

Teachers take action nation-wide

As *The Guardian* goes to press public school teachers around the country are preparing to take action on September 17 in defence of Australia's public school system. This action will include a historic co-ordinated strike across three States – expected to involve more than 70,000 teachers – that will target Labor Government Treasurers accused of colluding to keep wages down in the face of a national teacher shortage.

Teachers in NSW, Victoria and Western Australia have co-ordinated the 24-hour stoppages and nationwide protests as part of the Australian Education Union's (AEU) efforts to make education a top-level national priority.

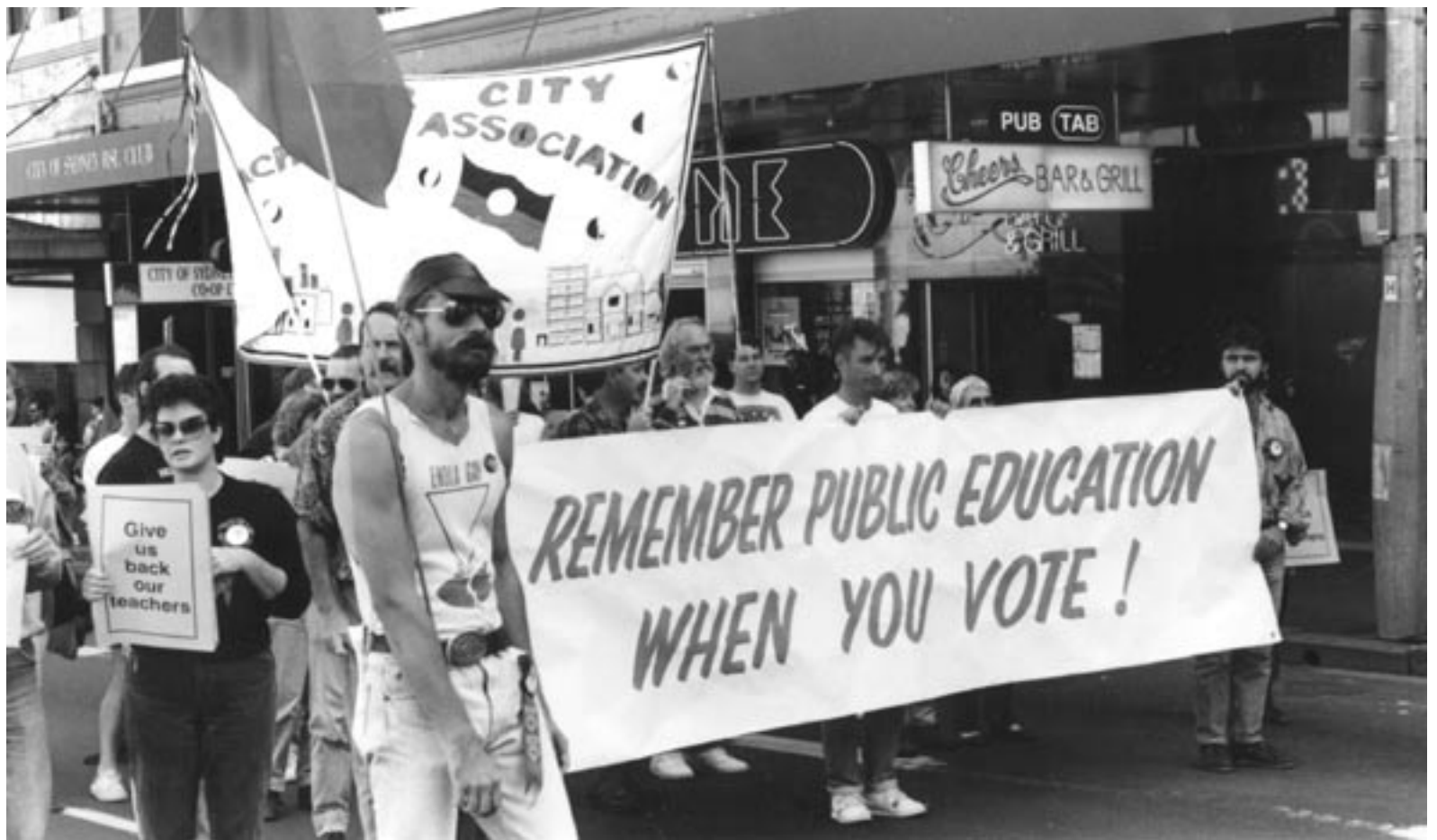
There will be range of political protests in all States and meetings of NSW and Victorian teachers along the state border.

The action, which comes as teachers in NSW commence a case for a 25 percent wage rise, was sparked by the recent meeting of State Treasurers where a plan to limit pay rises for all public sector workers was mapped out.

AEU Federal President Pat Byrne said the state and territory governments' wage suppression is simply unacceptable, particularly when the Australian education system is currently in the midst of teacher shortage crisis.

"As a result of the lack of financial and professional incentives provided by state and territory governments, up to 50 per cent of new teachers are on record as saying they do not intend to be teaching within 10 years", Byrne said.

"By 2005, Deans of Education estimate that there will be a shortage of 5000 teachers in primary and secondary schools. By the end of the decade, the Education Ministers' research shows that this shortage will have increased to at least 20,000."



NSW Teachers' Federation president Maree O'Halloran called the national action unprecedented – and an important wake-up call to the entire nation.

"It's totally irresponsible of the state governments to be meeting and colluding to hold down real wage growth of teachers at the very time when they should be working out ways to make the profession grow", O'Halloran says

"It is absolutely outrageous that we have been told that if we get more than three per cent per year they are threatening to punish our students by cutting the public education budget."

TAFE Teachers Get In On Act

Meanwhile, TAFE teachers in NSW have voted unanimously for industrial action of at least 24 hours, early in Term 4, if the Carr Government does not halt its attacks on TAFE.

NSW TAFE Teachers Association secretary Linda Simon says

teachers are concerned about the effects that increased TAFE fees will have next year in pricing qualifications needed to enter the workforce beyond the reach of many young people.

The teachers also noted with increasing concern the results of the survey conducted by the NSW Council for Adult Literacy and Numeracy that showed that 37 per cent of those currently in such courses would not be able to continue studies to improve basic skills levels.

"Council is angry that the Carr Labor Government does not value the great TAFE system in this state, and continues to undermine TAFE by cutting budgets, and proposing a restructure that attacks the integrity of TAFE", Ms Simon said.

"TAFE teachers are passionate about the education and training they provide for a wide variety of students, and will not allow this education to be undermined. If this means that we have to strike to highlight our determination, then we will do so." ✪

Cancún Historic win for developing countries

Prior to the World Trade Organisation's 5th ministerial conference in Cancún, Mexico, Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorin said there was the impression that the fight for social justice had taken place outside the hall. Now, he said, the fight for social justice is also going on inside the WTO.

by Anna Pha

And, inside the hall at Cancún, an historic battle was waged and won. It is historic not just because it blocked the agenda of the rich industrialised nations, but for the heightened understanding, unity and determination of the developing countries.

Amorin was speaking at a press conference organised by the Group

of 21 (G21) developing countries. The 21 countries represent more than 50 per cent of the world's population, and more than 60 per cent of the world's rural population. They were led by Brazil, India, China and include Cuba, South Africa, Indonesia, Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Venezuela, Mexico, Egypt, Peru, Guatemala, Philippines and Thailand.

Continued page 8

NSW transport report spells doom - p3

Geelong Wool lockout - month 5 - p4

Pharmaceutical negligence - p5

Chile: Free the political prisoners! - p6

Iraq: report from US soldier - p7

Silencing dissent

The severe attack on those opposed to the policies of the Federal Government and their determination to silence dissent has been demonstrated by the attack on Andrew Wilkie and on the ABC by leading federal Ministers and by PM John Howard himself.

The daily newspapers and the commentaries by some extreme right-wing columnists such as Gerard Henderson have added to the attacks on Wilkie and the ABC.

Wilkie's crime is that he blew the whistle on the lies being told by Howard and his Government in their attempts to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq by the US, Britain and Australia.

Apart from all other considerations, the fact is that no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq and even the investigators appointed directly by the US Government did not find any weapons. The publication of the report that this team was to have made has been postponed indefinitely, yet again confirming that the huge propaganda campaign was based on monstrous lies.

Andrew Wilkie declared as early as March that the claims of the Howard Government were "exaggerated, skewed, used selectively and fabricated". Personal abuse and denunciations have been heaped on him ever since in an attempt to discredit him and his exposure. He is being attacked, not because his claims were false but because he was telling the truth.

In the most recent attempt, a Liberal Party member who was part of the Senate inquiry into the "sexed up" propaganda claims of the Government, was provided with and used secret intelligence information. The publication of security information is a crime under federal law. Defence Minister Robert Hill admitted that the Liberal Senator concerned had been briefed by the Defence Department before Andrew Wilkie was to give evidence to the inquiry. Alexander Downer, the Minister for Foreign Affairs has refused to deny that his office had seen a top-secret report in the days before it was leaked at the inquiry.

As part of a smear campaign a WA Senator, David Johnston said Mr Wilkie was "very unstable, is unreliable and is flaky and irrational". Not to be out-done the neo-fascist and arch anti-communist Gerard Henderson wrote of Wilkie's "media-choreographed resignation from the Office of National Assessments".

But Wilkie is absolutely right and his claims are fully confirmed by the total failure of the investigators to find a single weapon of mass destruction in Iraq.

If the character assassins are so sure of their assertions, why doesn't the Australian Government have an open inquiry in the same terms as the Hutton inquiry in Britain?

On another front, it was Liberal Senator Alston who alleged that the ABC had displayed an anti-American bias in its coverage of the Iraq conflict only to have all but two of his 68 complaints rejected by an ABC inquiry.

The treatment of Wilkie and attack on the ABC are two examples of how the Government is determined to push its line and silence any attempts to question it. In the first example, it attempted to silence an insider who is in a position to know the truth about the Howard Government's assertions and in the case of the ABC, to intimidate and silence the independent voice of our public broadcaster.

The Howard Government represents the interests of the big corporations who are the real, but minority, ruling class in Australia. They will take any measure to retain their economic and political power and are in the process of taking away the democratic rights that have been won and established in Australia over the last 100 years or more.

They have already provided themselves with the "legal" means by which to persecute all opposition by giving sweeping powers to the police and so-called "security" organisations to arrest and jail those they consider to be a threat to their power and control.

Not only are the people of the world being threatened with endless war but also with fascist-type laws which have the aim of silencing dissent so that no voice and no opinion other than that of the ruling class is heard in Australia.

PRESS FUND

Some of the Press Fund contributors also write letters to the editor, and even the occasional article. There's more than one way to contribute to *The Guardian!* However, Press Fund contributions along with sales are the major sources of funding for the day-to-day production of *The Guardian*. Without them we'd be in dire straits, so we take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to *The Guardian* over the years, and to ask other readers to think about contributing on a regular basis. This week our sincere thanks go to the following for their generous contributions:

- Ray Gillespie, in memory of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, \$20.
- Bob Saltis, in memory of Jim Mitchell, \$20.
- Semaphore Workers' Club, in memory of Jim Mitchell, \$550.
- Bert Appleton \$40.

This week's total \$630. Progressive total: \$8395.

Book launch

Poems for peace, justice and women's rights

Justina (Joan) Williams' book of poems, *My Country, the World* was acclaimed by the 50 people who attended its launch in Perth recently.

The book was launched by Carmen Lawrence, Labor MHR who was introduced by Sheila Suttner. Carmen Lawrence had played a massive role in the maritime struggle against non-union labour said Sheila, who recalled her courageous protest against US warships in Fremantle and her consistent support for women's rights.

Carmen Lawrence welcomed Joan as an indefatigable campaigner for peace and justice and for women's rights. Joan opposed fascism, fought the attack on civil liberties by the Menzies Government and her poems defended the vulnerable.

They have been read at rallies and used in the choruses of marches. Joan was committed as a writer and a long standing supporter of Australian literature said Carmen Lawrence.

The unique feature of the event was the intimate relationship of her poems to those present. Many had been active in the campaigns that were highlighted in them - the protests against the Vietnam war, against the presence of US warships and the US base at Exmouth.

Others had marched as in the poems, *Women Carrying Banners* and *Women Marching*. *Women*

Marching recalls the courage of Cheryl Davenport, Labor MLC in initiating and carrying through the Act that furthered the right of choice for women. Cheryl could not attend the launch but sent a letter of apology and appreciation, as did other activists and writers.

Friends and a member of the family read poems to show the wide range of the themes and their international approach.

Glen Phillips, Patron of the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre, and himself a leading WA poet, welcomed Joan's poetry as accessible to a wide range of readers.

The warm and intimate support of her family was reflected in poems about her widespread family.

The political, social and personal themes of Joan's poems were interwoven with those present to make it a cultural, social and political event that led Jo Valentine, the first Greens Senator and outstanding Australian peace campaigner to say, "That was the best party I have been to".

Don Wignall, son of a Communist family, led the singing of the International in a magnificent voice. ☺



Don Wignall, Joan Williams and Carmen Lawrence

My Country, the World is available from
SPA Books
65 Campbell Street,
Surry Hills, NSW, 2010.
Price \$10 (p&p \$1.50)

"Failed States" meeting in WA

At a meeting organised by the No War Alliance WA in Perth on September 4, Anna Pha, editor of *The Guardian*, spoke on Australian intervention in the Solomon Islands. She gave a brief background to the situation, outlined some of the reasons behind Australia's involvement and explained the doctrine of "failed states" which was the excuse given for Australia's actions.

by Vic Williams

The Solomons is a state containing 1000 islands and a population of half a million with 60 languages. The majority of the people are very poor, but the islands are rich in timber, palm oil, gold and other mineral resources. The functioning gold mine near Honiara has been closed because of recent political and social disturbances.

Britain had colonised the Solomons in the 19th century. The Japanese military invaded them in World War II and the US retook them during the war in fierce fighting at Guadalcanal. The Solomon Islands gained independence in 1978. Now Australian police and military forces, accompanied by a small number of personnel from

other Pacific islands, have moved in to take control.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), financed by the Federal Government, produced a report entitled *Our Failing Neighbour* which outlined the plan for Australian military, police and economic intervention in the Solomon Islands.

The ASPI claimed that the Solomon Islands was not viable as an independent state, but with Australia's "intervention" could become viable as a "political community".

The Howard Government has taken this action, claiming that the Solomons is a "failed state".

The doctrine of "failed states" advocates the use of the military,

police forces and private security forces in "failed states" by a handful of powerful Western countries in order to redraw the political map of the world. It is recolonisation by another name.

Such an aggressive policy under the direction of the Australian Government could see attempts by Australia to take over other Pacific Island states, such as Bougainville where Rio Tinto's copper mine was closed by the people and Papua New Guinea.

Australia's plans were laid out in a recent Senate Committee report which included a proposal for a "Pacific economic and political community" with a single currency based on the Australian dollar.

Such a community, as proposed by the report, would be controlled by Australian interests, and aimed at opening up the island economies to further exploitation of their resources and privatisation of essential services such as water.

There are also proposals for the transport of workers from Pacific island nations as seasonal farm labour in Australia.

The committee which adopted these proposals were from the Liberal, National and Labor Parties and the Australian Democrats.

The ACTU expressed support for such an indentured labour scheme to provide the workers with training, skills and money to remit home.

Anna also outlined how the Australian Government is also attempting to use aid money to bully Pacific countries and force its plans for the region on the Pacific Islands Forum. ☺

Hear **Alvaro Guzman** national director of the Bolivarian Student Front of Venezuela

SYDNEY

- **Public meeting** Fri Sept 19, 6.30pm. Trades Hall, 4 Goulburn St, City. Ph Jorge 0425 237 285
- **Sydney Uni.** Tues Sept 23, 1pm Ph 0410 544 396
- **Uni of NSW** Mon Sept 22, 4pm Ph 0401 260 439
- **Macquarie Uni** Mon Sept 22, 1pm Ph 0413 958 371
- **Uni of Western Sydney** Tues Sept 23, 4pm Bankstown Campus Ph Megan 0419 117 606.

NEWCASTLE

- **Public Meeting** Thurs Sept 18, 7.30pm Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 406 King St, city Ph 02 4926 5328
- **Newcastle Uni** Thurs Sept 18, 1pm. Nelson room, Shortland Union Bldg, Ph Simon 0405 733 768

NSW transport report fiasco

The Carr Government's latest report on the NSW transport system is bad news for those who actually use the system. If carried to their logical conclusions, the report's findings could result in the replacement of most of the state's rural rail services with private buses contracted to the government, the privatisation of Sydney's ferry services, the elimination of periodical rail ticket concessions, the replacement of the current \$1.10 "seniors" ticket with a half normal price ticket concession, and reductions in the free student travel scheme.

by Peter Mac

The report, *Ministerial Inquiry into Sustainable Transport in NSW, Options for the Future*, has a fundamental flaw in that it focuses almost exclusively on the profitability, at the expense of the public's right to expect a good public transport system. Although the transport system has always been largely funded by taxation, the report concludes ominously (but with no argument to back it up) that this cannot continue to happen.

Flaws in assumptions

The report uses the complexity of Sydney's public transport system (which largely reflects the complexity of its geography) as an excuse to advocate the elimination of less frequently-used services.

The report's authors, and the Minister for Transport, Michael Costa, both ignore basic principles in transport planning. In his introduction to the draft report, Costa criticises the public transport system, and by implication its passengers, as responsible for the costs which have to be met by the taxpayer in order to keep it running. However, he fails to draw attention to the huge imbalance in taxation revenues directed to the construction of new roads, as opposed to rail systems.

Commuters will travel by either road or rail, depending on the quality and speed of the available options. But a good rail system takes up far less land surface, consumes far less energy, causes far less pollution and can deliver far more people to urban destinations in a given time than private vehicles.

For a major city like Sydney it is therefore simply more efficient to have the vast mass of commuters travelling by rail, and to have the road system used primarily for public transport where there are no rail connections, emergency vehicles and occasional trips or trips to inaccessible areas.

Construction of tunnels for new roads is also far more extensive than required for rail systems carrying the same number of passengers. This is particularly so in cities like Sydney which are now subject to increasing pressure for higher density development in order to curb urban sprawl.

One case in point is the proposed construction of a tunnel system for vehicles to access the northern beaches. Use of the tunnel for train travel, as an element in the long-awaited northern beaches rail line, would be a far more efficient method of improving the accessibility of those living along the northern beach suburbs to the city.

The report's myopic focus on dollars rather than service is nowhere better exemplified than in its statement that "Few of the CountryLink intrastate services are justifiable".

The logical conclusion of this statement is that almost all rural rail services in NSW should be discontinued, with some replaced

with coaches. The report's reference to CountryLink coach services is a furphy. All country link coaches are privately-owned, and are simply on contract to the State Government. The service is effectively privatised.

The Sydney/Canberra rail service has already been cut for a short period this year, on the excuse that there were was a shortage of both train drivers and passengers. When

in capacity, reliability, comfort and safety compared to a good rail service.

It would also set the stage for the progressive abandonment of regional public transport in favour of fully privatised coaches and force many more cars onto the roads.

Will privateers get ferry services?

Regarding Sydney ferries, the report contains the highly objectionable – and stupid – statement that, "We have ... a costly public ferry service that includes what is effectively a subsidised water taxi service for mainly middle to high income earners and tourists".



The report focuses on dollars rather than service

the service was resumed it was reduced to two services per day.

The situation will be reassessed in October, the options being maintenance of the existing service, a further reduction in service, or a transfer to a CountryLink coach service. Improving the rail service will apparently not be considered as an option, even though this would inevitably draw far more passengers.

This case illustrates the Carr Government's reliance on the "self-fulfilling prophecy" of rail services being allowed to fall into disrepair, and other transport options being sought when the patronage inevitably drops as a result.

The abandonment of a Sydney/Canberra rail service would, of course, free up the existing rail tracks for conversion to use by the proposed privately-owned high-speed intercity rail service between Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney.

In a seemingly contradictory statement, the report does state: "It is surprising that the large transfer of taxpayer funds (\$348 million in 2002-03) to private bus operators is not being used to purchase a much more extensive and appropriate range of community transport services across the state".

But note that the alternative suggested is not an improvement in the rail services. The reality is that widespread conversion of the regional rail system to a coach service would not only involve a loss

even presumed to speak on behalf of "seniors" when stating that they would, of course, agree to a hike in their fare prices.

Unfortunately, most self-funded retirees, superannuants and other non-pensioner aged people don't enjoy many of the benefits that are currently available to pensioners, even though in many cases their income is only marginally higher than the pensioner income limit.

Moreover, there is already a means test applied for applicants for senior cards, with regard to paid income. The extension of this test to include all income would be a savage blow to superannuants and self-funded retirees, and a supremely mean act on the part of the government.

earn more than average incomes. The introduction of a means test, an idea canvassed in the report, is fraught with difficulties, and would if introduced eventually reduce the availability of current concessions to a "safety net" provision.

Schoolkids, pay up!

The report suggests that free travel for school children should be limited to the nearest public school. This implies that those who travel long distances to selective public schools should pay an extra charge, i.e. that they should, in effect, be penalised for being outstanding students.

The report questions whether private school students should receive free travel to school at taxpayer expense. The NSW Parents and Teachers Federation thinks not, but they're unlikely to receive a sympathetic response from the current state government.

Travel on public transport for school children should be free and universally available.

A highly divisive document

The report implies that rail workers are no longer concerned with safety, ignoring the progressive replacement of the "safety culture" with one focused primarily on the almighty dollar. It points to the Olympic transport successes, but fails to point out that this was achieved by hiring an extra 3000 temporary workers.

One of the most objectionable aspects of the report, and Costa's press statement with regard to it, is the consistent attempt to set one group of commuters against another.

Pensioners are described as being more worthy of major concessions than "seniors" card holders; those living in Sydney's northern beach suburbs are depicted as silver-tails receiving unjustified benefits from the public purse; passengers on frequently used city services are described as effectively subsidising those on less utilised regional routes; aged concession passengers are depicted as clogging up peak-hour services; and regional health and community transport is said to be more worthy of funding than school student free travel and aged person concessions.

The report even poses spending on the transport system itself against other areas of government expenditure, e.g. education and health. The report should be rejected because of this dishonest and manipulative ploy, which is clearly intended to set one part of the community against another and open the way for the destruction of the presently integrated public transport system and its replacement by an inferior, more expensive and inadequate for-profit system.

As the privatisation of public transport in Victoria has shown, the public will pay twice, through higher fares and government subsidies.

The solution lies in avoiding dependence on private "loan-sharks" to fund new, private transport initiatives, and in adopting policies that will boost the efficiency, comfort and safety of public transport, particularly rail, and ensuring its affordability for all the public.

This latest report on public transport in NSW is an outrage and should be rejected out of hand. ☘

Apart from its inaccuracy (there are plenty of working people living in Sydney's harbour suburbs and travelling to work on the ferries) this blanket criticism of ferry passengers is one of a number of highly insulting statements in the report.

The report also suggests that the administration of Sydney ferries should be split off from the state transport network, and should be established as a corporation. This sort of move is now the standard initial procedure in the process of privatising public services.

Privatisation would definitely fit with the report's description of the ferries as serving mainly tourists and silver-tails.

"Seniors" to pay up big

The report suggests that those holding "seniors cards" are not worthy of the same rate of concessions on their tickets as pensioners, because of their higher incomes. The report suggests that only those meeting means test criteria, such as pensioners and health card holders, should receive the current concessions, and that others should only qualify for a half-price concession.

Apparently both the Carr Government and the coalition MPs are in agreement on this issue. Opposition leader John Brogden

The \$1.10 daily ticket enables many "seniors" to get around and lead more active lives.

The report also introduces a highly insulting and discriminatory description of aged people as effectively clogging up public transport during peak hours. It suggests that they should in effect be penalised by being charged normal rates for travel during such periods.

Significantly, the report suggests that the aged person concession scheme should be extended to include private transport, in particular coaches, thus reinforcing its support for privately-owned non-rail public transport. It does not, however, address the current outrageously high cost of travel on Sydney's rail network to the four privately-operated stations, including those at the airport terminals.

A comparison of fares between public and private gives some idea of what a privatised future would mean: a single fare of \$11.60 (an 11-minute trip from Central to the private international air terminal station) compared with \$2.80 for a comparable trip to a public station (say Central to Bondi Junction)!

Periodical ticket concessions to go

According to the report, many passengers don't deserve periodical ticket (e.g. weekly tickets) concession rates because they

Geelong lockout claims family homes



"He won't bargain in good faith. His only faith is in the almighty dollar."

The Geelong Wool Combing lockout that has cost three local families their homes was this week branded "criminal". And now another three families have approached real estate agents about the prospects of selling their homes as 93 employees bid to hold out against company demands for massive clawbacks.

Employees confirmed the lockout had also been a "significant factor" in the failure of a workmate's 36-year marriage.

Geelong Wool Combing locked out its workforce under legislation introduced by the Howard Government, after they refused to agree to demands for 25 percent wage cuts, unlimited casualisation and the unilateral right of the company to change hours of work.

Textile Clothing and Footwear Union (TCFUA) Victorian Secretary Michelle O'Neill confirmed that three of her members had had to sell their homes and that three more were actively considering the prospect.

"Three homes have gone", she

said. "The support of other members, and other unions, down here has been great but these people have been forced to sell up. They were no longer able to meet their mortgage repayments.

"For a company to be able to starve workers into submission and to cost them their family homes is criminal, whether or not is sanctioned by the Workplace Relations Act", Ms O'Neill said.

A community rally in the heart of Geelong, last week, drew 3000 supporters and raised tens of thousands of dollars. Representatives of the CFMEU, MUA and AMWU handed over substantial cheques representing money raised by workplace collections.

Ms O'Neill related the story of locked out workers addressing unionists at a nearby Shell plant and receiving a telephone call pledging \$23,000 within an hour of leaving the site.

Geelong Wool Combing workers have maintained a 24-hour, seven-day a week protest outside the company's gates since they were forced off site in May.

Federal Court decisions in two cases stemming from the protracted lockout are expected next week.

The TCFUA is contending the lockout is illegal, alleging it is a front for a stand-down arising from a combination of factors including the drought and the depressed wool market.

Geelong Wool Combing counter filed, accusing the union of attempt to "coerce" it into an agreement. Ms O'Neill, Assistant Secretary, Jenny Kruschel and 10 Geelong members are named as co-defendants. ❖

LABOUR NOTES

Industrial Relations Workplace Relations Minister Tony Abbott has called on nurses in country areas to subsidise the health system by accepting lower wages than nurses in city areas. Responding to a question from the Australian Nursing Federation about his opposition to pattern bargaining for nurses, Abbott said, "Why not pay the nurses in the city significantly more than those in the country?" Pattern bargaining is where a common or similar agreement is made with a number of employers rather a separately negotiated agreement with each individual employer. Pattern bargaining makes it far more difficult for governments and private sector employers to pit nurses against each other to drive down wages and conditions. It also saves time and money, and means a single standard of nursing care for all Australians, regardless of the hospital or their income.

ABC staff are fuming after Senator Alston suggested on the *Sunday Program* that the ABC Board could fix its funding problems by cutting staff and outsourcing more programs. Speaking on the Channel Nine program Senator Alston said "...If you look at what Channel Seven announced the other day, it was jobs not programming, whereas for the ABC it's always the other way around ... I think outsourcing is a very neglected area". According to the Community and Public Sector Union the Minister couldn't be more wrong. In fact since the Howard Government came into office more than 1000 people have lost their jobs at the ABC and outsourcing is at record high levels, eroding the quality and integrity of the ABC.

Five million dollars of entitlements belonging to 240 workers at the now closed Cudgegong Abattoir in NSW will not be covered by the Federal Government's workers' entitlement safety net scheme. According to the abattoir's administrator the operations were run by a local council so it was not covered by normal insolvency laws.

Striking Smorgon Steel workers, all members of the Electrical Division of CEPU, decided to mark 200 days on the picket line with a Solidarity Breakfast on Friday September 12. The workers were contracted out by Smorgon Steel 10 years ago and are seeking the same entitlements as 10,000 other members in the electrical contracting and labour hire areas. The dispute centres around demands for a 36-hour week over three years, the same as applies for other union members.

The Communications Electrical Plumbing Union (CEPU) has accused Telstra of doctoring annual accounts to hide \$281 million specifically used to sack another 2913 workers. CEPU NSW spokesman, Jim Metcher, said Telstra had axed more than 37,000 jobs since the Coalition came to power in 1996. "Without a contingency staff plan, Telstra's phone network will soon be in disrepair", he warned. Telstra had listed the figure under the seemingly-benign heading "operating expenses" in its annual account.

Postal workers' union warns Australia Post

The Communications Division of the CEPU has told Australia Post to withdraw its policy on "no chairs at counters" in PostShops or face further action. The threat of further action follows claims by the postal workers' union that Australia Post is trying to circumvent a recent Federal Court decision which the union says has effectively overthrown its "no chairs" policy in retail PostShops.

A recent Federal Court ruling found that Australia Post had discriminated against a Sydney postal worker, Sarah Daghlian, by directing her onto sick leave and terminating her employment because she required a chair at the counter in the PostShop in suburban Manly for intermittent rest while serving customers.

The Federal Court found that Ms Daghlian was "a competent and conscientious employee" and that there was no good reason for removing the stool on which she had relied for 11 years.

CEPU Communications Division Secretary, Brian Baulk, said that Australia Post could easily create a space in the retail counter so that pregnant workers and workers with physical disabilities

could serve customers in a seated position.

Mr Baulk said the only barrier to accommodating the needs of these workers is Australia Post's attitude that chairs look untidy and slovenly. The problem goes all the way to the top.

In spite of the evidence that pregnant workers or workers with physical disabilities perform their duties with a chair effectively and without interference with the day to day operations of PostShops, Australia Post senior management, in the name of image, have refused to withdraw the ban on chairs at retail counters.

In fact, Australia Post has ignored the court judgment and advised the union that there are no plans to vary the retail counter

design so that workers with physical disabilities may work in a seated position. Instead these workers are to be managed under a program that will see them directed home on sick leave and then terminated.

Chairs at retail counters have a long history. At one stage, Australia Post had agreed to incorporate chairs into the design process for a new retail fit-out but had later reneged on the agreement claiming that it would create an unjustifiable hardship on the organisation.

Mr Baulk said it was nonsense to suggest that one of Australia's most profitable companies producing profit year after year would suffer hardship by having to provide chairs to accommodate pregnant workers and workers with physical disabilities.

He said Australia Post managers were misguided if they thought the union would collaborate or co-operate in this unfair and discriminatory approach to managing employees with physical disabilities. ❖

Pharm collapse hits workers

Over 70 workers employed by Melbourne based pharmaceutical company Pharm Action are \$4 million out of pocket after the sudden collapse of their employer.

by Bob Briton

Workers were sent home from the Laverton site following the appointment of Sim Partners as administrators to the failed business.

Pharm Action joins an ever-growing list of Australian companies that have gone bust leaving their employees without their accrued entitlements.

"This is another classic case of arriving after the fact", said Dave Oliver from the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU). "We believe that prevention is better than the cure. This company has a fatal disease."

"It's a pity we couldn't get some agreement to protect entitlements, either through a bank guarantee or paying into NEST."

NEST is an independent not-for-profit trust facility established to secure employee entitlements such

as annual leave, long service leave, redundancy and severance pay.

Pharm Action employees, who are members of the AMWU and the National Union of Workers (NUW) now face an uncertain future with lost entitlements including over \$3 million in leave and redundancy and almost \$1 million of unpaid superannuation contributions.

The AMWU is speaking to the administrator in an effort to rescue the jobs through the sale of the company, but there is no obvious prospective buyer at this stage.

"The taxpayer will be expected to pick up the tab for the employees' basic entitlements while the employer will walk off scot-free", said Dave Oliver.

Pharm Action was a part of the Cottes Health group, which has now entered into voluntary administration owing \$10 million. ❖

Sydney
Bougainville fund-raising dinner
for Bougainville Women for Peace & Freedom

Friday 26th September 7pm-10pm
Gladesville RSL & Community Club
4-6 Linsley St Gladesville

Bougainville Slide Presentation and short talk by Bougainvilleans

Cost: \$30 or \$27 concession

For catering purposes please phone 02 9558 2730 or 02 9804 7632

More negligence uncovered in pharmaceutical industry

New scandals are rocking the pharmaceuticals industry in Australia. With the future of suspended complementary medicines manufacturer Pan Pharmaceuticals still hanging in the balance, reports of other serious violations of manufacturing standards keep rolling in.

by Bob Briton

Last week the Therapeutic Goods Authority (TGA) moved to shut down Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API), the nation's second biggest drug company and parent company of Soul Pattinson Manufacturing and the Soul Pattinson and Chemworld pharmacy chains.

This was followed up with the announcement that Cottee Health PharmAction, producers of more than 450 prescription drugs and over-the-counter pharmaceuticals, had gone into voluntary administration. Inability to raise the capital necessary to ensure quality control was said to be behind this major company's difficulties.

Elsewhere, the TGA was holding talks with Brisbane-based drug manufacturer New Products Development about the need to rectify resources, training and systems after a recent audit by the regulator. TGA spokeswoman Kay McNiece told the media "... it is fairly common to have lots of things that need to be fixed up. Invariably there are things that need to be rectified."

Ms McNiece said a mouthful! The audits that led to the closing down of API discovered an open drain of liquid effluent, cockroaches, rotting wooden floors and unacceptable levels of bacteria on equipment at the Kingsgrove factory, which was described as "very run down". Paint flaking off the ceiling, holes and crevices in walls and floors, chipped and flaking paint on machinery and seriously damaged walls were also among the potential hazards.

However, as API managing director David Young points out, the decision to close the factory before the TGA did it for him was taken because of an inability to overcome problems with the identification, documentation and validation of products containing promethazine hydrochloride. Errors in the use-by

date of this ingredient mean that the products, while considered safe for consumption, will lose their medicinal potency before their expiry date. Seven cough and allergy medicines have been recalled as a result. [See box for names of recalled medicines]

Mr Young sought to excuse the failings of his company, saying that for the past two years the management had been preoccupied with finding new premises for the manufacturer's operations. He is confident that the company will bounce back in spite of reports that Fred Bart, the entrepreneur behind an attempt to buy out the failed Pan Pharmaceuticals concern, has shown interest in API's predicament.

In the case of Cottee Health PharmAction, a scramble to meet the demand left by the collapse of Pan Pharmaceuticals had supposedly caused the drug maker to run ahead of its quality control procedures. The inability to raise the \$2 million required for an upgrade and the loss of a contract accounting for 40 per cent of Cottee's business were cited as the reasons for the company's woes.

However, *The Australian Financial Review* reported last week that Cottee Health PharmAction staff had been told by the TGA that they had concerns about their employer's air-conditioning and their ability to meet certain rules for "good manufacturing practice". Penalties for such violations have been stiffened considerably in the wake of the Pan disaster.

Penalties for malpractice now include fines of up to \$1.1 million and five years jail. Should investigations into API uncover sufficient evidence, the company faces a \$550,000 fine while individuals found in breach could incur a \$110,000 fine and/or 12 months imprisonment. The Federal Government is said to be considering on-the-spot fines for breaches

and a system of releasing information to the public about the safety and efficacy of medicines.

Some commentators, including Martyn Goddard of the Australian Consumers Association are encouraged by these developments.

Commenting on the "voluntary" suspension of API's manufacturing licence, he is reported as saying: "The TGA's reaction in this case shows that it has really listened to the criticism it copped after Pan and it has done something about it... We call on the parliamentary [health] secretary Trish Worth to continue to strongly support this new but controversial toughness from the TGA."

Mr Goddard's comments raise a lot of questions. What was the TGA doing prior to the Pan scandal while all these cases of negligence were banking up? TGA technical director John McEwen was quoted last week defending the agency's track record. "There was a criticism that people knew that we were coming and could cover things up and put certain things away. That is a lesson learnt - that unannounced audits are appropriate on occasion." [Emphasis added]

It is hard to imagine that the many problems at the API factory that were described in great detail in the media last week could simply be swept under the carpet. That factory was supposedly audited in December last year and before that in August 2001. The TGA claims that it audits 250 of the 335 medicine-producing plants in the country each year. If that is so, to what should we attribute the sudden rise in the number of violations of acceptable standards that we have witnessed in recent months?

Clearly, the TGA has a lot of explaining to do. It is unlikely, however, that the explanation would effectively counter the logic of the case for putting the pharmaceuticals industry under public ownership and control. API managing director David Young was speaking recently about the mood at a meeting of his company's shareholders in Sydney following the developments of last week:

"I think they should be disappointed, we're disappointed, I wouldn't expect shareholders not to be. Our job's to look after the shareholders' interests and we believe as a board we've made the best decision to ensure that we do that for the long term."

It's way past time that the interests of the public for safe and effective medicines were made the top priority of the pharmaceuticals industry and not the need to boost profits and returns to shareholders. ✱



First it was the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Michael Somare who shunned him, and now it's Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri who has given PM Howard the cold shoulder. PNG cancelled a planned visit by wannabe Pacific colonial overlord Howard, whereas the Indonesian President was "too busy" to be at a ceremony in Bali where Howard would wring plenty of propaganda out of the grief of those who lost family and friends in the Kuta bombing. "This is no surprise to me, it's no disappointment to me", said Howard. Face it, Deputy Dawg, you're on the nose in the Asia-Pacific.

As the Australian Electoral Commission continues to investigate him for possible criminal behaviour, Workplace Relations Minister Tony Abbott was getting on with his day job - union bashing. While he wouldn't say anything about his slush fund for targeting other political parties, which the Commission is now investigating to see if he's broken electoral laws, he was quite open about his aim of destroying legal worker collectives i.e. trade unions. Abbott now has draft legislation based on the findings of the Government-commissioned Cole anti-union kangaroo court. The proposed laws include the enforcement of secret ballots before strike action, reducing protected industrial action, allowing injunctions to be taken out to prevent unions negotiating enterprise-wide agreements, and the setting up of a union-policing body.

The utter failure of the contracted-out social security system was highlighted again when last week the Federal Government announced it will pay the system's 109 job-search agencies before they actually provide the service, that is, without placing anyone in a job. Until now the agencies were paid for each job placement, and some of them rorted that system anyway. The whole thing fell in a heap last July when the agencies declared cash-flow problems and threatened to cut staff, just like any other money-grubbing corporate boss. Now they're going to be pre-paid - to the tune of \$2 billion over the next three years - it'll be green lights all the way to the bank.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is the lobby for GM food. A consumer guide put out by Greenpeace lists supermarket food brands that are likely to contain genetically modified food products. The Greenpeace investigation has found that millions of Australians are unknowingly eating GM because of loopholes in labelling laws. Australia's pork, edible oils and poultry industries are major users of genetically modified stock feed and processed ingredients imported from the US. All this is contrary to the everything's-a-OK assurances by the corporate agri-monopolies like Monsanto, which claim that there will be no cross pollination of crops and that it's all a matter of consumer "choice".

Most recently recalled products:

- Soul Pattinson Allergy Relief Elixir oral liquid (100ml)
- Nyal Plus Allergy Relief Elixir oral liquid (100ml)
- Chem Mart Promethazine Elixir (all batches)
- Terry White Chemists Promethazine Elixir (100ml)
- Guardian Children's Antihistamine Elixir (100 & 200ml)
- Chemists' Own Promethazine Elixir (50, 100 & 200ml)
- Amcal Promethazine Elixir (50, 100 & 200ml)

Sydney

Ocean Press Book Launch with Greens Senator Kerry Nettle

The Roots of Terrorism: Articles from Covert Action Quarterly

Edited by Ellen Ray and William H Schaap

Monday 22nd September 6pm Gleebooks, 49 Glebe Pt Rd, Glebe

A comprehensive background to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the current "war on terrorism". Contributors include: Noam Chomsky; Eqbal Ahmad; Phillip Agee; Edward Herman; William Blum; Israel Shahak; Ramsey Clark

"The essays in this collection could hardly be more timely, or more informative and cannot be ignored by those who hope to gain a serious understanding of what is unfolding today." — Noam Chomsky
 "This book provides a critical and historical perspective on both the nature of terrorism and the manner in which it is portrayed in the mainstream media." — Edward S Herman

Political Prisoners in Chile

During her current tour of Australia, Victoria Torres spoke with *The Guardian* about the human rights environment in Chile today. Her activities in her homeland are centred on the plight of political prisoners and she hopes that, during her visit, what she has to say will inject new energy into the Australian arm of the international movement in solidarity with the people of Chile.

Victoria is representing the *Coordinador por la Libertad de los Presos Políticos* (Coordinating Committee for the Freedom of Political Prisoners). What Victoria has to say may shock most Australians, who have been led to believe that democracy and respect for basic human rights were restored in Chile in 1989 after 16 years of the Pinochet dictatorship.

Guardian: What brings you to Australia and to the city of Sydney?

Victoria: I came to Australia at the invitation of the *Comité El Otro Once Septiembre* (the Other September Eleven Committee) and the CFMEU [Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union], which is part of this committee. The comrades here are aware of the work we do in Chile to secure the freedom of political prisoners.

Sometimes there is confusion around the question of who the political prisoners are. Some people believe that they are prisoners from the time of the dictatorship. In Chile at present there are about 40 political prisoners from the "concertación" or period of transition to democracy. They were arrested after March 11, 1990 in the initial stages of the transition to democracy.

They were members of revolutionary left-wing organisations that played an important role in the struggle against the dictatorship. They are from the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front, a grouping that declared itself autonomous of the Communist Party of Chile.

Other comrades are from the Movement of the Revolutionary Left that was formed in 1966 while most of the others belong to a group called the Lautaro Popular Action Movement, which was formed during the years of Allende's Popular Unity Government and was part of that government.

They have a concept of struggle that is anti-capitalist – for them the removal of the dictatorship did not mean the changing of the economic, social and political model. Their position is that the economic and political system of the dictatorship is still present nowadays in Chile.

The economic program in Chile is neo-liberal. In recent years there have been free trade agreements signed between Chile, the United States, Canada and South Korea.

We believe that these treaties will be detrimental to the interests of the workers of Chile – in terms of exploitation, in terms of security of employment, in terms of poverty, in terms of work.

Struggle continues

At the present time, the constitution of the dictatorship is still valid in Chile. That constitution was formally drawn up in the years of the dictatorship, in 1980. The struggle of the left in Chile has always been to change the constitution, to call a popular assembly to create a new constitution.

As to the question of justice – a major problem for us in Chile – the transition to democracy has not meant that there has been justice for the torturers and others that committed crimes against humanity.

In the past three years there have been three attempts to put laws in place that would end all the efforts aimed at getting some justice concerning these matters. There is now a fourth attempt before the current government to legislate to essentially guarantee impunity to those that have committed crimes against humanity and to release the military from any responsibility.

At the moment we are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the coup d'état against the Popular Unity Government. There is still a confrontation between the popular movement and the economic plans being implemented by the Chilean bourgeoisie and supported by imperialism.

Contrary to what they think – that the class struggle has ended and that they can declare an end to history – there is no question that there is still a struggle between the two major sectors of society. There is no question, either, that the struggle for freedom for political prisoners is also part of the mass workers' movement.

Solidarity

We have solidarity with the political prisoners from the indigenous Mapuche people. Since 1990 they have begun to demand rights to their land and to defend their culture. They have been put into jail and we have been defending



Sydney rally to commemorate September 11, 1973

them. Obviously the laws that apply to the other political prisoners are applied to the Mapuche as well: the anti-terrorism laws, the laws against possessing arms and the laws relating to national security.

We support the Chilean comrades detained in Peru. Recently they were condemned to between 15 and 25 years in prison. They were militants of the revolutionary left in Chile. We support the Chilean comrades detained in Brazil. We also support the five Cuban patriots being detained by the empire – in the United States.

Guardian: What sort of work is your committee doing at the moment?

Victoria: We work at different levels. We produce publicity, information about the situation of the political prisoners. We deal with some of the judicial and legal problems of their defence, including the referral of accusations the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights. We create networks of support for the Mapuche people and their political prisoners.

To carry on this work we have established many links with those with a passion for human rights: lawyers, human rights and popular organisations in Chile.

Guardian: What can we do here in Australia?

Victoria: In political terms I think it is important to speak out and say that in Chile there is not a broad democracy. For me this issue is difficult because, in the past, we have had mass solidarity in support of Chile. We have not been able to repay this solidarity by achieving justice and full democracy in Chile. We feel we have a debt towards international solidarity for that reason.

However, we still need international solidarity to overcome the major problems that we have. There are many governments in the world that would like it believed that the problem of Chile has been completely resolved. They have links and carry on a lot of trade with the country. It is the duty of the Left to explain what is actually taking place in Chile.

That is where we need solidarity so that it is clear in the minds of the people what is going on in Chile. Aside from the human rights issue, it is important to build solidarity with Chile's workers that been affected so badly by the neo-liberal agenda being applied in their country.

Guardian: What are the social and economic conditions facing the Chilean people?

Victoria: There can be no doubt that there has been a powerful propaganda campaign from the Chilean Government to tell the world that, in political terms, we have restored democracy and that we are at the point of launching into economic development.

However, at the level of the workers' experience, the industrial law that we have is the same one applied by the dictatorship. It's difficult for workers to form their own trade unions, there's a lot of persecution that follows if you set out to create your own union. Neo-liberalism expresses itself in very low wages and great difficulty in finding and holding a job.

Super-exploitation

There's a lot of talk about further "flexibility" in connection with these labour laws and what this means is that workers would lose whatever conditions they have at the moment. There's a lot of work being delivered directly to your home – which basically means that there is the super-exploitation of workers going on.

This means low wages and a total absence of rights to do with health or the pension. Often it is attractive to large companies to decentralise production and, by doing this, prevent the formation of trade unions.

Manufacturing industry has been totally destroyed. The coalmines have been closed. These were the bastions of the trade union movement in Chile.

There are many people that go looking for seasonal work in the countryside. They don't have the

traditional outlook toward trade unions and, basically, they have no rights. The majority are women that work in orchards, for example, in conditions dictated by free trade agreements with Europe and the United States.

A lot of trade union leaders were assassinated in the years of the dictatorship making it hard for us to form trade unions. There was a break in the continuity of the trade union movement. We need solidarity, as well, in the work of developing young trade unionists, the leaders for today.

Guardian: Could you describe the effects of the anti-terrorism laws in Chile?

Victoria: Chile basically has no tradition of political terrorism. Nevertheless the dictatorship approved an anti-terrorism law to use in its fight against the anti-dictatorship forces.

These laws have been maintained. Some aspects have been altered but, overall, they are still in place. Basically they are used to carry on the social struggle. For example, the laws have been used against maritime workers and the Mapuche people. They are instruments of social control.

Guardian: Are they similar to the laws in Australia where the government can proscribe organisations, individuals can be detained [by ASIO] without charge, interview them in secret and so on?

Victoria: I think that this is an international phenomenon. This is because the capitalist system throughout the world is encountering more and more problems. It has been necessary to introduce these laws as tools to control movements for social change.

At the present time there is a resurgence in informing. The military, the police and civilians are now taking part in an organisation to gather intelligence. This is dangerous because we know that the military hasn't rid itself of those violators of human rights, of torturers. There is a contradiction here in that Chile is considered one of the more secure countries of Latin America. ☺



Victoria Torres

We still need international solidarity to overcome the major problems that we have.

Former UK Minister Michael Meacher charges Bush Admin with collusion in 9/11

Michael Meacher, who was the British Environment Minister in Tony Blair's government for the last six years, until his resignation three months ago, has written a scathing condemnation of the Bush Administration, charging it with collusion in the September 11 (2001) tragedy.

Meacher, a staunch ally of the United States in its war on terrorism, has accused elements within the US Government of foreknowledge of the September 11 attacks and a determination not to stop them in order to implement a pre-planned agenda.

In response, a US embassy spokesperson in London said Meacher's allegations "would be monstrous, and monstrously offensive, if they came from someone serious or credible".

Not only was Meacher serious and credible enough to have been picked by Tony Blair to serve in his government, and to have been elected by his West Oldham constituency since 1970, but the BBC earlier this year called him the Labor Party's "most experienced Minister".

Meacher's charges include:

- The blueprint for America's military adventures around the world was contained in documents prepared in September 2000 by the neo-conservative think tank, Project for the New American Century, whose members include Dick Cheney, Jeb Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz.

- US authorities ignored

advance warnings by at least 11 countries. The warnings included a list provided by senior Israeli intelligence that named four of the 9/11 hijackers, but none were arrested.

- Plans to crash-land airliners into Washington buildings had been known since 1996. In 1999, one intelligence report warned that "al-Qaida suicide bombers could crash-land an aircraft packed with high explosives into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the CIA, or the White House".

- The CIA had a long record, acknowledged by the former head of the US visa bureau in Jeddah, of issuing US visas to unqualified Saudi applicants for terrorism training in the US for the Afghan war. Fifteen of the hijackers had obtained their visas in Saudi Arabia.

- When Zacarias Moussaoui was arrested in August 2001, one FBI agent wrote that he may have been planning to crash into the Twin Towers. But the FBI turned down warrant requests to search his computer for information which may have led to other potential hijackers.

- Although the first hijacking was reported as early as 8:20 am



on September 11, no fighter planes were scrambled to intercept from Andrews Air Force Base until after the third plane hit the Pentagon at 9:38 am. This violated standard FAA procedures. Meacher quotes an AP report that between September 2000 and June 2001, US fighter aircraft were launched on 67 occasions to chase suspicious planes.

- Between September and November 2001, the US actually

avoided capturing or killing Osama bin Laden and senior al-Qaida leaders, despite having had many opportunities.

"The overriding motivation for this political smokescreen is that the US and the UK are beginning to run out of secure hydrocarbon energy supplies", Meacher writes.

"By 2010 the Muslim world will control as much as 60% of the world's oil production and,

even more importantly, 95% of remaining global oil export capacity."

Meacher concludes that "the 'global war on terrorism' has the hallmarks of a political myth propagated to pave the way for a wholly different agenda – the US goal of world hegemony, built around securing by force command over the oil supplies required to drive the whole project." ✪

US soldier wonders "How many more must die?"

Tim Predmore is on active duty with the 101st Airborne Division near Mosul, Iraq. He has been in Iraq since March and in the US military for about five years. The following letter was written by Tim late last month.

"Shock and Awe" were the words used to describe the awesome display of power the world was to view upon the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. It was to be an up-close, dramatic display of military strength and advanced technology within the arsenal of the United States and the United Kingdom's military.

But as a soldier preparing for the invasion of Iraq, the words "shock and awe" rang deeper within my psyche. These two great super-powers were about to break the very rules they demand of others. Without the consent of the United Nations, and ignoring the pleas of their own citizens, the United States and Britain invaded Iraq.

"Shock and Awe"? Yes, the words correctly described the emotional impact I felt as we prepared to participate in what I believed not to be an act of justice but of hypocrisy.

From the moment the first shot was fired in this so-called war of liberation and freedom, hypocrisy reigned. Following the broadcasting of recorded images of captured and dead US soldiers over Arab television, American and British leaders vowed revenge while verbally assaulting the networks for displaying such vivid images. Yet within hours of the deaths of

Saddam's two sons, the American Government released horrific photos of the two dead brothers for the entire world to view. Again, a "do as we say and not as we do" scenario.

As soldiers serving in Iraq, we have been told that our purpose here is to help the people of Iraq by providing them the necessary assistance militarily as well as in humanitarian efforts. Then tell me where the humanity was in the recent Stars and Stripes account of two young children brought to a US military camp by their mother, in search of medical care?

The two children had been, unbeknown to them, playing with explosive ordinance they had found and as a result were severely burned. The account tells how the two children, following an hour-long wait, were denied care by two US military doctors. The soldier described the incident as one of many "atrocities" he has witnessed on the part of the US military.

So then, what is our purpose here? Was this invasion due to weapons of mass destruction as we so often heard? If so, where are they? Did we invade to dispose of a leader and his regime on the account of close association with Osama bin Laden? If so,

where is the proof? Or is it that our incursion is a result of our own economic advantage? Iraq's oil can be refined at the lowest cost of any in the world. Coincidence?

This looks like a modern-day crusade not to free an oppressed people or to rid the world of a demonic dictator relentless in his pursuit of conquest and domination but a crusade to control another nation's natural resource. At least for us here, oil seems to be the reason for our presence.

There is only one truth, and it is that Americans are dying. There are an estimated 10-14 attacks on our servicemen and women daily in Iraq. As the body count continues to grow, it would appear that there is no immediate end in sight.

I once believed that I served for a cause: "to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States".

Now, I no longer believe; I have lost my conviction, my determination. I can no longer justify my service for what I believe to be half-truths and bold lies. My time is done as well as that of many others with whom I serve. We have all faced death here without reason or justification.

How many more must die? How many more tears must be shed before America awakens and demands the return of the men and women whose job it is to protect them rather than their leader's interest? ✪

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competition
Rewards for
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Organised by
the Sydney Peace
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For more info phone

Hannah

0418 668 098



The assassination of Yasser Arafat

It is now official: the government of Israel has decided to assassinate Yasser Arafat

Not any more to "exile". Not any more to "expel or kill". Simply to "remove". Of course, the intention is not to remove him to another country. Nobody seriously believes that Yasser Arafat will raise his hands and allow himself to be marched off. He and his men will be killed "during the exchange of fire". This would not be the first time.

by Uri Avnery

Even if it was possible to expel Arafat to another country, nobody in the Israeli leadership would dream of doing so. How come? Allow him to make the rounds of Putin, Schroeder and Chirac? God forbid. So the plan is to remove him to the next world.

Not immediately. The Americans forbid it. It may make Bush angry. Sharon does not want to annoy Bush.

Some people comfort themselves with the thought that this is just an empty resolution. It is supposed to be implemented at a time and in a way yet to be decided. But this is wishful thinking, a dangerous comfort.

The decision legitimising his assassination is by itself a far-reaching political act. It is intended to get the Israeli and international public used to the idea. What used to sound like a crazy plot by extreme fanatics now has the air of a legitimate political process, with only the time and mode of implementation still open.

Anyone familiar with Ariel Sharon can see how things will develop from now on. He will wait for his opportunity. It may come any minute, or after a week, a month, a year. He is patient. When he decides to do something, he is ready to wait, but he won't deviate from his goal.

So when will the planned assassination be carried out? When some big suicide attack will take place in Israel, one so big that an extreme reaction will be understood by the Americans, too. Or when something happens somewhere to divert world

attention from our country. Or when some dramatic event, something comparable to the destruction of the Twin Towers, makes Bush furious.

What will happen afterwards?

Arab leaders say that there will be "incalculable results". But, in truth, the results can be calculated fairly well in advance.

The murder of Arafat will bring about an historic change in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian people. Since the 1973 war, both peoples have been accepting the idea of a compromise between the two great national movements.

In the Oslo agreement, after a process initiated by Yasser Arafat practically alone, the Palestinians gave up 78 percent of the country that was called Palestine before 1948. They agreed to set up their state in the remaining 22 percent. Only Arafat had the moral and political standing necessary to carry the people with him, much as Ben-Gurion was able to convince our people to accept the partition plan.

Even in the sharpest crises since then, both peoples have remained steadfast in their belief that in the end there will be a compromise.

The assassination of Arafat will put an end to this, perhaps forever. We shall return to the stage of "all or nothing": Greater Israel or Greater Palestine, throwing the Jews into the sea or pushing the Palestinians out into the desert.

The Palestinian Authority will disappear. Israel will take over all the Palestinian territories, with all the economic and human stress involved. The "deluxe occupation",

which allowed Israel a free hand in the territories, with the world paying the bills, will be over.

Violence will reign supreme. It will be the sole language of both peoples. In Jerusalem and Ramallah, Haifa and Hebron, Tulkarm and Tel-Aviv, fear will stalk the streets. Every mother who sends her children to school will be consumed by worry until they come back. Terror on this side and on that side, an ever widening spiral of violence, automatic and incessant escalation.

The earthquake will not be limited to the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. The whole Arab world will erupt. Arafat the shahid, the martyr, the hero, the symbol, will become an all-Arab, all-Muslim mythological figure. His name will become a battle-cry for all revolutionaries from Indonesia to Morocco, a slogan for all religious and nationalist underground organisations.

The earth will tremble under the feet of all the Arab regimes. Compared to Arafat, the ultimate hero, all the kings, Emirs and presidents will look unmanly, traitors and mercenaries. If one of them falls, the Domino Effect will go into action.

Bloodshed will be universal. Every Israeli target – every airplane, every group of tourists, every Israeli institution, will be in constant danger.

The Americans have their reasons for vetoing the assassination. They know that the killing of Arafat will shake their position in the Arab and Muslim world to the core. The guerilla war that is becoming ever wider in Iraq will spread throughout the Arab and other Muslim countries and the world at large.

American consent

Every Arab and Muslim will believe that Sharon acted with American consent and encouragement, whatever feeble verbal opposition there may have been.



The fury will be directed against them. A host of new bin Ladens will plot revenge.

Doesn't Sharon understand all this? Of course he does. The political nobodies who constitute the government may be unable to see beyond the end of their noses, just like blinkered generals, whose only solution is to kill and destroy. But Sharon knows what the consequences are likely to be – and he relishes them.

Sharon wants to conclude the historic clash between Zionism and the Palestinian people with a clear-cut decision: solid Israeli control over the entire country and a situation that will compel the Palestinians to get out. Yasser Arafat is indeed the "total obstacle", as

defined in the government resolution, to the implementation of this design. And a period of anarchy and bloodshed would be good for its implementation.

And the people of Israel? The poor, brainwashed, despairing and apathetic people do not intervene. The silent, bleeding majority behaves as if all this does not concern them and their children. They are following Sharon as the children followed the pied piper, right into the river.

This thundering silence is disastrous. In order to prevent the disaster, it is our duty to break it. www.avnery-news.co.il/english/index.html

Uri Avnery is a leading peace activist in Israel. ☼

Cancún: Historic win for developing countries

Continued from page 1

It is a coalition of the poor who were determined to fight to the end against discriminatory subsidies paid to the farmers of the rich, developed countries. And that is what they did.

From the start, the ministerial meeting (September 10-14) was doomed to fail. The draft text pushed the agenda of the industrialised nations and ignored the demands of the developing countries. It was to be business as usual, with the undemocratic, secretive processes of the WTO in full swing – right down to the personal cajoling phone calls from George W Bush to heads of governments.

The US, the European Union, Canada and Japan, known as the "Quad", were the prime operators, trying to enforce their agenda with the help of WTO officials.

For the G21 and many other poorer countries, agriculture is a matter of "life or death".

In the streets outside of the meeting thousands of farmers and Indigenous people demonstrated. A Korean farmer took his own life outside the hall – so intense is the opposition of the people of the developing countries.

Thousands of others took part in

conferences, street actions and other protests in the lead-up to and during the meeting in Cancún and around the world.

Huge subsidies

The G21 pointed to the failure of the WTO to act on the more than US\$300 billion in subsidies paid every year to the world's wealthiest farmers which undermine the livelihoods of millions of poor farmers around the world.

The EU and the US steadfastly refuse to remove these subsidies and open up their markets to imports at the same time as expecting developing countries to make huge reductions in tariffs on their imports.

Four of Africa's poorest countries sought a reduction in subsidies paid to US and European cotton farmers that have ruined African farmers. They demanded that they be paid US\$300 million in compensation because of this unfair competition. They got nowhere.

While developing countries were seeking justice over agriculture and market access for their products in the developed countries, the Quad

were pushing a new agenda – for what are known as the "Singapore issues" or "new issues".

These issues are competition policy, foreign investment, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation.

The aim of these policies is to subject the economies of the developing countries to the complete control of the developed (imperialist) countries. Their implementation of these policies would place developing countries at a greater disadvantage, setting back their trade and development by decades.

They would restrict the ability of governments to regulate foreign investment or to take measures to develop local enterprises. They would open up the economies of the developing countries to the advantage of the big corporations from the US, EU, Japan, Canada, Australia in particular.

The developing countries reluctantly agreed to discuss the scope ("modalities") of these issues at a Singapore ministerial held in 1996 in exchange for promises on other issues of concern to them. It was agreed that there would be no negotiations on these issues before

consensus had been reached at the discussion phase.

Consensus is far from being achieved, but that did not stop the Quad trying to force the pace of negotiations against the will of over 70 developing countries.

The European Union insisted that any concessions on agriculture be conditional on the acceptance of new rules on foreign investment. This form of blackmail is not new. Previous promises made by the "Quad" in return for discussion of the Singapore issues and other significant trade-offs have, without exception, not been honoured.

This time developing countries said, enough is enough. Their message was: Carry out previous decisions and fix up problems with existing agreements before looking at agreements in new areas.

Walk-out

The actual trigger for the breakdown of the talks and the mass walkout of the representatives of the developing countries was the question of investment – and walkout they did!

The developing countries still

have a long way to go towards achieving their goals, of seeing a genuine development round of negotiations in which their needs receive recognition by the rich countries.

The Quad have received a far more serious setback than at Seattle but have not given up their aims. They are pushing their agenda on many fronts. They are using the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in outright blackmail. They are also pursuing bilateral agreements such as the proposed US Free Trade Agreement with Australia. Where all else fails they will use their military might to recolonise countries as we have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The drive for corporate global domination by the US, the EU and the transnational corporations of other countries will continue.

But, "The developing countries have come into their own", as the Malaysian International Trade and Investment Minister Rafidah Aziz said. "This has made it clear that developing countries cannot be dictated to by anybody".

Or, as Ecuador's Foreign Trade Minister, Ivonne Baki said, "It's not the end. It's the beginning". ☼

California farm workers vow big vote

California: Hundreds of farm workers and their families gathered at "Forty Acres," the United Farm Worker's (UFW) most hallowed ground, and cheered as UFW President Arturo Rodriguez denounced an attempt by the ultra-right to recall California Governor Gray Davis.

"The Republicans were not satisfied with what the voters decided last November", he said. "They are taking a cheap shot at it for the second time. They are trying to rob us of what we already decided. ... Shame on Arnold Schwarzenegger for making himself a part of it."

Rodriguez praised Davis for signing a Bill that provides for binding mediation when growers and farmworkers reach an impasse in bargaining.

One of Schwarzenegger's economic advisors, Rodriguez added, is David Murdock, chairman and CEO of Dole Food Company, one of California's largest agribusiness corporations.

Schwarzenegger's team "is made up of key aides to former Governor Pete Wilson", Rodriguez added. "Under Governor Wilson, enforcement of the laws protecting farm workers was effectively shut down." The Agricultural Labor Relations Act guaranteeing

farm workers union rights was decimated.

Tens of thousands of farm workers, Rodriguez continued, "lost the union contracts that had dramatically improved their lives. Because of the Republicans, thousands of farm workers were fired or blacklisted for supporting the UFW. ... A 19-year-old farm worker, Rene Lopez, was shot to death when he was voting in a state-conducted union election at a dairy farm in Fresno County."

Flanking Rodriguez as he spoke were Mexican American mayors, city council members and school board members from up and down the San Joaquin valley, testifying to the growing clout of the Latino vote. He vowed a strong UFW get-out-the-vote campaign to defeat the recall. Beside him stood Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante, a Democratic candidate for governor, son of Mexican immigrant farm workers, born and raised in Dinuba just north of here.

"Today the farm workers

endorse 'No' on recall and 'Yes' on Bustamante because Cruz is on the right side and Arnold is not", Rodriguez said. He praised Bustamante for joining the UFW march on Sacramento last spring demanding enactment of the binding arbitration law and for helping block enforcement of Proposition 187 that would have denied public assistance to undocumented workers.

Davis, he pointed out, has promised to sign a bill permitting these workers to obtain driver's licences. Bustamante supports that legislation as well, but Schwarzenegger said he would veto the driver's licence Bill if he were governor.

Bustamante said, "I'm proud to be standing with the farm workers who feed the nation, here where the United Farm Workers was born". He vowed to fight for living wages and benefits, including health care for farm worker families who add \$30 billion in value annually to California agriculture, the largest sector of the state's economy.

Asked when he would come out for Davis' recall, Bustamante replied, "There is a principle involved. Someone is trying to hijack democracy. When I go into that voting booth October 7, I will

vote 'No' on recall." The crowd cheered and chanted, "Recall, No! Bustamante, Si!"

"Forty Acres", about one mile west of Delano, hacienda-style buildings surrounded by towering date palms, is the first UFW headquarters. UFW founder Cesar Chavez staged a 25-day fast here in support of a farm workers' strike in March 1968.

Robert F Kennedy came to visit Chavez and to endorse farm worker union rights just before his assassination. The first UFW contract was signed with table grape growers here July 29, 1970, ending a five-year strike and boycott. It is now the regional headquarters for the UFW in the San Joaquin valley, the most productive farmland in the nation but also among the poorest for working families.

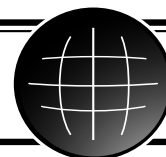
Gustavo Aguirre, UFW Vice President in charge of the San Joaquin valley, told this reporter that blocking the Republican power grab "is a matter of life and death for farm workers. We are going to work

hard in getting out the vote in the valley to keep Davis in office or put Bustamante in. The only way farm workers and working families can move forward is to have someone in the governor's office who is enforcing the law."

Maribel Olvera, 16, held a placard with a photo of Schwarzenegger embracing Wilson and the words, "No RePete". In Spanish, it added, "Tell me who you are walking with and I will tell you who you are". She told the *People's Weekly World*, "I'm a junior in high school. I want to go to college. But Wilson raised the tuition rate and I'm afraid Schwarzenegger will too."

Strolling through the crowd with his guitar and singing "De Colores" was Carlos Moraza. "It's the song of the movement", he told this reporter. "Cesar loved it. It says the colors of the rainbow bring us together. If these Republicans steal back the governorship, it would set us back. They don't know how to represent workers."

People's Weekly World ☪



Global briefs

USA: Being dragged deeper into the quagmire that is its occupation of Iraq, the Bush administration is trying to bully the UN into taking over the human rights disaster caused by the US war. President Bush told Congress he wants more money, a further A\$134 billion, in the name of "reconstruction", as well as demanding that the world community supply money and troops to Iraq. Exploiting the anniversary of the Twin Towers attack of 2001, Bush delivered his speech just a few days before September 11, claiming the occupation of Iraq was "the central front in the war against terrorism". He said that there should be a "multinational division to serve in Iraq" to "share the burden".

UNITED NATIONS: A draft UN resolution continues to highlight America's avoidance of accountability for human rights abuses. The resolution, put forward last month by Mexico and co-sponsored by France, Germany, Russia, Bulgaria and Syria, is opposed by the US because it contains references to the International Criminal Court, which the US refuses to recognise. The resolution for protecting UN workers, calls the attack on the UN headquarters in Iraq a war crime under the statutes of the International Criminal Court, which was inaugurated last March. Mexico's UN ambassador said that the resolution has to state in clear and unequivocal terms that an attack against humanitarian workers is a war crime. The US opposes the Court because it could be used to hold US officials to account for crimes committed in Washington's name.

ITALY: The media tycoon and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has launched another attack on Italy's judiciary, calling its judges "mentally disturbed". The country's prosecutors have been investigating the reactionary Berlusconi for corruption. He stated that the judges were "politically mad" and that he was a "victim of left-wing magistrates".

ZAMBIA: The country's civil servants are continuing their indefinite strike for a wage rise and a housing allowance. Around 120,000 civil servants launched their action in protest against a 14-month delay in the payment of their housing allowance and the refusal of the Government to compromise in wage negotiations. In June the IMF withheld more than A\$200 million in balance of payments loans to the Mwanawawa Government when the Government announced an increase in budget expenditure of around A\$160 million.

ROMANIA: Thousands of workers at Romania's state railway are carrying out stoppages to protest against the Government's deal with the IMF that would see 19,000 rail workers lose their jobs. The Transport Ministry is pushing for the lay-offs as part of IMF demands for Romania to implement structural reforms to align its rail network to EU standards. The cuts are tied to a A\$826 million IMF loan which stipulates that they must be implemented by mid-September. Romania aims to join the EU by 2007. This latest move follows the sacking of 27,000 rail workers in 1998.

Arnold Explains that Oui Magazine Interview



Hot reception for Sharon in India

A demonstration in New Delhi organised by the combined left parties of India greeted the visit of Ariel Sharon to India as the guest of the right-wing BJP Government headed by Prime Minister Vajpayee.

Speaker after speaker strongly condemned Ariel Sharon for his brutal repression of the Palestinian people. As Israeli Defence Minister they charged that in 1982, he was directly responsible for the massacre of over 3000 Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps

in Lebanon. He was forced to resign as Defence Minister after this massacre.

Setting the tone the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury condemned the Vajpayee Government for having invited Sharon to India

and called upon the Government to give up its policy of appeasing the brutal Zionist regime at the dictates of the US and in total negation of India's foreign policy.

Yechury, amidst cheers, said that in a way it was natural that the killers of Mahatma Gandhi had invited the killers of the Palestinian people and warned that the Government's hasty move could alienate support for India from the rest of the Arab world.

He said that an overwhelming majority of the people of India supported the Palestinian Liberation struggle and recalled how Hitler had to face humiliation at the end, caught in his own wrong moves.

Sharon was forced to cut short his visit to India as a consequence of the intensification of the struggle by the Palestinian people against the assassinations and other terrorist acts of the Israeli authorities. ☪

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New US policy to block freedom of the seas

Not content with gobbling up Afghanistan and Iraq, US President George W Bush is marshalling another "coalition of the willing" to shadow the world's oceans in search of weapons of mass destruction.

Within weeks the recently established 11-nation Proliferation Security Initiative will conduct military exercises over wide areas of the Pacific, including seas and airspace adjacent to Australia.

Joining the US initiative are Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain.

According to Washington arms control official John R Bolton, the plan is to intercept ships and aircraft suspected of carrying unconventional weapons.

North Korean shipping is clearly in the PSI's sights, although Iran has been mentioned as another potential threat.

Targeted are chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and components. The ambit is so wide

that virtually anything of value to the intelligences services in the "War on Terror" in any form or any carrier could be intercepted.

China has thus far rejected an invitation to join the initiative, questioning its legality.

In peacetime, international law prohibits arbitrary search of vessels on the high seas, although in recent times numerous incidents have resulted from boarding of such vessels as the Norwegian ship *Tampa*.

Other maritime nations may be reluctant to set precedents that could affect world trade and freedom of the seas.

How did the United States hatch this potentially illegal policy without its usual spin in the world media?

The concept was first broached by President Bush at two meetings held in May with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun – all concerned over North Korea's revived nuclear weapons program.

In early June, having declared victory in Iraq, President Bush met with Group of 8 leaders in France. In the background, White House aides cobbled together a coalition

of European nations concerned over intelligence from North Korea and Iran.

A week later, North Korea protested the policy of intensive inspections and suspended its ferry service with Japan, concerned over interruption of its fishing fleet.

At the Association of South East Asian Nations and Asian Regional Forum held in Cambodia on 18 June US Secretary of State, Colin Powell sought broad support for an international plan to interdict shipments of nuclear materials and other weapons of mass destruction. Alarmed over North Korean drug smuggling efforts, Australia has other motives to strongly support the proposed coalition.

By July plans were underway to step up pressure on North Korea by conducting a joint naval/air PSI training exercises in the Coral Sea off Australia in September.

According to a September 4 report by Reuters, arms control officer Bolton denied nations taking part in PSI would be breaking international law. He said participants had agreed to guidelines limiting how they would carry out ship and aircraft interceptions.

"What we intend to do is

consistent with national and international authorities", Bolton reported to Reuters.

"Where we think we may have gaps in that authority, we are willing to consider seeking additional authorization", he said, alluding to possible approval from the United Nations Security Council.

Already, forces of Australia, United States, Japan and France are moving into position to simulate land, sea and air interceptions.

France confirmed its military commitment in a statement from its foreign ministry on September 6.

On the eve of September 11 Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer announced in parliament that PSI training exercises are soon to begin.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the Proliferation Security Initiative is enlarging the US war on terror to include the seas, spanning more than three-fifths of the Earth.

The potential for conflict is alarming.

Rasjad Moore
Fremantle, WA

Theodor W Adorno: remembering a September 11 of a different kind

As television and the print media file their stories about the continuing war against terror since September 11, two years ago in New York, and the day of infamy in Chile for the Left of 30 years ago, it would seem all doom and gloom for the future of humankind.

Richard Titelius
Ballajura, WA

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.

Culture & Life

Developing urban blight

The district where I live, the NSW Central Coast, has recently been in the news. Last week the ABC's *7.30 Report* delved into a new report identifying Wyong Shire as the region in the State – if not the country – with the highest rate of child abuse, the highest divorce rate, the highest rate of unemployment, the highest percentage of single mothers and one of the highest rates of domestic violence.

by Rob Gowland

These statistics are not unrelated. The NSW Government has for years now been pursuing a policy of promoting the development of the Central Coast as a dormitory district for Sydney.

The original concept had it as a dormitory district for both Sydney and Newcastle, but the economic collapse of Newcastle after BHP went offshore meant that the once prosperous industrial city of Newcastle actually itself became a dormitory suburb of Sydney.

But people were still being encouraged to move to the Central Coast, where apparently there was plenty of fresh air, fishing, cheap housing, beaches and bowling clubs.

What the Central Coast did not have, but which people were not told about, were jobs, facili-

ties for youth, and adequate health care. This did not deter the developer friendly NSW Government, of course.

Real estate agents and property developers stood to make a bundle and did, as stretch after stretch of rural land was divided up into "estates" with names designed to sell rather than reflect reality or local history. Tens of thousands of people were lured to the area by the prospect of an affordable house amidst "rural surroundings".

Built by developers concerned to maximise profit rather than create a viable living community, the project homes on these estates are crowded so closely together that their eaves practically touch. The people may be living in the country but they have no backyard, no room for their children to play outside.

With both partners often commuting to Sydney for work, marriages and relationships come under great strain: people are tired and stressed when they get home, and there is little to look forward to as even more people are moved into the area.

Little wonder that the area produces the statistics I quoted at the beginning of this article.

Efforts by the local population to stop the unbridled overdevelopment of the region run up against the State Government which sides with the developer lobby every time.

Only a fortnight or so ago the Government "relieved" the Council of planning control, in order to allow a highly controversial and inappropriate high rise development to go ahead on the waterfront at the Entrance (to Tuggerah Lakes). That the foreshore should be dedicated public land, that no development should be allowed to alienate public access to the views of the Lakes, these considerations counted for nothing with the NSW Government.

The Council had tried to put the interests of the community first. The property developer had the ear of the Minister. It was no contest, really. Not in NSW, at any rate.

The people who move here quickly learn that they have been ripped off: the government has created a vast urban sprawl, a social crisis that creates more crises as relationships fail, families fall apart, anger and frustration turns to violence.

The smart operators have made a mint out of the "development" of the area. But the overall social failure of the "dormitory suburb" concept has bred small scale would-be smart operators who are laying waste many traditional practices of the region.

Local produce is still placed out the front of properties for sale to passing travellers (take your pick and leave the money in the tin provided). But now there are increasing thefts, of dozens of orchids from one of our neighbours' roadside stall, bags of oranges, tomatoes and dozens of eggs from another neighbour's stall.

In the face of such mean-minded criminality, people tend to give up having stalls by the road. The result is a monetary loss to the battlers who had the stalls, and a loss of amenity for the rest of us, who used to patronise those stalls for fresh fruit and vegies, and eggs.

The fault does not lie with the people in these Central Coast dormitory developments. Most are ordinary working or professional folk who are merely looking for decent living conditions. The fault lies with a government and a system that leaves the creation of those decent living conditions to profit-gouging property developers and real estate agents.

But governments these days, whether Labor or Liberal, maintain that whatever social problems exist



can be taken care of by the "private sector". Apparently, if enough people have a conscious need of some service (whether it is counselling, child care, youth clubs or supervised recreation), some entrepreneur will see the opportunity for making money and will supply the wanted "product" or service for a suitable fee.

In other words the people must pay for the solution of their problems. And if the people are unable to pay enough money to satisfy the entrepreneurs the latter will go elsewhere. Too bad, but that's business.

However, there is an antithesis to this terrorism against the West and the West's response to it with increased oppression, repression and surveillance.

It is to remember the contribution to social, political and cultural thought of Frankfurt School theorist and writer Theodor Adorno who was born in Germany 100 years ago on September 11, 1903.

Adorno wrote several books which sought to critically examine the art, culture and scientific thought of the Western world, which he argued, were sinking humanity into, "a new kind of barbarism". In his most celebrated work, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, co-written with Max Horkheimer in 1947, the barbarism referred to is not inflicted by the ruling class elites, but by a new technological consciousness which has gripped mass society.

To resist the influence which this technological consciousness has on our lives, Adorno wrote that man needs to be wary of not seeking normative and practical explanation at the expense of philosophical reflection.

While Adorno was no darling of either the Left who accused him of being an ivory tower intellectual or the Right which accused him of being a pessimist and anti-American (Adorno lived from 1938 to 1949 in the USA), there is a persistence of Adorno's thinking and ideas amongst those for whom the good life, true liberty and a just society are not just a utopian dream.

Rob Gowland
previews

ABC & SBS
public television
programs

Sun September 21~
~ Sat September 27

The Amazon rainforest has been described as “the lungs of the planet”. Its continued destruction by fire and clearing has far reaching potential consequences.

In 1988, Brazilian trade union leader Chico Mendes, campaigner for the rights of the Amazon’s rubber workers, was assassinated. But at the United Nations Environmental Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, his policy of protecting the forest by helping the people who live within it was seen as the best way forward.

A decade later, as the *Cutting Edge* documentary *Fires of the Amazon* (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday) shows, it still is. But the outlook for Amazonia is even bleaker.

Today, Chico’s ex-aides and associates are the Mayor of his hometown of Xapuri, the Governor of his state of Acre, and the leader of the opposition in the Brazilian Senate. His closest associate, Mary Allegretti, is the Federal Government’s Secretary for Amazonia. The underdogs of Amazonia have come to power.

Progress has been made. In *Fires of the Amazon*, Mary Allegretti shows us the rubber tapper reserves that she and Chico set up. Protected by legislation, the reserves cannot be challenged; and every year somewhere in Amazonia, a handful of new reserves are set up.

Co-operative factories for rubber and Brazil nuts have begun to provide higher prices for forest products, and Duda Mendes, Chico’s brother, says his income – from the sustainable logging of timber – has increased fourfold.

But the Brazilian Government’s

planned “Avanca Brasil” development program will fund the paving of half a dozen highways through Amazonia. A recent report in the American journal *Science* estimates that this will leave the area 28-42 percent deforested by 2020, with vast additional areas of forest degraded.

It also appears that selected logging inside the reserves, while it leaves most of the trees standing, thins out the density of the forest and punches holes in the canopy, making the forest vulnerable to fire.

In the past, standing Amazonian forest was too damp to be flammable. But now, Dan Nepstad of the Institute for Amazonian Environmental Research estimates that in periods of drought induced by the regular weather event El Nino, 30 percent of the forest is vulnerable to a “really mega fire event”.

According to the British Meteorological Office’s Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction, thanks to global warming drought alone will have killed off most of the forest before the end of the century.

And that should make everybody an environmentalist!

The Daleks make their first appearance in this week’s vintage episodes of *Doctor Who* (ABC 6.00pm Monday-Thursday). Supposedly the most malevolent creatures in the universe, Daleks look like the result of mating a pepper pot with a kitchen tidy.

They can’t run, they need a flat smooth surface on which to travel, they can’t go down stairs, they have no arms (or anything else) with which to grab their victims, they can only roll along what are presumably the corridors of the BBC crying “Exterminate! Exterminate!” and (according to the scripts) spreading fear in all directions.

To the BBC’s delight, they became almost instant cult items and the first BBC merchandise success. They were the brainchild of Terry Nation, comedy writer for Tony Hancock and later writer of the action series *McGyver* (regularly and mercilessly lampooned on *The Simpsons*).



66.6 million litres of chemicals were used by the US in Vietnam (*Battle’s Poison Cloud*)

Unfit To Command, screening on *The Big Picture* (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday), is a hard-hitting study of the sinking in 1964 of the destroyer *Voyager*, the scapegoating of the captain of the *Melbourne* which sank her and the naval, political and legal cover-up that followed.

Written and directed by David Salter, the program exposes the culture of the Navy at the time, a culture that saw protecting “the good name of the service” as far more important than the rights of any individual person.

The cover-up was so blatant that it split the ranks of Liberal Party MPs themselves, and ended more than one career.

The program disappointingly fails to explore the culture within the Navy of safeguarding your career by keeping quiet, but at least it raises it.

The Navy in the early ’60s provided Australia, in the eyes of Prime

Minister Menzies and other political and military leaders, with security from “the Communist threat”. They did not want anything to undermine the position of the military.

This aspect is not covered either. But all in all, it is a well made program that packs a punch.

According to US Defence Department documents, 66.6 million litres of chemicals were used in Vietnam.

Herbicides and defoliants were the most frequently used, so too were asphyxiates, tear gas, nerve gas and insecticides. Agent Orange, one of the main defoliants used by the US, was tainted with the deadly poison dioxin, 100,000 times more toxic than anything found in nature.

As second and third generations of children are born with deformities, the US still does not acknowledge its part in the contamination in Vietnam. However, it does recognise the effects of Agent Orange on US veterans and their children!

Battle’s Poison Cloud, screening on *True Stories* (ABC 10.00pm Thursday) looks at the effects of this hideous problem that continues to plague the population of Vietnam.

Just a few years ago there were only about 100 White Rhinos

left in the whole of Africa. Today, the numbers are between 10,000 and 12,000. As wildlife conservation campaigner Saba Douglas-Hamilton says in *Africa Bush Rescue*, “it’s one of the great success stories of wildlife conservation”.

But other aspects of the BBC program, filmed in South Africa and screening on *Richard Morecroft Goes Wild* (ABC 6.30pm Saturday), are much less rosy. At a wildlife rescue centre Saba meets up with a range of orphaned cheetas, leopards and a baby baboon, whose parents have been shot in “canned hunts”.

Basically, entrepreneurs fence a relatively small area of land, then release wildlife into it and charge “big game hunters” a bundle of money to go into the enclosed area and shoot the animals (which can’t escape, so you’re guaranteed a kill).

As the woman at the rescue centre says, “it’s all about money”.

This program appears to be part of a series with Saba Douglas-Hamilton exploring different facets of Southern Africa’s wildlife scene. This episode is mainly about two vets who specialise in wildlife treatment, and do about 600 km a day.

Curiously, the ABC appears to have only this one episode. ☘

Port Adelaide
Commemoration
75th anniversary of the 1928
waterfront strike
SA Maritime Union of Australia
Sunday September 28
Events start at 2.45pm
Poverty Corner
(corner Lipson and Nile Sts)
Maritime Museum

Sister Janet Meade and volunteers will set up a replica soup kitchen for the commemoration Inside the Maritime Museum, Rex Munn will speak about the poverty and working conditions, Arthur Shertock will explain the reasons for the strike, and the trade union choir will perform sea shanties. The Port Adelaide Enfield Council will supply a band to lead the march back to the Waterside Workers Hall SA UTLC Secretary Janet Giles will speak Music and songs by Eileen Darley, Jaqy Phillips Sandwiches and soup will be served The bar will be open

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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

September 19
THE CHURCH: ON THE FRONT LINE OR THE BACK FOOT?
Fr Brian Gore, Centre for Peace, Ecology & Justice;
Rev Dr Ann Wansbrough, Uniting Care NSW/ACT

September 26
IMMIGRATION 2003: RAZOR WIRE AND BACK DOOR VISAS
Dr Mary Crock, Immigration Law specialist, Uni of Sydney,
co-author report on Curtain detention centre;
Linda Jaivin, author including several plays
and short stories on asylum seekers

October 3
LABOUR DAY LONG WEEKEND

The Gaelic Club, like all clubs, is required to have non members sign in.
To avoid queues you may wish to become a social member for \$5.
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Unions fight back in WA

The trade union movement is on the move in Western Australia. Unions are involved in a number of important struggles and face a number of serious issues. Workers' compensation, wages, collective agreements and individual work contracts, the importation of overseas labour, unemployment, occupational health and safety, industrial relations legislation and relations with the WA State Labor Government are among the issues mentioned by Stephanie Mayman, Secretary of Unions WA when she recently spoke to *The Guardian* editor Anna Pha in Perth.

Last week construction workers took strike action and are due to hold a rally and march in the coming days on the issue of workplace safety.

In the public sector workers are seeking wage rises – teachers are striking this week, the police union has imposed work bans.

Cleaners in public schools are fighting to retain their jobs as the State Labor Government plans to use contract cleaners.

Stephanie Mayman listed workers' compensation as one of the main "hot issues" with the government.

She explained that the previous Liberal Government of Richard Court had "turned the clock back about 80 years" undermining statutory benefits and common law access for workers.

"We keep hearing that these issues will be addressed and that there is legislation being drafted but they've almost forgotten how to spell workers' comp. But individual workers haven't", said Ms Mayman.

Workplace safety

She said that the fines for employers who breach the safety laws are "horrendously low".

Two weeks ago Transfield was found negligent and fined \$50,000, the biggest fine previous to that was \$35,000. The case, which relates to the death of Joe Guliardo, is going to be appealed by Transfield. Joe, aged 37, was killed in September

2000 at the Acacia prison, the first privately run prison in the State.

The widow cannot claim for compensation for the family until the appeal is over. She has already waited three years and could wait as many more again before receiving compensation. It seems the company, now owned by a transnational, is prepared to spend more than the \$50,000 fine dragging out the case and delaying any semblance of justice for the family – not that compensation can replace the life of a family member.

This callous disregard for the widow and family of a worker adds to the anger of construction workers who are pressing the government to take action over safety and compensation.

The Construction division of the CFMEU WA has been campaigning for more than a year to get more work safe inspectors to prevent fatalities.

This year the number of deaths in the industry in WA has reached 10 compared to 23 same time last year.

The Government publicly said that it was an acceptable number given that it has been a smaller number of deaths this year. As far as the workers are concerned this is not acceptable, it is 10 too many. The CFMEU held a 24-hour strike Monday September 8 over the safety issue and will call for a rally to involve the community.

Last week's strike affected more than 50 construction sites around

Perth and involved some 4000 construction workers.

The Labor Party came to office "on the basis that it would amend the workers' compensation legislation to return benefits to workers that had been removed from them in the last decade", Ms Mayman said.

Still waiting for action

The Government announced that it would amend the legislation to enshrine:

- A maximum fine under the Act of half a million dollars from \$200,000.
- That where an employer or corporate director commits a significant breach of the Act causing injury or death there is to be a jail term;
- That health and safety reps will have the right to issue provisional notices and that the Government will set up an occupational health and safety tribunal.

Stephanie Mayman pointed out that WA is now in the third year of the Labor Government and asks, "Where is it all? Where's the reform?"

"With the Government as an employer there is extreme dissatisfaction. With the Government as a policy maker there is also significant dissatisfaction given all the delays that are occurring in their alleged policy reform."

Public sector wages

WA's public sector workers are also campaigning on the question of wages. They include the police, teachers, fire fighters, nurses and other health workers. Teachers in WA are to join teachers in NSW and Victoria this week in the first national strike of teachers called by the combined teacher unions.

"We've got industrial action happening with the police at the



Campaign for care – Swan Village aged care workers take action for better wages

moment and the teachers have also taken a decision in relation to action this month", said Ms Mayman.

State Governments have done a deal to limit any wage increase to public sector workers to three per cent per year.

Foreign workers

Another issue is the importation of workers from Korea and other Asian countries "paid at below award wages and kept in despicable conditions", said Stephanie Mayman. "The latest was a group of Korean welders that were brought in under the pretence of being needed. So that is a difficult issue that we are trying to confront at the moment."

The Industrial Relations Commission has made a decision to establish a foreign standard rate of pay.

Asked about the policy of Unions WA about foreign labour, she

said, "We are absolutely opposed to it. We are currently in discussions in relation to it. [Liberal Immigration Minister Phil] Ruddock's line is shocking."

"What there is in this country is a skills shortage that is not being addressed by the vocational education training system. We've got a crisis in TAFE. The average age of a lecturer in TAFE is 55 years, so we are losing valuable skills. We haven't got enough trainers now let alone what happens when these lecturers retire or resign", explained Ms Mayman.

On unemployment she said that with young people it is "shocking", with Indigenous people it is "terrible". She said that the unemployment figures are irrelevant. "If you work for an hour a week then you're employed. They claim that [WA] has the lowest unemployment rates in the country. It's a claim that means nothing because there is unemployment out there." ✪

Reopen the Auburn Dental Health Clinic

It was just another slap in the face for the residents of the western Sydney suburb of Auburn when the Auburn Dental Health Clinic was closed.

A leaflet published by the Auburn branch of the Communist Party says that the closure of the clinic was a sly and sneaky move. The State Labor Government closed the clinic in the lead-up to the 2002 Christmas school holidays in the knowledge that residents would not notice the closure until the New Year.

It was closed without consulta-

tion. Staff were quickly transferred to the Westmead Hospital and told the reason for the closure was poor facilities and a lack of security for staff. Even the local Labor Member of Parliament Barbara Perry claimed that she knew nothing about it until told by residents.

The health clinic provided dental check ups for all primary school students in the Auburn Council area

and, if necessary, gave follow-up dental treatment.

It provided a dental health education program for children by visiting local primary schools, child-care centres and mothers' groups. It also organised dental health awareness at community activities such as the Auburn Festival.

Auburn has a large percentage of low-income, migrant and refugee families and without this important service many young children will never see the dentist and will develop dental problems at an early age.

But prevention is better than cure and a small investment in children's dental health is cheaper than treating people for related health problems when they are older.

The Western Area Health Service that is responsible for the closure keeps changing their story as to why the clinic was closed. It was first claimed poor equipment and no staff security was the reason. Then that there are not enough therapists for the clinic, but the therapists were transferred to Westmead Hospital.

Auburn residents now have to make an appointment at the Westmead Dental Clinic where there is waiting list of six-weeks or more and the extra expense of travel and time off work.

Another alternative is to pay for private health care for children that can be very expensive.

Both options disadvantage the many struggling low-income families in Auburn.

A committee of local residents has been formed to take up the issue and have collected hundreds of signatures to a petition calling for the

reopening of the clinic. A delegation has been sent to the Mayor to ask Auburn Council for its support.

A group of local residents will attend the next meeting of Council and ask for time to address Council on the matter. Local residents are being encouraged to attend this meeting which is on September 17.

The Auburn Branch of the Communist Party is calling for the clinic to be reopened in new premises within the Auburn Hospital and with new and modern equipment in a safe environment for both the patients and the staff. ✪

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