why do they hate us?" They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government.

"Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."

Goebbels, 1939:

"They hate our people because it is decent, brave, industrious, hard-working and intelligent. They hate our views, our social policies, and our accomplishments. They hate us as a Reich and as a community. They have forced us into a struggle for life and death. We will defend ourselves accordingly. All is clear between us and our enemies."

Richard Perle, policy advisor to Bush, 2001:

"No stages. This is total war. We are fighting a variety of enemies. There are lots of them out there. All this talk about first we are going to do Afghanistan, then we will do Iraq, then we take a look around and see how things stand. That is entirely the wrong way to go about it ... If we just let our vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely, and we don't try to ... piece together clever diplomatic solutions ... but just wage a total war against these tyrants, I think we will do very well. Our children will sing great songs about us years from now."

Goebbels, 1943:

"So total war is the demand of the hour. We must put an end to the bourgeois attitude which we have also seen in this war: Wash my

back, but don't get me wet! The danger facing us is enormous. The efforts we take to meet it must be just as enormous. The time has come to remove the gloves! We must use our fists now! There is no excuse for only superficially and carelessly making use of the war potential at home and throughout Europe. We must use the full resources, as quickly and thoroughly as it is organizationally and practically possible. Unnecessary concern is wholly out of place. The future of Europe hangs on our success in the East! We are ready to defend it! The German people are shedding their most valuable blood in this battle. The rest of Europe should at least work to support us. Those who do not understand this fight today will thank us on bended knee tomorrow that we took it!" ✪

Public meeting

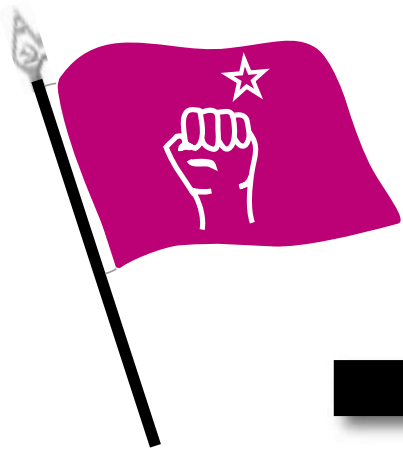
Venezuela

Alvaro Guzman: National Director of the Federation of Bolivarian Students
– hear how real social change is being made by working people

ADELAIDE: Wednesday 3rd September 7.00pm
Adelaide Community Centre 23 Cogliin St, Adelaide (off Gouger St, near Central Market)

PERTH: Friday 5th September 7pm
Inglewood Community Centre 891 Beaufort St, Inglewood (cnr 10th Avenue and Beaufort St)

Entry: \$8/6 All proceeds to cover tour costs For more information ring (08) 9218 9608



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THE FUTURE IS RED

THE COMMUNIST YOUTH OF AUSTRALIA

WINTER 2003

ISSUE 5

INSIDE:

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Hands off

MEDICARE

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Life at

MACCAS

Bring back

BTN

Mission Impossible

IRAQ

What the hell

BUSH SPEAK

Since 1996 Federal Government Higher Education policy has been premised on funding cuts and deregulation. This has accelerated a user-pays system in which education is treated as a private commodity.

by John Bailey

In 1997 universities were granted powers to introduce up-front fees for 25 percent of student places. A number of universities, prominently the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), voted against up-front fees after student protests and occupation of administration offices.

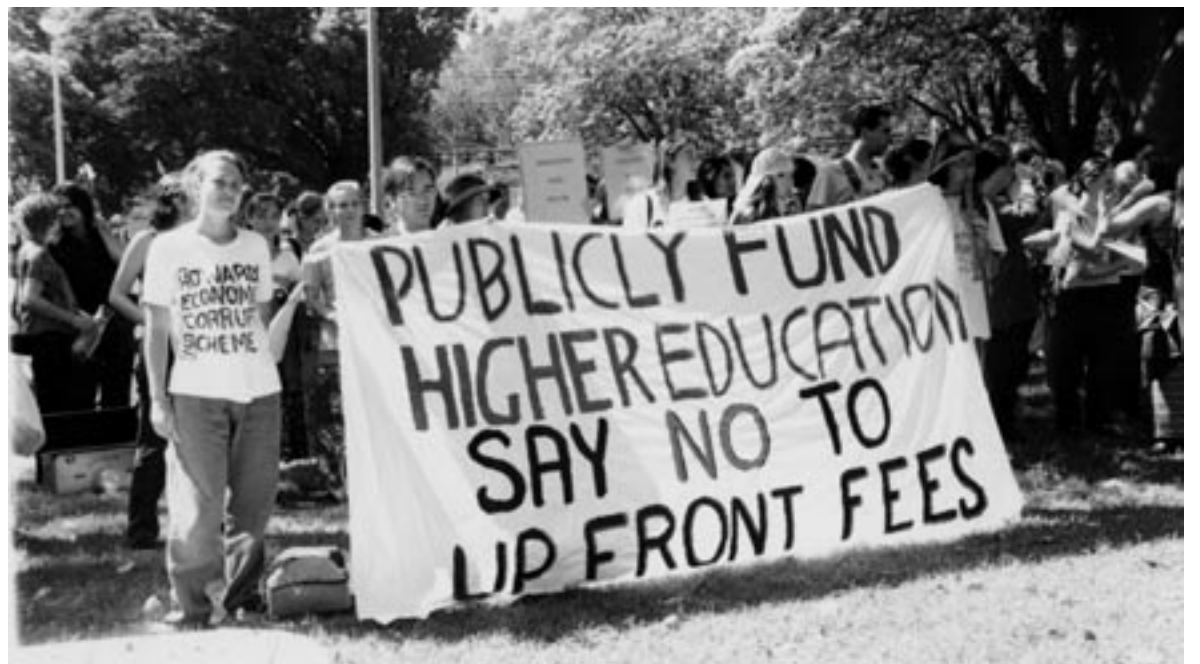
The immediate consequences of the 2003/4 Federal budget, if passed, will be to increase student fees by up to 30 percent. This is at the discretion of the individual university rather than implemented uniformly by government.

The result will be discrepancies in the quality of university education. It will encourage universities to generate their own income via the "student-pays" system and private sources of income.

This will further exclude poor and working-class students and make tertiary education a privilege of the rich.

TAFE

In the 2003/4 Federal budget there was no increase in funding at all for TAFE. The NSW State budget went further and delivered a decrease in real terms. The funding for TAFE was increased by a measly 0.69 percent and this figure includes extra revenue from student fees. In fact for the first time



the State Government has used the word "fees" to describe what was previously known (euphemistically) as "administration charges".

This real reduction in TAFE funding by the state Labor Government is to be accompanied by a restructure in which over 1000 TAFE employees in the non-teaching areas face redundancy.

As a result of this budget TAFE fees will rise dramatically. In some cases by 300 per cent. Moreover, there will no longer be fee-exempt courses in the Access and Equity area, which will prevent the most disadvantaged groups being able to access TAFE courses.

As a percentage of total Vocational Education and Training operating revenue, the Commonwealth contribution has

declined from 25 percent to less than 20 percent. Forcing TAFE colleges to compete with private colleges for education funding has further redirected public funds into private hands.

Due to these policies there has been a real reduction in funding for public TAFE systems. This has resulted in fewer courses being offered by TAFE and pressure to lower the salaries and working conditions of TAFE employees.

Public Schools

Since the advent of the Howard Government in 1996 there has been a massive shift in funding away from public schools to private schools. The Commonwealth Government in its latest budget

allocated more funding to private schools than to Universities.

This government funding means that Catholic schools are able to spend an average of 15.2 per cent more on each student than state schools can, and other private schools can spend 52.2 per cent more.

However, there are other forms of subsidies to private schools, which many people are not aware of. Contributions to building funds are tax deductible. So the purchase of property and addition of new buildings are in reality paid for by taxpayers.

Moreover, as "charities" private schools do not have to pay council rates. Ratepayers are subsidising rich private schools by paying higher rates.

Many private school students travel long distances to get to their elitist school of choice. The State Government foots the bill for this by allowing them to travel free on public transport.

The attacks on public education will require students, staff and the community to demand not only reinstating funding and reducing fees, but preserving student and staff democracy on campuses and the very essence of education's social utility and rights. ✪

The Communist Youth of Australia demand:
Free public education available to all
End state funding of private schools
No fees for TAFE or university
No "full fee" queue-jumpers – university places should be awarded on educational merit, not wealth
Increase Austudy – students need to live and eat too!

if you tremble with indignation
at every injustice, then you are
a comrade of mine

CHE GUEVARA





Join the ultimate struggle!

An address by Comrade Rob Gowland to an introductory meeting for new members of the Communist Youth of Australia in Sydney on Sunday 10th August, 2003.

We Communists are engaged on a mighty undertaking: nothing less than the total transformation of society. We aim to replace the rule of the owners of capital by the rule of those who create the wealth of the land through their own labour – or who would if the capitalists could provide them with jobs!

For apart from the fact that capitalism is a chaotic, inefficient and essentially unjust system, that requires war as part of its *modus operandi*, capitalism has for the last hundred years also been a moribund system.

Capitalism can no longer – and never will again – use all its productive capacity or provide jobs for all the workers available to it. And this despite all the shortages throughout the world crying out to be met, despite the desperate need of people all over the world for products and services that they lack, despite widespread homelessness, poverty and hunger, capitalism simply cannot organise itself to satisfy their needs.

We know that there is a better system, an historically better system that is not only better in theory but which has been proven to work in practice. That system is socialism.

The temporary overthrow of socialism in some countries at the end of the 1980s was an undoubted victory for capitalism, a setback for the working people of the world. But historically it is no more than a hiccup that cannot alter the general progression of history – and that progression is towards socialism.

But when we say that socialism is historically inevitable, we do not mean that you can just sit back and wait for it to happen. That way would ensure that it did **not** happen!

Socialism is inevitable precisely because the economic conditions of capitalism *force* people to struggle for it.

Capitalism's economic conditions – the great *and growing* inequality, the grinding of the poor, the constant drive to extract more profit from the labour of the workers – these economic imperatives of capitalism *inevitably* drive the working class and other oppressed and exploited sectors of society to fight back.

In that struggle they develop

revolutionary theory, form revolutionary movements and parties and build mass struggles for fundamental change.

This process is inevitable. And when, sooner or later, the revolutionary movement comes to be led by a revolutionary party armed with correct revolutionary theory, you will have the conditions for successful revolution.

The people, by their struggle, make it inevitable.

Organising, educating and leading the mass of the people to that revolutionary change, *that* is our job.

And there can be no greater or more rewarding task available to anyone. Nor a task that offers more scope for learning about the world and about society, or which offers more scope for initiative and personal fulfilment.

That does not mean it will be a bed of roses. In fact, it can deliver more disappointment and frustration than you could imagine. But the education that is an essential feature of the Communist movement will have given you an understanding of the processes at work in society that both explains these occurrences and sustains you through them.

Once you have embarked on the struggle for revolutionary change, you soon come to realise that it is the main or ultimate struggle, that all others are secondary to it. You may not be able to stick with it, for any number of reasons, but you will always know that to quit it is in fact to step *back*, to settle for less out of life.

Because concern for humanity, in fact *life itself*, demands that this struggle is *necessary*.

To participate in this great struggle requires commitment, self sacrifice and discipline. You cannot change the world in your spare time, or when you are in the mood. Your comrades must be able to rely on you. You need to attend not only the popular rallies and functions, but also the meetings that discuss and determine policy, for you cannot carry out decisions effectively unless you understand the thinking behind them.

At rallies, street stalls, marches, demonstrations, events large or



small, you need to be thinking all the time: "What can we do to make this event – or the CPA/CYA participation in it – more effective?"

When given a task – say giving out leaflets at a rally – don't be content when you have given them all out: look for a *new* task, either another batch of leaflets or something else entirely. Don't just stand around; always remember, there are things you can and should be doing. Look for things to do, for they will not only make our participation more effective, they will make your participation more interesting and more satisfying.

For that is the essence of Communist work: it is collective, it is in a great cause, it requires dedication, commitment and discipline, and it is the most fulfilling activity that anyone can ever undertake.

Don't settle for less. ✨

Hands off Medicare!

The Federal Government is about to destroy Medicare in the interests of the private health industry's profits. Howard's changes will shift the cost of health care onto individual families, depriving most Australians of the free access to health care that is our democratic right, especially in a resource-rich, wealthy economy such as ours.

Most Australians want the universal health care system and bulk billing to remain. We oppose the attack on bulk billing and call on all Australians to join the fight to save Medicare for the good health of all.

The Government, private health industry and drug companies want a two tier (one level of care for the wealthy, another lower level for the rest of us) health system to maximise the profits of the corporations and free Government of responsibility for health.

The Government is abandoning its role as a public service provider. It is destroying Australia's public sector and replacing it with a dog-eat-dog, everyone for themselves society. ✨

The Communist Youth of Australia demand 'people first' policies

- ★ **MAINTAIN BULK-BILLING** for everyone and no co-payment.
- ★ **RETURN THE \$3.6 BILLION** currently used to prop up the private health insurance industry to support the public Medicare system.
- ★ **PAY GPs MORE** to ensure their support of bulk billing.
- ★ **PROVIDE A NATIONAL DENTAL SERVICE** under Medicare with free basic dental care for all.
- ★ **NO INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF PRESCRIPTIONS** for young workers and students with Health Care Cards
- ★ **CONTROL PRICES CHARGED BY DRUG COMPANIES** to keep the cost of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme down.

JUST A TEN PERCENT CUT in the \$37 million a day that Australia currently spends on the military would fund all our public health needs.

What you can do:

- ★ Write to an ALP Senator in your state explaining how necessary Medicare is for you and calling on the ALP to block Howard's changes to the Medicare system. (Addresses of ALP Senators can be found at www.alp.org.au/people/search.html and selecting "MPs Senate".)
- ★ Visit the CPA web site www.cpa.org.au for petitions, form letters and other materials for yourself and your friends to sign; run a street stall with the petition; write to your local paper.
- ★ Get your student council, union or community to adopt a resolution to retain Medicare and join the campaign.



Bright Red

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Life in the fast-food lane

The general working conditions at McDonald's are pretty average, but I've never worked anywhere else so I don't have anything to compare it to.

The treatment by managers differs every shift. There is one Manager who owns the store who is one of the rudest men I've ever encountered. He used to call all of the female employees "babe", and he could be really insulting if you made mistakes.

I get one three-hour shift a week if I'm lucky; there have been occasions where I have been without a shift for an entire fortnight. The three-hour shifts are the shortest shifts they can give me and it is very rare that I work over those three hours.

I'm pretty sure I get such short shifts because I am 17 and I still haven't been trained to do everything yet (such as: working when the store opens and closing it up).

The wage is low which means I struggle to pay for petrol every week and after I do pay for my petrol to get to school I don't have

enough money for my lunch or anything else I may need.

There is a real emphasis on aesthetic value at McDonald's too. The good looking young people get the better jobs dealing with the customers, they get the best shifts and they are treated better by the managers and the other employees.

It is very rare that someone who doesn't dress or look like everyone else gets hired.

When they hire you they give you booklets to read that have phrases like "welcome to the team" written throughout the pages but after working there for a week I realised that it's not so much a team of equals as it is a class pyramid: the managers and owners are at the top, then there's the crew trainers, then the older employees, then the new employees at the very bottom.

If you don't make yourself seen and appreciated when you're new you don't move up the ranks.

That's probably all I can say before I launch into an angry rant...

Rachelle ✪

Bring Back Behind the News

For many Australian children, their window onto the world of news and current affairs has been closed with the ABC's recent decision to axe its 34-year running educational program, *Behind the News (BTN)*.

By Dora Anthony

Faced with reduced funding from the Federal Government, the ABC has cut \$26.1 million in spending across the board, which will see up to 100 ABC staff become redundant. BTN is one of a number of news and entertainment programs to be discontinued.

BTN will be leaving behind an impressive audience of 1.3 million students per week who watch the program during school time, including 83 percent of 9-12 year-olds. It is a valuable teaching aid, particularly in isolated and rural schools with limited resources. For many children, BTN is their only opportunity to study news and current affairs in an educational context.

BTN is unique in children's television, presenting reports on breaking national news and world events, such as the Iraq war. Its clear and entertaining format encourages children to develop an interest and concern for problems affecting the people of the world, while minimising the experience of distress.

By promoting a broad understanding of the issues at hand, BTN

challenges children to think about news in a constructive way. For instance, rather than just describing events, it raises questions about political and economic motives of government and other sections of society.

Furthermore, it has been recently revealed that BTN is a significant source of revenue for the ABC, generating thousands of dollars in copyright payments from schools every year. Thus, the real reason for the axing of the program appears to be political rather than financial. All indications are that it is buckling under the government's increasingly intense criticism of the "left-wing bias" of the ABC.

Yet people are not standing silent at the prospect of losing BTN. Principals, students, parents and media associations around Australia have mounted campaigns to save the iconic program from extinction. Many people are recognising that without positive action, the ABC will become increasingly stifled by the conservative Federal Government and will merely project the government's own prejudiced view of the world. ✪



Demand a witness! Stand up for your rights



All you people working in retail should be aware of your rights in regards to security issues, especially if you are under the age of 18.

An incident occurred in a supermarket where a young union member was called into his manager's office and was accused of theft. The manager closed the door and demanded that the boy empty his pockets. He then began intimidating the boy with questions regarding the theft of some of the store's merchandise.

The boy denied the allegations but was repeatedly accused of stealing.

He asked a number of times to have his parents present at the interview but was refused. At no time was he offered a witness. The manager made it clear that no parent, guardian or witness would be allowed in the room.

The treatment in which the manager conducted the interview was a serious breach of the young worker's rights.

THE FACTS

Every employee is entitled to have a witness of their choice accompany them when asked into a manager's or supervisor's office to be questioned.

If you are a member of a union, it would usually be the store delegate. If you are a minor, that is if you are under the age of 18, and are being interviewed for security issues such as theft, you are required to have a parent or guardian present with you by law.

So make sure you stand up for



your rights. Remember to ask for someone to be present every time you have to attend a disciplinary or security matter in a manager's office.

If you are denied your basic rights, you can refuse to go into the office. A witness, parent or guardian is there for your protection and their presence is needed to ensure that nothing wrong or unlawful is said or done by management that infringes your rights.

SPREAD THE WORD

Young people are the most likely to suffer from intimidation and have their rights breached. Inform your fellow employees about their rights in regards to these

issues. If they do not belong to a union, tell them to join.

It is a great way to learn about your rights as an employee and ensure the workplace is observed and protected. ✪

For more information on which union covers your workplace or job contact the ACTU or your local trades and labour council.

Alternatively, visit: www.worksite.actu.asn.au and click on "JOBS UNION MATCH".

Freedom (under Capitalism)

freedom is a choice of 10 types of bottled water, yet having no clean rivers.

freedom is a brand new car with free cd player, free airbags and free air conditioning, yet choking on the air outside when you have to walk.

freedom is choosing who will make political decisions, yet not choosing what those decisions are.

freedom is being allowed to protest, yet having the protest ignored.

freedom is a credit card because we can't really afford what we buy.

freedom is being able to drink alcohol, wishing we had the bodies and the looks that we are told we are supposed to have.

freedom is being able to take a panadol to ease the pain, because the world won't slow down for us.

freedom is an instant meal done in two minutes, yet suffering the impact of artificial ingredients for a lifetime.

freedom is dressing how you like, yet having to comply to a strict dress code if you want to keep your job or enter that club.

freedom is a home loan, while the banks profits are in the billions.

freedom is a throw-away cup, freedom is a throw-away eco-system, freedom is the ultimate convenience while the earth dies fast, freedom is not caring about the consequences of your actions.

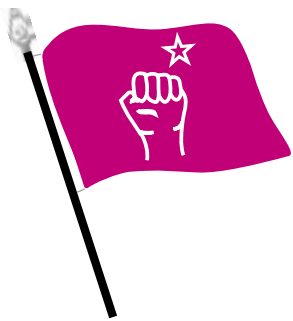
freedom is a value system of apathy and waste.

freedom is an illusion that we are made to believe.

freedom is a lie.

i don't believe any of it.

freedom will bring death to this planet, yet I don't want to die;



BRIGHT RED
THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT THE FUTURE IS RED

Communist Youth of Australia

Iraq: Mission Impossible A Letter from Michael Moore to George W Bush

Dear Lt George W Bush,

I hope you don't mind me referring to you by the only true military rank you ever achieved, that being the one from your on-again, off-again "days" in the, um, Texas Air National Guard. Ever since I saw you in that flyboy outfit, landing on that ship, I assumed you now wanted to be addressed by your military title, as opposed to the civilian rank imposed on you by your dad's friends.

So, Lieutenant, I was wondering, would you do me a favour?

Could you PLEASE do better than a ROSE BUSH?

I saw the guy on TV yesterday that your boys found the Iraqi who said he had "planted" some nuclear plans in his "back yard" in Baghdad - 12 years ago - "under a rose bush".

Woo boy. That's a good one.

Do you really think we are as dumb as we look? I know our fascination with "American Idol" and Scott Peterson may make us Americans look a little light in the head, but when it comes to lying to us to lead us into war, we really do demand a bit more of an EFFORT and a FOLLOW-THROUGH.

You see, George, it's not the lying and the doctoring of intelligence that has me all upset. It's that you've had control of Iraq for over two months now - and you couldn't even find the time to plant just a few nukes or vats of nerve gas and at least make it LOOK like you weren't lying to us.

You see, by not faking some evidence of weapons of mass destruction, it shows that you thought no one would mind if it turned out you made everything up.

A different kind of president, who believes that the American

public would be outraged if they ever found out the truth, would go to great lengths to cover up his subterfuge.

Johnson did it with the Gulf of Tonkin. He said our ships were "attacked" by the North Vietnamese. They weren't, but he knew he had to at least make it LOOK like it happened.

Nixon said he wasn't "a crook", but he knew that wasn't enough, so he paid hush money to the burglars and somehow had 18 1/2 minutes erased from a tape in the Oval Office.

Why did he do this? Because he knew the American people would be pissed if they found out the truth.

Your blatant refusal to back up your verbal deception with the kind of fake evidence we have become used to is a slap in our collective American face. It's as if you are saying, "These Americans are so damn apathetic and lazy, we won't have to produce any weapons to back up our claims!"

If you had just dug a few silo holes in the last month outside Tikrit, or spread some anthrax around those Winnebagos near Basra, or "discovered" some plutonium with that stash of home movies of Uday Hussein feeding his tigers, then it would have said to you that you thought we might revolt if you were caught in a lie. It would have shown us some *respect*.

We honestly wouldn't have cared if it later came out that you planted all the WMD - sure, we'd be properly peeved, but at least we would have been proud to know that you knew you HAD to back up your phony claims with the real deal!

I guess you finally figured that out this week. It started to appear that millions of us were calling you

on your bluff - those "fictitious reasons for the fictitious war."

So you quickly produced this man and his rose bush and some 12-year-old piece of paper and some metal parts.

CNN broke in at 5:15pm and screamed they had the exclusive! "IRAQI NUCLEAR PLANS FOUND!" But a few good reporters started asking some hard questions - and, barely three hours later, your own administration was forced to admit the plans were "not the smoking gun" proving that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

Oops.

Never a good idea to rely on a bush, Lieutenant.

Yours,

Michael Moore

www.michaelmoore.com



PS. Sorry, I still can't get that padded flyboy suit out of my head. I know, I need help.

But when you landed on that carrier, and that banner read, "MISSION ACCOMPLISHED", just what mission was that that was accomplished?

'Cause by my count, more than 50 of our young soldiers have died since you said the mission was accomplished.

Anarchy still reigns, the Brits are losing kids, too, and wacko fundamentalists now seem to be ready to rule the land.

Women are already being told to cover their face and shut their mouths, store owners who sell liquor have been executed, and movie theaters showing "immoral" Hollywood movies have been forced to shut down.

And hey, this isn't even west Texas!

Maybe you could get back into that jumpsuit, fly over to Baghdad and land at the former Saddam International Airport, jump out and give one of those big happy waves - under a sign that reads, "MISSION IMPOSSIBLE." ✪

Michael Moore's international bestseller book *Stupid White Men* is now available from the Communist Party bookshop. See page 2 for address details.



BUSHSPEAK what the...?

Bushspeak: tragic or comic?

George W Bush may go down as one of modern history's most dangerous men, but he certainly won't be recognised as one of the most intelligent. As soon as he strays from his carefully prepared speeches, his comments can be chilling, clumsy and certainly bizarre.

Are we really sure he's off the drink now? Read and decide!

"You're free. And freedom is beautiful. And, you know, it'll take time to restore chaos and order - order out of chaos. But we will." Washington, DC, April 13, 2003

"One year ago today, the time for excuse-making has come to an end." Washington, DC, Jan 8, 2003

"I think the American people - I hope the American - I don't think, let me - I hope the American people

trust me." Washington, DC, Dec 18, 2002.

"There's only one person who hugs the mothers and the widows, the wives and the kids upon the death of their loved one. Others hug but having committed the troops, I've got an additional responsibility to hug and that's me and I know what it's like." Washington, DC, Dec 11, 2002.

"Any time we've got any kind of inkling that somebody is thinking about doing something to an American and something to our homeland, you've just got to know we're moving on it, to protect the United Nations Constitution, and at the same time, we're protecting you." South Dakota, Oct 31, 2002

"I'm a patient man. And when I say I'm a patient man, I mean I'm a patient man. Nothing he [Saddam Hussein] has done has convinced me - I'm confident the Secretary of Defense - that he is the kind of fellow that is willing to forgo weapons of mass destruction, is willing to be a peaceful neighbour, that is - will honour the people - the Iraqi people of all stripes, will - values human life. He hasn't convinced

me, nor has he convinced my administration." Crawford, Texas, Aug 21, 2002

"The problem with the French is that they don't have a word for entrepreneur." George W Bush, discussing the decline of the French economy with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

"Sometimes when I sleep at night I think of (Dr. Seuss's) 'Hop on Pop.'" George W Bush, in a speech about childhood education, Washington, DC, April 2, 2002

"We had a good Cabinet meeting, talked about a lot of issues. Secretary of State and Defense brought us up to date about our desires to spread freedom and peace around the world." Washington, DC, Aug 1, 2003 ✪



Communist Youth of Australia

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BRIGHT RED

Iraq blast sparks call for UN to take charge

A deadly bomb explosion at the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on August 19 sparked calls for a stronger UN role in Iraq and a rapid end to the US occupation. The attack killed 20 people including the chief UN representative to Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, a Brazilian who had been the UN Commissioner for Human Rights. The UN office was destroyed by the blast and 100 people were wounded. A UN spokesperson said the UN had depended on the US for the building's security.

by Susan Webb

Russia's foreign ministry said the attack proved that the international community must become more heavily involved in restoring order in Iraq.

"The UN is paying a price for the US occupation", Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies told the *People's Weekly World*. UN members overwhelmingly opposed the US war, she noted. The Bush administration had to fight to get the UN to agree to "a kind of partial legitimization" of the US occupation, and then refused to give the UN any real authority in Iraq. The solution, she said, is for the US to get out of Iraq, to be replaced by a truly international UN-led peacekeeping force and an infusion of money to enable Iraqis to rebuild their country.

Steven Zunes, a Middle East expert at the University of San Francisco, told the *People's Weekly World* the attack makes the case even stronger for turning authority for Iraq over to the UN "as a genuine UN trusteeship". He called the attack on UN humanitarian workers "particularly tragic and ironic" because they have been among the most outspoken opponents of the US war and occupation.

Just days earlier, *The New York Times* reported that the Bush

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld "vehemently opposes any dilution of US military authority".

administration had dropped the idea of allowing the UN a bigger role, insisting on retaining sole control over Iraq. According to the *Times*, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld "vehemently opposes any dilution of US military authority".

But the administration is facing heavy domestic pressure, including from US troops themselves, to bring American soldiers home quickly. And US occupation head L Paul Bremer said last week that the money needed for Iraq over the next four years would be "staggering". Some estimate the amount at tens of billions of dollars.

A meeting of possible "donor" countries is planned for October 24 in Madrid. But France, Germany, Russia and other key countries, who have their own interests in the region, have said they will not contribute funds unless the UN has more say in Iraq's reconstruction.

France, India and others have refused to send troops without greater UN authority over peacekeeping efforts. Currently 139,000 US soldiers and 20,000 British troops are in Iraq. Other countries that have sent handfuls of troops are Albania, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Ukraine all serve under US/British command.

Last week, blasts destroyed Iraq's main oil pipeline to Turkey and a Baghdad water main. Also, a Reuters journalist filming outside a US-run prison in Baghdad was shot and killed by US soldiers, sparking international protests.

With US troops and Iraqis being killed and injured daily, President Bush backtracked on his May 1 photo-op statement that combat in Iraq had ended.

In an August 14 interview with the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, Bush interrupted the interviewer to insist that his much-publicised aircraft carrier speech referred to "major military operations" but not to "combat operations".

"Because we still have combat operations going on", Bush blathered. "It's a different kind of combat mission, but, nevertheless, it's combat, just ask the kids that are over there killing and being shot at."

In an apparent damage control effort, a White House spokesman said Bush was not making a distinction between combat and military operations, according to the *Washington Post*.

In the same interview Bush claimed the US military presence in Afghanistan is being "gradually replaced" by other troops. "We've got about 10,000 troops there, which is down from, obviously, major combat operations", he said. In fact, the 10,000 US troops are the largest number of US soldiers in Afghanistan since the war there began.

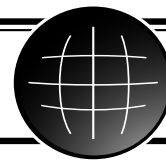
Bush also said Poland would send a "major contingent" of troops to Iraq. In reality, Poland has agreed to send 2400 troops, and the Pentagon will pay much of the cost.

As the administration continues to play fast and loose with the truth, 112 members of Congress have signed on as co-sponsors of Rep. Henry Waxman's (D-Calif.) bill to establish an independent commission to investigate the evidence Bush used to make the case for war. MoveOn, Win Without War, and United for Peace and Justice have launched a grassroots lobbying campaign on this issue.

People's Weekly World, www.pww.org ☪



The bombed UN headquarters – "The UN is paying the price for US occupation"



Global briefs

NEW ZEALAND: The Clark Labour Government has introduced legislation to block Maori claims to the country's foreshores and seabeds. Maoris have already won a court case in which they claimed that the coastal areas belonged to their forebears long before the Europeans moved in 163 years ago, and that they remain theirs today. The Government introduced legislation to nationalise the foreshores and seabeds. "Maori are the only losers from today's announcement", said a spokesperson from the Hauraki Maori Trust Board, who warned there would be a "fairly strong attitude to the Government on this matter".

BRITAIN: The sexed-up document used as a pretext for war on Iraq has put the spotlight more glaringly on PM Blair after new allegations claiming he had authorised the report to be rewritten so as to favour war. Blair's chief of staff says that the document originally said Saddam Hussein's regime did not pose a threat, let alone an imminent one. This contradicted the document made public which claimed that Iraq presented "a serious and current threat" with the capability "to deploy chemical or biological weapons at 45 minutes' notice". This confirms what weapons expert, the late David Kelly asserted, for which he was harassed and hounded by the Government, later to be found dead of what the media now call suicide.

VENEZUELA: The US has tried to portray the Chavez Government as a supporter of terrorism, alleging it supports the Colombian liberation fighters the FARC, by allowing them to operate in Venezuelan territory. The US has put the FARC on its list of terrorist organisations. Chavez Government supporters instead point to the US backing of the Colombian Government – using the military and right wing death squads – and its phoney "War on Drugs" of proof positive of an anti-Chavez disinformation campaign. Meanwhile, in a gesture of friendship, Cuba has sent 1000 doctors to low income and impoverished areas of Venezuela, where there is a lack of health care services due to the nation's economic crisis.

SOUTH AFRICA: The South African Communist Party has decided it will approach the 2004 South African polls with the objective of "an overwhelming ANC victory" in the general and provincial elections. The Party's statement said, "In the view of the SACP the ANC remains the best ... strategically placed organisation to lead the transformation of our country and the struggle to build a better life for all".

USA: As the Bush Government continues to fund right-wing death squads in various countries while waging its terror war, it provides a home and comfort for right-wing terrorists such as Emmanuel Constant, the head of FRAPH, Haiti's most notorious death squad. Constant, responsible for the rape, torture and murder of thousands of Haitians, lives in relative luxury in New York City. The Bush administration has refused requests by the Haitian Government to have him extradited.

Korea

Six-party talks but the threat of war continues

Talks involving China, Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and South Korea, Japan and the US are due to open in Beijing on Wednesday, August 27. They are to consider the so-called Korean issue amid continuous bluster by the United States that the DPRK has or is developing nuclear weapons.

As part of its belligerent policies, George Bush denounced the DPRK as part of its so-called "axis of evil". Iraq and Iran were the other arms of this fictitious "axis", trumped up by the US administration to justify its pre-emptive strike policies.

The long-running propaganda offensive of the US and its Australian Government ally has been overshadowed by the intensifying US problems in Iraq. None-the-less, behind the scenes US and Australian military preparations are continuing with exercises to "intercept" DPRK ships which they say are suspected of carrying military equipment. The largest arms exporter in the world is the US!

The US, with the support of the Australian Government, is arrogantly proposing that nuclear weapons inspectors be admitted to the DPRK in advance of any agreement by the US to conclude a non-aggression treaty with it.

As Iraq has found out, the destruction of its weapons was no guarantee that the country would not be invaded.

Latest reports from the DPRK say that the US is attempting to scuttle the six-party talks so that the US can wheel the issue into the United Nations in the hope of gaining support there.

There are no indications that China and Russia are willing to go along with the agenda of the

US war-hawks who would dearly love to bomb the DPRK's nuclear facilities and start a new war on the Korean peninsula.

One of the main reasons for the US's concerns is not that the DPRK could develop a nuclear weapons capacity but the steadily increasing contacts and negotiations between the north and south towards their eventual reunification.

At inter-Korean talks held in July the two sides agreed that the "nuclear issue" should be solved in a peaceful way through an appropriate form of negotiations, that the program of reuniting separated families should continue and that a panel to examine north-south cooperation in social, cultural, sports and other activities be established.

The refusal of the South Korean Government to go along with the belligerent policies of the US are also a worry for the Bush administration. ☪

Hanson's resurrection?

It is sickening to see the pages and pages of dailies and excessive time on radio and TV given over to Pauline Hanson. Are we supposed to cry for her? Forgive her her policies and fraud?

How can any decent person forget the impact she had, with the assistance of the mass media, on politics in Australia?

She, or her script writers, knew how to appeal to the sentiments of ordinary Australians, particularly in the bush, as they suffered the impact of tariff reductions, bank closures, deregulation and the privatisation of Telstra, etc.

Hanson and her One Nation's racist attitudes towards Aborigines and migration, hatred of anything foreign, "zero tolerance" law and order policies, proposals for concentration camps, and other backward reactionary attitudes, opened the way for neo-fascist ideas to be publicly stated and the likes of Alston and Ruddock to do their dirty work.

Rejection of "political correctness" became a vehicle for turning

back the clock on attitudes towards women, multi-culturalism and other cultural values.

She served a purpose. She helped keep Labor out of office, diverting many a disaffected Liberal or National Party vote that might have gone to Labor.

The Liberals lurched further to the right than ever to win back support. Howard had no difficulty in taking up her policies, and implementing them, eventually making One Nation irrelevant.

But now she is back on the front pages again. An innocent victim who didn't understand the electoral law?

It's time to take another look at that electoral law. In the Federal sphere, a political party must provide 500 names, addresses and signatures of members to gain registration, unless they already have a member in Parliament.

In NSW they must provide details of 750 members – and I believe this is on public display.

This is outrageous, particularly in the present political climate. In the case of a communist party or other progressive party this would certainly save ASIO a lot of foot-

work, and with the new ASIO legislation, assist them greatly in raiding and taking in members of any political group that challenged the system.

So much for civil liberties, privacy and freedom of association!

It's time for all democratic loving forces to get together and do something about changing these crook laws. That is not to say that I have any sympathy for Pauline Hanson.

I do have a concern: are the media trying to resurrect her now that the National Party and Liberal Party are running into difficulties over the privatisation of Telstra?

Would three years – or whatever it is shortened to be used to create a martyr?

I hope not.

J W Wilson
Fairfield

Spare a thought

On Nauru they will observe a "silence" for Tampa Day August 26, to say thank you to Arne Rinnan for saving their lives.

"We are killing softly and slowly by Australian Government", writes my friend in the camp on Nauru. "Many people thought that if we go to Afghanistan we will be kill one time. That is why they have gone."

He goes on to tell me that almost 400 have taken this option.

These are the bright enthusiastic young people who managed to escape death by a perilous journey towards Australia. They are just the type of person Australia needs, cultured, polite, and courageous.

No wonder Australians are not allowed to travel to Nauru. If we met these people our hearts would be opened.

Got something to say?

Got an opinion about the system, about human rights, the labour movement, peace, land rights, socialism, privatisation, child care, your local community?

Then write it down and send it to us. ✉

Letters of up to 400 words in length are preferred.

It suits Mr Ruddock much better to get them to desperation point, send them crazy, so that they do not care if they live or die. Maybe then we are allowed to see them, and call them names.

But while they are holding it together, year after year, with their children in the camps, we are not allowed to share a smile and a cup of tea, let alone the spare room in our house.

If you would like to offer a prayer on their behalf, please attend church on Refugee Sunday, August 31. Remember them also on Tampa Day August 26. If you would like to write to a person in camp on Nauru or offer some other sign of good will, please contact me. (02 65596977).

Elaine Smith
West Haven, NSW

Media coverage for registered political parties

Political ideas are not the sole domain of political parties represented in parliament, political science professors, regular newspaper commentators or letter writers.

They also live in small, active political organisations that bother to

register with the Australian Electoral Commission and run candidates at election time, often at considerable expense, without financial assistance provided by the state or strong financial interest groups to back them.

In relation to the major parties they are already at a serious disadvantage. Their chances of election are much reduced on account of the single-district electoral system. In addition, they tend to be systematically ignored by the mainstream media.

Given that the voters are extremely cheesed off with the major parties and the political system as a whole one would think that new blood and ideas are badly needed in Australia.

The look-alike major parties could well be described as a two-party tyranny solidly in the pockets of corporate Australia. Where is the real Opposition that is, supposedly, a positive feature of the Westminster system?

It is our view that the media in a democracy have a responsibility to air the views of such bona fide, registered small parties. We have waited for that, in vain, for six years now.

Klaas Woldring
Media Officer
Progressive Labour Party,
NSW

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Culture & Life

The "right" to work hard

The Japanese know all about the problem of employees being made to work excessively long hours. Over a decade ago they recognised "death by overworking" as a phenomenon of modern commercial and industrial life, a health and safety issue that the government should be addressing like any other.

by Rob Gowland

Of course, Australians, in common with working people in other countries, recognised it as a reprehensible feature of capitalism a century or more ago. They waged courageous and often bitter struggles to secure shorter working hours, so that workers didn't have to kill themselves just to earn a "living" wage.

It was a momentous victory for workers in this country when they won the forty-hour week. That happy occasion occurred before I was born, and yet last week at the ACTU Congress unions were calling for working hours to be capped at 48 hours a week.

According to ACTU Secretary

Greg Combet, conditions have gone backwards so far that today "about three-million Australians now work more than 45 hours per week, with about two-million of them working more than 50 hours per week".

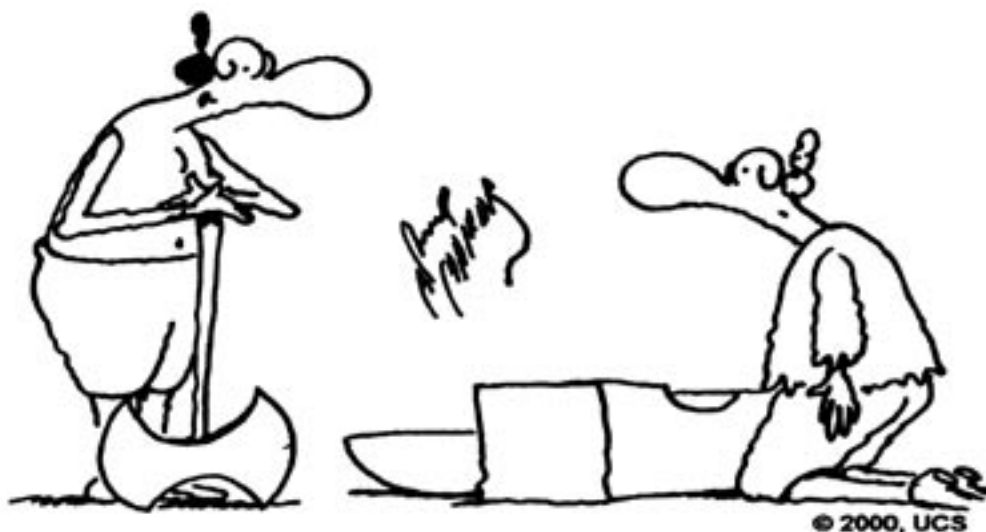
To add insult to injury, most workers apparently work overtime, with much of it not paid, which suits the employer class down to the ground.

Essentially, as *Guardian* readers would all be aware, bosses pay their employees just enough to provide them with food and shelter and allow them to raise families (thus ensuring new generations of workers). It takes only part of the worker's production for the week to cover the cost of his or her wage; everything else the worker produces that week is sheer cop for the employer.

The more hours an employee works each week, the greater the part of the week where everything produced goes exclusively to benefit the boss. Hence employers are always trying to get workers to not only accept lower wages but to work longer hours for them.

If workers are physically unable to work six or more days a week, for ten hours a day, while subsisting on an Egg McMuffin for breakfast and a small tin of baked beans for dinner, well there are plenty of young unemployed to take their place. And if the supply of willing workers dries up (or dies out?) then the factory or office can always be moved to Asia where there are even more unemployed people desperate for work who can be made to slave for the smell of an oily rag.

Such is the reasoning of the capitalist class, and don't for one moment be fooled into thinking it's



"If it's any comfort, I personally think you were an asset to the company."

too extreme to be true. The working conditions, wages and hours (and consequently the reasonably comfortable lifestyle) enjoyed by working people in Australia at present or at least in the recent past were wrung from a highly indignant ruling class after fierce struggle.

Moreover, those victories were won in conditions of economic growth, when the capitalist class felt it could afford to be generous because it stood to make a lot more money. It was cheaper to buy off the workers than waste money on major industrial disputes.

But that was then; now is now. And now, the bosses are going to make the workers pay for every dip in the Dow Jones – and pay heavily.

When the ACTU announced its push for a cap on working hours,

one of Howard's Ministers with responsibility in this area (I think it was Mal Brough) was interviewed on Channel Seven's *Sunrise* show. He sputtered with fury and outrage at the horror of the union body's proposal.

"They want government [here he sought for an evil, pejorative term and came up with] regulation! That's what the ACTU wants."

You could tell from his expression as well as his tone of voice that he assumed that the interviewer and the television audience were positively reeling at this shocking news. That government regulation might not be as shocking to the rest of the population as it clearly was to him was obviously not an idea he considered worth entertaining.

For a laissez-faire capitalist

it probably is just about the worst thing he can think of, at that.

But Howard's man had another bon mot to toss off: "People should have the right [sic] to work as long or as hard as they want ... or not."

The last two words were added as an afterthought, but they give the game away, don't they? I mean, if the boss wants you to work 56 hours and you only want to work 36, guess whose "rights" the Howard Government will support?

And as for having the "right" to work as long or as hard as you like: it's not the employee but the employer who sets the hours and the pace of the work. The "right" to work yourself to death for the enrichment of your boss is no right at all – it's an offence against human dignity and human rights. ☹

Rob Gowland
previews

ABC & SBS
public television
programs

Sun August 31 ~
~ Sat September 6

The four-part documentary series *Rebels And Redcoats: The American Revolutionary War* (ABC 7.30pm Sundays) is presented by Richard Holmes, Professor of History at Cranfield University.

Holmes is determined to cut through the patriotic nonsense of Hollywood coverage of this subject and reveal the essence of the American colonies' revolt. And the series begins well, with Holmes reminding us that, for all the idealistic speeches, the rebellion was essentially brought about for economic reasons.

In fact, he says, it was organised and led by the landowners, merchants, traders, entrepreneurs and some of the better off artisans among the colonists who objected to the British authorities trying to interfere with their right to make as much money as they could.

To my mind, however, the series too quickly settles down to a blow-by-blow account of the revolutionary war. How many times the British soldiers marched up the hill is not all that significant, really, but Holmes leaves nothing out.

Horns And Halos (SBS 8.00pm Sunday) is a fascinating, moving report on the fight to republish a controversial biography of George W Bush. Sounds dull? Well it is anything but.

US publishers hasten to produce quickly-written "gloss" biographies of anyone who is momentarily a celebrity, like candidates for President, which is what George W Bush was in October 1999, when a biography of him, *Fortunate Son* by Jim Hatfield, was published.

Hatfield, however, was repulsed by Bush's politics and personal history and had dug deeper than usual for such books. He covered Bush's dodging the draft during the Vietnam War, his insider trading, his cocaine use in 1972. The book quickly went to number seven on Amazon's best seller list.

The Bush camp tried to ride over the cocaine allegations ("I haven't taken drugs for 25 years" said Bush) but then they obviously told their lawyers to "get" the author. Hatfield turned out to have a criminal record which was promptly splashed everywhere.

Amazon withdrew the book, the publisher withdrew the book. Then a little "left-of-centre" publisher run by a 29 year old punk rocker, Sander Hicks, who worked as a janitor, took over the book and republished it.

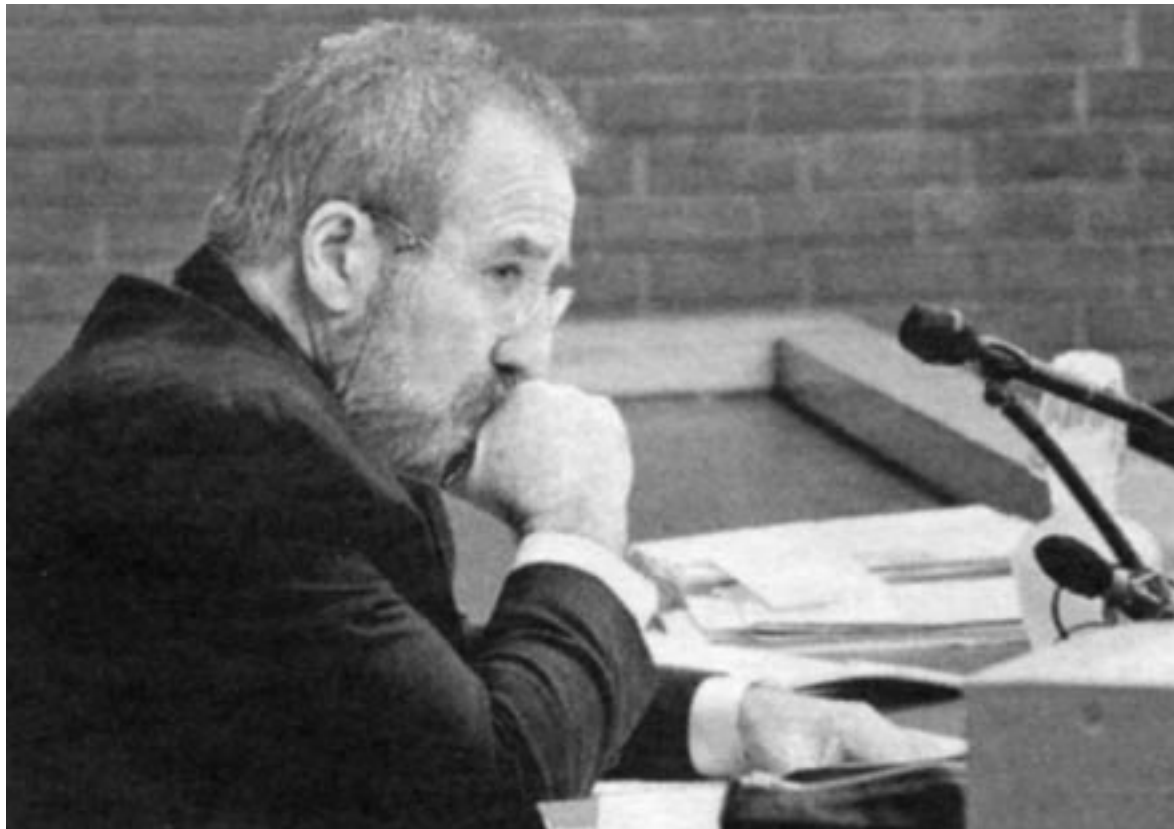
Horns And Halos is a modern US documentary: to avoid lawsuits it lets the people it interviews make the controversial statements, and includes enough people presenting the opposite viewpoint to allow it to claim if pressed that it is impartial.

But all the time, through skilful editing it is pointing the viewer towards the appropriate conclusions. And the conclusions are grim: the use of power and wealth to silence dissenting voices, the use of the legal system to do the same, the manipulation of the media, the hounding of those considered to be "enemies" of the ruling class.

Some of the most moving material is when Hatfield tells us that, as a twice-convicted person who will go to jail for life if he is ever convicted again, "they've only got to find something on me or plant something on me and I'll be banged up for ever".

Near the end of the film Hatfield is accused of attempted credit card fraud and takes his own life. Hicks breaks down and sobs uncontrollably. But he gets the book out.

The film includes interesting scenes on the US left (or part of it at any rate) in action. I particularly liked the march, outside the Republican Convention, of people dressed up to the nines purporting to be "Billionaires for Bush" and carrying the sort of placards and



Splendid, sad series (*A Case For The Coroner*)

chanting the slogans you would expect billionaires to use if they were honest about their intentions. Lovely political theatre.

Reminiscent of the '60s, this is very much an alternative US culture up against the Man; little punk rock clubs, student teach-ins, impoverished basement publishing houses all in action against corporate Amerika. Well worth watching, but keep your eyes and ears open.

For sheer stomach-turning claptrap you would have to go a long way to beat *Hollywood Religions*, screening on *Compass* (ABC 9.40pm Sundays). This is a fairly shallow survey of the myriad of religions that infest the movie capital rather than the movies.

I found scenes of Richard Gere, a leading proponent of Tibetan Buddhism, telling us how the Dalai Lama radiates goodness and how he and other celebrities like Goldie Hawn raise lots of money for "the Tibetan cause". Rather tragic.

But Gurmukh, Yoga teacher to

the stars, spouting unadulterated pabulum in the kind of voice used by phony mediums in Hollywood "B" movies, was too much and I gave up, missing out on *Angel Therapy* and *Sweat Your Prayers*. Perhaps you will have a stronger stomach than I.

Don't forget, the second episode of *A Case For The Coroner* on *Reality Bites* (ABC 8.00pm Tuesdays) this week it concludes the inquest into the death of 14-year-old Amber Stewart. This is a splendid, if sad, series that deserves to be seen.

The final episode of *The Age Of Terror* in *The Big Picture* slot (ABC 8.30pm Wednesdays) is concerned with state-sponsored terrorism. Typically, this very right-wing, pro-Bush White House take on the subject, although it covers Argentina's "Dirty War" and Reagan's support of the Nicaraguan Contras, uses these experiences (now, safely, well in the past) to give credibility to its diatribes against Libya, Iraq and especially Iran.

If you want to know what the Solomon Islands look like, you'll get some very attractive

seascapes and skyscapes in *True Stories: The Search for Kennedy's PT109* (ABC 10.00pm Thursday).

You'll also have to put up with a lot of American bullshit over what was after all a very minor skirmish of WW2, that would not even be recorded at all if one of the crew had not later become President of the USA.

Made by National Geographic, the participants strive mightily to make us believe that finding this sunken torpedo boat is historically important. They fail, but the story of the Australian Coastwatcher and the Solomon Islanders who actually rescued Kennedy and his crew is interesting and towards the end moving.

The Narrow Margin, this week's RKO noir thriller (ABC 10.15pm Saturday), was a sleeper when it came out. No one expected it to make a splash (it was just a little thriller to bolster mid-week programs at the local cinema), but its stylish use of its railway train setting made it a minor classic.

Tautly directed by Richard Fleischer and very well photographed by George E Diskant, it is well worth a look. *

Sydney

The other September 11th – Chile 1973

The Sydney Committee meets at 7pm on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month at the CFMEU, 12 Railway Street, Lidcome.

The following activities have been planned:

Protest rally: 5pm, September 11th, Sydney Town Hall Square, marching to US consulate
Film evening: 7.30pm, September 11th, Valhalla Cinema, Glebe
Solidarity concert: 7.30pm, September 13th, Marrickville Community Hall, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville
 Cost of entry: \$15 (concession \$10, children free)
 A special guest from Chile will be attending, with Jeannie Lewis and many other Australian and Latin American artists performing.

For more info contact
the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union
 on 9746 0400 or visit: www.theotherseptember11chile1973.net

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Sydney

Politics in the Pub

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

August 29

THE POLITICS OF CARE: MENTAL HEALTH & CHILD WELFARE
Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans, Australian Democrats MLC
 & member Legislative Council Select Committee on Mental Health;
Jane Woodruff, Chief Executive Officer, Burnside

September 5

THE BIG PRIVATE SCHOOL FUNDING SCAM
CLOSING THE GATE ON COMMUNITY
John Kaye, Education Spokesperson, Greens, NSW;
Rodney Molesworth, Vice President Public First, former President
 Australian Council of State School Organisations

September 12

PUBLIC TRANSPORT – CARR'S FAILURE
Lee Rhiannon, Greens MLC NSW;
Jim Donovan, Action for Public Transport;
Gabrielle Kuiper, Bicycle NSW Board and Critical Mass rider

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ACTU Congress falls into line behind the ALP A delegate's observations

Trade unionists gathered in Melbourne at the Convention Centre from August 18-21 for the triennial Congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). Most of the 800-900 delegates were organised into officially sanctioned left and right factions, along similar lines to those of the Australian Labor Party. There was little contest of ideas or real debate over trade union objectives or policies. Delegates were told to get behind the ALP and that is essentially what happened.

To all intents and purposes the Congress was a preparation for the election of a Labor Government with the trade union movement, in effect, adopting a "don't rock the boat" attitude.

The overall theme of the Congress was "working for a fairer Australia". Sharan Burrow hammered this concept in her presidential address to Congress. Titled "Australians Want A Fair Country Back", her report said, "Fairness, tolerance, 'a fair go' - these are the values Australia has always aspire to but they are now in contest."

She pointed to the many social and economic inequalities and injustices which have only worsened under the Howard Government.

The concept of fairness was mirrored in the "Statement of Australian Union Values", the *Future Strategies* document and in the many policies adopted by Congress.

These policies ranged from traditional workplace issues to social, economic and political questions

as well as international issues and solidarity.

Working hours

Working hours and work intensification, casual employment and employee entitlements were among those policies adopted. However no target for a reduction of working hours was set despite the fact that many full-time workers are now working up to 60 hours per week while overtime is often unpaid.

Maternity leave was also on the agenda, but there was no demand that it be funded by employers.

There were differences over a range of issues, but tight stage management and scripted contributions were used to suppress dissent and present a united trade union movement.

This aspect of Congress aside, progress was made in promoting struggle over casual employment, unionisation of non-union areas and strengthening unions in the workplace.

"A fair day's work for a fair day's wage" was touted as the solution to workers' problems although this concept had been torn to shreds by Karl Marx more than a century ago.

Some positive proposals regarding traineeships, labour hire, job security, greater access to permanent work and other pressing issues were adopted. Quite often they fell short of the mark by not directly challenging the cause of the problem, instead trying to reduce the damage.

International guests

Guy Ryder, the General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions addressed Congress, taking up the theme of "fairness in the global economy".

Linda Chavez-Thompson, Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO (US unions); Ross Wilson, President of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions; and Willie Madisha, President of COSATU (South Africa) were among the other international guests who addressed Congress.

Big business leader addresses Congress

The most stunning and surprising guest was the Chair of the Qantas board, Margaret Jackson AC. Jackson is no friend of the union movement.

She addressed Congress precisely at the time Qantas baggage handlers were being sacked and management was attempting to replace them with labour hire company workers. This proved to be an embarrassment to ACTU officials. The baggage handlers took strike action and succeeded in forcing Qantas to withdraw the labour hire workers.

Margaret Jackson is also a director of the ANZ - another company that is in the business of sacking workers.

Jackson was unflinching in her call for "flexibility", the very "flexibility" - sackings and casualisation - that Congress was adopting policies to fight.

In response to a question about Qantas' plans to contract out and casualise work, Jackson said, yes, we have to make some decisions to improve competitiveness.

Doug Cameron from the

Workers know that bosses never let up in their war against workers

Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union took exception to the choice of speakers and strongly expressed the inappropriateness of such speakers at an ACTU Congress.

Strong ALP presence

Two state Labor Premiers addressed Congress - Bob Carr from NSW and Steve Bracks from Victoria.

The purpose of the invitations seemed to be about the funding of trade union training by the two governments.

Carr said they were committed to a "fairer Australia".

Bracks took the opportunity to give a lecture on the arbitration system and emphasise Australia's fairness.

Simon Crean took to the stage but did not receive the usual standing ovation accorded to Federal Labor leaders. He promised an agenda of social reform from an ALP government including the restoration of bulk-billing, and promised not to sell off the remainder of Telstra.

There seemed to be a strong mood of disappointment with Crean's leadership among the NSW Right.

In all, the guests included six Labor MPs as well as former Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Senator Kerry Nettle from the Greens.

A fairer capitalist Australia

The struggle for a better future being promoted during Congress was steered towards a fairer Australian capitalist future.

The dominance of the ALP and social democrat thinking shaped the international policies adopted, resulting in a mix of progressive policies with outright reactionary ones.

In the case of oil workers in Venezuela, for example, the reactionary role of right-wing trade union leaders, whose aim was to bring down a left-wing government while cementing the privileges and corruption of the former directors of Venezuela's oil industry, was not recognised.

Where differences did surface they were often over how best to get the ALP elected.

There was contention over whether to totally oppose them and possibly embarrass Labor which accepts them, or to fall into line with Labor, which is what they did for workplaces with no union members.

Greg Combet told delegates that they needed to support Simon Crean. He told them to settle down and get behind their leader. From

now on the pressure will be on the trade union movement to go quiet and, thereby, not harm Labor's electoral chances.

This false strategy has been often followed in the past but has only weakened the trade union movement and has a steady deterioration of the conditions and rights of working people.

Weakness of Left

Although those who caucused as part of the Left were in the majority, this position was not used to bring about any fundamental change in the direction of ACTU policy or to break the subservience to the ALP.

It was very evident that the Accord ideology of co-operating with employers to boost profits still prevails. Class collaboration and right-wing Labor Party policies and theories dominated and these are continuing to further weaken the trade union movement in the eyes of many workers.

The dominant theme, even where relatively good policies were adopted, was to look to the Arbitration Commission or changes to industrial legislation to implement the policies rather than to organise the trade union movement to struggle for them.

The Left were divided, at one stage moving separate and opposing amendments to a policy. It appeared that some of the Left were also concerned not to adopt policies that differed from those of the Labor Party.

There was an opportunity for the Left to have begun asserting its independence and turning the policies of the ACTU towards trade union struggle rather than class collaboration while putting the interests of workers first. But this did not happen.

As usual the elections were a charade with backroom deals and positions carved up between factions.

The presence of business leaders, funding from corporate sponsors and the now customary cocktails on the Monday night (this time courtesy of a legal firm) are all evidence of a further move towards corporate unionism.

The emphasis was on sitting down with employers, reaching amicable agreements and avoiding conflict or struggle in the workplace.

For a number of rank and file workers and young organisers this was their first Congress. They came with great expectations. But after hearing their leaders, politicians, academics and MPs, and seeing a Qantas boss on the platform, some were wondering what this had to do with the realities of the workplace.

They are confronted with the class struggle on a daily basis. They know that bosses never let up in their war against workers. ✪



Simon says - the ACTU has called for total commitment to the ALP

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