

Services for all or tax cuts for the few

The revelation that the Federal Government budget has a \$7.5 billion tax surplus shows conclusively that the savage cutbacks that the Howard Government has made to public health, education and many welfare programs cannot be justified. The money was there to finance these government responsibilities. The cutbacks were driven by the Howard Government's ideological agenda, their hostility to everything that is publicly owned and that benefits the ordinary working people and their families.

by Peter Symon

The budget income and expenditure is not audited by any outside body and the surplus may be much more than has been revealed.

It has not been achieved as a result of "good management" by Howard and Costello but by the millions of dollars cut from the proportion of government expenditure going to health and education and other welfare programs.

Other contributing factors are the imposition of the GST by the Howard Government that has taken billions from the pockets of mainly working people. Over \$31 billion was collected from the GST in the last financial year and it has been rising by about \$3 billion each year.

Bracket creep

Another factor is "bracket creep" that pushes some wage and salary earners into more highly taxed brackets. There is a justified argument that tax brackets should be adjusted to take account of the increase in wage levels for some categories of workers.

There has been a massive assault on the unemployed, disabled persons, carer allowances and those receiving other necessary welfare benefits.

The Howard Government has been more destructive of essential services than any other Government Australia has ever had. At the same time it has imposed on working people the heaviest tax regime of any in the developed industrialised countries.

The statements by Howard and Costello following the announcement of the budget surplus clearly indicate their cynical preference for tax concessions to middle income earners in the hope that this will win their vote for the present

government in the next Federal election.

Priority

The priority must now be established by a massive public demand that the monies cut from health, education and other social welfare benefits be restored and that this BE GIVEN PRIORITY over tax cuts to only a few. **This provides benefits to all and particularly to low and middle income earners to pensioners and other welfare beneficiaries.**

The fact that the Government has been forced to suspend the health insurance levy imposed on doctors as a result of the threatened resignation of specialist doctors shows that decisive action by sections of the community can force a retreat by the government.

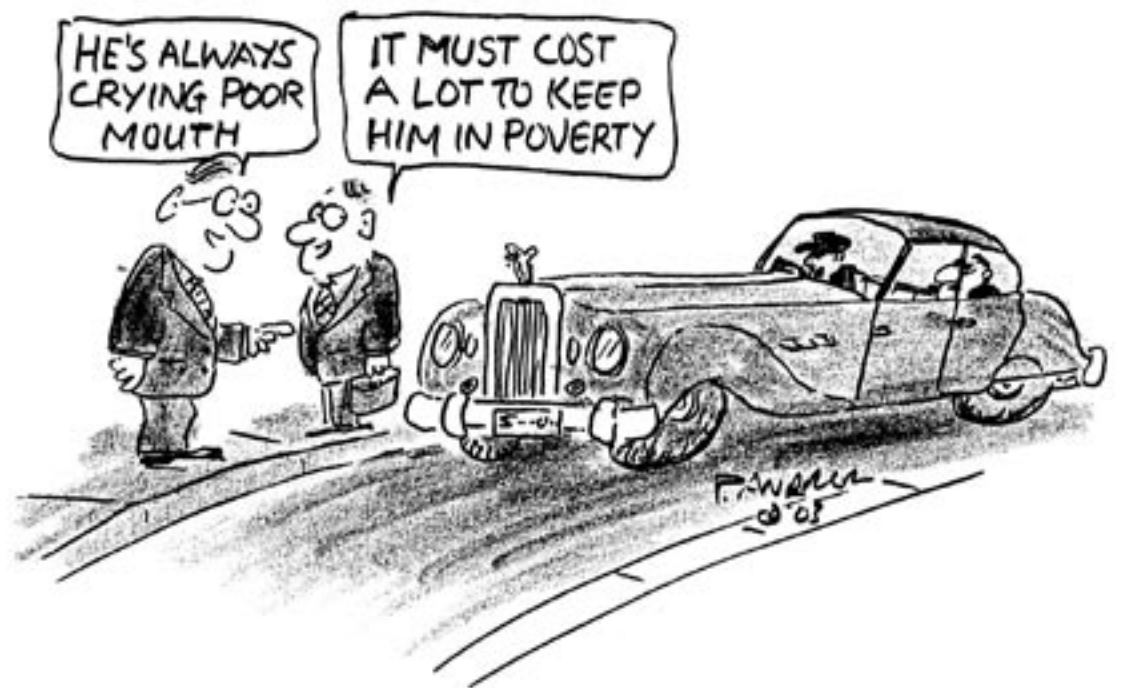
- The budget surplus must be used to increase the rebate paid to doctors so that Medicare bulk-billing can be maintained as a service to every member of the community.

- The free public dental service destroyed by the Howard Government should be re-established.

- Some of the surplus could be used to re-establish government insurance offices so that the huge costs imposed on doctors by way of insurance premiums could be scaled back and contained. The policy of privatisation should be reversed.

- Millions must be made available to properly fund universities and to wind back the new impositions recently forced on the public education system. HECs fees should be completely abolished. (In the 1970s it was possible to have free tuition in universities but 30 years later universities are being starved while huge debts are being forced on students).

- Any government concerned



for the Australian people and the future of our country should re-establish free public education from kindergarten to university.

Who pays?

A basic question concerning taxation is, **who pays?** While company tax has been reduced from 47c in the dollar to its present 30c in the dollar – and many companies pay much less than this requirement, with some paying no tax at all – tax paid by working families has gone up, particularly as a result of the GST.

The CPA remains adamantly opposed to the GST, which places a disproportionate tax burden on the poor and low income workers. It should be replaced with a progressive tax system based on earned income, particularly by tax paid on company profits.

The fact that many families are vastly worse off is revealed in the figures for household debt which has risen from \$290 billion in 1996 (the year the Howard Government was first elected) to \$660 billion now. This situation demands that the financial policies being pursued by the government are forcing many more to borrow to keep going. The debt on credit card borrowings is now substantially over \$20 billion – over \$1000 for every man, woman and child in Australia.

Another source of budget income could be that from the profits earned by publicly owned enterprises. The stupidity of the privatisation of public enterprises and facilities such as the sale of Qantas, airports, Telstra, the sell-off of buildings previously owned by governments, is now apparent.

Kenneth Davidson of the Melbourne Age writes, "...the dividends forgone from the sale of half of Telstra are greater than the interest saved on the retirement of debt. The leaseback arrangements from the sale of Government property such as the Foreign Affairs headquarters are far more expensive than the previous situation in which the Government owned the buildings".

He writes, "...an extra billion dollars a year put back into public

hospitals and universities ... would generate jobs and take pressure off household debt".

Letters carried in daily newspapers and the response on talk-back radio indicate that many people do not support tax cuts while allocations to public services such as health, education and welfare are further attacked and neglected.

Public pressure demanding that these services be given priority needs to be built from now until the next election as part of the campaign to decisively defeat this most conservative and anti-people government that Australia has ever suffered. Letters to newspapers and participation in talk-back radio session, writing to your local Federal member and Senator will all help to build the campaign. ☼

Vital statistics:

Foreign debt has grown from \$190 billion when the Howard Government was elected to \$360 billion now.

Commonwealth taxation has increased from 23.5 percent of GDP (1996) to 25.4 percent of GDP in 2003.

Household debt is up from \$290 billion in 1996 to \$660 billion now.

The Federal Government's GST rip-off increased from \$27 billion when first introduced in 2001 to \$31.25 billion in the last financial year.

SA nuke dump
- p2

Medical indemnity
crisis
- p3

October 16
university strike
- p4

Globalising solidarity
CP Chile
- p6

The war on
al-Jazeera
- p9

Exchange rates are economic & political

The steady rise of the currency exchange rate relationship of the Australian dollar to the US dollar has a number of causes, not the least being the decline of the US dollar against other world currencies.

Currency exchange rates are not just an economic question but are also a political matter.

The three main currencies of the industrialised countries are the US dollar, the European Euro and the Japanese Yen. Another currency that is steadily becoming of more importance in world trade is the Chinese Yuan.

The ebb and flow of currency exchange rates has a big influence on world trade. For example, as the value of the Australian dollar relative to the US dollar goes up, imports of goods and services into Australia become cheaper. Fewer Australian dollars are needed to pay for them.

On the other hand, Australian exports become more expensive to importers in other countries and they are less inclined to buy Australian commodities. Importers in other countries will look elsewhere to buy what they need.

In the last year or so, there has been a major trend in the exchange rate relationship between the US dollar and the Euro. The value of the US dollar has been declining while the value of the Euro has been increasing.

This actually helps the US economy to the extent that US manufactures and services become cheaper on European markets and those of the European countries become dearer on US markets.

However, it also means that investors are less likely to send their investment money to US banks and, if they have invested in the past, they may be inclined to take their money out of the US and make a profit out of the exchange.

An enormous amount of money is sloshing around the world being used to speculate on exchange rate variations between the major currencies. Sometimes the exchange rate differences are tiny but, when multiplied by huge sums, actually translate into very big profits.

One reason for the greater demand for the Australian dollar at present is that money invested in Australian banks earns an interest rate higher than that available in the US, Japan or Europe.

For many years the Australian dollar was government controlled but it was "floated" in the early 1980s by the Labor Government's Treasurer Paul Keating. Floating the dollar meant that it became the plaything of international speculators who can make or break pretty well any currency.

When it was at its lowest the Australian dollar was worth only about 50c to the US dollar. In the 1970s, before the Australian dollar was floated, it was about equal to the US dollar, that is, 100c Australian would buy 100c US.

The Chinese government is much wiser and has refused to float its currency on the open market thereby enabling it to control more effectively the terms of trade between China and other countries. It also protects the currency against speculators.

In the 1990s the currencies of a number of Asian countries crashed as a result of speculation by US multi-millionaire speculator, George Soros. However, because it was largely government controlled the Chinese currency weathered the storm.

Furthermore, China was able to substantially help other Asian countries because China's currency and China's trade relations with other countries remained stable.

What needs to be watched now is the decline in the value of the US dollar and the rise in the value of the Euro. This can have a devastating consequence for the US economy if more countries cash in their reserves and investments held in the US and convert them into Euros.

A number of countries have already taken this step. In fact one of those countries was Saddam Hussein's Iraq. That was undoubtedly a factor that impelled the US to invade Iraq. What if other Middle Eastern countries were to follow the Iraqi example?

Venezuela has also opted out of the US dollar net to some extent by making barter arrangements for sale of their oil with other Latin American countries.

Some countries will undoubtedly take this step as a means of making a political protest against the foreign policies being implemented by the Bush administration.

PRESS FUND

So, the Federal Government has reaped a windfall surplus from taxpayers. True to his class, the federal treasurer observed: "Since we reduced taxes for business, tax revenues have boomed." Perhaps he thinks that if business taxes were reduced to nothing, revenues would go through the roof. What a great piece of reasoning for his big business friends! But it doesn't actually work that way, of course. And speaking of revenues, the Press Fund's total has slipped a bit behind our annual target at this stage. *The Guardian* is demanding that the surplus be spent on health and education. That's a good reason to send a contribution to our Press Fund. Our thanks go to those who contributed this week, as follows:

G Busselmann \$90, Don Cartwright \$20, D Gill \$12, B Griffin \$20, "Round Figure" \$13, John Williamson \$20.

This week's total \$175. Progressive total: \$8785.

Old days on the waterfront re-lived in Port Adelaide

Hundreds of visitors to the heritage area of Port Adelaide were recently given vivid insights into the lives of the men that worked on the waterfront in the 1920s. Union organisations and retired waterfront workers combined to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the 1928 national maritime strike. The wretched conditions of the families of workers were also recalled.

Among the numerous events and speeches – some of which made the connection between the 1920s struggles and the ongoing efforts of the bosses to degrade pay and conditions and to destroy the union – was a performance by local resident and former waterside worker Rex Munn.

Rex's last job on the waterfront was that of "vigilance officer" or V/O – going to ships and taking up the problems of the workers.

At the commemoration Rex brought to life the tense and humiliating experiences of the men at the time of the "bull system" – the body-hire that used to take place on Lipson Street – at "Poverty Corner" near the spot where Port Adelaide's Maritime Museum now stands. Rex took the role of the boss's agent at a "bull system" pick-up ...

"Righto, you useless lot, get around here if you want to get a job. How many of you here today? Four Hundred! Bloody lot of you goin' home without a job, then. Righto, we've got the Adelaide Steamship Company – SS Mandala, eight o'clock start, number five berth, unloadin' railway sleepers in heavy redwood, kauri and jarrah from Western Australia. Don't turn up without ya bloody timber hooks.

"Here's the labour for today. I want four gangs and extras. I want to see four good bull gangs – I don't want bludgers. Bull hatchmen – Smith, Walters, Hendry, Murphy, take ya damned gangs down to number five berth and make sure ya move a bit of cargo, not sit on ya arse all day!

"Some of you blokes wouldn't move enough timber to make a box of matches. Now we've got



Rex Munn

the gangs, we need someone to get down there to get the gear ready. I want two winch drivers. Jones and Brown, you'll do. Jackson, don't waste ya time delayin', you're not gettin' the job, you're frightened to turn on the bloody steam, you're tryin' to hang the bloody job out. I'm not interested in you, get a job somewhere else.

"Righto, I want four strong holdies and I mean strong, not frightened of a bit of bloody work. Diva, Kellerman, Redder, Virgilio – you'll do. And have a look at these. These boots are nearly worn out. If I don't get new boots soon they'll be new bloody holdies.

I wouldn't waste me time on some of you blokes, you wouldn't sweat in a bloody fit. I don't want you Wilson, you're a trouble makin' bastard. You're always whingeing about safety on the job.

"I've got an easy job here for

a horse dragger. Selwyn, you'll do and don't forget to pay me tab up at the Railway Hotel or you won't get a bloody job next week.

"Now the rest of these jobs are shore jobs. I want ten strong men to work. Not skinny, under-nourished bloody weaklings. Let's have a look, who do I want? Not much good tryin' to pick out any amongst ya. There's only one thing to do. I'll throw the bloody lot at ya and ya have to fight for 'em. Strongest wins. Here! It's the best way I know to get strong men.

"Righto, there'll be another pick up at one o'clock. Don't bank on gettin' a job, shippin's scarce. That's the end of the pick up".

The 400-strong crowd then marched behind the MUA banner to the old Wharfies Hall in Nile Street for other lively activities commemorating the great wharfie's strike of '28. ☺

Action against nuclear dump continues in SA

A very important meeting will have taken place in Adelaide on Wednesday, October 8.

The meeting aims to bring together all those who have worked tirelessly over the years on the campaign against establishing a nuclear waste dump in SA.

The campaign planning meeting was initiated by Friends of the Earth (FOE) and the Adelaide Kungkas.

The Adelaide Kungkas is an Adelaide support group formed to assist the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta (Cooper Pedy women) in their fight against the proposed radioactive dump that the Federal Government plans to establish on their land.

The Kupa Piti Tjuta is a council of senior Aboriginal women and their campaign is called "Iratu Wanti" – "the poison, leave it".

The women have been fighting for five years to stop a nuclear dump from being located on a pastoral property near Woomera in South Australia. The Federal

Government recently bought the property by compulsory acquisition.

It is now 50 years since the first British nuclear tests at Woomera and it is a sad anniversary for the

survivors of those tests to have to campaign again against the same threat.

Having survived the legacy of the atomic testing and the radioactive fallout, the women ask for help and support from a wider community to prevent new threats posed by a nuclear waste dump. ☺

Things you can do:

- Please write to Prime Minister John Howard expressing your opposition to the planned nuclear waste dump. The address is Parliament House, Canberra, ACT, 2600. Best to write and post but you can also email via this website: www.pm.gov.au/email.cfm.
- Write a submission opposing the dump to the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA). The website is: www.arpansa.gov.au/reposit/nrwr.htm Post submissions to: The Project Management Officer – NRWR ARPANSA, PO Box 655, Miranda NSW 1490.
- Keep in touch with the nuclear dump campaign developments: Contacts: Jim Green (FoE): (08) 8227 1399, 0417 318368, jim.green@foe.org.au; or Adelaide Kungkas: adelaidekungkas@yahoo.com.

Insurance levy threatens public hospitals, Medicare

While a postponement on the payment of the first instalment of the medical indemnity insurance levy has been announced, doctors are refusing to accept the genuineness of the Federal Government's apparent concession. They justifiably point out that the 18 months moratorium takes the issue to a period after the next elections. They fear that the Government, if re-elected, will then proceed with the implementation of its agenda.

by Bob Briton

The objective of the Government is to undermine public health care, not just Medicare, and force doctors out of the public system and into the private hospital system.

The Australian Medical Association says that the Government's latest manoeuvre will not stem the flow of resignations of specialist surgeons from public hospitals. In fact, the crisis now centred in NSW is threatening to move to other states.

The AMA has called on the Government to establish a timetable for structural and financial changes to medical indemnity. Doctors want an expert committee established to review all the options and to report back in six months. Staff specialists and GPs are joining private surgeons in rejecting the Federal Government's moratorium.

New system

A "no fault" system similar to that in place in New Zealand should be considered together with the right of patients to take legal action and for negligent doctors to be penalised if found guilty.

The present system of indemnity insurance is obviously not working. Furthermore, to the extent that the present system is retained, premiums should be the responsibility of the employer. In the case of public hospitals it is the federal and state governments. (It is employers who have to pay premiums for workers' compensation so governments should pay similar premiums to cover doctors in public hospitals.)

Huge insurance premiums are gradually forcing doctors out of public hospitals and into private

hospitals which is what the federal government intends. Private hospitals pay higher salaries to doctors and, with higher salaries, they can more easily pay high indemnity insurance charges.

But an inevitable consequence is a substantial increase in fees charged to patients as doctors attempt to claw back the extra insurance charges. The AMA predicts that it could add hundreds of dollars to the cost of a consultation with an obstetrician, for example.

Hospital closures

Acting NSW Health Minister Frank Sartor said that there was a risk that hospitals would have to close and that the already long queues for elective surgery would lengthen.

The Doctors Reform Society (DRS) warned that the lives of mothers and babies were at risk thanks to the bungling of the indemnity insurance crisis by the federal government. This could result from the decision of trained professionals to leave their practices and the inability of midwives to obtain insurance.

Working class families

But resignations are mostly taking place in the public hospitals in the working-class western suburbs of Sydney where most families cannot afford private health insurance. It is working class families that would mainly suffer from a closure of public hospitals in that area.

Former Federal Workplace Relations Minister and chief head-

kicker for the Government, Tony Abbott, was forced to act in an attempt to at least delay the damage being done to the federal government by the breakdown in public hospitals resulting from the resignations. The pugnacious neo-liberal tried to defuse the present crisis by deferring for eighteen months the introduction of the federal government's levy to be paid by specialist doctors.

However, the federal government is maintaining levy payments by doctors up to \$1000. The only levies being postponed are those over \$1000 per year. This means that about 80 percent of doctors would continue to have to pay. This is, perhaps, a scheme on the part of the federal government to bring about a split among doctors.

It was the growing radicalisation of doctors, including specialists, which forced the government's hand.

The insurance levy is designed by the Federal Government to recoup the estimated \$460 million in unfunded liabilities it has agreed to cover on behalf of Australia's biggest medical indemnity organisation, the failed United Medical Protection. The liabilities in question are claims that may yet be made for malpractice during medical treatment provided in the fifteen years leading up to the year 2000.

Hardest hit by the levy will be specialist surgeons, such as obstetricians and neurosurgeons. The Australian Medical Association (AMA) reports that the 30,000 doctors affected by the levy have already received their bills for between \$50,000 and \$260,000, to be paid over the next ten years. This cost is on top of what they have to find for their indemnity insurance.

Dr Neil Wallman, an obstetrician practicing on NSW's Central Coast, is typical. He pays \$140,000 a year in indemnity insurance and will be expected to find an extra \$22,000 a year for the next ten years



Dr Con Costa, National President of the Doctor's Reform Society speaking in Sydney at the Save Medicare Alliance commemoration of Medicare's 20th birthday.

for the levy. For many the new tax was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Health needs overlooked

Up to the time of Abbott's "concession", the federal government maintained a posture of unyielding confrontation. Every authoritative claim from doctors' organisations about the consequences of the levy was rejected and the action of individual doctors in resigning was described as "contrived". The needs of the public for health care were completely overlooked as the Government resorted to mudslinging instead of dealing with the practical issues.

Only the very real possibility of a meltdown of public hospital services and the unity of doctors – clearly visible in their 4000-strong protest in Sydney on September 28

– brought about some change to the Government's unacceptable stand on the issue.

However, the Howard Government's determination to undermine Medicare and to promote private health care and private hospitals should not be underestimated.

Speaking to The Guardian last week, Doctor's Reform Society president Dr Tim Woodruff summed up the levy fiasco this way:

"It certainly fits with the agenda of the Howard government since it came to power to strengthen the private sector and to weaken the public sector. Just like their absence of action on general practitioner rebates and general practitioner working conditions that has led to a decline in bulk billing, so their lack of appropriate action to address the medical indemnity crisis is leading to a decline in the services that can be provided in a public hospital. It suits their purpose, which is to destroy Medicare." ❖

Reshuffling the head kickers

A brief profile of the new Attorney-General provides an indication of the Howard Government's plans to step up its reactionary agenda. Philip Ruddock's credentials as a jackbooted reactionary prepared to grind human rights into the dirt are behind his instalment as the country's leading law officer. He now has at his disposal a raft of laws that, in the name of anti-terrorism, allow for the gross violation of the civil liberties and democratic rights of all Australians.

by Tom Pearson

As Immigration Minister, Ruddock oversaw the imposition of a repugnant regime of punishment and incarceration of innocent people coming to Australia's shores seeking asylum.

In locking up men, women and children in a network of prison camps run by a US-based private prison corporation, he broke international laws. In setting up the "Pacific solution" he bribed and threatened a number of Pacific island nations to also lock up Australia-bound asylum seekers. Overall, Ruddock has made Australia an international pariah for violating fundamental human rights.

As Minister for Indigenous Affairs, he led the Government's attack on the hard won rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This included the gutting of ATSIC and a vendetta targeting a number of Indigenous leaders through a malicious campaign of character assassination via the mass media.

Now Ruddock is in charge of the judiciary. This is the same judiciary he has publicly attacked with allegations of political bias against judges and court decisions that have come down in favour of asylum seekers and against the mandatory detention laws that form the basis of the Government's inhumane refugee policies.

There is every reason to expect his attempts to browbeat the courts to continue along with a concerted drive to install members of the judiciary whose politics are in line with those of the Government.

The other ministerial changes, including in industrial relations, health and welfare, reinforce this preparation for a stepped up period of privatisations and harsher austerity programs.

Hatchet-man Tony Abbott was obviously transferred to the sensitive health portfolio to push ruthlessly the Government's objective of privatised health services by destroying Medicare and the nation's public

hospitals. Despite his attempt to defuse the immediate crisis over the insurance levy, the main government objective remains the same.

Treasurer Peter Costello signalled that the appointment of Kay Patterson from Health Minister to family welfare and of Kevin Andrews to unemployment and industrial relations will involve even more ruthless cuts to the already poverty-level payments to pensioners and the unemployed.

Just prior to Patterson's and Andrews' official instalment as Family and Community Services Minister and Employment and Workplace Relations Minister respectively, Costello announced that the Government would "make sure disability benefits did not become a non-work-tested waiting room for the aged pensions".

He defined those on disability pensions as mostly people "reportedly suffering from bad backs".

And Andrews slots into Abbott's union-basher seat as though it were tailor-made for him. In his maiden speech to Parliament in 1991 he said: "Rampant unionism hinders the vaunted but little-recognised and little-realised micro-economic reform in this nation and continues to keep our economy uncompetitive with its wasteful work practices" ❖

Sydney
For Heaven's Sake Speak Out
on the US's missile defence &
weaponisation of space programs
Saturday 11 October 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

Adelaide
The limits of injustice
A film program about dictatorships.
Life under Pinochet's and Batista's dictatorships.

Mercury Cinema
13 Morphett St Adelaide SA 5000

Friday 17 October 7pm
"Fernando is Back" & "Chile: Obstinate memory"
Live performance, poetry reading and a short introduction.
Food and drinks at the end of this function.

Friday 24 October 7pm
"Viva Pinochet!" & "I am Cuba"

Advance ticket sales from 08 8410 0979.
A fundraiser to support a project in Chile.
An independent radio for the Corporacion Mapuche XEG XEG

University staff to strike over university funding

Universities around the nation are expected to grind to a halt on October 16, as staff hold a one-day strike over the Howard Government's draconian higher education policies. The National Tertiary Education Union and the Community and Public Sector Union have called the strike over the new policies, which will result in massive infringements of educational standards and employees' rights.

by Peter Mac

If implemented, the new policies would result in universities being able to increase their fees by 30 per cent. All current limits on the extent of contract employment would be lifted and university authorities would, in effect, be called on to pressure their employees to sign individual work contracts.

The Government also threatens that University funding would be cut if a university agreed to introduce employee wages and conditions better than the current "community standard", in effect, blocking any future improvements in wages and conditions over that level.

The government recently announced that university funding would be conditional on them introducing new measures in conformity with its policies. At the time of the announcement, the Senate of Sydney University was about to sign a new workplace agreement with their staff which would have set a precedent for other universities.

The agreement included

improvements in conditions, for example, the introduction of new maternity leave provisions. However, the announcement caused the Senate to postpone signing the agreement and, as a result, many new agreements at other universities have been cancelled or postponed.

Maternity leave

The loss of the new provisions regarding maternity leave will impose particular hardships on women employees and students. As Suzanne Hammond, Federal Women's Industrial Officer, recently pointed out: "Women in the sector ... stand to lose their superior entitlements to maternity leave, family leave, higher superannuation contributions and other benefits. The removal of protection of casual workers would see many full-time and part-time jobs transferred to casual employment with little protection".

The national president of the NTEU, Carolyn Allport, points out

that the government's position on university employment contradicts the Workplace Relations Act, which bars third parties from involvement in enterprise bargaining. She commented: "In this case the government is the third party. It is intervening against its own workplace relations legislation".

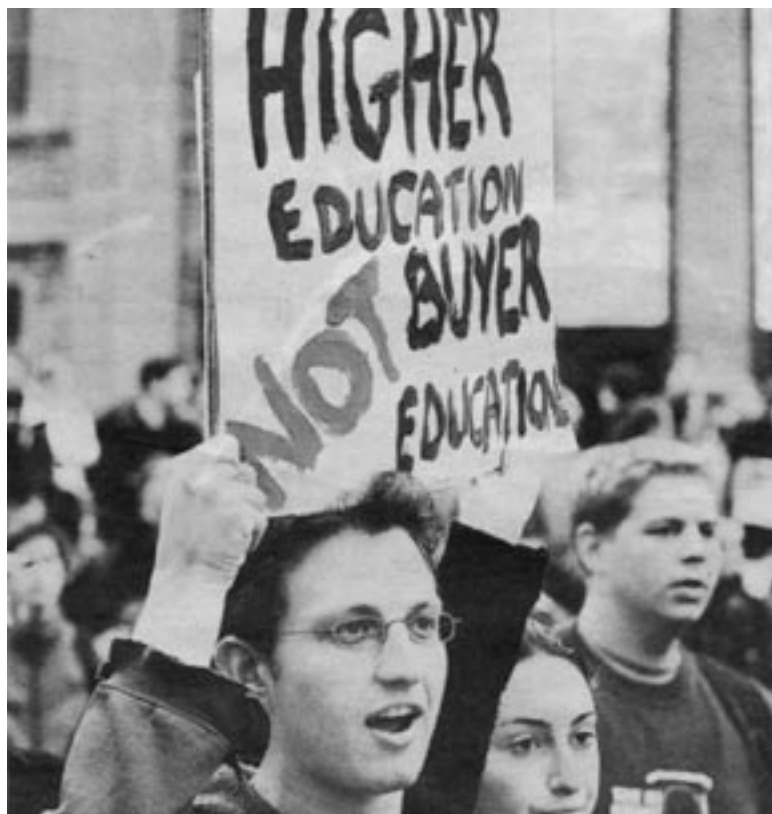
Excluding students

The government's policies will also exclude many students from gaining a university position. The deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, Alan Robson, stated last week that the government's demand that over-enrolments be eliminated means that some 8000 students would probably be denied entry to university.

He noted that universities currently receive \$2700 to educate "marginally funded" students in over-enrolled courses, as opposed to some \$10,000 for fully-funded students. There are now some 33,000 positions in the over-enrolled courses, of which the government proposes to fully fund 25,000, leaving a shortfall of 8000 positions.

Mr Robson said that he expected these students to be turned away, "because the government is not going to fund you for over-enrolments".

These and other obstacles will pose particular difficulties



for women students. As Suzanne Hammond noted, "A woman who intends to spend some of her working life in part-time employment can expect to pay 23 percent more for gaining a qualification. Many women may decide that it is just not worth it! This is a backward step in gaining gender equality".

Gaining a place in a university will be made harder by the new requirements. Given the operation of the law of supply and demand, it is expected that the score needed by school students to gain university entry will rise significantly if the number of available university places falls.

The president of the National

Union of students, Daniel Kyriacou says, "Students will either miss out on university places or pay dearly if they get a place under these so-called reforms".

The Council of Postgraduate Associations has said its members will walk off the universities in support of the university employees' strike, and the National Union of Students is considering doing the same thing.

Howard's new Minister for Workplace Relations, Kevin Andrews has indicated that he will retain the policies imposed by his predecessor, Tony Abbott. The stage is set for a major showdown on October 16. ☼

LABOUR NOTES

Pan Pharmaceuticals is likely to get its licence back after the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration said that a recent audit showed that Pan was on its way to recovery, having met good manufacturing practice requirements. But while that is good news for the manufacturer the workers have been left out in the cold with no jobs after the company's liquidator Tony McGrath of KMG said that he still intended sacking the company's workforce. The AWU has won an improved redundancy package for the workers and it expects that up to 85 workers will be put off this week. AWU National Secretary Bill Shorten told *Labor.net* he was disappointed that the workers will be made redundant however he is pleased that the workers will receive an increased package.

The ACTU has launched a print and radio advertising campaign warning workers about the impact of the federal government's proposed building industry legislation. ACTU Secretary Greg Combet said, "This government started with workers on the waterfront, then they targeted construction workers. We now see them threatening university staff, and it is very clear that the agenda of the new industrial legislation is not about making the building industry more productive, it is about setting new low standards for workers rights in Australia. The legislative response to the Building Industry Royal Commission is a rehash of the federal government's anti-worker, anti-union agenda and the government has admitted that it will flow on to other workers". The advertisements will run over the next month in every state in Australia.

Casual workers working outside normal business hours could lose their superannuation entitlements following a recent High Court decision. The High Court ruled that although some workers may be disadvantaged by the decision, casual loadings and the flexibility of work compensated for the loss of super. About 30 per cent of the Australian workers are casuals. One of the judges who dissented from the decision Judge Michael Kirby said that the decision would deny industrial equity to casuals. "In Australia, the numbers of 'permanent casual' workers have grown enormously in recent years. What once would have been regarded as an oxymoron is now an industrial commonplace, Justice Kirby said.

Corporate greed leads to closure

Victorian Trades Hall Council Secretary, Leigh Hubbard, has condemned Geelong Wool Combing's decision to close its Lara plant as based on corporate greed.

The closure on October 1 follows the company's five-month lock-out of 100 workers who refused to accept a 25 percent pay cut, unreasonable changes to rosters and the casualisation of the workforce. The workers had not taken any industrial action at the plant prior to the lock-out.

"This decision is indicative of a culture of greed that currently dominates multi-national companies where shareholder value is considered more important than the lives of workers and their families", said Mr Hubbard. He also criticised the Federal Government for attempting

to shift the blame for the closure onto the workers involved in the five-month lock-out.

"The workers and their union made repeated attempts to negotiate in good faith with the company and insisted that they were ready to return to work. The reality is that the Federal Government's Workplace Relations Act has no provision for good faith bargaining and the company repeatedly refused to allow the workers back in the gate."

He said the workers should be congratulated for their strength and determination to resist the com-

pany's efforts to reduce their living standards and working conditions to an unacceptable level.

"The Federal Government's militant approach to industrial relations has sent a message to employers that brutalising workers and their families is acceptable behaviour. While it is only a handful of rogue employers lacking a sense of fairness and justice who will take up this attitude, it is nevertheless taking industrial relations on a dangerous and destructive route.

"While the Geelong Wool Combing workers will be even more disappointed by this decision, they can remain proud of their efforts to resist the push to reduce Australian workers' rights and conditions". ☼

Building unions face biggest challenge

Two thousand building workers packed the Perth Concert Hall last Monday and unanimously resolved to work to reject Howard's agenda to attack building unions through the recommendations of the Cole Commission.

by Vic Williams

They called on building unions to be united and strong. The wider union movement must be informed on all issues.

One hundred and fifty chanting MUA members arrived at the meeting in four buses and marched in with banners flying.

The CEPU, AMWU, the Plumbers and Transport unions gave strong support.

Kevin Reynolds, Secretary of the WA CFMEU outlined the menace of the recommendations

coming from the final report of the Cole Commission.

The proposed Building and Construction Commission is to have unbelievable powers of questioning in secret. A penalty of six months jail for refusing to answer questions is provided.

A special police force of 200 persons is planned to enforce the Commission's activities and will cost \$17 million.

Under the proposals unions going on strike can be fined \$100,000 a day and individuals

\$20,000 a day. Recruiting to a union can become a criminal offence.

Martin Kingham, Secretary of Victorian CFMEU who refused to give names to the Commission, said employers were breaching the Industrial Relations Act every day.

Jock Ferguson of the AMWU said the urgent task was to get rid of the stinking rotten Federal Government.

Les McLoughlin of the CEPU said they must fight. In reply to a question he said, "We can't wait for the ACTU, we must bring them along".

Chris Cain of the MUA said, "Bad laws are there to be broken. Your struggle is our struggle". ☼

Gusher gives a "yeee ha" to Buttock promotion

From Our Correspondents

The two-party system's most prized democratic process, the opinion polls, have shown Labour leader Hyman Spleen still way behind PM Coward in the populist pandering stakes. The Labour opposition continues to be hit with scandals, setbacks, backslides, roll overs, turn-about, retreats, retractions, denials, internal division, turmoil, hesitation, opportunism, intrigue, confusion, uncertainty, low morale and general lethargy.

"Things are looking positive", exclaimed an up-beat Hyman Spleen. Following on Mr Coward's recent denial that he had been sexed up, Mr Spleen promised supporters that he, like Mr Coward, was also not sexually oriented. His confirmed denial came as it was revealed that his shadow treasurer Bark Loathsome had penned a discriminating letter to US President Petroleum G Gusher giving expression to certain deep-seated desires.

The letter, a copy of which has been obtained by our correspondents, speaks of "a grovel that dare not speak its name".

"Yes Pet, I want your endorsement to be the new Labour leader", says the letter. "I know you've penned in Little Timmy Beastly for the next barbeque at Rancho el Gusher, but just consider this - who else (aside from PM Coward) can bash skulls and suck at the same time? Not Beastly, who, let's face it, is past his use by date. Certainly not Spleen! I mean, how do you think I got to where I am today?"

"Pet, Beastly even confronted Spleen just the other day. 'Hyman' he said, 'Your yesterday's man.' And Spleen's response was 'But you're the day before yesterday's man'."

Mr Spleen went on the offensive, telling the media, "I can assure Labour supporters I have never been sexed up in any way, shape or

form. You can be assured that I am utterly sexless."

Meanwhile, Mr Coward's reshuffle of his cabinet deckchairs came after close consultation with the US President, the PM has confirmed. "I spoke to Mr Gusher in our usual exchange of ideas and he was absolutely of the firm opinion, with careful consideration, that we, as a sovereign embedded state should, all things considered, make whatever decisions we want after Mr Gusher's nod of assent."

Asked about the appointment of Commandant Adolph Buttock as Minister for Legalising Tyranny, Mr Coward said that President Gusher gave a "yeee ha" to the Buttock promotion. "His exact words were, 'Any guy who has created a concentration camp network such as Australia has got is the kind of guy you want as head of your country's justice system'."

Foreign Minister Oleander Bounder also received a promotion with Minister for Sheep Ships added to his portfolio, immediately having to deal with a ship load of oves sent back by their country of destination. "The Saudis refuse to take them", said an outraged Mr Bounder. "They told me they would decide which sheep came there, and how they came."

"It's quite heartless, I think, leaving them to sail around the ocean sick and dying. Daddy had sheep on his farm when I was a boy. Lovely woolly things, they were."

In the US, President Gusher has issued another of his now famous "Gunfight at the OK Corral" addresses to the nation following findings by terrorist expert Con Coction that terrorist networks are being funded by a complex underground system using fly-buys.

"We gonna git all them re-cruted by the regime's evil henchfolk", said President Gusher in his address. "They jist terrists re-cruted by Saddam to be goorillas."

Cleg Lapdog, the Antipodes Editor for the News Extremely Ltd paper *The Strain* ("We strain all the news that's fit to print"), responded to these latest revelations by calling for Australia to become even more embedded with the USA.

"Anti-Americanism is un-Australian", Mr Lapdog told an extraordinary media gathering, including our correspondents. "They are us, we are them. Didn't they come halfway round the world and kill hundreds of thousands of people in South-East Asia in the name of democracy and freedom? And aren't they killing even more people right now in your name?"

"Haven't they rescued our television and film industries by filling the void with endless amounts of their programming and movies. Why, my boss Rupture T Burlap has even set up his Schlock Studios here. And don't they want to help rid us of all the protection of our industry and agriculture that's stunting us economically, so as to expose us to deeper economic penetration?"

"I tell you, we're apple pie, right to our bobby sox", Mr Lapdog proclaimed pressing the CD key on his computer and standing to attention with a smart West Point salute as the strains of the *Star Spangled Banner* filled the room. ✪



The National Coalition for Gun Control has labelled the NSW firearms amnesty "Operation Mr Whippy". The Coalition warns that the amnesty for gun owners to hand in illegal weapons from October 1 to March 31 next year, will not only be a failure but a public health hazard. "There is a great danger that the money given to shooters and firearms dealers who hand over their illegal handgun will be used to upgrade to one of more than 800 more powerful handgun models that will remain legal in NSW and across Australia", said the Coalition's Samantha Lee. The Mr Whippy title comes from the monetary treat the government will be providing shooters via mobile buy-back vans.

It's branch stacking time at the Vatican. With the current Pope just about pooped the lobbying, bribes and standover tactics will be in full swing in the halls of the tax-free haven of absolutism in the centre of Rome. To ensure that reaction reigns in the hierarchy Catholic Church the College of Cardinals, which will appoint a new Pope, is a who's who of doctrinaire fundamentalists. It is no surprise then that included in the list of 30 newly promoted cardinals in the College is Australia's own George Pell, a religious zealot with a particularly nasty turn of mind. At the Vatican, Pell will slot right into that seething hotbed of homophobes and ratbag right-to-lifers who will elevate one of their kind to the throne of the Holy See. Australia's Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer, in Rome last week to chat to the Pope on behalf of the Christian fundamentalist Howard Government, stuck up for Pell following criticism of him from the more progressive elements of the church. "I think they should show a bit more tolerance than that", said Downer without a hint of irony. "I certainly want to congratulate the Pope on the appointment." He said the Government was "delighted there is a new Australian cardinal, and such a distinguished Australian".

Even the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission couldn't ignore the get-rich-quick operation run by the National Investment Institute, a high fallutin' title for a one-man rip off scheme. Henry Kaye ran adverts in the mass media promoting seminars that would "turn ordinary Australians into millionaire property investors, with no money down, no debt and price protection" i.e. a guarantee that if the market crashed they wouldn't lose a cent. Not surprisingly the ACCC found that the scheme did not enable people to become millionaires, that Kaye and his company had "no reasonable grounds" to claim that they could, nor that the five volunteers Kaye trained would become property millionaires in six months without using their own money or taking on a risk of debt. The ACCC also said that Kaye was "party to alleged misleading and deceptive conduct" in promoting the program. In fact, this could be everyone from the Packer family down to PM Howard's bankrupt brother.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is Smorgon Steel Chief Executive Ray Horsburgh. Smorgon has locked its workers out for months whilst trying to exclude their union and slash their pay and conditions. Horsburgh will be paid more than \$2 million in bonuses and other perks under his new separation contract.

Public Meeting
Nidia Diaz
from El Salvador

Brisbane
Monday 13th October 7pm
Communications, Electrical & Plumbing Union
41 Peel St, South Brisbane
Suggested donation \$5
Australian Solidarity with Latin America - ASLA

Melbourne
Saturday 11th October 7pm
Kaleide Theatre
Building 8, Level 2
RMIT, Swanston Street, City
Entry \$5

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

info@oceanbooks.com.au
For more info: Salvador
03 9356 9987 or 0409 166 937

Crunch time for Australia's arts and media

Geoff Morrell, Simon Burke, Quentin Dempster, John Howard, Margo Kingston, Alice McConnell, Judy Horacek and key Australian orchestra members were among Australian performers and media identities gathering at the Sydney Opera House on October 6 to make a last ditch attempt to ensure that Australia's cultural and media industries are not put up for grabs in the government's free trade negotiations with the US.

"It is down to the wire", said Simon Whipp, Director Equity, for the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance.

"To date we have had support from the Federal Government for the exclusion of Australian media and cultural industries from the free trade agreement", he said.

"However, negotiations with the US are set to recommence in late October and the US Government is pushing for a backdown, so we must ensure the Australian Government holds firm."

The US proposal trades away our cultural future by ruling that from here on in, no new provisions or structures will be needed or

allowed to protect our culture or media.

"We live in an ever-changing world and a proposal which does not protect the right of governments to react to these changes as and when they happen will mean that future regimes are not able to support and promote Australian culture as governments have to date", Whipp said.

Significant changes to technology in the future are inevitable. Governments need the flexibility to respond to these technological advances and other societal changes to continue the promotion of Australian culture to Australians and to the world. ✪

Globalising solidarity

A visit from Javier Chávez of Communist Party of Chile

Last week Javier Chávez visited Sydney as part of his tour of major centres in Australia. Javier is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Chile and the Secretary of the Party in the IX Region of the country. He spoke with Bob Briton from *The Guardian* about the purpose of his visit, the political situation in Chile and the commitment of his party to building links of solidarity with progressive forces around the world.

Bob Briton: What is the purpose of your visit to Australia?

Javier Chávez: I have been invited to come to take part in the events commemorating the 30th anniversary of the coup d'état in Chile. For that reason I have been participating in activities in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney. I was invited to take part last Sunday in a ceremony in Fairfield to inaugurate a statue of our martyred President Salvador Allende. The commemorations have been a very important and it is very clear that the image, the esteem in which Allende is held is growing throughout the world.

The people who assassinated him and so many others are now covered in shame. There have been events taking place throughout the world giving recognition to the contribution of Salvador Allende. In every city in Chile there was a demonstration to mark the 30th anniversary of the coup. It is possible to say, then, that the figure of martyred President is still alive. He remains as a symbol of hope for the oppressed peoples of the world, not only those of Chile.

BB: What impression did it make on you that there were such significant commemorations in Australia?

JC: It is well known that there are important links of solidarity between the people of Australia and the people of Chile. Even after 30 years, you still feel that those bonds of solidarity are there. As a party, we have been very impressed that in every activity in Sydney the trade unions have been involved. Left and progressive forces have been well represented, as well. This indicates to me that progressive people around the world have kept alive the desire to change the world.

Allende Government

BB: Has there been a change of attitude among the people of Chile toward the period of the Allende Government in recent times?

JC: Thirty years after the coup, the truth is finally coming to the surface. The commemorative events have served to involve the youth and to help them know more about those years of Popular Unity Government. However, after 17 years of dictatorship and 12 years of

the *concertacion* [post-dictatorship coalition government], there is still much to be done to convey the true meaning of the Allende Government to the people of Chile.

Things are starting to be known about the policies of that time: a half-litre of milk per day for every child, the nationalisation of natural resources, the nationalisation of the banks, the agrarian reform. Above all, there was the real participation of the people in the running of the country – it was an experience in people's democracy.

BB: Is the illusion widespread in Chile that a form of "people's capitalism" is being built in the country?

JC: The official propaganda that Chile is some sort of paradise in Latin America is very strong. Some sectors of the population believe it. The reality, however, is even stronger than the propaganda. Chile is a country in which 40 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. That reality is very strong and cannot be overcome by the propaganda.

People have been waiting for 12 years since the fall of Pinochet to see change – 12 years to carry out democratic changes in the country. It hasn't happened so it is time for people to take the task of bringing about change into their own hands.

BB: What are the obstacles facing progressive forces in organising a fight back against these conditions?

JC: It's a difficult task to organise all the popular forces that are struggling against the system. One of the principal problems is that during the dictatorship, the people faced criminal repression with detention and torture. However, the same laws that existed during the dictatorship are still in existence right now. The Chilean Government and the structures of society are still very authoritarian – they maintain the same constitution and the same laws.

An example is the labour code that impedes the formation of large and effective unions and limits the capacity of unions to negotiate on behalf of workers. This hampers the work of building a strong movement today. We recognise that the people are not alert to all this and that there is a false consciousness about the issues. This is beginning to change, though, as poverty begins to exert itself even more strongly.



Bob Briton interviews Javier Chávez

The Communist Party, together with other sections of the left, are working to accumulate this experience and to revive the popular movement as the major force in society. We have to interact and build our own forces to resist the government.

BB: Is there more unity among left forces in Chile than has been the case in previous times?

JC: Today in Chile we don't have the traditional left forces that we knew in the days of the Popular Unity government. The left-wing groupings are widely dispersed. As a Party we've taken it on ourselves to talk with all these left-wing forces so that we can build a single social and political movement. After all, social issues are political issues.

The left will gain strength if it succeeds in building strong links with social movements, above all with the workers. When we talk about social issues we are talking about the struggles of the unions, the students, peasants, women and the Indigenous people. There is also a cultural movement reaching sections of the youth that don't have any official means of expression.

Mapuche struggle

BB: You've mentioned a resurgence of activity among the Indigenous Mapuche people. Is the Party involved in these activities?

JC: Yes. We support the aspirations of the native people of Chile. In Chile, as in many other parts of Latin America, the Indigenous movement is one of the only ones to mount effective resistance against the transnationals. There are dif-

iculties, of course, but it is a very active resistance.

We support the efforts of the Mapuche to reclaim autonomy and their land. This movement wasn't born within the Communist Party but within the Mapuche community. However, the Communist Party is the only party organised on a national basis that gives one hundred percent support to that movement. Many other left organisations support this struggle. They are not, however, organised at a national level.

BB: Are youth being attracted to the Party and its youth organisation mainly through cultural work?

JC: The youth are a part of society that is very disenchanted with the current state of affairs in the country, with the government and with politics. The youth were the ones that struggled most against the dictatorship – the majority of the victims in the fight against Pinochet were young people.

They struggled for years but the government of transition that we have is not what they were hoping for. Naturally, they are disenchanted.

Youth

However, we have a nationwide organisation of youth in Chile that has good links with the education sector at the university and secondary school level and with the new cultural movement that you can see developing in poor communities.

The Communist Youth also works within the trade unions on cultural matters. We hope that the Communist Youth succeeds in building links with the struggles talking place throughout the country.

BB: Could you describe the difficulties facing the Party in the electoral arena?

JC: The electoral laws currently in force in the country were formulated during the dictatorship. We have an institutionalised two-party system that does not permit representation from the popular organisations. The parliament only has representatives of parties sup-

porting the system. To put it another way, the parliament does not represent express the aspirations of the people.

A parliamentarian in Chile is paid eight million pesos (\$A 20,000) a month while a worker receiving the minimum wage gets one hundred and twenty thousand pesos (\$A 300) a month! Naturally, the people don't love the members of parliament or feel a connection to the parliament.

Sometimes we feel a pride in not having any representation in the parliament. More than trying to build representation in the parliament, we are working to build a strong social movement. We take part in election campaigns but only with the purpose of getting an alternative message across to the largest number of people possible.

Building a social alternative

BB: How do you anticipate the process of change will develop?

JC: It will depend on the development of, the existence of a social alternative in Chile. The present authorities will not bring about social change in Chile. In this context it is very important to consider what happened last August 13 during the national strike called by the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores [Chile's major trade union peak council].

The strike was called to advance claims affecting the immediate situation of workers but also in support of all of those opposed to the system. Change will depend on the capacity of popular forces to build a social and political alternative.

In this period it is vitally important that we unite all the progressive forces around the world. The transnationals have globalised poverty, exploitation and hunger. It is time for the workers to globalise their resistance. It is possible. We Chilean Communists are open to any proposal aimed at fighting our common enemy, which is US imperialism. Another world is possible. ✪

People have been waiting for 12 years since the fall of Pinochet to see change ... It hasn't happened so it is time for people to take the task of bringing about change into their own hands.

Deceit and dirty tricks on Iraq

Accusations that the White House illegally leaked information to stifle dissent over its Iraq war policy are the latest in a series of charges that the administration used deceit and dirty tricks to sell the Iraq war. The charges fuelled widening dissatisfaction over the cost of the occupation of Iraq – both in lives and dollars – and further battered President Bush's sagging credibility.

by Susan Webb

It was revealed last week that the CIA filed a "crime report" with the Justice Department, asking for an investigation of whether Bush officials illegally leaked to reporters the fact that the wife of former ambassador Joseph Wilson is an undercover CIA operative.

Wilson was sent by the CIA last year to investigate claims that Iraq had tried to purchase uranium in Africa. Wilson reported that the claims were false. Recently, he has publicly denounced the administration for knowingly using the false information to justify the war, including in Bush's State of the Union speech last January.

Wilson and others charge that the "outing" of his wife was done for revenge, and to warn others of the consequences of challenging the administration's policies. Revealing the name of an undercover agent is a federal crime. The Justice Department and FBI have now been forced to launch an investigation of White House involvement. Leading Democrats have called for the appointment of an independent prosecutor, saying the Ashcroft Justice Department is incapable of conducting an impartial investigation.

Earlier in the week, the Republican and Democratic heads of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence released findings that the administration

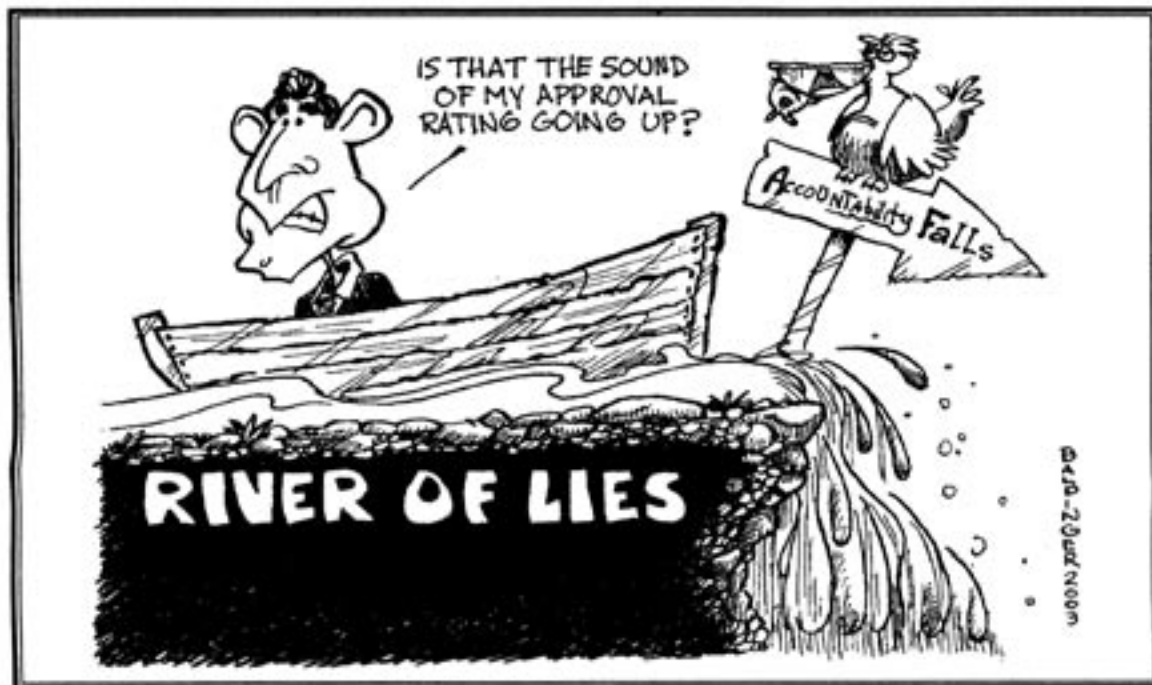
launched the war even though it had no solid evidence that Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction or had ties with terrorists.

In a September 25 letter to CIA director George Tenet, the committee's chair, Republican Porter Goss, a former CIA agent and a long-time supporter of Tenet, and the ranking Democrat, Jane Harman, charged that intelligence agencies' conclusions about Iraq's weapons programs were based largely on outdated, "circumstantial" and "fragmentary" information with "too many uncertainties".

Administration officials have delayed indefinitely the publication of a report by a group they sent to Iraq to find weapons of mass destruction, after the group found no evidence that any such weapons exist, following a four-month search. The report by the "Iraq Survey Group", consisting of 1400 US and British scientists, military and intelligence experts, may never be published, British Government sources said.

Earlier last month, former UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix said he believes that Iraq destroyed most of its weapons of mass destruction 10 years ago.

"I'm certainly more and more to the conclusion that Iraq has, as they maintained, destroyed all, almost, of what they had in the summer of 1991", Blix told an Australian radio



station. "The more time that has passed, the more I think it's unlikely that anything will be found." His successor, Demetrius Perricos, told Reuters it was becoming "more and more difficult to believe stocks [of WMD] were there" in Iraq.

CNN's top war correspondent, Christiane Amanpour, recently accused the Bush administration of conducting a campaign of "fear" and "disinformation at the highest levels" during the Iraq war. On a CNBC talk show last month, Amanpour said CNN and journalists in general were "intimidated" by the administration, which, with the help of Fox News, created "a climate of fear and self-censorship."

On September 30, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted 29-0 to approve President Bush's \$87 billion "supplemental" request

to pay for the occupation of Iraq. Most Senate Democrats are not opposing the bulk of Bush's request – \$67 billion for military operations. They are focusing instead on the \$20 billion requested for Iraq's reconstruction. The fight is expected to continue on the Senate floor until mid-October.

During a nation-wide "call-in" organised by the Win Without War coalition and MoveOn.org, in five hours over 12,000 people called their senators to oppose giving Bush a blank cheque, saying Congress should require him to hand over control of Iraq to the United Nations, and fire those responsible for mismanaging Iraq, starting with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Bush's \$87 billion request, in the midst of record job losses and

budget cuts for domestic needs, has sparked wide public discontent. But rather than challenging the occupation, pressing for transfer of control to the UN, or suggesting that Pentagon funds or war profits pay for repairing the damage caused by US actions, many Democrats are limiting their objections to calls for shifting reconstruction costs to Iraq.

At the UN, the administration is continuing its efforts to push through a resolution that would give a cover for military and financial help from other countries, without ceding real control either to the UN or to Iraqis. Thus far the US remains isolated.

"They're on their own", a UN official said. "It's just between them and the American taxpayer."

People's Weekly World
Paper of the CP USA

Why there's no peace in Palestine

On September 13, 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat signed a Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn, heralding the beginning of the Oslo peace process. Ten years later, the process is completely deadlocked. Israel has decided to "remove" Arafat, and many outside observers are left wondering what went wrong. The answer lies in the fundamental failure of the Oslo process to address the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

by Catherine Cook*

While scenes of bombed-out Israeli buses on television screens have become a familiar sight for many, this conflict is not about suicide bombings. Rather, violent attacks on Israeli civilians stem from larger unresolved issues, particularly Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Oslo agreements, which were to be implemented in phases, made no mention of occupation and postponed, until the final stage, negotiations over the most contentious issues, including

borders, refugees, Jerusalem and settlements. It failed to address the fundamental power imbalance between Israel, which has regional hegemony, and the Palestinians, a stateless, occupied population.

Palestinians hoped that the Oslo process would lead to an end of occupation and the creation of an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But Oslo's phased process, and the absence of an effective enforcement mechanism or a clear end goal, allowed Israel, as the more powerful party, to continue a policy of territorial expansion,

leaving Palestinians with little recourse.

While Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were haggling over areas in which Israeli troops would redeploy, Israel continued to build settlements in the occupied territories. Between 1994 and 2000, the Israeli settler population doubled. Concurrently, Israel constructed a network of "bypass roads" to connect the settlements to each other and to Israel.

By early 2000, nearly 250 miles of bypass roads had been built on confiscated Palestinian land. Israeli settlement building went largely unchecked by the United States, supposedly an "honest broker" between the two sides.

What the world perceived as a "peace process" was resulting in a marked decrease in Palestinians' already poor standard of living. Israel maintained its control of the land and resources of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and through a series of increasingly restrictive checkpoints, it controlled movement

of persons and goods as well. Israel had altered the form of its occupation, but not the content.

The attempted reincarnation of the Oslo process in the U.S.-backed "road map" is faring no better. While the road map calls for an end to occupation and is intended to be based on "reciprocal steps," attention thus far has almost exclusively focused on what measures the Palestinian Authority is taking to crack down on militant groups.

Israel's obligations, such as freezing settlement activity and removing roadblocks, have largely been ignored. At the same time, Israel continues to carve up the West Bank, seizing more Palestinian land, demolishing businesses and destroying livelihoods as it constructs its so-called security wall there.

No one should doubt that Palestinian suicide bombings pose a major security threat to Israeli civilians, but these attacks do not occur in a vacuum, and neither Israelis nor Palestinians are served by a political process that ignores

the cause of conflict and focuses on one group's security at the expense of the other's. Attacks on Israeli civilians are unlikely to end until the conditions that encourage them are removed.

If the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to end, there needs to be a fundamental change in the approach to its resolution. As the party with the most power, the choice is Israel's. Israel can maintain the status quo.

But occupation has not brought Israel security, and choosing to continue it will undoubtedly ensure the deaths of more Israeli and Palestinian civilians. Conversely, Israel can accept the solution that the majority of Palestinians and the international community have accepted: two states based on the 1967 borders, an end to occupation and the possibility of true peace and security.

*Catherine Cook is senior analyst at the Middle East Research and Information Project
www.merip.org

Venezuela Food in exchange for rubbish

On a hilltop in Venezuela's capital Caracas, where hunger and crime are commonplace, Amarilis Chirinos is finding that the rubbish strewn on the slum's slopes has its uses.

by Catherine Wattes

"I feel pretty proud because I earned the food. It wasn't just given to me. They swapped it for rubbish I collected", said Chirinos, who turned in empty bottles, old clothes and a damaged and rusty cooker in exchange for groceries.

Under the Big Swap program, organised by authorities in Caracas' Libertador district, residents can exchange 25 kg of scrap metal for 1 kg of rice, 2 kg of aluminium for a can of powdered milk and 20 kg of glass for a can of tuna.

Caracas' slums are overflowing with rubbish.

Old fridges, mattresses and used tyres are among tonnes of discarded items clogging the steep ravines, which are packed with poor homes that ring the sprawling capital of the world's fifth largest oil exporter.

According to official estimates, 80 per cent of Venezuela's 25 million people live in poverty, with many of the rest living in disproportionate wealth.

Unemployment remained stubbornly high at 18.3 per cent in July.

It was pushed up by a severe recession triggered by a crippling general strike in December and January called by Venezuela's US-backed right-wing opposition against popular leader Hugo Chavez.

Organisers said the food-for-rubbish program had more than one benefit.

Besides providing food for the poor, it also helped to clear rubbish-

choked ravines that overflow in the rainy season, threatening homes with deadly floods and mudslides.

"The Big Swap helps us because we clean up our neighbourhood – and we can obtain food from it", says housewife Blanca de Teran, as she waits in line to weigh the bottles and cans that she has scavenged.

In some cases, collecting the rubbish involves scouring foetid, polluted streams that bisect the capital's slum neighbourhoods.

But, despite some complaints that the scheme exposes them to infection, most El Resplandor residents seem to think that the program is worthwhile.

"Swapping bits and pieces for food is not a bad idea. We've all got to find a way to live", says unemployed 36-year-old Pedro Salas. But he adds that he would much prefer to have a stable job so that he could buy food for himself.

The idea of exchanging recyclable waste for food originated in the Brazilian city of Curitiba. It has also been applied in the western Venezuelan states of Lara and Merida.

Manuel Molina, head of municipal services in Libertador district, explains that the program works on a system of points, calculated from the market cost of the recyclable waste and the cost of food to be handed over in exchange.

"We could just buy the rubbish, but the idea is that people develop a sense of the value of the material they collect, not in terms of money,



Caracas – a modern city surrounded by slums

but in terms of food products", Molina says.

The Libertador district alone, one of the five municipalities that make up Caracas, generates 2000 tonnes a day of discarded items.

The food-for-rubbish program is expected to reduce the level of refuse by up to 40 per cent.

Molina says that the authorities intend to carry out around 60 similar food-for-rubbish operations in Caracas this year, swapping

1200 tonnes of refuse for around 76 tonnes of food.

The three tonnes of food being distributed in the first exchanges were donated by the Sovereign People Foundation, which is directly run from the office of the President.

Molina says that it was better to hand over products rather than cash.

"We wouldn't want people to be squandering away what we get from

the swap on horse races or crates of beer. We want them to have food", he adds.

The collected rubbish is given to local co-operatives which sell material to recycling companies. This covers around 30 per cent of the cost of the program.

Authorities are hoping to extend the initiative to the rest of the country.

Morning Star
Britain's socialist daily

Background to the Iran nuclear power station

The United States has not given up in its pursuit of Iran and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) – two of the three "rogue states". Despite being bogged down in both Afghanistan and Iraq, US leaders nevertheless maintain pressure on both states "to come clean" on their nuclear programs. They demand full disclosure of nuclear programs and threaten unspecified sanctions and consequences if the two countries do not bend to US demands.

Iran has come under particular pressure over its nuclear power facility which is presently being built in Bushehr.

For the last eight years the Bushehr nuclear power station has been built with the active participation of Russian specialists.

The Bushehr nuclear power station started back in the 1970s when the then West Germany spent five years building it. Two sections of the station were almost complete – the equipment had been installed and the launch was at hand. But then the Islamic Revolution took place, the German specialists left in a hurry and construction was mothballed.

In the 1980s, when the Iraq-Iran war started some unidentified military planes bombed the power station with rocket fire, neatly hitting and destroying the two completed reactors. Iraq's nuclear power station was also hit. The ill-fated Columbia spaceship had on board

the Israeli astronaut who had taken part in the bombing of the Iraqi plant.

In 1995, the governments of Russia and Iran signed a contract for almost a billion dollars to finish the building of the power station. It was decided to integrate the German equipment with the Russian made equipment where ever possible and dismantle the remainder.

The construction of the station is in full swing and expected to be operational within 18 months.

It is this nuclear power station that is being targeted as a vipers' nest of nuclear arms production by the Bush administration.

Any engineer would know that the nuclear power station could not produce nuclear weapons. As for nuclear material that might be used for weapons production, the Iranian Government has agreed to return the nuclear waste back to Russia for processing.

The International Atomic

Energy Commission is fully aware of this and that all the speculation about nuclear weapons is just that – speculation.

Russian President Vladimir Putin lashed out at journalists at a recent press conference when he was asked about Iran's nuclear ambitions. His advice was to obtain facts and leave gossip and speculation alone.

The Bushehr's power station construction is extremely important for Russia, as it has provided thousands of highly qualified specialists with work, and provided guaranteed agreements with Russia's machine-building enterprises.

Iran is planning to build more nuclear power stations which could mean up to \$10 billion worth of contracts for Russia if co-operation between the two countries continues.

At the recent meeting with Putin at Camp David, Bush attempted to push the Russian President into a hostile position towards both the DPRK and Iran.

Putin told his American counterpart that the DPRK should receive a guarantee of its security from the USA.

As for the Iranian power station, the work there will continue and there will be no pull back from the deal. ☘

The true heroes of Israel

Twenty-seven F-16 fighter jet pilots of the Israeli Air Force are refusing from now on, for conscientious reasons, to execute immoral war crime targeted assassination tasks and other attacks against Palestinian militia members and civilians in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and other places. These pilots, partly on active service, others on reserve duty, announced their decision in a letter sent to the Air Force command, the Defence Ministry and to the press.

Air force chief Commander, General Dan Halutz, threatened the objecting pilots with ousting them from the Air Force, with court martial and life-long prison terms for high treason.

Another Air Force General, Eliezer Shkefi, stated that these few pilots out of hundreds of others are acting not out of conscience, but in political protest against the government.

The objecting pilots and many others who sympathise with them told the media that they reject the threats to the pilots as being unlawful. They point out that the law allows them to refuse to carry out orders which are immoral and violate human rights and international conventions.

Moreover, they stressed in their press release, that the continuous occupation of Palestinian Gaza and the West-Bank endangers the security of Israel and its public image.

What particularly enrages the

powers-to-be in Israel, is that this refusal to carry out orders is by pilots who are held in high esteem.

With their action, these 27 pilots (and those who might follow suit) add their conscientious objection to those of about 600 army officers and soldiers who refuse to serve in the occupied territories.

Many of them had already been sentenced by the officers of their units to stockade jail terms. Five of them are at present standing trial at the supreme military tribunal for refusing orders.

The peace forces in Israel have expressed their solidarity with the pilots.

The Gush-Shalom Peace Bloc, the Coalition of Women4Peace, the communist-led Democratic HADASH Front, the Communist Forum and others are calling for massive solidarity and protest actions in support of the pilots during the coming days.

Acknowledgements: Hans Lebrecht, Kibbutz Beit-Oren ☘

Silencing the truth. The war on al-Jazeera

The US is determined to suppress the independent Arab media says Dima Tareq Tahboub whose husband, a journalist for al-Jazeera TV, was killed by US bombs when they bombed the TV station's office in Baghdad several months ago.

When my husband decided to go to Baghdad, he knew that I would protest. He told me that I was exaggerating the risks; that there was nothing to be afraid of because he was a reporter, an objective witness, neither on this nor that side and, because of that, was protected by world protocol.

On the early morning of April 8, I woke up to the sound of my mother crying and yelling. The house was suddenly full of people. I couldn't see or hear anyone. I was waiting for the [TV] film to end. I was waiting for the hero to appear and end all evil. I was waiting for the story of my life to end with "and they lived happily ever after".

I couldn't cry. I was just listening to the news, seeing again and again all through the day how the Americans bombed the al-Jazeera office and killed my husband.

I teach English translation. Once, when I was lecturing on the translation of political terminology, with reference to the UN charter and the declaration of human rights, one of the students said: "How can the US say that this war has a noble cause and a humane agenda? All the dictionary definitions of war involve bloodshed and overwhelming destruction." Another student joined in: "Don't tell us about charters and so-called noble missions, what we see is what we believe". The whole class cheered.

The US bombed al-Jazeera because it was angered by reports that did not confirm its one-sided picture of the war. For the past five years, al-Jazeera and other Arab stations have been gaining credibility and fame not only in the Arab countries but also in the west, competing with international networks such as the BBC and CNN.

Al-Jazeera's decision to broadcast both sides was in keeping with its motto – "The opinion and the counter-opinion" – but the Americans could not allow such freedom of expression to prevail.

The US sent its first warning to al-Jazeera in November 2001, bombing its Kabul office, destroying its equipment and forcing its journalists to flee. An al-Jazeera cameraman was sent to Guantanamo Bay as a war prisoner.

In Baghdad during the war, the coverage of al-Jazeera again focused mainly on the daily suffering and loss of ordinary people, and again the Americans wanted their crimes and atrocities to pass unnoticed. The two bombs they dropped on al-Jazeera's Baghdad office were the ones that killed my husband.

Then the Americans opened fire on Abu Dhabi television, whose identity was spelled out in large blue letters on the roof. The next target was the Palestine hotel, the headquarters of world media representatives – an American tank fired a shell and two more journalists were killed. Thus the US tried to conceal evidence of its crimes from the world and kill the witnesses.

The US didn't take responsibility for the attacks, claiming that all three were mistakes and insisting that it did not know the whereabouts of journalists, apart from those "embedded" with its troops. Later, al-Jazeera's director confirmed that it had given the precise location of the station's Baghdad office to the Pentagon three months before the war. My husband and the others were killed in broad daylight, in locations known to the Pentagon as media sites.

The US accused al-Jazeera and other Arab channels of anti-

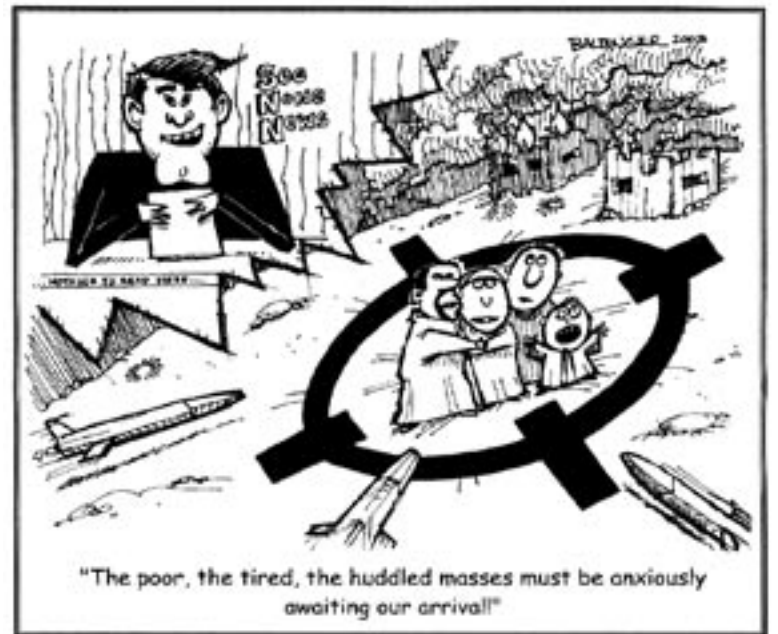
American bias in their coverage of the war. But how biased can a picture of dead people be? A picture of a destroyed house doesn't need a reporter to tell its story, and the tears of children and refugees need no interpreter.

Six months have passed since the killing of Tareq, and those responsible for his death are still in control, claiming ethical supervision of the world, and basking in their military achievements.

The attacks on al-Jazeera continue – Iraq's US-appointed governing council has just warned the station that if it continues to "misbehave", its licence in Iraq will be revoked.

Six months have passed since my husband's death and I can't find anyone to help me to launch legal action against those who killed him. When I thought I had found an outlet under Belgian law, US threats and ultimatums got the law repealed and put an end to my hopes of gaining justice.

When the Muslim Association of Britain invited me to speak at last weekend's anti-war march in London, I hesitated because of the despair I have been in. But when I saw all the people marching against the war, condemning those responsi-



ble for it, my hope and belief in the solidarity of humankind, in humanity, justice and truth was rekindled.

My life and happiness came to an end on April 8, but I still have one last dream; that my Fatimah will have a better future full of love and security, that her heart and mind as well as mine will be relieved when those who committed the cold-

blooded murder of her father and my husband are brought to justice.

• Dima Tareq Tahboub is a lecturer at the Arab Open University in Amman (Jordan) and the widow of Tareq Ayyoub, a correspondent for al-Jazeera dima@mabonline.net
• Acknowledgement to The Guardian(London) (Abridged). ☺

Bush out, says Soros

BBC NEWS reports that US multi-billionaire George Soros has called for "regime change" – that he wants an end to the Bush administration.

"I am very hopeful that people will wake up and realise that they have been led down the garden path, that actually September 11 has been hijacked by a bunch of extremists to put into effect policies that they were advocating before, such as the invasion of Iraq."

Soros added that there was a "false ideology" behind the policies of the Bush administration.

"There is a group of – I would call them extremists – who have the belief that international relations are relations of power, not of law, that international law will always follow what power has achieved", he said.

"And therefore [they believe] the United States being the most powerful nation on earth should impose its power, impose its will and its interests on the world and it should do it looking after itself.

"I think this is a very dangerous ideology. It is very dangerous because America is in fact very powerful."

George Soros said he felt the rift between the US and the United Nations over the war – which President Bush referred to as a "difficult and defining moment" for the UN – had in fact strengthened the

UN, rather than weakened it.

"I think that the United States has over-reached", he said. "What happens to extremists is that they go to extremes and the falsehood in their ideology becomes apparent.

Soros' own "regime change"

Mr Soros has his own history of changing regimes by using his huge financial resources to achieve his preferred objectives and he usually does not do this through the UN.

Soros said, "In Bosnia we gave it to UNHCR – but that was really quite the exception... We do interfere in the internal affairs of states, but based on supporting people inside the country who take a certain stance... We have actually been quite effective in bringing about democratisation, democratic regime change in Slovakia, Croatia and Yugoslavia, but that's by helping civil society in those countries to mobilise".

In June this year he announced he would be drastically cutting back the money he gave to Russia, says the BBC report. ☺

East Timorese workers threaten strike action against Australian air transport company

The East Timorese Transport Workers' Union and Trade Union Confederation have demanded an urgent and immediate resolution to an ongoing industrial dispute that began when Australian-owned Timor Aviation Services (TAS), based in Dili, unfairly dismissed two employees in the midst of negotiations.

The Union has been negotiating to finalise salary increases and improved working conditions after the company had frozen wages for a period of almost three years.

The two sacked workers were the Union workplace delegates who had been representing all TAS workers in the negotiations for a collective agreement. After long negotiations failed, the Union and the Confederation issued TAS a final opportunity to avoid industrial action.

This declaration follows four weeks of combined efforts by the Union, the Confederation and the East Timor Government's Department of Labour and Solidarity to return the two employees to work.

The company has so far ignored

their obligations and refused to reinstate the workers, despite receiving a directive from the Government to do so on three separate occasions.

On September 30, the Department of Labour again instructed Timor Aviation Services to reinstate the dismissed workers but the company refused.

The Union has three main demands:

- That TAS immediately reinstate the two dismissed workers;
- Sign the Collective Agreement as negotiated by the Union delegates;
- Issue the outstanding salary increases due to employees.

Timor Aviation Services (www.timoraviation.com) is owned and operated by Australian nationals, who show little regard for the

laws of either the fledging nation of East Timor or their country of origin.

TAS provides freight handling, customs and charter services to the Australian Defence Force, Qantas, Harvey World Travel and numerous air companies that service oil, gas, mining industries and non-government organisations operating in both Australia and East Timor.

The East Timor Trade Union Confederation has warned that their affiliated unions and the workers of East Timor will not tolerate any attempt by TAS to break the strike through the hiring of replacement workers. ☺

Messages of solidarity to Rigo Monteiro(TLUC):
+ 670 723 6276
in East Timor or
secretariat@tluc.org
Didge MacDonald
(LHMU): +418 852 545

Chilean teachers one day strike

In an action which paralleled similar action by Australian teachers, Chilean teachers took national strike action on September 30. More than 3,500 Chilean teachers marched and rallied in Heroes Square (La Plaza de los Heroes) in Santiago.

The demands of Chilean teachers are also similar to their Australian counterparts.

Some demands had already been agreed to by the Chilean Government as long ago as 2000 but not yet implemented.

1. A reduction of the number of students per class;
2. No education fees. Guaranteed free access to education for all;
3. The elimination of fast-track

teacher training which goes against the students interests and results in the poor quality of education;

4. The right to full employment and against casualisation;
5. A pay rise of 11.7 per cent annually over four years.

The Teachers' Union estimated that 80 percent of teachers participated in the national strike while the government claimed that only 25 percent took part. ☺



Chilean teachers take action

Watching the liars wriggle

It is truly amazing how Bush, Blair and Howard and others in leading positions in these three governments, continue to brazenly lie about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Twelve hundred weapons inspectors from the US, Britain and Australia have spent more than three months and US\$300 million scouring the country since the end of the war in Iraq. The number of weapons of mass destruction found – nil.

Prior to that, UN weapons inspectors spent over four months scouring the country. The number of WMD found – nil.

They are still clutching at straws in the hope that something will turn up (not excluding the possibility that something will be planted and then found) to justify this most obnoxious and illegal of wars.

Here are just a few of their lying statements – lest we forget:

"Intelligence leaves no doubt that Iraq continues to possess and conceal lethal weapons".

George Bush, March 18, 2003

"Saddam's removal is necessary to eradicate the threat from his weapons of mass destruction".

Jack Straw, British Foreign Secretary April 2, 2003

"We are asked to accept Saddam decided to destroy those weapons. I say that such a claim is palpably absurd".

Tony Blair, March 18, 2003

"Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction".

Dick Cheney, US Vice-President August 26, 2002

"Right now, Iraq is expanding and improving facilities that were used for the production of biological weapons".

George "aWol" Bush, Speech to UN General Assembly, September 12, 2002

Bruce Gillman
Sydney

Our agriculture needs protection

The collapse of the WTO round in Cancun may inject a sense of realism into thinking about Australian agriculture policy. While Australia should continue to argue for reductions in subsidies and lowering of tariffs in the US and the EU, for many good reasons, the level playing field simply isn't happening at all.

That goal of at least 30 years standing remains totally illusive. Given that this is the reality, should Australians allow their generally efficient farming sector to be wiped out further through tariff reductions and only spasmodic assistance, mostly to combat droughts or floods?

Seems to me we should match the subsidy levels applied elsewhere, raise the tariffs where required and get on with rebuilding agriculture and boosting rural exports.

Last year 45,000 jobs were lost in the rural sector. In an already highly urbanised society this doesn't make sense.

Some say we don't have that option. Please explain! Otherwise

change tack. The proposed FTA with the US, not wanted by American farmers anyway, could carry a much higher price for Australia than subsidies.

Klaas Woldring
Pearl Beach, NSW

Cheers for Panthers, jeers for PM

How good was that rugby league grand final? The Penrith Panthers from the struggling working class of western Sydney versus the silvertail Roosters from the wealthy inner eastern suburbs, with the Panthers the winners.

Our opportunistic PM John Howard was there, of course, to try and shore up support from the battlers he claims to represent.

On the stage at the centre of Telstra Stadium with the team captains and league officials was Johnnie, and when he was introduced the majority Penrith supporters in the 82,000 crowd booed together spontaneously.

They know who's destroying their health services, their schools and their jobs.

Nathan Barnes
Brisbane

Mickey Mouse government

It is no coincidence that when Greiner was premier of NSW there was a general assault on standards across the board,

especially at local government level. Most of these policies have continued under the Carr Labor Government.

A lot of this was done under the guise of efficiency, freeing up the market, deregulation, medium density housing, also stripping councils of their planning powers, contracting out services like garbage collection and road maintenance, urban consolidation, quotas and lots of other things. Also self-regulation by building contractors.

At the same time this was going on, there was a big shake-up in the TAFE system and an attack on the apprenticeship and training system.

The TAFE was broken up as a government department and a board was set up with input from big business and the old "tech" culture was destroyed.

"Mickey Mouse" courses were brought in where previously there were comprehensive courses.

Five-year courses in plumbing, fitting and machining or electrical trades, etc and an apprentice would come out as an all round tradesman and sit for an examination that would give him/her a licence.

If they passed they could then go on to further studies to become estimators, designers, building engineers, health inspectors, etc.

All of this was scrapped and a person did a "crash course" and became a roof fixer or something totally at the behest of the market.

This is why in Sydney today there is a crisis in the building industry, with dual occupancy, people building homes in the backyard, people doing their own plumbing and

gas fitting and electrical work. Great stuff! Third world here we come!

At the same time NSW Government was putting off or not rehiring apprentices in government departments like public works and closed down the railway workshops and training centre in Chullora.

Then the government came out and said that the master builders or electrical contractors and plumbing contractors could put apprentices on if they felt like it, or put a young adult on one of Abbot's "Mickey Mouse" starvation training schemes.

R J Girvan
Greenacre, NSW

Crux of the problem

How can anyone be expected to seriously believe the repeated statements by Israel and its supporters that to stop Palestinian violence Israel must build a wall, that Arafat has to go into exile or that the Palestinian Authority has to repress and disarm the militants.

These are all Israeli distractions from the real crux of the problem. The only effective way to decrease Palestinian resistance and resolve the Palestinian issue is for Israel to stop the occupation, withdraw from the Palestinian territories and stop building illegal settlements there.

The Palestinian violence is a reaction to the Israeli occupation. Any other so-called solutions that negate this central fact are just pathetic side issues and delays while suffering on both sides continues.

Steven Katsineris
Hurstbridge, Vic

Culture & Life

Conspiracy theories

There are people in the USA (and here) who believe fervently that the US Government has an alien space ship and some genuine dead aliens preserved in an aircraft hangar in Roswell. To avoid panic (why would there be panic, for goodness sake?) the public are kept in the dark about this momentous discovery or event or whatever it is supposed to be.

by Rob Gowland

There are also people in the USA (not so much here) who believe that agents of the United Nations fly around the US in black helicopters kidnapping people and generally enforcing the rule of "one world government".

And there are people who believe the ruling class in the US, is utilising the various intelligence agencies, the military, the FBI, organised crime when expedient and the private operatives of the big corporations, to frame, railroad, smear and physically assassinate people who obstruct their plans.

One of these three beliefs is justified and true. The other two are crackpot theories with no basis in fact.

But the two daft ones are extremely useful. They serve to help convince people that all three are loopy and not to be taken seriously. That all three are merely "conspiracy theories".

As the twentieth century pro-

gressed so has the use of "black" propaganda – false or misleading information and statements, bogus documents, faked photos, even faked medals – to discredit and destabilise political movements and governments.

As knowledge grew of the eagerness with which the ruling class used professional liars and put its intelligence services to work spreading rumours and "disinformation", people began to be increasingly cynical about official reports on almost everything.

At the same time they began to comprehend the extent of the ruling class conspiracy against progressive thinkers, movements and governments. With so much at stake, giant corporations and the governments they dominate, are not going to balk at bending a scruple or breaking a moral imperative, or killing someone considered dangerous to their continued class rule and accumulation of profit.

With imperialist governments, especially the US Government, behaving deviously, even criminally, and lying through their teeth about it, it is hardly surprising that wild rumours not only arise about almost any topic of popular interest but, if denied, assume the status of an "official conspiracy".

This is also partly the consequence of the deliberate cultivation by the ruling class of unscientific thinking on the part of the masses. It is a consequence that suits the ruling class down to the ground.

What better way to dismiss someone's evidence of a government sanctioned conspiracy against the people than to put on a patronising smile and say of the person raising the evidence "He (or she) must have a conspiracy theory"?

Derision is such a useful arguing tool, for it does not require actual facts to disprove something.

No one wants to be thought gullible, to be identified as someone



Diana talks to Angolan war victims

who can be taken in by crackpot conspiracy theories.

The conspiracy theory label is extremely useful to the ruling class. So much so, that if the rumours of "conspiracies" did not arise spontaneously, it would be necessary for the ruling class to create them. And in more than a few cases, that is precisely what they in fact do.

The television program *Diana: The Night She Died* is a piece of investigative journalism from Britain's Channel Five. It was well received by the British press, *The (London) Guardian* commenting that "Woodward and Bernstein would have been proud" (referring to the two *Washington Post* journalists who broke the Watergate conspiracy – oops, there's that word again).

The filmmakers were given exclusive access to all 27 volumes of the French report into the fatal car crash in a Paris road tunnel on the night of August 31, 1997 in

which Diana was killed. They were in a prime position to ask pointed questions of those involved.

They found that key witnesses have been silenced. Others have gone missing. Another committed suicide in suspicious circumstances.

Claiming that the French report is fundamentally flawed, the program challenges the validity of the claims in the report that Diana's driver Henri Paul was drunk and on medication at the time of the crash.

Some of the questions the program raises, although troubling, can perhaps be explained away. But, can they?

Why was the scene of the crash scrubbed clean and reopened to traffic within four hours, destroying valuable forensic evidence? Was it such an important road that it had to be reopened for the morning peak hour traffic?

Why was the Traffic Police

Investigation not included in the official enquiry report? Bureaucracy, perhaps? (What *did* they include in those 27 volumes?)

Why was the first witness on the scene ignored and silenced by the police? Drunk, hysterical, away with the fairies, or was it that the witness's evidence did not suit the authorities?

Why was the autopsy carried out on Henri Paul so blatantly inaccurate? Why were Henri Paul's secret service connections never properly explored? The questions are no longer so easily explained away.

Why did Diana's ambulance take over an hour to cover the 3-mile distance to the hospital? *What!*

And how does the ABC choose to publicise this program? With the tag line: "Compulsory viewing for conspiracy theorists!" Or is there a real life conspiracy being covered up? ☸

Rob Gowland
previews

ABC & SBS
public television
programs

Sun October 12 ~
~ Sat October 18

Diana: The Night She Died (ABC 9.30pm Monday) is dealt with in *Culture & Life* on the opposite page this week.

Staunch unionism is the subject of this week's episode of *A Big Country Revisited* (ABC 8.00pm Tuesdays), *I'll Never Change Sides*. It takes up the story of two union activists who were first looked at by *A Big Country* in 1974.

Well-meaning though the original program probably was, it does tend to view the unions as antiquated, even eccentric, rather than fundamental to our society.

The second skein (Episodes 5 to 10) of David Attenborough's epic natural history series *The Life Of Mammals* begins this week on *The Big Picture* (ABC 8.30pm Wednesdays) with an episode intriguingly called *The Opportunists*.

Like all of Attenborough's wildlife series it is scientific in its approach while warmly human in its appreciation of the diversity and intricacies of the natural world. As the *Observer* put it: "One of the best natural history series ever made for television... Compulsory for old and young alike".

On the intensely variable *Dead Ringers* (ABC 9.30pm Thursdays) this week, "Tony Blair confesses they have been looking in the wrong place for Weapons of Mass Destruction, which they now believe can be found at the end of the rainbow".

"George Dubya Bush" addresses the Aborigines in Africa, *Crimewatch* highlights heinous crimes against plausibility in TV and film plots, and *Dead Ringers*



One of the best screwball comedies (*Bringing Up Baby*)

exposes early examples of product placement in such classic films as *Psycho*, *Casablanca* and *The Graduate*.

The *True Stories* program this week is *Hired Assassins: Political Cartooning In Australia* (ABC 10.00pm Thursday). Unfortunately, the cartoonists chosen for this study are all "embedded" in the bourgeois press.

They are Bill Leak from *The Australian*, Warren Brown from *The Daily Telegraph*, David Rowe from the *Financial Review*, Geoff Pryor from the *Canberra Times* and Rod Emmerson, whose work is syndicated in *Australian Provincial Newspapers*.

For this conservative bunch to view themselves as "performing the role Socrates chose for himself: a stinging gadfly on the rump of the social animal" borders on the delusional.

Had the more outspoken of the mainstream newspaper cartoonists - Moir, Tanberg and Leunig - been included, the program would have had more substance. One observation is worth repeating, however: Often what cartoonists say is more

poignant and honest than the political observations on the page next to their drawing.

When I was at high school, our guest speaker for one weekly assembly was a genial racist from the NSW Aboriginal Welfare Board. This patronising, paternalistic git happily informed us that Aborigines were not as intelligent as "us", by which he meant the white population.

As proof of this he informed the school that "for many years in Queensland there has been a scholarship for an Aborigine to go to university but", with a condescending smile, "no one has been able to take it up yet".

That this might have more to do with educational opportunities and Aborigines' enforced social and economic position was clearly not a factor in his thinking. I like to think that today he'd be booted off the stage.

The excellent Aboriginal program *Message Stick* (ABC 6.00pm Fridays) this week deals with the centenary of the Cherbourg State School, an Aboriginal school that is a model for Queensland and Australia as a whole. The documen-

tary tells the story of the rise of the Cherbourg State School from a situation of aimless despair and chaos to an institution with a sense of purpose, direction and unity.

Recent years have produced exceptional educational and social outcomes at the school, since the arrival of a dynamic new teaching staff led by Chris Sarra, the school's first Aboriginal principal. The film captures the new sense of achievement, the innovative curricula, the new-found pride in Aboriginality.

The Australian-made tele-movie *Martha's New Coat* (SBS 8.30pm Friday) is being screened in a new SBS slot "Friday Night Drama". It stars Matilda Brown, the daughter of actors Bryan Brown and Rachel Ward, as Martha, a young girl growing up in a small town with her younger sister Elsie, their pregnant mother (Lisa Hensley) and their mother's seemingly unsavoury boyfriend.

Rachel Ward never cut it for me as an actress, but lately she has begun a new career as a director. *Martha's New Coat* is her first feature film, and is based on her research last year while making a documentary film in Lismore about disadvantaged youth.

I have not seen her new film, but her previous short *The Big House* won the award for Best Short Film at both the 2001 AFI Awards and the 2001 Film Critics' Circle of

Australia. So *Martha's New Coat* should at least be worth a look.

"RKO made some of the screwiest of the screwball comedies and *Bringing Up Baby* (ABC 10.20pm Saturday) is one of the best" (Ronald Haver, American Film Institute).

Written by Dudley Nichols and directed at breathless pace by Howard Hawks, it details what happens when a dog runs off with one of the bones Cary Grant, a mild, absent-minded scientific chap, needs to complete the assembly of a large dinosaur skeleton. The dog belongs to a madcap heiress (a splendid Katharine Hepburn) who seems to live on another planet to everybody else.

A bewildered Cary finds that to retrieve his bone he has to help the heiress recapture an escaped leopard (the "baby" of the title). Of course they all end up in jail (where else?).

There are numerous delightful sequences in this classic example of screwball comedy of the late '30s: Hepburn posing as a female gangster to bamboozle the local sheriff or (my favourite) character actor Charlie Ruggles demonstrating "the mating call of the she leopard" with unexpected results!

But it is Hepburn's ditzzy heiress and Grant's long-suffering paleontologists that make the film work so well - that and Hawk's brilliant direction. ★

Sydney
International Year of Fresh Water
ME NAM: RIVERS

Photograph exhibition exposing efforts to control our water resources, and a celebration of waterways & community activism to protect them. Launch: Tuesday 14th October 7.00pm (free) Speaker: Peter Garrett RSVP: by emailing to aidwatch@aidwatch.org or phoning Antonella 02 9557 8944

Exhibition runs October 7-17
NSW Parliament House
Weekdays 9.00am-4.30pm

Artists include: Paul Blackmore, Gordon Undy, Peter Solness, Ruby Davies, Vince Lovecchio, Maylei Hunt, Daniela Guerra, Japan's Yoshiaki Murayama and Taiwan's Hong Tien-Jun.



Water pipes, Bombay, India, 2001 - Paul Blackmore

Subscribe to **The Guardian**

12 MONTHS: \$88 (\$80 conc.) 6 months: \$45 (\$40) 3 months: \$23 (\$20)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

Pay by Cheque Money order

- to Guardian Subscriptions
65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia

or by credit card: Bankcard Mastercard Visa

Card #

Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Guardian

65 Campbell Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 9212 6855
Fax: (02) 9281 5795

Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Anna Pha

Published by T Pearson
65 Campbell St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Printed by Spotpress
105-107 Victoria Rd
Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment is taken by T Pearson, 65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, 2010

Sydney

Politics in the Pub

Every Friday night 6pm - 7.45pm
Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

(across from the Chalmers St exit and Devonshire St tunnel at Central Station)
Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

October 10

THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE. THE US OR A BETTER UN?

John Dowd, Chair Exec Committee, International Commission of Jurists, Geneva;
Dr Geoff Hawker, Senior Lecturer in Politics, Macquarie Uni

October 17

AUSTRALIA IN ASIA-PACIFIC: WHAT DO THEY THINK OF US?

Fr Tom Rouse, Columbian Missionary, Pacific;
Dr Allison Broinowski, Visiting Fellow, faculty of Asian studies, ANU, former Aust diplomat

October 24

TERTIARY EDUCATION: THE VANDALS STRIKE AGAIN
Gerard Noonan, Education Editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*

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

Inq: Pat Toms 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com; Jan O'Leary 9818 3737, jol@pnc.com.au PO Box 325 Rozelle NSW 2039; Win Childs Fax 9660 6554

www.politicsinthepub.org

“Don't Be Bush-Wacked” (Part 2) The UN and the Sea Swap campaign

In the lead-up to Bush's visit, Andrew Jackson spoke to Hannah Middleton, President of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and a co-convenor of the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition. In the first part of the interview, published in last week's *Guardian*, Dr Middleton spoke about the forthcoming “Don't Be Bush-Wacked” action in Sydney and what Bush expects from Australia. She takes up the question of the United Nations and the Sea Swap campaign in this instalment.

Andrew Jackson: You've mentioned the role of the United Nations. Bush was there again recently asking for more assistance in Iraq – this time a little more humbly – acknowledging the US is facing great difficulties. Yet once again he got a very cool reception from other countries.

Hannah Middleton: Yes, but a number of forces suggest that the United Nations is not an appropriate forum because it is so dominated by the United States.

No single country can stand up against the US at the moment. No power, no other state has the power the US has.

And so we see a struggle within the United Nations for the General Assembly to express its voice. The majority of the General Assembly are *opposed* to pre-emptive strike and *opposed* to the war on Iraq.

So while there is a very strong case for a reform of the United Nations, at the moment it's the only multi-lateral body we have.

The people in the Peace and Justice Coalition believe that the UN can still play a positive role.

AJ: Australia is one of the countries arguing for an expanded Security Council, which is perhaps at odds with US policy. The Australian Government has argued for the inclusion of Germany and Japan. There are others - Brazil, Indonesia, India, South Africa and Nigeria. Is there a need for an expanded Security Council?

Eliminate veto

HM: Expanding the number on the Security Council will not change the situation so long as the nuclear club has veto power. The more countries that are added, the more one may be pretending the Security Council is genuinely representative, and it's not.

If just the three countries from the non-aligned movement [India, Brazil, and South Africa - Editor] were brought on it would change the political complexion of the Council and all kinds of wonderful decisions could be made. But as long as the United States retained its veto power it would use it to thwart the majority decisions of the Council, as it has consistently and effectively done since the inception of the UN.

To democratise the Security Council and make it work as an executive which carries out and expands the decisions of the world's countries, a genuinely democratic kind of multilateralism is needed. The veto power must be removed and the power within the UN must reside with the General Assembly.

AJ: Immediately prior to, and shortly after the Iraq war there were a number of demonstrations which pulled record numbers of people onto the streets. This activity has dropped off in recent months. What difficulties are you having getting people active again?

New protest actions

HM: The huge demonstration on February 16 came out of a growing movement which had seen smaller demonstrations before it became a world-wide event. So by February there was already an enormous amount of publicity – we are going to have to battle very hard to make sure people know about “Don't Be Bush-Wacked”.

Another thing is that while ordinary people understand war, no-one is fighting a war at the moment – there is an occupation but not an invasion going on.

There are moments when people respond in very large numbers to a specific situation.

During the French Testing at Mururoa there were large demonstrations, and during the first Gulf War about 60,000 people marched in Sydney.

On February 16 this year *hundreds* of thousands of people took to the streets.

There was a strong feeling that “We, the people, have spoken”, and people were left very angry because Howard ignored them completely.

So perhaps they will want to come out again on October 19, and once again express their views to Howard and Bush.

However, while we are focusing on Bush's visit at the moment there are a wide range of things that need to be done.

In other areas of the country there are all kinds of other peace movement projects in process.

AJ: There is a campaign in Western Australia against a new US naval facility.

HM: In Western Australia there is a very large campaign about Sea Swap. US naval ships come to Western Australia and swap their crews there instead of having to go back to mainland USA.

This would mean large numbers of US troops – for example, the whole crew of an aircraft carrier – living in WA, possibly with their families.

The Australian Government has also invited the US Navy to use the Australian Defence Force's Lancelin Training Area.

Now, the US military has the worst record in terms of world-wide environmental vandalism, and it has spread contamination not only via the wars it has waged – most recently against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq – but through contamination at the over 300 military bases it has used outside the continental United States.

It is very likely that they would use depleted uranium shells during their exercises at Lancelin. This would leave the West Australian people with the legacy of yet another nuclear no-go area, along with the Monte Belo Islands which were handed over to the British for nuclear testing in the 1950s.

The Fremantle Anti-Nuclear Group (FANG) has an excellent

web-page with information on Sea Swap, Lancelin, depleted uranium and campaign materials at www.seaswap.org

What communists can do

AJ: Finally, what is our role as communists within the peace movement?

HM: As communists in any mass organisation, we must try to be exemplary in the way we work to carry out the decisions of that organisation.

Party comrades should join working groups of the peace coalitions; they should be out poster, handing out leaflets and should encourage friends and neighbours to take part.

One idea of previous demonstrations was “Bring your street with you!”. Actually go out and visit your neighbours and perhaps say “I don't know how you feel about this but how about we go together, and maybe we could make a banner together that says ‘X Street says we won't be bushwacked?’”. (And then

they could enter that in the competition for the best banner!)

People who don't often take part in demonstrations often like to go in a group. There is strength in numbers if they are not so familiar with demonstrations. Party members should initiate these kinds of activities.

A number of Party comrades already work within their local peace groups and should make sure their groups participate as a local group with a banner. They should also encourage their local group to take on the responsibility of publicity.

The Peace and Justice Coalition (in Sydney) has affiliated organisations of which the CPA is one. Party comrades should ensure that any mass organisation they belong to – an ethnic group, a trade union, an environmental group, etc, is affiliated and sends delegates. That is where the decision-making is done and the basic direction decided.

As well as working very hard to carry out the decisions when they're made, Party members must argue for the *content* of those decisions and to find appropriate forms in which to express our views.

The Peace and Justice Coalition is *very* broad, it has ALP, Greens, trade unions, ethnic groups, religious groups and others in it.

That means its very pluralist in its position – as it *should* be. It should appeal to the broadest constituency possible to activate people and bring them into the peace movement.

At the same time it is always possible to bring out the structural analysis that the anti-imperialist forces make about *why we have these wars* and *how terrorism is caused* as a result of imperialism.

All those things need to come through in an appropriate form, at an appropriate time.

The impact of imperialism on ordinary people – the suffering, despair and hatred it breeds because of its brutality – it is important that a clear anti-imperialist line is argued for.

The Peace and Justice Coalition will not be an anti-imperialist organisation but that element is legitimate and it is important that that viewpoint be heard within it. ✪

Communist Party of Australia

Central Committee:
General Secretary: Peter Symon
President: Hannah Middleton
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