

# Funding blackmail Uni staff fight for rights

Australia's universities are seething with anger at the Howard Government's latest industrial blackmail concerning university industrial relations. The government has notified universities that their access to an extra \$414 million in funding will be conditional on them introducing harsh new industrial relations practices.

by Peter Mac

Under the government's proposed new conditions for universities to qualify for funding increases, all university employees would have to be notified individually that they have "the option" of entering into individual workplace agreements. In practice, this would take the form of pressuring employees to abandon collective union agreements.

Universities would not be allowed to remind employees of the other option, i.e. entering into collective bargaining agreements. Nor would they be permitted to provide union membership forms or facilities for union offices, including student unions.

The terms of individual agreements would override those of any collective agreement.

Universities would not be permitted to place any limits on the number of casual employment positions.

And in perhaps the most outrageous move of all, universities would not be allowed to enter into any agreement that included arrangements in excess of "community standards", i.e. anything better than a current agreement in widespread use. For example, the requirement would prevent acceptance by university authorities of improvements in redundancy payments.

If carried to its logical conclusion, this requirement would eliminate any future improvements in working conditions for university employees.

The government's new edict was timed to forestall the introduction of a new collective industrial relations agreement for Sydney University employees. The agreement included provision

for a limit to the number of casual positions, and the introduction of 36 weeks of paid maternity leave, both of which are in excess of "community standards".

Because of the government's move, Sydney University authorities have postponed signing the collective agreement, and the University's employees have voted to take industrial action in protest, including a strike on October 6, the first day of the new term.

The agreement was widely expected to have been the forerunner for negotiations on similar agreements at other universities. As a result of the government's move and the university's response, all such negotiations are now in jeopardy.

A number of universities previously caved in to pressure from the Howard Government over other issues. The most notable case was that of Sydney University, whose conservative senate voted recently to accept in principle the raising of student fees by a maximum of 30 percent, in the event that the government managed to get the necessary legislation through Parliament.

However, even the most conservative university authorities have expressed shock at the government's latest requirements, and opposition to their introduction. Sydney University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gavin Brown, said that he was taken by surprise at the extremity of the government's new policies. He commented grimly:

"I have a fairly strong feeling that there will be universities that will say that impact on the quality of education we can offer, if we are



forced to comply with these regulations, is not worth the money."

The executive Director of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, John Mulharvey last week expressed doubts as to whether such iron constraints were consistent with the government's own aim of fostering "flexible and responsive" work practices. He stated that: "We don't believe that university operating grants should be tied to such provisions".

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said the union movement would back the National Tertiary Education Union and other unions covering university employees, in opposing the government's attack on university unionism.

She declared that: "The requirements are unfair, discriminatory and extremist. The regulations specifically aim to erode long-standing benefits like redundancy pay, and to promote the use of casual labour. Collective agreements would become worthless for any staff forced onto individual contracts, which would override existing arrangements.

"The changes would contravene internationally recognised rights to freedom of association and collec-

tive bargaining. The government is using standover tactics to force its extremist policies onto university staff and management.

"Mr Abbott has failed to get his industrial legislation through the parliament and is now trying to bully universities to adopt his policies by threatening them with massive funding cuts.

"These changes will do nothing to solve real workplace problems in universities, such as high levels of job insecurity and excessive student-to-staff ratios."

## Student unions under attack

The government's anti-union position extends beyond the employee industrial relations arena to student unionism. The association representing student unions, the Australian Campus Union Managers Association (ACUMA) said that the legislation "has the ability to cripple student organisations at Australian universities."

The abolition of compulsory student unionism has the potential to eliminate 600 jobs, (including 115 positions at Deakin University

alone), and to drastically cut the level of student services provided.

These services include health and counselling services, child care, sports and entertainment. However, the Liberal Party's student offshoot, the Australian Liberal Students Federation, has actually defended the government's move.

Tanya Skelpic, the Federation's President, pointed out with airy disdain that students with limited means now have to get part-time jobs to get through uni courses, and therefore "The ones that need to work and put themselves through uni don't have time to enjoy the (union) services".

Ms Skelpic ignores the fact that the very reason why students with limited means have to work to support themselves is the imposition of huge student fees by the Howard Government, which she defends.

She overlooks the stress that this situation causes, and also the fact that child-care services are vital for student mothers to complete courses. She also ignores the importance of entertainment as a crucial element in relieving the stress of study, which has now been compounded by the financial worries over the student fees. ✪

## Are the ALP leaders determined to lose the next election?

Recent statements by several leaders of the Labor Party give the impression that they are determined to lose the next election despite the lying of the Howard Government and its concerted attacks on education, health care and every other aspect of social security and welfare.

The ALP still refuses to make a commitment to abolish the private health insurance subsidy by which billions of taxpayers' money is being ploughed into the pockets of the private insurance companies and used to prop up private hospitals. The rebate could and should be redirected to the public health system.

Then only last week Simon Crean ruled out an increase in the Medicare levy – another means by which funding could be found so that bulk-billing and the whole basis of Medicare as a universal health care system could be preserved.

The ALP has quietly dropped its opposition to the GST which signals that it has no intention of removing the iniquitous GST but would continue its operation. No single piece of legislation has so severely discriminated against the working people of Australia, imposed such a massive increase in the tax burden on low and middle income earners and resulted in substantially increased prices.

Mark Latham has added to the perception that there is practically no difference between the economic and social policies of the ALP and the Liberal/National Party Coalition by parading an economic policy based on "the rigour of private sector competition and the demands of corporate social responsibility". Latham's policy prescription is called "A Strong Economy for a Fair Society".

To talk about "private sector competition" and "corporate social responsibility" is plain nonsense. "Competition policy" was introduced at least a decade ago by Paul Keating but what has actually been achieved by this policy apart from deregulation and privatisation?

The Commonwealth Bank was privatised. It has since sacked many thousands of workers, imposed a multitude of ever-rising fees, closed branches and massively reduced services to customers. These are the "achievements" of this policy.

In what way has the privatisation of Australian airports, water supplies, rail transport, etc. increased competition? And how did the sackings and higher fees benefit customers? Where is the "corporate social responsibility" of Ansett towards its workers who are still waiting for their entitlements after almost two years. Many other workers have also been stripped of their long service leave, superannuation, holiday and sick leave entitlements by employers who have conveniently become insolvent?

Mark Latham is totally committed to private enterprise and merely mouths off about a "Fair Society" aiming to deceive the Australian people into believing such catch-cries have some meaning when, in practice, they mean nothing.

Latham declares that a market economy, (meaning a capitalist economy), is here to stay. He and almost all other Labor Party parliamentarians have given up all pretence of putting forward a socialist or even progressive alternative as the founders of the Labor Party once did.

To top it all the Labor Party cannot find the means to offload Simon Crean as its leader when all the evidence shows that he is the most unpopular Labor Party leader ever. The reality is that the Labor Party is bereft of a leadership that is capable of really standing up for the working people of Australia. Even the Labor Party Left has become almost indistinguishable from the right-wing factions and fails to enunciate or stand up consistently and forthrightly for people friendly policies.

A left and progressive alternative must be found and built if there is to be any worthwhile solutions to the many economic and social problems that are piling up. This alternative is not a pipe-dream. The people of South Africa, Venezuela and Brazil have already put their feet firmly on the path of serious change in the interests of the working people and the poor in society and the working farmers who are also facing very serious economic and environmental problems that cannot be overcome by mere band-aids.

This is the path for the Australian people to take, and the sooner the better.

### PRESS FUND

Bush's isolation is growing as the world says "No" to further aggressions. He received a cold reception at the United Nations and his backers suffered a humiliating defeat at the WTO. Differences within the Bush administration are widening as his corporate backers become concerned of the wider ramifications of their actions. In Australia little Johnnie seems oblivious to the fact that the tide is changing. The Bush visit to Australia this month gives us an excellent opportunity to show both Bush and little Johnnie what we think of them and their policies. So join the actions and in the meantime send a contribution to the Press Fund. Our warmest thanks to those who contributed this week:

Bert Appleton \$20, June Ayres \$50, N H \$5.

This week's total \$75. Progressive total: \$8610.

# The Venezuelan revolution: a process that belongs to the world

In a recent visit to Perth Alvaro Guzman, President of the Bolivarian Federation of Students in Venezuela, spoke to the 70 people who attended a public meeting organised by the Committees in Solidarity with Latin America and the Caribbean (CISLAC). He also addressed another gathering of several people last Friday.

by Vinnie Molina

With his contribution, Alvaro exposed the role of right-wing groupings acting against elected president Hugo Chavez. Particularly instructive was his report of the events that led to the defeat of a right-wing military coup staged in April. Millions of people took to the streets to defend the country's democratic constitution. Those actions gave a voice to all sectors of society including those who had for too long been forgotten.

President Chavez has rescued the ideas of American Liberator Simon Bolivar who promoted the ideal of a united Latin America (the "big homeland"), fought for independence against the colonisers and believed in the freedom of individuals and their right to be citizens.

In closed societies – such as those of Latin America – any change in the power structure is a

revolutionary change. The democratic government is struggling to transform Venezuela from a neo-liberal state that has condemned the majority of the Venezuelan people to misery into a democratic state with social justice.

The rich oil industry is one example of the changes being made. Venezuela has the fifth largest oil reserves in the world. These should be capable of providing the entire population with better living standards but are instead currently producing huge profits for US corporations.

Venezuela is rich in natural resources but the country has to import 80 percent of its foodstuffs. To help overcome this problem, the Bolivarian revolution has given land and credits to the peasantry with the aim of reducing the importation of foods by 30 percent in the next 10 years.

Education has been declared a national priority. It is starting to bear fruit with more than a million people between the ages of 10 and 65 now having been taught how to read and write. This has been achieved with the co-operation of Cuba and the aim is to expand this effort to all Latin American countries in which a large proportion of the population suffer from illiteracy.

Australia was fortunate to have heard from Alvaro Guzman at all. His visit was delayed for a week after he was kidnapped and held for two hours by right-wingers in Venezuela.

The incident made him miss his flight to Australia. His tour was the first by a delegate from the social movement in Venezuela to an English speaking country and it is hoped that an exchange program can be developed next year with the assistance of the solidarity movement in Australia.

Next year a series of visits will begin with the arrival of a delegate from the Bolivarian Trade Union movement who will report on their efforts to build an independent trade union movement in the country. ☼



Alvaro Guzman and Fred Fuentes

Photo: Vinnie Molina

## ATSIC says "Thankyou" to union movement

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission has given warm thanks to the Australian union movement for assistance in past struggles, and has announced it is seeking closer ties to help improve the living standards of Indigenous people.

ATSIC Acting Chairman Lionel Quartermaine told the Maritime Union of Australia's National Council that the union movement, and particularly the MUA and its predecessors, have had a long and proud history of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"Our shared history should be the foundation for even closer working partnerships between trade unions and our people", Mr Quartermaine said.

During his address to the MUA, Mr Quartermaine acknowledged the MUA's active support for Indigenous people during industrial disputes, in particular the historical disputes including the Pilbara pastoral strike of 1947, the Wave Hill walk off of 1966 and the Noonkanbah dispute of 1979.

The Pilbara and Wave Hill strikes started over low wages but developed into successful landmark land rights claims.

Mr Quartermaine praised the

MUA and its predecessors for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by providing funding, medical aid and food, supporting Aboriginal artists and athletes, and by winning jobs for Aboriginal people on the wharves.

The MUA was also a foundation member of the Tranby Aboriginal College in Sydney in 1958 and the union continues to financially support the College to this day, providing funding for scholarships for Indigenous students.

Mr Quartermaine also acknowledged the support of the ACTU and praised its incorporation of Indigenous issues into all of its policies at the ACTU Congress in August. The ACTU also has a dedicated Indigenous seat on its executive and conducts annual conferences of Indigenous union delegates.

He also welcomed the support of the ACTU and unions in the dispute with the Queensland Government

over stolen wages and savings and the campaign to prevent dumping of nuclear waste on Aboriginal ground in South Australia.

The Queensland Government's compensation offer of \$55 million to Aboriginal people who had had their wages and savings taken off them between 1897 and 1972 was "nowhere near good enough" and a denial of natural justice.

Late last week ATSIC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the 55,000-member Independent Education Union of Australia, aimed at increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in non-government schools.

The Memorandum committed both parties to developing an action plan which achieves better educational outcomes for Indigenous students, increased numbers of Indigenous students and teachers, and the incorporation of Indigenous history and culturally appropriate teaching into school curricula.

ATSIC is now seeking similar agreements with other education unions as well as in other sectors including health and the public service. ☼

# Support the Stolen Wages campaign

**Henry Jackson was 13-years old when he was taken from his grandfather and sent to work as a stockman on a remote Queensland cattle station.**

For 13 years he worked on cattle stations, cane farms and saw mills without receiving any wages. Henry only received board and lodgings in return for his labour.

Successive Queensland Governments stole Henry Jackson's wages for the first 13 years of his working life. The Queensland Government is currently offering a miserly \$4000 as compensation for all of those years of lost income.

Henry's daughter, Lenore Jackson, was in Melbourne last week to deliver the Stolen Wages postcards. The postcards are available from the Victorian Trades Hall and union members are encouraged to send them to Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie, and Queensland Council of Unions Secretary Grace Grace, to help these workers receive a fair and just outcome.

In the following interview Lenore Jackson tells of the injustice inflicted on generations of Aboriginal workers from the 1890s until the 1970s in Queensland. Her father Henry's story is just one of thousands.

## Why are you involved in the Stolen Wages Campaign?

My father was taken away from his home on Palm Island at 13 years of age and sent to work as a stockman on a station called *Dover*. He was there for a year and never received any wages. All he received was food and lodgings. While he was there his grandfather died. They didn't inform my father and he only found out when he returned to the mission. Dad's grandfather was very important to him because he kept the family together.

I have got all the records that prove my father worked at various places. The Government claim that they have pay slips that indicate that he was supposed to be paid, but he never received anything in his hand. The money went to the government. I remember looking at one of the

pay slips that indicates he was paid eight shillings but he never received any money.

My father was born in 1928 and started work in 1941 when he was only 13 years old. It wasn't until 1954 that he actually got a job with Queensland railways and received wages for that job.

I am here to deliver these postcards because my father is not well enough to be very active in the campaign. He did come to the rallies and meetings earlier on but he has become more fragile so I am campaigning for him.

## What do you think of the Government's compensation offer?

It is an insult, absolutely disgusting. It doesn't come anywhere near compensating Dad, not only for the loss of wages but the emotional trauma he suffered. Not knowing his parents and being separated from his grandfather and not even told of his death.

Dad's grandfather took the children to Palm Island to try to keep the family together. Palm Island was a penal colony back in those days. They were originally sent to Mornington Island but they weren't given enough rations to feed the children.

As my father gets older he breaks down a lot. As a young person he kept all of the pain inside and wasn't able to deal with the trauma he had been through - now the memories keep coming up and he finds it very difficult.

This campaign is not just about money. Dad lost his family, his culture and his language. The Beattie Government is trying to get most of the claimants to accept the lousy \$4000. Beattie knows that most of these claimants are very old and that some of them are taking the money because they don't understand the law and they feel intimidated.

My dad won't be accepting the money being offered. He just wants his name on the list

of claimants. He took part in a claim back in 1994, relating to under-award wages, which was settled with a payment of \$7000.

## What do you hope to achieve with the postcard campaign?

I am hoping that the postcards will generate a lot of attention around the issue. We feel the Queensland campaign could set a precedent for other States in Australia.

It is important to make the public aware of what has happened because a lot of people in the community don't know the facts. They might think we are asking for a hand out but that is not the case at all. I can't see anyone working for nothing these days. Everyone expects to receive their pay at the end of the week. This is a wage claim and the people involved should be adequately compensated.

Handing over the postcards here in Victoria has been a fantastic experience. We have been pleasantly surprised with the interest and support for the campaign. A visiting delegation of Korean unionists took hundreds back to Korea.

We met with Dave Cushion and Kevin Braken from the Victorian branch of the Maritime Union of Australia. They explained that they never understood the issues but now both of them feel it is a wage and therefore union issue and should be treated as such.

We have support from the ACTU and met with [ACTU President] Sharan Burrow also. It is great that these people are taking notice and supporting us.

## Where to from here?

My involvement has been on a personal level so far but after this trip I feel even more committed. I am not going to back off. This campaign is urgent because these people are getting old. I would personally like to see my father benefit from the compensation. He is still struggling to make ends meet and he will be 75 in December. ♣



### Stolen Wages postcard campaign

**You can help by supporting the national postcard campaign. Three postcards have been produced. They tell the story of forced, unpaid and underpaid labour of Aboriginal people over the past century.**

One card supports the unions' backing of the campaign, one for sending to Queensland Premier Peter Beattie and the third has details of a fighting fund to be set up for a longer term campaign.

The postcards call for the return of the stolen wages to the workers and their families.

From the 1890s until the 1970s the wages and savings of Aboriginal workers were controlled by successive governments under compulsory labour contracts. In Queensland wages and other monies belonging to these workers were kept in government-held "trust" accounts. Since the 1980s these workers have waited in good faith for their wage claims, which records show could amount to as much as \$500 million. In May 2002 the Government offered just \$55.6 million as a "take it or leave it" deal. Support these workers in their fight for what they are really owed in missing, unpaid and underpaid wages. Support their claim for all their stolen wages.

- Postcards are now available from 4US in Rockhampton, 4K1G in Townsville, 4C1M in Cairns, the Woorabinda BRACs and council offices and the Mackay CDEP offices.
- Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council (07 4044 2999)
- FAIRA (07 3391 4677) and 4AAA (07 3892 01100)
- Queensland Council of Unions (07 3846 2468)
- ANTaR Qld (07 3844 9800)
- ANTaR National in NSW (02 9555 6138)
- Australia Asia Worker Links in Victoria (03 9663 7277)
- Victorian Trades Hall Council (03 9662 3511)
- ACTU (03 9663 5266)

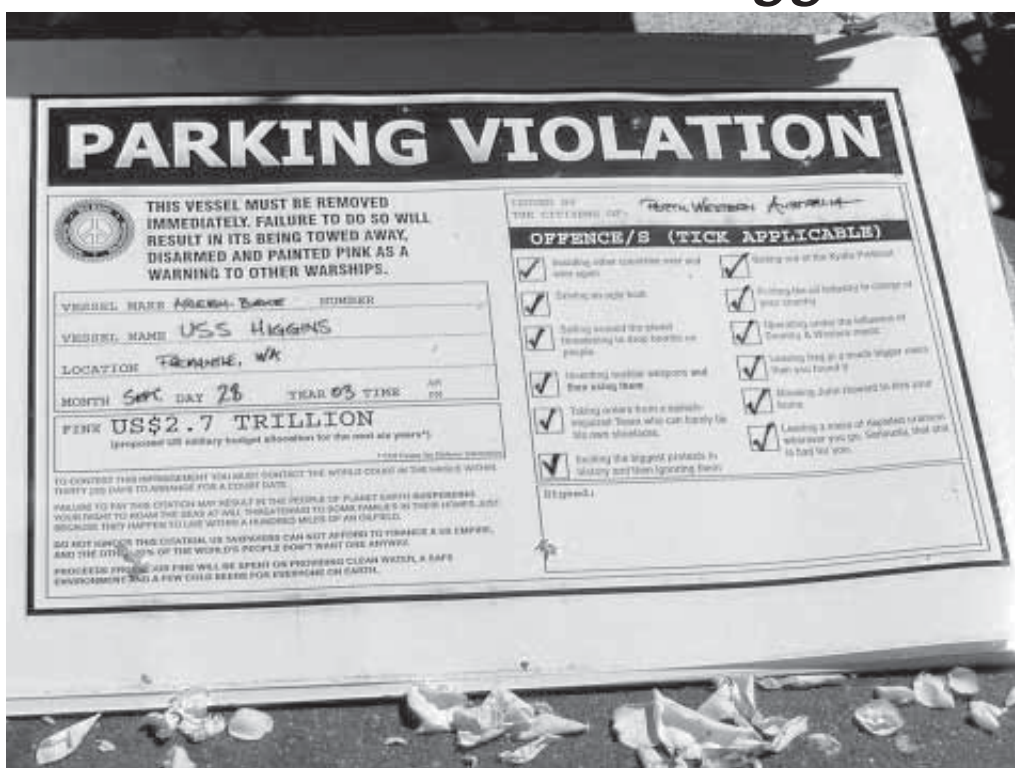
# Protest in Fremantle at arrival of *USS Higgins*

**Over a hundred people demonstrated against the "Sea Swap" of crews of *USS Higgins* at Fremantle harbour on September 28. The protest was organised by the Fremantle Anti-Nuclear Group (FANG) and was part of a campaign against Federal and WA State Government plans for the establishment of a de-facto US naval base in Cockburn Sound.**

The Sea Swap plans include flying thousands of US military personnel in and out of Western Australia to meet US warships in Cockburn Sound. Under the proposal, the US navy would use WA as a swap over point for the 7th fleet. Navy crew coming in and out of theatres of war would go straight to WA instead of US bases in San Diego or Hawaii. If Sea Swap is given the go-ahead, it will mean a dramatic escalation of Australia's involvement with the US military.

The *USS Higgins* was arriving fresh from war service in the Persian Gulf and the protest took up the issue of the occupation of Iraq. Anthony Benbow of the No War Alliance pointed out that the Americans were now in a quagmire in that country and that the Iraqi people were paying the price of the war.

He called for action to get the troops out of Iraq now. "We must protest when Bush comes to Australia for he is only coming to get more support from Australia". ♣



Sydney

**For Heaven's Sake  
Speak Out  
on the US's  
missile defence &  
weaponisation of space  
programs**

**SAT 11 OCT 2 - 4 PM**

**NSW Teachers' Club  
23-33 Mary Street, Surry Hills  
(5 minutes from Central Station)**

**SPEAKERS:**

**Dr Michael McKinley**  
Senior Lecturer, Global  
Politics, Department of Political  
Science and International  
Relations, ANU

**Dr Bob Hunter**  
National President of Scientists  
for Global Responsibility (SGR)  
(Australia).

*Nibbles provided  
Drinks at bar  
Entry by donation*

Organised by Australian  
Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition  
Ph: (02) 9212 0800.  
Email: aabcc@zipworld.com.au

# WA public servants set to escalate industrial action

More than 2000 public servants rallied in Perth, Albany and Bunbury on September 17 in support of the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association's (CPSU/CSA) rejection of the State Government's three percent across-the-board pay proposal.

by Michèle Cohen & Richard Titelius

Unions WA Secretary Stephanie Mayman and Assistant Secretary Dave Robinson were amongst those who offered their support to the CPSU/CSA membership at a mass meeting at the Perth Concert Hall on September 17.

They were joined by the State School Teachers of WA (SSTUWA) General Secretary David Kelly, Senior Vice President Mike Keely, and Vice President Anne Gisborne. The teachers' officials had come from a half-day work stoppage and mass rally of members earlier that day.

Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union Secretary Dave Kelly, and Dan Hill from the Hospital Salaried Officers Association also offered their support at the CPSU/CSA meeting.

The General Agreement for West Australia's 29,000 public servants expires on January 1, 2004. The

union is demanding a wage increase comprising a 12 per cent parity payment and \$5502 on January 1, 2004, 10 per cent on January 1, 2005 and \$6680 on January 1, 2006.

The claim also seeks to address issues of workloads and working hours through the establishment of processes to establish the parameters of a reasonable workload.

**Other demands include:**

- restoration of members' access to the Industrial Relations Commission;
- reinstatement of selection processes based on merit;
- enhanced shift, study leave and parental leave provisions;
- a review of the methodologies used to define classification levels;
- defining and limiting the circumstances where jobs can be filled on contract;
- transmission of business and outsourcing protocols.

Addressing the meeting, State

Secretary of the CPSU/CSA Toni Walkington said that the union was not seeking a predetermined outcome from the government, but a genuine response to their claim.

The nine percent over three years being offered in reality costs the government only six percent, as one percent from each year is funded by savings from the budgets of government agencies themselves.

Funding of pay increases in this manner will inevitably lead to further cuts to members' jobs and services. It will force remaining staff to work harder and longer hours.

Given that average weekly earnings in Australia rose by 6.3 per cent in 2002/2003 the CPSU/CSA's claim of approximately 27 per cent is not an unrealistic one.

Ms Walkington warned that failure to adequately fund government infrastructure and employees would result in more strain being placed on the community, in further environmental mishaps such as Brookdale and Bellevue, longer queues for the sick and injured at public hospitals, a higher number of prison escapes and the revolving door syndrome in the criminal justice system.

**Members unanimously passed resolutions:**

1) Expressing deep concern that the Government's wages policy does not deliver equal pay in the sector, and fails to deliver a fair wages outcome for all members.

2) Setting a deadline of Thursday September 25 for the State Government to provide an offer to the Union that properly address wages and conditions issues.

3) Calling on the Government to honour its pre-election commitment to restore members' industrial rights and welcoming the government's decision to announce a review of the Public Sector Management Act.

4) Authorising the "CPSU/CSA Wages Campaign Committee" to issue directions to members to engage in any or all of the following activities if the deadline is not met or if any offer made is not satisfactory:

- a) ban unpaid overtime and time beyond ordinary hours;
- b) ban all overtime (both paid and unpaid);
- c) decline to submit statistical and management infor-

mation, including Business Activity Statements;

d) refuse to process revenue payments;

e) refuse to collect payments for services to the public and community;

f) decline to process Ministerial correspondence;

g) call workplace, regional and sector wide stoppages, stop work meetings;

h) call rolling stoppages;

i) any other action.

5) Authorising members not to take action against other members, that any action taken against an individual member by an agency or Government be seen as an action by Government against the Union and all its members.

In the meantime, Premier Gallop has intervened in negotiations with the police who are believed to have won their 15 percent pay rise over three years. Gallop may well need the police in the months ahead as public servants and teachers are set to escalate industrial action.

Teachers are seeking a 30 percent pay rise over three years. ✪

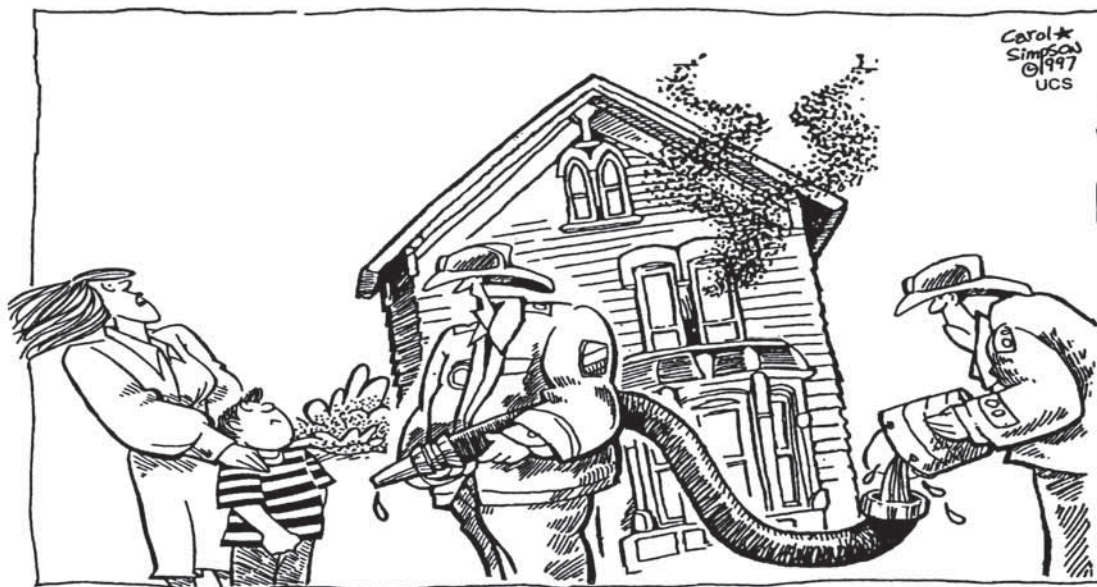
## LABOUR NOTES

Fifty-four Telstra workers in the telco's sales office in Wollongong will lose their jobs come November. The announcement came on the back of employment statistics showing that the South Coast of NSW has a youth unemployment rate of 34.6 per cent, the highest in NSW and the third highest in Australia.

More than 240 jobs have been lost in Mudgee NSW after the local government-run Mudgee meat works went into liquidation. Both Federal and State Governments are passing the buck about workers' entitlements. The NSW Government says that the Commonwealth is responsible for footing the bill. Deputy Prime Minister and local federal MP John Anderson says that, seeing it was run by a local government authority, it is a state government responsibility. While both governments are buck-passing, the workers are left waiting!

CFMEU Assistant Secretary, Brian Parker, has accused Leightons Contractors of stand over tactics in its dealings with more than a dozen sub-contractors involved in the Hilton Hotel redevelopment. WorkCover closed the site down when asbestos, synthetic mineral fibres, carcinogenic timber and silicone dust were discovered and questions over structural integrity, formwork and scaffolding were raised. Mr Parker claims Leightons has threatened legal action against sub-contractors if they pay the hundreds of workers affected by the closure. The CFMEU has made an application to the Industrial Relations Commission for lost time payments. Meanwhile, Tony Abbott's much-hyped Building Industry Taskforce hasn't been seen at the Hilton.

"Live sheep exports have had their day", said Australian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU) Federal Secretary Tom Hannan. As well as wiping out an estimated 4000 jobs for local meat workers, the union believes that "the torment, cruelty and inhuman practices are just not worth it". Mr. Hannan's comments were made in response to the horrendous spectacle of the foreign-flagged Cormo Express, adrift in the Persian Gulf with its cargo of 53,000 unwanted and distressed Australian sheep. Reports have it that the Australian Government has intervened in the crisis, secretly offering a \$10 million sweetener for Iraq to take the sheep. Meanwhile, the New Zealand Government is moving towards a moratorium on live sheep exports.



"Public service cutbacks."

## Grocon sacks MCG workers

The Construction Division of the CFMEU in Victoria has condemned the developer Grocon for sacking workers and effectively sabotaging the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) project.

CFMEU Secretary, Martin Kingham, said 30 form workers were being sacked and another 25 were expected to lose their jobs. There had been no discussions with unions about labour needs on the project.

"Are these the thanks workers get for taking on extra shifts to get extra seats ready for the AFL finals?" Mr Kingham said.

"This is unbelievable action on a project with a strict deadline. Does Grocon want to get the 'G' rebuilt in

time for the Commonwealth Games or not? It doesn't look like it."

Mr Kingham said the union had already tolerated nine months of stalling from Grocon over negotiations for an MCG site agreement.

The union had held off taking action over the stalled negotiations to prevent any disruption to the AFL finals matches.

"Union members, and all Victorians, are being taken for a ride by this mob", Mr Kingham said.

"It's now obvious that Grocon see nothing special about the MCG, the people of Victoria who want to host a great Commonwealth Games in 2006, or the fans who want to see their footy and cricket over the next couple of years.

"It's time we all told Grocon we're calling them to account."

The union believes the State Government should intervene as Grocon's client to pull the company into line before they make it impossible for the MCG to be ready by the 2006 deadline. ✪

Brisbane  
Public Meeting

**Hear Nidia Diaz from El Salvador**

**Monday 13th October 7pm  
Communications, Electrical & Plumbing Union  
41 Peel St, South Brisbane**

Suggested donation \$5

Nidia Diaz (a founding member of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) will bring information from El Salvador where the FMLN has the real possibility of winning the presidential elections.

Australian Solidarity with Latin America - ASLA

# Demagogues on the denial bandwagon

## *The Hunter of the Black\**

by Mary Gilmore

*Softly footed as a myall, silently he walked,  
All the methods of his calling learned from men he stalked;  
Tall he was, and deeply chested, eagle-eyed and still,  
Every muscle in his body subject to his will.*

*Dark and swarthy was his colour; somewhere Hampshire born;  
Knew no pity for the hunted – weakness all his scorn;  
Asked no friendship, shunned no meetings, took what life might bring;  
Came and went among his fellows something like a king.*

*Paid each debt with strict exactness, what the debt might be;  
Called no man employed him master; master's equal, he;  
Yet there was not one who sought him, none who held his hand,  
Never father, calling, bid him join the family band.*

*Tales and tales were told about him, how, from dawn till dark,  
Noiselessly he trailed his quarry, never missed a mark,  
How the twigs beneath his footstep "moved but never broke",  
How the very fires he kindled "never made a smoke".*

*Men would tell, with puzzled wonder marked on voice and brow,  
How he'd stand a moment talking, leave, and none knew how;  
"He was there! ..." and then had vanished, going as he came,  
Like a passing of a shadow, like a falling flame.*

*Once (I heard it when it happened) word was sent, to him,  
Of a lone black on Mamoosa – O, the hunting grim!  
Through three days and nights he tracked him, never asking sleep;  
Shot, for him who stole the country, him who killed a sheep.*

*Tomahawk in belt, as only adult needed shot,  
No man knew how many notches totalled up his lot;  
But old stockman striking tallies, rough and ready made,  
Reckoned on at least a thousand, naming camps decayed.*

*Time passed on, and years forgotten whitened with the dust;  
He whose hands were red with slaughter sat among the just,  
Kissed the children of his children, honoured in his place,  
Turned and laid him down in quiet, asking God His grace.*

\* Called those days a sharp-shooter; today he would be a sniper. I remember the man well. I met one of his daughters lately, but did not mention that I had known her father or knew what he had been. He had a large family and many grandchildren, and as a paid killer of the black, he was but one of many.

A recent article in the *Australian* newspaper by its foreign editor Greg Sheridan was yet another to be hauled onto the denial bandwagon currently doing the rounds. The denial – basically a history re-write by right-wing demagogues – is that the genocide of Indigenous Australians by the white ruling powers never took place.

by Jo Dunleavy

Mr Sheridan goes on about a "genocide debate", accusing those who raise it of "emotional manipulative use of so exaggerated a term as genocide". He dismisses it as a "jargon word" and even warns: "Once you use a term such as genocide, you inspire manic extremism in your supporters".

This claims Mr Sheridan, threatens "one of the finest features of Australia's political culture" i.e. "its resolute calmness". And so on.

There are any number of ways

to pull this lying propaganda to pieces. As a contribution I offer the following poem by Mary Gilmore, one of Australia's most calm and resolute political activists.

Mary Jean Cameron (1864-1962) was born at Cotta Walla near Goulburn, New South Wales, and was a school teacher before she joined William Lane's New Australia experiment in Paraguay. In Paraguay she married William Gilmore in 1897.

They returned to Australia in 1902 and settled on a farm near

Casterton in western Victoria. In 1908 she began to edit the Women's Page of the *Sydney Worker*, which she continued to do until 1931. In 1912, her husband joined his brother on the land in north Queensland, and she and her son moved back to Sydney.

Her life span of nearly a century joined pioneering Australia to the modern Commonwealth, just as her verse projects some of the basic elements of the Australian ethos into 20th century literature. In 1937 she was made a Dame of the British Empire for her services to Australian literature.

Mary Gilmore is one of two Australian writers (AB Paterson is the other) featured on the 1993 ten-dollar note. ☼



Mary Gilmore



Government-commissioned reports almost always get the thumbs up because they inevitably find what the government wants them to. The rule in Parliament is: if you don't like the findings of a report attack its authors. Such as the findings of the Senate Medicare inquiry which reported that under the Howard Government's plans to destroy Medicare only half of GP consultations would be bulk billed and that patients would pay more to see their doctor. Health Minister Kay Patterson said the authors of the report had "made up their minds" before doing their research and that it was based on the "false assumption" that doctors are motivated by money. What Patterson doesn't say, of course, is that the Government's refusal to properly fund the system has forced doctors to abandon bulk billing, most of them reluctantly.

Visiting PNG Foreign Affairs Minister Sir John Kaputin told a forum at the University of Wollongong last week that Australia should clean up the corruption in its own back yard before dictating to others about governance. The Howard Government has successfully bullied PNG into allowing Australian police and bureaucrats to oversee the operation of PNG's public servants and members of government on the assumption they are corrupt. "Treat your own people fairly first before you can start talking about other people elsewhere", said Sir John. "I am not saying that there are no problems in our country, but there are problems everywhere. You have problems with your own police down here. You have problems with your own politicians down here in terms of corruption".

And we were given a prime example last week when former Health Minister Michael Wooldridge was appointed as head of the Government's National Council on AIDS, Hepatitis C and Sexual Health. In his brief but highly controversial political career Wooldridge: allegedly leaked (or his office did) information to his mates running private clinics that MRI machines would be subsidised in the budget if purchased before a certain date, sparking a rash of MRI purchases; diverted \$5 million of funding meant for rural health services and asthma research to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to pay for a new building at their headquarters in Canberra; soon after resigned from Parliament and became a consultant for the same College of General Practitioners; when the College was forced to return the ill-gotten gains they terminated Wooldridge's contract, whereupon he sued them and was paid out \$382,500. The really interesting part will be to see what he manages to do with HIV services.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is Telstra chief executive Ziggy Switkowski. Australia's national telecommunications provider is a real cash cow for the Government appointed privateers running it into the ground and contracting out and selling it off piecemeal. Ziggy was thus rewarded for services rendered in preparing Telstra for privatisation with a cash package for 2003 of \$2.113 million.

## The Queen vs David Burgess & Will Saunders Charge: Malicious Damage to Property

This week, David Burgess & Will Saunders are due to appear before the Sydney District Court on charges of malicious damage arising out of the painting of "NO WAR" on one of the sails of the Opera House. They state their case:

On February 16th 2003, about a million people (that's 1:19 of Australia's whole population) marched against the upcoming war in Iraq. Mainstream newspolls showed consistently that opposition to this war was running at about 70 per cent. Later that week our Prime Minister referred to these people as a "mob". A month later, he took us to war.

On March 18th 2003, after it became apparent our Government was going to go to war illegally and against the wishes of its own people, we climbed up the outside of the Sydney Opera House and painted "NO WAR" on its highest sail.

While we were painting, the "Coalition of the Willing" (USA, UK & Australia) announced the (official) commencement of hostilities against Iraq.

The action received coverage across the world. To this extent, we were successful in drawing world attention to the opposition of the Australian people to any non-UN-sanctioned Australian involvement in the invasion. Many people

didn't know Australia was actually involved.

The action also exposed (coincidentally from our point of view) the lack of promised security measures around a building supposedly on high alert for terrorist attacks.

After our arrests we were taken to The Rocks Police Station and charged with the criminal offence of Malicious Damage and the summary offence of Wilfully Marking a Building With Chalk/Paint etc. If found guilty, the charges carry penalties of up to five years jail and a \$440 fine respectively.

Along with these, we are facing a compensation claim of A\$166,000 or US\$106,000. The bills have been paid by the Opera House so the matter, it appears, is now in the hands of their insurance company.

Our attempts to enter into talks with the Opera House over the compensation issue were unsuccessful. Our bail conditions still prohibit us from entering a large section of the CBD.

In the six months since, we

have been through six Local Court appearances, the last of which saw us plead not guilty to the more serious charge and committed for trial in the District Court from September 29 to October 1. The case will now be heard before a jury. Dave's case will be heard first and Will's case second. Will is representing himself in court.

As we did on March 18th, we still believe Australia's involvement in the war on Iraq was illegal and immoral. If anything, this belief has been strengthened by events that continue to unfold around the world.

We believe we did not act out of malice towards anybody. It was an extraordinary day on which Australia became an aggressor in conflict for the first time in its history without voting on the matter in Parliament.

Given the total collapse of democracy applied by the Australian Government, we felt that what we did required an extra-ordinary response...

For more information on the court case and fund raising for the cleaning of the Opera House, visit [www.sydneyoperahousenowaracle.anupfund.org](http://www.sydneyoperahousenowaracle.anupfund.org) ☼

# Making enemies of our neighbours

Ever since the theory of the “failed states” was put forward in 2002 and George Bush announced the policy of “pre-emptive strike”, the Australian Government has been planning to apply these theories against the Pacific Island nations.

by Peter Symon

The various “think-tanks” set up by the Government and corporations together with a gaggle of academics who serve the interests of the corporations and their colonialist interests, were set to work.

There is the Centre for Independent Studies, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), and another in which the new Governor-General, Michael Jeffery was a leading figure. Then came the Senate Inquiry into Australian relations with Papua New Guinea and Pacific Island nations.

All these bodies are singing virtually the same tune – the Pacific Island states are “failed states” and big brother, Australia, has to intervene with police, military forces, financial mandarins to run their economies, retired judges to show them how to mete out “justice” and, of course, private investors who alone are capable of getting their economies going, providing jobs and bringing “development”.

## Pre-emptive intervention

The policy of “pre-emptive intervention” has already been imposed on the Solomon Islands and is planned for Papua New Guinea. This was the objective of Alexander Downer’s recent visit to Port Moresby where he signed an agreement “in principle” with the Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea.

The agreement opened discussion on the placing of at least 200 Australian police into Papua New Guinea and the dispatch of Australian “financial experts” who would show their counterparts in various Papua New Guinea Government departments how to do it.

“Papua New Guinea on the Brink” is the title of one paper put out by the Centre for Independent Studies”. Another of its publications runs the line that “Aid Has Failed the Pacific”.

The ASPI report justifying Australia’s invasion of the Solomon Islands is entitled “Our Failing Neighbour”. The Senate Inquiry report published in August is a little blander and is entitled “A Pacific Engaged” although its recommendations have the same objectives as the others.

Emeritus Professor Helen Hughes in her paper “Aid Has Failed the Pacific” claims that

“Inappropriate economic policies have failed to deal with the hard tasks of development and with the negative effects of aid and mineral income flows. That is why Pacific governments are failing their people.”

Her touching concern for the people of the Pacific Island states would ring truer if her solution was really intended to help the people of the Pacific.

Her solution is basically the promotion of private enterprise. She writes, “Pacific societies have to adopt policies that establish secure, free economic environments...”, and rails against the public sector and, of course, against aid. She goes so far as to suggest that Australia should “suspend all aid and thus provide the catalyst for change” – her own contribution to “shock therapy”!

Helen Hughes claims that aid flows “bias an economy against the private sector, they undercut employment and growth and lead to corruption. Super-profits from rich mineral deposits similarly create economic rents that also have negative economic effects, leading to public waste.”

To Hughes the communal ownership of land is a big barrier to the building of a private enterprise economy. “Communal land ownership has held back indigenous entrepreneurship.”

## Communal land ownership

But while damning communal land ownership she admits that “Communal land ownership and clan loyalty provide security and ensure that in traditional societies no-one goes hungry”.

It appears that in the eyes of Helen Hughes the fact that no-one goes hungry as a result of communal ownership is, none-the-less, not a sufficient reason not to destroy it by introducing private land ownership.

The fact that millions upon millions of people across the world go hungry every day in private enterprise economies is ignored when propagating the alleged splendours of capitalism.

The fact that the economic policies imposed on the former colonies of the Pacific are directly responsible for the economic consequences that are now being felt across the region is also ignored.

For example, Helen Hughes says that “Nauru and the Solomon

Islands are disintegrating and Papua New Guinea’s problems are acute”.

Nauru was rich in phosphates but the British Phosphate Commission ripped this resource out of the Island and little of this wealth was put back into lifting the prosperity of the people of Nauru or providing alternative economic opportunities once the phosphate was worked out.

More recently the Australian government found no better use for Nauru than to establish a concentration camp for refugees.

## Foreign ownership

Papua New Guinea is also rich in minerals and timber but these industries are owned by foreign corporations – OK Tedi Gold, owned by BHP, is one example. How much of the wealth ripped out by BHP went to the people of Papua New Guinea by way of social services, schools, health services, jobs, etc? Instead the Papua New Guinea people and Government have been left with an enormous environmental problem.

The management of the Tolukuma Gold Mine in Papua New Guinea has recently been charged with the unexplained deaths of 19 Papua New Guinea citizens who live downstream on the river into which the gold mine management pours its tailings. This mine is owned by South African mining giant, Durban Roodeport Deep. Undoubtedly its

profits are exported to shareholders in South Africa and do little to help the living standards of the people of Papua New Guinea.

The mine management immediately dismissed any responsibility for the deaths claiming that the charge was “outrageous”. BHP’s Ok Tedi mine also poured mine tailings into the Fly River and poisoned both the river and those living downstream who were dependent on it.

The timber companies logging the rich Papua New Guinea timber resources are mostly controlled by foreign capital and it is they who skim off the profits.

Helen Hughes does admit that “the private sector is dominated by expatriate investors”, but fails to say that the profits reaped by these expatriates will mostly be exported out of the country.

## Mutual obligation or mutual benefit

Failing the suspension of aid completely, which Helen Hughes obviously favours, she proposes that a system of “mutual obligation” be imposed, thereby taking a leaf out of the Howard Government’s approach to those receiving unemployment benefits in Australia.

She goes on: “Aid should only be spent on mutually agreed development projects and programs designed and monitored by teams nominated by the sovereign recipients and donors...”

Such mutual arrangements however, can only work where there is a relationship of equality between the donor and the recipient. But that is not what is intended.

Another paper put out by the Centre for Independent Studies says: “Both the Australian public and the international community expect that Australia – as a

developed neighbour, principal source of trade, aid and investment, defence partner, and former administering power – will take prime responsibility for resolving any problem should something go wrong. Failure to do so would undermine Australia’s aspirations to regional leadership”.

So it is all about Australia’s “prime responsibility” and its “aspirations to regional leadership”. There is nothing about the sovereignty of the island states or an attitude of equality, let alone giving Pacific Islanders control over their own affairs.

In these circumstances talk of “mutual obligations” means that the economic and political policies and interests of the larger power will be imposed.

Helen Hughes says that, “Recolonisation in any form is not a solution”. It’s a nice sentiment but the reality of the policies being already implemented by the Australian Government is, in practice, a form of neo-colonialism.

The Australian Government would do well to think carefully about the fate of the former colonial empires and the quagmire into which the United States is sinking in Iraq where all the talk of “liberation”, “freedom”, “helping”, etc. is false and is being rejected by the Iraqi people who do not wish to be recolonised.

Opposition to any form of colonisation is already apparent, particularly in Papua New Guinea. It will grow stronger as the reality of the new forms of colonial domination become apparent. The current policies are a continuation of those that have already caused such havoc to our Pacific neighbours.

Our relationship with our neighbours must be based on genuine friendship and equality with the objective of achieving mutual benefit. It cannot work on the basis of the strong dominating the weak. ✪



*Our relationship must be based on genuine friendship and equality with the objective of achieving mutual benefit.*

# Afghanistan – two years after “liberation”

On October 7, 2001, the US began bombing Afghanistan in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks. Afghanistan was the country headed by a reactionary government called the Taliban, which also was allegedly giving aid and comfort to terrorist Al Qaida boss Osama bin Laden. The bombing of Afghanistan and routing of the Taliban from power was supposed to bring liberation to a terribly impoverished people and war-torn country. US occupation and military operations continue two years later.

Promises made by both President George W Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair that Afghanistan will not be forgotten and human rights, economic vitality and other necessities of a democratic society will be restored, have not been fulfilled.

Reports paint a dismal picture of life for people in Afghanistan.

In a devastating account called “What Good Friends Left Behind”, journalist and film maker John Pilger wrote about Afghanistan – two years later, in the September 20 British *Guardian*.

Pilger, who travelled to Afghanistan recently, describes the daily horrors: “It was my first visit. In a lifetime of making my way through places of upheaval, I had not seen anything like it. Kabul is a glimpse of Dresden post-1945, with contours of rubble rather than streets, where people live in collapsed buildings, like earthquake victims waiting for rescue.

“They have no light and heat; their apocalyptic fires burn through the night. Hardly a wall stands that does not bear the pock-marks of almost every calibre of weapon. Cars lie upended at roundabouts. Power poles built for a modern fleet of trolley buses are twisted like paperclips. The buses are stacked on top of each other, reminiscent of the pyramids of machines erected by the Khmer Rouge to mark Year Zero.”

Pilger quotes earlier *Guardian* reports that up to 8000 Afghans have been killed by US bombs

and as many as 20,000 more have died “as an indirect consequence of Bush’s invasion, including those who fled their homes and were denied emergency relief in the middle of a drought”.

Four US soldiers have been killed in the last two weeks. In all, 35 US soldiers have been killed in action in Afghanistan, and 162 wounded.

On September 7 Bush requested \$11 billion more for military operations in Afghanistan and a mere US\$800 million for reconstruction, half of which is for Afghan military and police. More than US\$10 billion has already been spent on Afghanistan since October 7, 2001, according to Pilger.

“More than 80 percent of this has paid for bombing the country and paying the warlords, the former mujahedin who called themselves the ‘Northern Alliance’”, Pilger wrote.

No one knows what more misery this US\$11.8 billion more will buy. Pilger describes another daily horror – land mines. “A hundred yards away, men in blue move stiffly in single file: mine-clearers. Mines are like litter here, killing and maiming, it is calculated, every hour of every day.

“Opposite what was Kabul’s main cinema and is today an art deco shell, there is a busy roundabout with posters warning that unexploded cluster bombs ‘yellow and from USA’ are in the vicinity. Children play here, chasing each



Forgotten – homeless Afghani children queue for food

other into the shadows. They are watched by a teenage boy with a stump and part of his face missing. In the countryside, people still confuse the cluster canisters with the yellow relief packages that were dropped by American planes almost two years ago, during the war, after Bush had prevented international relief convoys crossing from Pakistan.”

The post-Taliban government is non-existent. US-approved, Afghan President Hamid Karzai cannot go anywhere without his US Special Forces bodyguards. The country is run by “Mafiosi” or organised crime bosses, often termed warlords, placed in power by the US.

They rule “by fear, extortion and monopolising the opium poppy trade that supplies Britain with 90 percent of its street heroin”, Pilger said.

Pilger continues, “In a series of extraordinary reports, the latest published in July, Human Rights Watch has documented atrocities ‘committed by gunmen and warlords who were propelled into power by the United States and its coalition partners after the Taliban fell in 2001’ and who have ‘essentially hijacked the country.’

“The report describes army and police troops controlled by the warlords kidnapping villagers with impunity and holding them for

ransom in unofficial prisons; the widespread rape of women, girls and boys; routine extortion, robbery and arbitrary murder.

“Girls’ schools are burned down. ‘Because the soldiers are targeting women and girls’, the report says, ‘many are staying indoors, making it impossible for them to attend school [or] go to work.’”

All of which leads to the question: If Iraq is a quagmire, what is Afghanistan?

*People’s Weekly World* ☪

To read Pilger’s full story go to [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

## The stench of corruption

**The stench of corruption permeates the occupation of Iraq as huge US corporations are awarded enormously profitable contracts by the US Army and other government agencies. Heading the list is Halliburton which was formerly headed by Dick Cheney who is now Bush’s Vice President.**

The company has won contracts worth more than US\$1.7 billion under “Operation Iraqi Freedom” and stands to make hundreds of millions more dollars under a no-bid contract awarded by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

“The amount of money [going to Halliburton] is quite staggering, far more than we were originally led to believe”, said Democrat representative for California, Henry Waxman. “This is clearly a trend under this administration, and it concerns me because often the privatisation of government services ends up costing the taxpayers more money rather than less.”

It is estimated that as much as one-third of the monthly US\$3.9 billion cost of keeping US troops in Iraq is going to private contractors.

Services performed by Halliburton, through its Brown and Root subsidiary, include building and managing military bases, logistical support for the 1200 intelligence officers on a fruitless hunt for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, delivering mail and producing millions of hot meals.

Often dressed in Army fatigues with civilian patches on their shoulders, Halliburton employees and contract personnel have become an integral part of Army life in Iraq.

Halliburton has emerged as the biggest single government contractor in Iraq. Others making big windfalls include Bechtel, a California-based engineering firm that has won hundreds of millions of dollars in US Agency for International Development reconstruction contracts, and DynCorp, which is training the new Iraqi police force.

Indicating that wars have been planned well in advance, Daniel Carlson, a spokesman for the Army’s Joint Munitions Command, said Brown and Root won a competitive bidding process in 2001 to provide a wide range of “contingency” services to the military in the event of the deployment of US troops overseas.

Halliburton was awarded a no-bid contract in March with a US\$7 billion limit to put out fires at Iraqi oil wells. In the event, very few oil

wells were torched by the Iraqis.

The practice of delegating a vast array of logistics operations to a single contractor dates to the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War and a study commissioned on military outsourcing when Dick Cheney was Defence Secretary.

The Pentagon chose Brown and Root to carry out the study and subsequently selected the company to implement its own plan. Cheney served as chief executive of Brown and Root’s parent company, Halliburton, from 1995 to 2000, when he stepped aside to run for the vice presidency.

The new Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld is another champion of outsourcing.

It is estimated that the number of contract workers in Iraq is 20,000, or about one for every 10 soldiers. During the first Gulf War, the proportion was about one in 100.

Inevitably reliance on private corporations suffers from a lack of accountability and transparency on the part of private military firms and questionable billing practices.

Furthermore, neither these private corporations nor their employees are bound by military justice, and it is up to them whether they show up or not. This has resulted in delays in providing services for troops such as showering facilities and even getting their cooked meals.

Another consequence is the rising cost of hiring contract workers because of skyrocketing insurance premiums. One correspondent says that insurance premiums have increased by 300 percent to 400 percent this year. All these costs are passed on to American taxpayers.

Acknowledgement to CorpWatch <http://www.corpwatch.org> ☪

# You made the mess, you fix it!

President Bush's plea to the United Nations General Assembly to come to the aid of the United States with money and troops was received coldly, even with hostility, by many other members of the UN General Assembly.

In what can only be regarded as yet another display of hypocrisy, double standards and outright lying Bush claimed that "The primary goal of our coalition (US, Britain and Australia) in Iraq is self-government for the people of Iraq, reached by orderly and democratic means..."

"As in the aftermath of other conflicts, the UN should assist in developing a constitution, training civil servants and conducting free and fair elections", said Bush.

Some of the strongest criticisms of US actions were made by Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General. He said, "My concern is that it could set precedents resulting in a proliferation of the unilateral and lawless use of force, with or without credible justification".

He continued: "No one should be able to accord himself the right to use force unilaterally and preventatively. In an open world, no one can isolate themselves".

Bush warned, "This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the UN was founded... It is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some states feel uniquely vulnerable and thus drive them to take unilateral action".

French President, Jacques Chirac said, "The war, launched without the authorization of the Security Council, shook the multilateral system. The UN has just been through one of the gravest crises in its history. No one can act alone in the name of all and no one can accept the anarchy of a society without rules".

## Transfer of sovereignty

Chirac called for the early transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people, a call that was promptly rejected by the United States.

The President of Brazil, Lula da Silva said that "An everlasting peace cannot be built without the participation of all people". He said that the main task of the UN is to protect nations from wars and foster negotiations to avoid conflicts. He called for a fight, "which we can win", against poverty and hunger and urged the UN to act resolutely against starvation.

## Resurgence of imperialism

The Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamed declared that "Today we are seeing the resurgence of European imperialism. Today we are actually faced by the old physical occupation by foreign forces, puppet regimes are installed, dancing as puppets do".

He declared that the United Nations organs "have been cut out, dissected and reshaped so that they may perform the way the puppet masters want. This organisation is collapsing on its clay feet, helpless to protect the weak and the poor", said Dr Mahathir. The United Nations had become a tool of the colonisers, he said.

In Middle Eastern countries, people were just as unimpressed by the Bush appeal.

"Bush's words are just cover. America is looking for others to



Lawless use of force – US soldiers raid an Iraq home

help pay for the occupation of Iraq's oil", said Yehya Mahmoud a seller of electronics on a Cairo street.

A Yemeni student said much the same: "The Americans just don't stop grudging any role for the rest of the world after they went to war without international legitimacy".

## Sticky morass

The Lebanese newspaper *Daily Star* said, "The White House is still refusing to recognise the hopeless-

ness of going it alone. It is waiting for the French and the Germans to start feeling guilty about not helping to extricate their old ally from the increasingly sticky morass".

The United Arab Emirates' *al-Itihad* wrote that "A US administration like this only knows military plans to invade this or that country using the pretext of freedom and democracy and other slogans that no one believes any more".

There were some voices that, not surprisingly, backed the US's plans. The chief of the International Monetary Fund, Horst Koehler said that "Leaders of the world should now really set aside their disputes".

Russian President Vladimir Putin's comments were also mild when compared with the denunciation that the US invasion of Iraq warranted. He failed to insist on a rapid timetable or that the UN should take on the major role. He did say: "To be a world power

means to be together with the world community. To be a really strong and influential state means to be able to see and address the problems of small nations and economically weak countries".

As the meeting of the UN General Assembly continues the UN has announced a further withdrawal of its staff from Iraq following a second attack on the UN compound in Baghdad.

The team of selected British and US personnel who have been searching for the alleged weapons of mass destruction have come up with nothing. At the same time the British and US administrations keep up the pretence that there are such weapons.

The evidence continues to mount that Bush, Blair and Howard were blatantly lying when using the pretext of weapons of mass destruction to invade Iraq. Despite this, they still peddle their lies. ✪

**"Today we are seeing the resurgence of European imperialism. Today we are actually faced by the old physical occupation by foreign forces, puppet regimes are installed, dancing as puppets do"**

**The Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamed**

## "Slaughter Every Night"

Robert Fisk interviewed on *Democracy Now*

The whole of Baghdad is full of gunfire. I went to one hospital where the mortuary attendant told me that almost 40 percent of the total dead that come into their mortuary are killed at US checkpoints by soldiers, either because the cars approached the checkpoints too quickly or because American troops come under fire and fire back at the civilians in the area without making direct contact with whoever is their aggressor.

On one occasion recently a woman and her child were brought dead to the hospital after they were killed by US forces who opened fire at people who were shooting in the air at a wedding party.

Over and over again this happens. We had a case about six weeks ago which I personally investigated, in which two men got too close, drove up to a US checkpoint, it wasn't a usual check point, just a piece of barbed wire thrown across the road in a very poor suburb of Baghdad.

The Americans opened fire at

the car. When the car was burned out, I counted around 23 bullet holes in it. The bullets caught fire to the petrol, and I don't know if they were still alive or not. They were burned to death anyway. As the car was on fire, according to those who saw it happen, the Americans packed up and abandoned their checkpoint. I went to the mortuary again afterwards and found these two skeletons with burned flesh, their identity papers long ago consumed by the fire. The car itself and the registration plate had melted into the road. So again, two Iraqi

families were waiting that night for loved ones who would never come home.

Yesterday, the Baghdad city morgue had 21 dead of whom 12 were killed by gunfire. This morning they had another five by 10 am. If you add that up, and you turn it into a month of killings, you remember that there's 20 dead a day of gunfire being brought even to the Najaf cemetery, which is about 200 miles south of Baghdad, who are killed by violence, not just of course by the Americans but family revenge killings, shootings by thieves, people trying to stop looters and get killed by accident caught in crossfire, you're talking at least 1000 Iraqis dying every week.

I had one case this morning, a young man, only son of a Shiite from the very poorest area of Baghdad had been killed in his door, no one knew why. Four very, very angry Shiites arrived with his body

at the mortuary. "This is because there is no security. America doesn't want us to have security. It wants to divide our society. We won't allow it. We will explode ourselves against the Americans", said one of the men. He was talking about suicide bombers.

Among those Iraqis who don't take such a conspiratorial view, there is a milder, but in my opinion, quite devastating view that the Americans don't really care very much about the Iraqis. They might talk about bringing democracy, liberating them. But they care only about Western soldiers who are killed. They don't really care about the lives of ordinary Iraqis.

And over and over again, we've had examples of people shot by the Americans at checkpoints, and the Americans have not even bothered to find out who they shot down, who they killed, who they wounded.

We had one very sad case the other day of a man whose family I

spoke to, who did survive, he was a night watchman of a building, his factory was attacked by looters. He fired back at the looters and the Americans turned up and shot him in the chest. He's now just undergone his second operation to save his life. But he hasn't once been visited by American forces. No one said sorry. No one says, "would you like some compensation, we can help you".

In some cases we do know, especially in outlying and very tough areas, the Americans and other Western forces have offered and given money compensation to families of those they killed.

It's this overall feeling, and I don't go along with conspiracy theories, that the US wants a civil war, wants to divide people, wants violence, no, because they also become victims. But Americans just don't really care about Iraqis. And that is the cancer that is eating into this society now. ✪



# Vanishing Act

It's a shell game, with money, companies and corporate brands switching in a blur of buyouts and bogus fronts. It's a sinkhole, where mobbed-up operators, paid-off public servants, crazed Christian fascists, CIA shadow-jobbers, war-pimping arms dealers — and presidential family members — lie down together in the slime. It's a hacker's dream, with pork-funded, half-finished, secretly programmed computer systems installed without basic security standards by politically partisan private firms, and protected by law from public scrutiny.

by Chris Floyd

It's how the United States, the "world's greatest democracy", casts its votes. And it's why George W. Bush will almost certainly be the next President of the United States — no matter what the people of the United States might want.

The American vote-count is controlled by three major corporate players — Diebold, ES&S, and Sequoia — with a fourth, Science Applications International Corporation, coming on strong. These companies — all of them hard-wired into the Bushist Party power grid — have been given billions of dollars by the Bush Regime to complete a sweeping computerisation of voting machines nationwide by the 2004 election.

These glitch-riddled systems — many using "touch-screen" technology that leaves no paper trail at all — are almost laughably open to manipulation, according to corporate whistleblowers and computer scientists at Stanford, Johns Hopkins and other universities.

The technology had a trial run in the 2002 mid-term elections.

In Georgia, serviced by new Diebold systems, a popular Democratic governor and senator were both unseated in what the media called "amazing" upsets, with results showing vote swings of up to 16 percent from the last pre-ballot polls.

In computerised Minnesota,

former Vice President Walter Mondale — a replacement for popular incumbent Paul Wellstone, who died days before the vote — was also defeated in a large last-second vote swing.

Convenient "glitches" in Florida saw an untold number of votes intended for the Democrat candidate registering instead for Governor Jeb "L'il Brother" Bush.

A Florida Democrat who lost a similarly "glitched" local election went to court to have the computers examined — but the case was thrown out by a judge who ruled that the innards of America's voting machines are the "trade secrets" of the private companies who make them.

Who's behind these private companies? It's hard to tell: the corporate lines — even the bloodlines — of these "competitors" are so intricately mixed.

For example, at Diebold — whose corporate chief, Wally O'Dell, a top Bush fundraiser, has publicly committed himself to "delivering" his home state's votes to Bush next year — the election division is run by Bob Urosevich. Bob's brother, Todd, is a top executive at "rival" ES&S. The brothers were originally staked in the vote-count business by Howard Ahmanson, a member of the Council for National Policy, a right-wing "steering group" stacked with Bushist faithful.

Ahmanson is also one of

the bagmen behind the extremist "Christian Reconstructionist" movement, which openly advocates a theocratic takeover of American democracy, placing the entire society under the "dominion" of "Christ the King". This "dominion" includes the death penalty for homosexuals, exclusion of citizenship for non-Christians, stoning of sinners and — we kid you not — slavery, "one of the most beneficent of Biblical laws".

Ahmanson also has major holdings in ES&S, whose former CEO is Republican Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska.

When Hagel ran for office, his own company counted the votes; needless to say, his initial victory was reported as "an amazing upset". Hagel still has a million-dollar stake in the parent company of ES&S.

In Florida, Jeb Bush's first choice for a running mate in his 1998 gubernatorial race was ES&S lobbyist Sandra Mortham, who made a mint installing the machines that counted Jeb's votes.

Sequoia also has a colourful history, most recently in Louisiana, where it was the centre of a massive corruption case that sent top state officials to jail for bribery, most of it funnelled through Mob-connected front firms. Sequoia executives were also indicted, but escaped trial after giving immunised testimony against state officials.

The British-owned company's corporate parent is private equity firm Madison Dearborn — a partner of the Carlyle Group, where George Bush Sr makes millions trolling the world for war pork, privatisations and sweetheart deals with government insiders.

Meanwhile, the shadowy defence contractor SAIC has jumped into the vote-counting game, both directly and through spin-offs by its top brass, including Admiral Bill Owens, former military aide to Dick Cheney and Carlyle honcho Frank Carlucci, and ex-CIA chief Robert Gates.

SAIC's history of fraud charges and security lapses in its electronic systems hasn't prevented it from becoming one of the largest Pentagon and CIA contractors — and will doubtless pose little obstacle to its entrance into election engineering.

The mad rush to install unverifiable computer voting is driven by the *Help America Vote Act*, signed by Bush last year.

The chief lobbying group pushing for the act was a consortium of arms dealers — those disinterested corporate citizens — including Northrop-Grumman and Lockheed-Martin.

The Bill also mandates that all states adopt the computerised "ineligible voter purge" system that Jeb used to eliminate 91,000 eligible black voters from the Florida rolls in 2000. The Republican-run private company that accomplished this electoral miracle, ChoicePoint, is bagging the lion's share of the new Bush-ordered purge contracts.

The unselected Bush Regime now controls the government, the military, the judiciary — and the machinery of democracy itself. Absent some unlikely great awakening by the co-opted dullards of the corporate media, next November the last shreds of a genuine American republic will disappear — at the push of a button.

Moscow Times ❖



## Global briefs

**ISRAEL:** A group of reserve pilots in the Israel Air Force is planning to publicly announce their refusal to participate in attempts to assassinate senior officials in the Palestinian Authority. The various refusal movements view the pilots' planned declaration as a big boost for their cause, due to the special status enjoyed by pilots in Israeli society, and hope that it will shake up Israelis in a way that "ordinary" refusals have not.

**VENEZUELA:** Security services have given reasons for the sudden decision to cancel President Hugo Chavez's trip to Washington and New York (to deliver a speech to the United Nations). They say they have "overwhelming evidence" of a CIA-backed plan to "bring down" Chavez's plane during the scheduled flight to the United States from Caracas. "Presented with overwhelming evidence of Washington's planned attack on the Presidential flight, it was decided that the President's personal security was pre-eminent and he should not go", Venezuela's Military Intelligence Directorate (DIM) said.

**UKRAINE:** About 3000 Ukrainian war veterans protested against government plans to scrap free bus travel and cheaper electricity and gas. Government plans to cut social spending are a big issue in Ukraine in the run-up to the presidential election which is due next year. Elderly men and women, many wearing war medals, waved red flags and shouted "Shame on you" in front of Ukraine's government building. War veterans and pensioners are entitled to pay lower tariffs and travel free on public transport. The government plans to replace those privileges next year with a program of means-tested benefits. War veterans vowed to hold more demonstrations unless ministers satisfied their demands.

**BRITAIN:** Public-sector unions in Britain accused the government of handing over the National Health Services (NHS) to fat-cat privateers as the first wave of bidders for new diagnostic and treatment centres were named — five international and two British companies. The Health Secretary claims the new centres will specialise in non-urgent operations such as eye cataracts and hip and knee replacements. NHS patients will be treated free with the state footing the bill, but private centres will be paid more than a NHS hospital for the same operation. These routine operations often subsidise the complicated procedures that require more long-stay care in the NHS. Without those operations, many NHS wards will close. Trade unions and NHS doctors have expressed opposition to this further privatisation and concerns about quality of care.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Last month the South African Communist Party saluted the memory and contribution to the struggle of Steve Biko, on the 26th anniversary of his death. Biko was brutally murdered by apartheid police whilst in custody. The apartheid regime ensured that there was no investigation, no court trial and conviction of the killers. The SACP supports the continuing search for full information about Biko's murder and other apartheid murders of political leaders and activists. The SACP called on all South Africans to struggle against racism, gender inequality, poverty, neo-liberalism and capitalism. This means a struggle for nation-building, non-racism, non-sexism, economic growth and development biased towards poor and working people.

*When Hagel ran for office, his own company counted the votes; needless to say, his initial victory was reported as "an amazing upset".*

## London Leads Worldwide Anti-War Protests

Organisers of a demonstration held in London last weekend report that 100,000 people rallied in Trafalgar square to protest the occupation of Iraq and to demand freedom for Palestine.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Stop the War Coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain provided the opportunity for the mass outpouring of anger at the role of the British Government in the war on Iraq, its occupation of that country and the scandal surrounding the "weapons of mass destruction" pretext for the UK's entry into the war.

At the rally, Labour MP George Galloway spoke of "...a very dangerous diversion, a false dichotomy which is emerging in this debate — whether or not Iraq

should be controlled by a group of foreigners with blue helmets or a group of foreigners with stars and stripes. Foreign occupiers are not the solution to Iraq's problem, they are Iraq's problem".

Anti-war protests also took place in Dublin and Edinburgh where 1500 demonstrators marched. About 3000 protested in Paris and a similar number took the anti-war message to the gates of the US Embassy in Athens. More than 2000 marched to the centre of Seoul. There were also protests in Vienna, Berlin, Madrid, New York and San Francisco. ❖

Lessons from the ultra-left and history  
**The letter on Adorno by Richard Titelius brings up a present day problem of how to bring the revolts of non-proletarian forces into continued and developing action in the movements for peace and socialism. The actions of students and youth focused around the slogan "Books not Bombs" were in protest at the then impending war on Iraq and have not developed further.**

The same thing happened to the "New Left" culminating in the student demonstrations in France in 1968 when Daniel Cohn-Bendit was one of the prominent leaders.

The New Left challenged bourgeois society, the foreign policies of imperialism and its economic and political repression. They reacted against bourgeois culture. They did not link up with the organised union movement or the communist parties who they called the "old ideology".

Among their spokespersons were those who set out to create an up-to-date revolutionary theory, with emphasis on spontaneous actions with release of unconscious forces. These writers said they were looking for the shaping of a new culture and a new man.

Marcuse, Sartre and Adorno were among the main ideological leaders at that time. Marcuse saw only a dead end. "The economic and technical capabilities of the established societies are sufficiently vast to allow for adjustments and concessions to the underdog, and their

armed forces sufficiently trained and equipped to take care of emergency situations" (Bush screaming for more troops and money!).

"The critical theory of society possesses no concept to bridge the gap between the present and its future; holding no promise and showing no success; it remains negative."

Adorno is just as negative. He saw it as impossible to view a contradiction as soluble, and that it was wrong to envisage any definite alternative. He regarded the modern world as a contradictory chaotic chain of events not arranged in any integral system.

These and other writers confused and held up the political development of many of the protesting people associated with the New Left. Their ideas have penetrated communist parties.

In 1968 Dubcek, Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, called for changes for a socialism with a human face – "the good life, true liberty and a just society". In the last Czech elections, the Czech Communist Party got 20 percent of the votes. Dubcek formed and led an anti-communist pro-capitalist splinter party in those elections.

Under the banner of perestroika, Gorbachev confused and misled the CPSU and the Soviet people, and was the chief internal factor in destroying the Soviet Union. There had been a close link between Dubcek and Gorbachev.

We need to study the present-day writers appealing to the youth, to understand their appeal and their weaknesses, so that we can

win the new, young forces emerging to progressive and consistent action.

**Vic Williams  
Perth, WA**

## The six counties of Ireland

**A few observations of the ongoing struggle in the six counties of Ireland:**

Prime Minister Tony Blair has set about dismantling the Good Friday Agreement, including the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly at the request of the Unionists.

Let it be recalled that the Northern Ireland Assembly was founded by the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC) to advise Edward Heath before the Sunningdale Conference in England in December 1973.

This conference entrenched the power of Unionism, to uphold a Protestant state, for a Protestant people.

Final result – the British Government gave agreement to the UUUC that the Six Counties of Ulster would remain part of the UK.

Thus the continual terror on the streets by the UDA, UFF, UDR, the abuse of school children, Sinn Féin councillors barred from entering Council Chambers, are all part of this sabotage that includes the suspension of the Assembly, illegally preventing democratically elected Sinn Féin members from functioning. This has to be tested in the International Court.

Blair is a liar. He will not defeat the will of the Irish people, though the price paid by the people in suffering is horrendous. We have defeated British propaganda before and will do so in the future and continue with our struggle.

**Anne Duffy-Lindsay  
Sydney, NSW**

## Source of technological consciousness

**In his letter in *The Guardian* (September 17) Richard Titelius suggests that the work of Theodore Adorno might indicate some remedy for the disasters of recent years, or if not, make us feel better in spite of them.**

Titelius suggests that what he calls, with some justification a "new kind of barbarism", "is not inflicted by the ruling class elites, but by a new technological consciousness which has gripped mass society".

Where does Adorno think this technological consciousness came from and is this a proper description of the situation?

Certainly, large numbers of people in countries like Australia have been fascinated by the achievements of science and technology and benefited from them but without having what one could call technological consciousness, i.e., they have very little appreciation of the scientific and technological achievements.

Part of this "technological consciousness" could well be described as the result of advertising and the search for wider and wider markets.

How many people are influenced by the use of largely meaningless terms like "natural", "holistic", "state of the art", and in contrast, in some fields of health support of medical practices by referring to their age old use!

The growth of technology and unwarranted reverence for it, or at least some aspects of it, lies in the development of the capitalist economy – it is not due to some mystical consciousness – and as far as it is planned today it is the bourgeoisie; the planning is in their hands and those of their imitators.

Like some of the New Left, it would seem that Adorno wished to purge "social, political and cultural thought" of any interpretation in terms of the class structure of society, and as a result in common with the New Left, of the recognition of the working class's critical position and responsibility for the changing of society.

I am not clear as to the exact meaning of Titelius's final sentence in which he concludes "... there is a persistence of Adorno's thinking and ideas among those for whom the good life, true liberty, and a just society are not just a utopian dream".

Does he mean that Adorno is speaking to those for whom these things are no longer a dream (the bourgeoisie?) and if not, to whom?

**Tom Gill  
Sydney, NSW**

## Culture & Life

### Kids' stuff

***Sesame Street* began in the USA in 1969. It was not long before it was introduced to Australia with a great fanfare about its supposed sensational educational virtues.**

by Rob Gowland

Media and advertising gurus like Phillip Adams weighed in with fulsome praise for the program's alleged success in teaching New York ghetto kids to read. It would be an educational catastrophe, they suggested, if the ABC did not take up this "revolutionary" new program.

In truth, they seemed overjoyed at finding a series where the techniques of advertising – a dirty word in anybody's language – were being used to capture the attention of children for the worthy purpose of education.

*Sesame Street* taught reading by teaching letter recognition. Australian teachers were at first dismayed to discover that their more sophisticated approach was suddenly being berated as "old fashioned".

In the event, *Sesame Street* did not revolutionise the teaching of reading in Australia. Nevertheless, the series settled in for an apparently permanent spot in pre-and-after school viewing.

I was about 30 when *Sesame Street* started here, so it is perhaps understandable that I was not entranced by Big Bird. Bert and Ernie were much more fun, as was Kermit in the guise of the reporter

for "Sesame Street News", breathlessly covering various spoofs of famous fairy tales.

The series was originally made for the most deprived sub-stratum of underprivileged America: the Black and Latino ghettos of New York and other large US cities. But the makers of the series never once questioned the legitimacy of a system that made their program necessary.

They wracked their brains for ways of using the attitude moulding techniques of capitalist marketing to reach children living in cultural deprivation, without kids' books, safe playing areas or a stable home-life, where rats gnawed at their bedding and the air was nightly rent by the sounds of violence. But they never publicly questioned the American Dream or what Bush today is wont to call "American Values".

Instead, they embraced the American Dream, presenting a seriously romanticised view of urban living in the USA. There was no racism on *Sesame Street*, no sir! Instead there was (and is) tolerance: of people of colour, of people with disabilities, of monsters of every hue.

The program's target audience encounters racism every day of their lives. Even little kids can understand and benefit from simple explanations of the nature of racism, who benefits from it, what purpose does it serve.

But that would call the capitalist system into question, and that would never do. No, the makers of this much-vaunted series preferred to put the blame for racism on to the very people who were its victims. Ordinary people's intolerance for anyone a little bit different was at the bottom of it, and all we had to do was be more tolerant and there would be no racism, like on *Sesame Street*.

Have you ever seen the police come cruising down *Sesame Street*

picking on black kids to hassle just because they are black? No, neither have I.

Or seen the INS raid a *Sesame Street* store and rough up the Latino customers for failing to produce naturalisation papers fast enough? No again.

But why not? After all, it's everyday reality for the kids the program is trying to reach. But it's not reality that the series is preaching.

*Sesame Street* espouses a small-"I" liberal view of the USA that says: "America is great. Whatever little things are wrong with it are that way because people don't try hard enough to make it work."

This is a middle-class view that was given expression by Michael Douglas in *The American President*: "America is hard work. You've got to want it bad." (Here, "America" has become both a goal and an ideology all its own.)

*Sesame Street* is a program for poor children that never even acknowledges the existence of poverty, let alone the causes of it. It visits Indian reservations to show Indian kids playing in the dirt or admiring their mother's baskets ("encouraging tolerance").

But it never comments on the fact that they live in squalor under the thumb of the FBI. The children on *Sesame Street*, unlike its audience, never suffer hunger.

Many of the families that watch it cannot afford books. At their inner city schools they share pencils. (Is that why the series spends so much time lauding the virtues of sharing? They are certainly not advocating sharing the wealth!)

The relentless but clever pro-establishment line of *Sesame Street* and its popularity have endeared the program to the US State Department and other US government agencies charged with combating the "anti-Americanism" in the world.

Charlotte Beers, Undersecretary



Oscar the small "I" liberal

of State for Public Diplomacy ("newspeak" for Minister for Propaganda) waxed ecstatic to a Senate Committee about the Egyptian version of the program: "The children are glued to the set. They are learning English, they are learning about American values".

Ms Beers, one need hardly add, is a former advertising executive.

The US is strenuously trying to secure bases in Bangladesh, and *Sesame Street* is part of the effort. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is giving the series' producers US\$6.26m to produce a version for viewers in Bangladesh.

One unnamed official told Britain's *Daily Telegraph* that the project is "aiming to promote greater understanding of American morality and culture". Yeah, right.

Thanks to a combined marketing, media and diplomatic push, *Sesame Street* is now aired in no less than 120 countries! That's a lot of "American morality and culture" being aired daily.

The BBC reported recently that the Russian version, *Ulitsa Sezam*, now has a new storyline about a lemonade stall. This has been included to show, that in a nation where many people suspect all businesses of corruption (goodness, why would they think that?), someone "can make a profit and be a nice person".

And the BBC also reports that back in the US, "the cute, squeaky-voiced puppet Elmo has just been sponsored by Wall Street firm Merrill Lynch to explain business to American pre-schoolers". Of course. ★

**Rob Gowland**  
*reviews*

**ABC & SBS**  
**public television**  
**programs**

Sun October 5 ~  
~ Sat October 11

**Who Killed Julius Caesar?** (ABC 7.30pm Sunday) is a pretentious waste of television space. Made for cable (the overrated Discovery Channel), it takes a serious historical subject – which historical forces conspired to overthrow Julius Caesar and why – and turns it into a highly problematic whodunnit.

The program's jazzed-up approach is based on the assumption that its viewers not only know nothing about history or historical processes, but are incapable of taking a serious interest in such a topic without lots of shots of Caesar's bloody corpse and portentous intimations on the soundtrack of startling revelations to come.

Nicolae Ceausescu was President of Romania from 1964 to 1989. His growing megalomania successfully derailed socialism there. When he was finally shot by firing squad he left behind a country wracked by extreme poverty and ripe for counter-revolution.

Ceausescu's record is used to discredit socialism not only in Romania but throughout the world. One of his policies was to ban abortion and most methods of contraception, leading to unwanted pregnancies and unwanted children.

Some of those children now constitute a feral underclass of children living in the underground railway system and similar places. Their daily struggles against hunger, drug abuse and violence are shown in *Children Underground* (SBS 8.35pm Sunday).

The film, by first-time director Edet Belzberg allows the children to speak for themselves with striking naturalness, revealing both the

horrific conditions of their existence and their uninhibited, distinctive personalities.

It has won a number of Best Documentary Awards, including the 2001 Sundance Festival Special Jury Prize for Best Documentary.

After WW2, it was in the Soviet zone of occupation that filmmaking began again in Germany. The DEFA film studios were established and in 1946 their first feature film was released.

*The Murderers Are Among Us* (SBS 11.50pm Sunday) was directed by Wolfgang Staudte and starred Hildegard Knef as a former concentration camp inmate and Ernst Wilhelm Borchert as a doctor traumatised by witnessing the murder of an entire Polish village.

The doctor discovers that the Nazi officer who ordered the massacre is alive and living comfortably in Berlin. Called "a serious and courageous film" by H H Wollenberg in his seminal 1948 book *Fifty Years of German Film*, *The Murderers Are Among Us* set the tone for GDR filmmaking for the next 40 years.

Hildegard Knef made such an impression she was immediately poached (with more money and star status) for the emerging West German cinema.

The trials and tribulations of China's attempt to establish socialism in a hostile capitalist world via a socialist market and capitalist investment funds have obliged the Chinese Government and people to deal with such unwelcome phenomena as mass unemployment and entrepreneurial thinking.

Clearly there are many in China who echo the Western media's cry that "China is going capitalist". I suspect however that they are a little premature.

Documentary maker Sue Williams certainly thinks the country is going capitalist, and in her two-part documentary *China In The Red* (SBS 7.30pm Tuesdays) she has amassed a litany of horror stories to show the dreadful effect of all this on the people.

In the new series of the BBC Impersonation show *Dead Ringers* (ABC 9.30pm Thursdays) Tony Blair searches for Weapons of



Set the tone of GDR filmmaking (*The Murderers Are Among Us*)

Mass Destruction in the shopping bags of bemused customers in a shopping mall.

This episode at least seemed less parochial and more consistently humorous than the last series. I particularly liked the guy with the toffy accent collecting (from real passers by in the street) on behalf of northerners – "people who have to travel by bus".

In 1950, the US was fresh from successfully completing the task the British had begun of rolling the Communists back in Greece. US forces had intervened not quite clandestinely in the civil war in China, on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek's Guo Min Dang (Kuomintang).

The US Fleet and Air Force had been used to prevent the Chinese Red Army from pursuing the remnants of Chiang's forces to Taiwan. Thousands of Guo Min Dang troops had been flown by the US from Taiwan to Burma to prepare for an imminent counter-attack on China.

In Korea, there were constant armed provocations along the

38th parallel between the North and South. Probing attacks and "incidents" involving the army of Syngman Rhee, the US-installed dictator of South Korea, resulted in several thousand soldiers being killed between October 1949 (declaration of the People's Republic of China) and June 1950.

On June 25, according to the US, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) invaded the South. According to the DPRK, and initial Western news reports would seem to support this, South Korea had launched a pre-emptive strike against the North but discovered that they had made a bad miscalculation.

By June 28, DPRK forces had captured the South's capital, Seoul. In the ensuing war, 33,269 US soldiers were killed, as were 415,000 South Korean soldiers and perhaps as many as 1,500,000 DPRK and Chinese soldiers.

As the four-part documentary series *Korea: The Unfinished War*, screening on *As It Happened* (SBS 8.30pm Saturdays), tells us, there are one hundred times more books and films on the death of Custer at the Little Big Horn, where 225 US soldiers died, than on the Korean War.

The program accepts the US version of the War's origin, but does acknowledge that "evidence hidden for almost 50 years demonstrates that the United States deployed biological warfare, including bubonic plague, cholera, anthrax and other deadly agents, against North Korea and China during the conflict".

The filmmakers were given the unprecedented opportunity to interview Chinese commanders. They were also granted access to new material from the former Soviet military and intelligence archives as well as to material emerging from the archives of the United Nations powers (US and its allies) that fought the war.

In the first episode, the program also claims that US forces staged assaults on "civilian targets and refugee columns" in an effort to halt the Northern advance.

I watched John Cromwell's 1934 RKO film *Spitfire* (ABC 10.20pm Saturday) some years ago and found Katharine Hepburn's fey "Ozark mountain girl" irritating beyond sufferance.

As the *New Yorker* observed at the time, "her artistry does not extend to the interpretation of the primitive or the uncouth".

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Water pipes, Bombay, India, 2001 - Paul Blackmore

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Phone: (02) 9212 6855  
Fax: (02) 9281 5795

Email: [guardian@cpa.org.au](mailto:guardian@cpa.org.au)

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**October 17**  
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# “Don't Be Bush-Whacked”

It is just three weeks to George Bush's visit to Australia. And while the Howard Government is preparing to greet and grovel at the feet of this international terrorist and warmonger, peace activists and other progressives are preparing a different sort of reception. Andrew Jackson spoke to Hannah Middleton, President of the Communist Party of Australia and co-convenor of the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition.

**Andrew Jackson:** George Bush is coming to Australia — what kind of welcome are we planning for him?

**Hannah Middleton:** The situation is this — we know he is coming to Australia sometime in the week beginning Monday the 20th, but we don't know which day or days.

It is rumoured he is going to go to Canberra and that there will be a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament for him to address. It is also rumoured that he may come to Sydney as well but we don't know how long for, it could be possibly only as short as two hours.

This is why we have decided to organise the main protest — “Don't Be Bush-Wacked” — on the Sunday before, which will give the maximum number of people the opportunity to come to Prince Alfred Park and say what they want to say.

And what we are trying to use is satire, contempt and ridicule and other forms of humour to make our political criticism. We'll have two serious speeches but the rest will be fun activities, for example, the longest protest line-dance in the world.

We are going to give prizes for the best display for adult and school student category, and the best placard or banner.

We are encouraging people to be creative but have a serious content to the fun, so it's not just comedy, it's satire in that tradition.

I was watching on ABC television last night the program about Charlie Chaplin making the *Great Dictator* and how that had an enormously strengthening impact for many people. I saw it when I was young and my parents took me, we were in London.

People would go and see it during the blitz and would come out going “(gesture) to you, Mr Hitler!”, because they really felt empowered by this send up.

So we are hoping we can do that, that we can make people express

their anger and their criticism of the USA and the Bush Administration and imperialism is doing to ordinary people in the world, but do it in ways that are satirical and abusive and funny.

**AJ:** And George W is certainly a wide target!

**HM:** Yes! There is already that iconic one from February the 16th of Bush with a Howard-face dog moving along behind him and every now and then its nose would touch Bush's bottom, which everyone remembers. One or two of the people in the Coalition felt it was a bit rude about the institution of Prime Ministership. I didn't agree but we decided as a matter of consensus not to use it on the poster.

**AJ:** So what is Bush's agenda on this trip?

**HM:** We're assuming some things: certainly one will be to strengthen the link between to our two countries and drum up political support.

It's unlikely — but not impossible — that the US will request that more Australian troops should go to Iraq. Although the Howard Government has already said it's not going to do that, that it's already stretched to the limit with our current presence in Iraq, with the Solomons, (with Bougainville next), and our current commitment in East Timor and all the other things we're involved in.

But there are other ways I'm sure John Howard is willing to help — with rolling out the so-called “war against terrorism” in our region.

Bush will also want Australia to spend more on the military and that will definitely include paying for two new vessels which will be used off West Australia for theatre missiles. And then of course there's all the further expansion of Pine Gap for the US missile defence which of course is being called “astro-imperialism” — a phrase I like — but what is essentially the militarisation of

space in order to further dominate the globe.

I'm sure all those “security” issues will come up.

I'm sure the establishment will be fawning on him, and at the joint sitting of Parliament everybody will cheer — which we hope at least the Greens will boycott.

**AJ:** And free trade?

**HM:** Well, whether they will let Bush say anything about the Free Trade Agreement while he's out here, well, we know he's not that bright...

I'm assuming that that's going to be talked about those talks are ongoing. It doesn't look as if enough has been finalised for him to sign anything with a flourish alongside Howard. But they may be able to cook up some sort of preliminary statement of intent or something like that for a photo opportunity and some political gain.

But there's still a lot of work to do on that. There are still some worries amongst sections of the ruling class, even about the free trade agreement and what it may do, apart from massive opposition amongst large sections of the community.

But I'm sure he'll have an entourage with him who will carry out the economic discussions as well as the security/military.

**AJ:** October 25 is being publicised as another international day of action.

**HM:** What happened initially is that some of the Trotskyist groups in the USA called for the October 25 action but there's been quite a delay on more groups coming on board in the interim.

Some American groups were worried because there was going to be a trade union conference on peace held on that weekend too.

The Peace and Justice Coalition — to which the CPA is affiliated — decided they wouldn't take on October 25 at any early stage.

The Sydney Stop the War Coalition, which is the ultra-left coalition that came out of the peace movement split here in Sydney, thought they would go with it. It's my understanding now that they've instead decided to also protest against the Bush visit by calling a rally at 5pm at Town Hall Square on the day that Bush comes to Sydney.

So rather than the international action on October 25 we will be focusing in Sydney on October the 19th.

**AJ:** What demands will be made on that day?

**HM:** We've been a little careful about that because we wanted to emphasise the satire aspect, but the overtly stated political demands



**Hannah Middleton**

will be brought out through the two speakers.

Firstly, we need to bring about an end — an *immediate* end — to the occupation of Iraq. Some form of transitional authority must be organised by the United Nations that will *very* quickly — the speed is a very important element — bring about *full* restoration of Iraqi sovereignty with democratic elections.

**AJ:** The USA has long said that the long time-frame for holding elections is necessary to enable an extensive consultation process prior to the drafting of a constitution.

**HM:** One of the things that has come up in our meetings is that when the United States had “pony express” mail they still managed to produce the American Constitution in a very short time, a matter of weeks.

Yet we are told it is going to take many *months* to produce a constitution for Iraq, and the lead-up to elections must take even longer. This is nonsense.

It is just the United States making sure they have a complete strangle-hold on the political process, who will get elected, which parties and candidates they'll fund and also control over the economic levers of that country.

And once they've got that all sown up — which they don't seem to be doing very successfully — then of course they'll allow a form of elections into which they'll pour a great deal of money into their candidates.

**AJ:** You mentioned Pine Gap earlier, and Australia's support for US “astro-imperialism”. What does that involve?

**HM:** The Anti Bases Coalition is going to have a “For heaven's sake speak out!” forum on the United States missile defence and weaponisation of space, which will have a couple of speakers informing us about what exactly the US will be putting up in the sky.

Bob Hunter who is the National President of Scientists for Global Responsibility is a great speaker who doesn't make the science too difficult. He's quite scathing about the United States.

And then Mike McKinley from ANU why the Americans are putting weapons systems up there. And then we can all have a drink and a talk about it. We are calling the campaign “For heaven's sake: against the weaponisation and militarisation of space”. (See ad on bottom of page 3).

However there are lots of other smaller peace campaigns going on all over the country at this time. People have become much more optimistic about these local campaigns this year, they are excited that they can build campaigns that will educate people and get them into activity.

I think that what's happened is that the strength of the campaign against the invasion and occupation of Iraq has actually regorganised the peace movement. ☺

**Continued next issue:**

Hannah discusses the Sea-Swap campaign, the new campaign on land mines, the role of the United Nations, and tasks of CPA members within the peace movement

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**Australian Marxist Review:**  
**Executive Editor:** Hannah Middleton  
65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: (02) 9212 6855 Fax: (02) 92815795  
**Sydney District Committee:**  
Rob Gowland, 65 Campbell St,  
Surry Hills 2010 Phone (02) 9212 6855  
**Newcastle Branch:** 303 Hunter St  
Phone: ah (02) 4926 1752

**Wollongong Branch:**  
Leanne Lindsay  
PO Box 276 Corrimal 2518  
**Riverina:** Geoff Lawler  
PO Box 1016 Wagga 2650  
Phone: (02) 6921 4316  
Fax: (02) 6921 6873  
**Victorian State Committee:**  
Andrew Irving  
PO Box 3 Room 0  
Trades Hall Lygon St Carlton South 3053  
Ph: (03) 9639 1550 Fax: (03) 9639 4199

**Brisbane Branch:**  
David Matters  
PO Box 2148 Salisbury East 4107  
Phone: (07) 3398 9623  
**South Australian State Committee:**  
Marie Lean  
Room 5, 1st floor, 149 Flinders St,  
Adelaide 5000 Ph: (08) 8232 8200  
**West Australian Branch:**  
Vic Williams  
5B Jemerson St Willagee Perth 6156  
Phone: (08) 9337 1074

Website: <http://www.cpa.org.au> Email: [cpa@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpa@cpa.org.au)