



# More draconian laws Democratic rights trampled

In the latest attack on privacy and civil liberties the Howard Government has bulldozed legislation through Parliament to hand more draconian powers to ASIO and the Australian Federal Police (AFP). These new powers will allow ASIO and the federal and state police forces to demand that phone companies and internet service providers (ISP) stream information to them just minutes after phone calls are made and websites visited. This turns ISPs and phone companies into accessories to Howard's attack on democratic rights. If they do not comply they could be shut down as some web pages have already been closed.

The agencies will be informed of what websites and chatrooms you have visited or downloaded. The laws will also allow authorities to track internet conversations and will officially be able to do their spying for up to three months without obtaining a warrant. Just before the three month period is up they can drop the spying and then resume for another three months of spying after a short recess.

The Australian Privacy Foundation expressed its concern at the new laws. Without prior warning, the Government, through Communications Minister Helen Coonan, is proposing to provide the AFP with powers to censor the Internet and notch up fear among internet users.

An even worse aspect is that ISPs throughout the country are to be the vehicle for censorship, by being required to block Internet content.

These draconian powers would apply to a vast array of content which the AFP may "have reason to believe" "induces" or "facilitates" any criminal offence, or is even "likely to have [that] effect". An adviser to the Minister said that justification for such measures is unnecessary.

"This Government's extremism has reached new heights", said the chair of the Australian Privacy Foundation, Roger Clarke.

"How can a politician claim the right to hold office if they set out to undermine the critical democratic right to freedom of speech, and blatantly decline to evaluate the impact of measures put before the Parliament?"

The new laws also allow agencies to secretly track people via their mobile phones.

### Misuse

The Law Council of Australia warned that the new powers were "far more amenable to misuse or overuse by law enforcement agencies".

Already ASIO and the AFP have the



Police presence at APEC - trampling democratic rights - protecting corporate interest.

Photo: Anna Pha

powers to detain anyone who they may consider to be "suspicious". If you have any contact in any way with someone who is "a person of interest", you can be arrested, held in isolation and forbidden to contact your family or employer to tell them where you are.

You must answer questions or face five years' imprisonment. You will also be committing a criminal offence if after you are released you tell anyone where you were or what happened to you. You will also face prosecution if you go to your MP to complain or if you give details to your doctor of what has happened to you.

Most of the provisions put in place under cover of "anti-terrorism" laws are in four pieces of legislation - ASIO legislation, The Commonwealth Crimes Act, the Commonwealth Criminal Code and the National Security Information Act.

### Background Information

Communications Legislation Amendment (Crime or Terrorism Related Internet Content) Bill 2007 available at: [http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/view\\_document.aspx?ID=2686&TABLE=BILLS](http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/view_document.aspx?ID=2686&TABLE=BILLS)

### The key clause:

If the AFP Commissioner has reason to believe that Internet content is a crime or has terrorism related content, the Australian Communications and Media Authority must notify the content to ISPs so that the providers can deal with the content in accordance with procedures specified in an industry code or industry standard (for example, procedures for the filtering, by technical means, of such content).

### The key definition:

Crime or terrorism related content means any of "[content that] encourages, incites or induces the commission of a Commonwealth offence", "[its] purpose is to facilitate the commission of a Commonwealth offence", or "[content that] has, or is likely to have, the effect of facilitating the commission of a Commonwealth offence".

The Bill was not visible in the List of Bills at close of business on Wednesday September 13, but was tabled during the morning session of Parliament of Thursday September 14. The Federal ALP voted for these measures too so a change of government is not going to repeal the legislation.

Be awake! Be alarmed! Defend your democratic rights! The time is five minutes to midnight! ✪

## "This Government's extremism has reached new heights"



3 page



Water on tap or profits on tap

4 page



The unsaleable IR system

6 page



Remembering Sabra & Shatila

8 page



Communist gains in Greek elections

# The Guardian

Issue 1338

September 26, 2007

## Public education on the rack

The appalling ranking of Australia in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) latest report on education should come as no surprise to anyone who has been following government policies in this area over recent decades.

Years of cuts in spending on public education have seen Australia sink to the third bottom position of the 29 OECD countries. At the same time Australia spends double the OECD average on private education.

The figures confirm the long term efforts of both Labor and Liberal governments to privatise the whole of the educational system from primary schools to universities. It's a policy aimed to provide an education for the children of the ruling class while turning out children of working class families with minimal education. Private schools can also be relied on to educate children in the values and ideology of the capitalist ruling class.

"Australia is now lagging badly behind much of the first world on the importance we place on funding the education of the next generation", said Australian Education Union Federal President Pat Byrne commenting on the figures.

The fact that public education is now a semi-starved mess is a direct consequence of the deliberate policies of governments. Schools need more teachers and insufficient teachers are being trained.

Exactly the same process has been going on in hospitals and other medical services.

Country towns are without doctors while the training of doctors in Australia has languished. At the same time the government is subsidising the importation of doctors and nurses from countries such as India, South Africa and the Philippines, countries that need their services much more urgently than does Australia.

The OECD report, Education at a Glance, confirms that there is a strong relationship between educational outcomes and the socio-economic backgrounds of students. Class sizes in Australian primary schools are above the OECD average. The availability of teaching resources relative to student numbers in secondary education is more favourable in private institutions than public ones.

Many of the measures to assist disadvantaged students have been removed. Funds for TAFE have been slashed while university tuition fees are among the highest.

Australian teachers are paid less than the mean at the top of the salary scale despite teaching longer hours and facing larger classes than most in other OECD nations. Higher salaries recently won by the AEU and its members for beginner teachers have put this group above most of their overseas compatriots. Hopefully this will make teaching a more attractive option.

A great deal was done by the Whitlam Labor Government in the mid-1970s with the introduction of free university places, the establishment of the TAFE system of technical and further education, special programs for women, Aborigines, migrants, the disadvantaged and early school leavers. Some called it an "education revolution" at the time.

The rot set in well before the election of the Howard Coalition Government in 1996. The Fraser Coalition Government in 1976 began the process of making cuts to public education. These were continued by Labor Governments in the 1980s. Successive governments poured money into non-government schools and starved the public system of funds.

Then came the Howard Government which took a sledgehammer to public education and set about turning education into a commodity, to be bought in a market of competing educational institutions. The basic concept of education – at all levels – from being a right was turned on its head. Private schools, with only one third of the student population, receive 65 percent of federal government spending on schools. The government spends more on preparing to fight wars for US imperialism than it does on universities.

Labor is promising an "education revolution", but nothing that leader Kevin Rudd has so far said indicates that Labor will reverse the promotion of the private sector in education.

That change will only come with a government committed to a universal system of free, secular public education – system where education is a right, not a privilege.

### Correction

In last week's editorial a line was inadvertently dropped from the fourth paragraph. The sentence should have read: "His [Howard's] latest international action is to persuade the Canadian Prime Minister to join Australia and vote against the UN declaration on the rights of the Indigenous people.

The omitted words are underlined.

### PRESS FUND

Peter Holmes á Court, co-owner of the South Sydney Leagues Club, has flagged the idea that the Club get rid of all its poker machines. Up the mighty Rabbits! Holmes á Court has even suggested that maximising profits at any cost is not the best way for clubs to go. That's a really refreshing thought, given that over the last thirty years clubs all over Australia have waxed extremely fat on profits from the pokies, and in the process have imposed misery on thousands of problem gamblers and their families, especially in working class areas. If you want to know more about this issue, read the Pokies article in this issue of *The Guardian* and make a contribution to the Press Fund. We back the families of Australia's workers, and that's no gamble! This week we thank the following contributors for their support:

J R Allen \$10, J Ayres \$10, Jim Robson \$20, "Round Figure" \$10

This week's total: \$50 Progressive total: \$8450

# Police exonerate themselves over APEC violence



Photo: Josephine Donnelly

The police have investigated and exonerated themselves over their violent and illegal actions at the APEC protest in Sydney on September 7-8, the Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione announcing that there will be no action taken against those police who had taken off their identity badges and others who had attacked and assaulted protesters.

The NSW Greens and Human Rights Monitors, who photographed the badge-less officers, have called for an independent inquiry. Two other people who were on a police list of "excluded persons" and who were arrested outside the APEC exclusion zone, are suing for wrongful arrest. Complaints have been lodged with the NSW Ombudsman about police violence during the APEC summit.



Photo: Donna MacLaren

The party spreading the word.



Photo: Anna Pha

The Maritime Union of Australia made a strong show in the APEC protest.

## Special Guardian Appeal – 2007

Our Fund target was higher and the response has been far greater than for any previous *Guardian* Appeal.

Last week we appealed for someone to take us over the half-way mark with a \$500 contribution. Well, we did not get that but three contributors did take us over the \$12,500 mark.

It's a sign of the times and the altered technology when it comes to the production and distribution of a newspaper that our website has been receiving over 400,000 hits per month. So, many with computers are reading *The Guardian* for free. It does not help the finances but it does mean that many are reading our newspaper regularly off the net who would probably not be receiving a "hard" copy. We also know that some overseas Communist Party newspapers publish selected articles from *The Guardian* after translating them into their language.

Many Internet readers are overseas from the US, Britain, New Zealand and Canada and a small number from such scattered countries as Malaysia, Argentina, Pakistan, Japan and a number more. There are also a sizable number of Internet readers from within Australia. The web is certainly a world-wide affair.

But the first thing is that we have to produce a paper and that takes work and money. That's why we make this Appeal to keep the Fund rolling, acknowledging this week's three contributors.

MH \$150; Laurie Reed \$100; RB \$112.

This week's total \$362. Progressive total 12,687.

Please use form on page 11 when making a contribution.

# Water on tap or profits on tap?

Anna Pha

**Water is essential to all life on earth, for day-to-day survival, for households, agriculture, industry, nature and the environment. Access to clean drinking water is a basic human right. We need to conserve it, use it wisely and ensure its fair distribution for use by the people of the world.**

To big business water is a capitalist's dream: it is becoming scarcer at the same time as demand is increasing. The scope to charge sky-high prices and reap massive profits is almost beyond belief. There is just one catch – in Australia most of the water provided to the public and agriculture is in public hands. Big business does not have control of water allocation or pricing.

The finance sector – including some superannuation funds as well as investment banks – is pushing for its privatisation. So too are some of the major infrastructure transnational corporations. As the recent unsuccessful moves by state and federal governments to sell off the Snowy Hydro scheme illustrate, any government privatising water faces strong public opposition.

This has not deterred the Howard Coalition Government from planning to privatise the nation's water. It has affected the timing of announcements – not before the federal elections – and its tactics.

The first step in this privatisation agenda (shared by a number of state governments) was the corporatisation of water infrastructure and provision. Agreement on this was reached in 1994 by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in its Water Reform Framework: the aim being "full cost recovery" and the treatment of water as any other commodity to be bought and sold on a market.

One of the major aims behind the Federal Government's national water plan is to grab control of water so that it can be privatised.

Citigroup, Garry Weaven from the superannuation funds management industry, the Business Council

of Australia and other big business interests are pushing hard for its privatisation. The financial institutions are awash with cash and looking for new sources of money-making investment.

The Business Council of Australia laments that water usage is based on government allocations,

To understand what leaving it to the markets and allocating water where the "highest value" is, take a look at the oil markets. Oil prices have gone through the roof, speculative activity is rife. South Australians have had some experience with rising electricity charges, although the worst is still to come

## The Howard Government wants control of water so it can privatise it.

water restrictions, etc, and not determined by the markets. "If we ... allowed market pricing and the laws of demand and supply to operate as they do in every other market, there would be no talk of shortages or the need to curb economic growth", the BCA said in a recent statement advocating water privatisation.

Powerful mining companies, smelters, energy generators and other big industrial users of water are competing with cotton and rice growers, with communities and others for scarce water in drought conditions.

To them it is a crime that the agricultural sector has access to such large volumes of water at unbelievably low prices. According to Professor Paul Kerin from Melbourne university, some irrigators pay as little as \$45 per megalitre for water, and some householders as much as \$1,600.

The privateers argue that water is not being employed where its "highest value" is. That is, water is not being distributed to where it could be sold for the highest price. Privatised it and let the markets determine allocation!

when existing price cap regulations are lifted. They do not deny that households would be paying much higher prices for water.

World Bank privatisation programs in Third World countries have had disastrous consequences, with the poor being denied access to clean drinking water because they did not have the money to pay the higher prices. The result is disease and countless avoidable deaths.

There are very serious problems with the allocation of water, and



these need to be urgently addressed by a central body. Privatisation will not solve these problems. It will only exacerbate them.

Water is integral to human life and nature, not an economic commodity to be bought and sold where

the highest profits can be made. In the interests of the people and the environment it is better to have water on tap than super profits on tap with all the human and environmental devastation that would entail. ☘

## Pine Gap in the front line

**A statement made last week by Defence Minister Brendan Nelson confirms that the American run surveillance and control base at Pine Gap is a major facility in the global operations of the US military.**

It is now and has always been part of a network that straddle the whole of the world from Europe to Asia and the Pacific Ocean. These operations are directly

targeted against Russia and China and other countries whose governments are out of favour with the US government leadership.

Commenting on the Pine Gap developments and the US missile program, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer is reported as saying that "No one in their wildest dreams should imagine that the trilateral security dialogue between Australia, the US and Japan poses any threat to Russia."

Robert McClelland, the ALP's shadow foreign minister, echoed Downer's statement.

At the same time Brendan Nelson warned Parliament about nations that are "aggressively pursuing" ballistic missile program.

The statements of both Downer and Nelson are just plain lies. It is the US that is aggressively pursuing a dangerous missile program both in Europe and in the Pacific and only a politically blind and malicious politician could possibly claim that they are not directed against Russia and China.

The claim that these preparations are directed at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (which has agreed to close down its nuclear weapons facilities) and Iranian missiles (which does not have missiles capable of reaching Europe) or nuclear weapons which it also does not have, are to deliberately mislead those who might be taken in by such garbage.

Both Russia and China have reacted negatively to the present developments and can easily see that Australia is an intimate participant in these

preparations for eventual war or a threat of war against them.

Brendan Nelson says that a "Ballistic missile launch early warning information could be used in any US missile defence system, and as such this would be a continuation of a ballistic missile early warning partnership that we have shared with the United States for over 30 years".

These preparations are not part of a "defence system" as Mr Nelson asserts but are aggressive preparations – just another remark of Brendan Nelson that turns the truth on its head.

In a strongly worded media release, Denis Doherty of the Anti-Bases Coalition said that "The Anti-Bases Campaign has been saying for years that Australia is involved in the US strategy of containing China by the use of bases and agreements to aid the US in its endeavours".

He said that US bases in South Korea, Japan and Guam have been beefed up and Australia is providing bases, storage facilities and training for American forces and their allies.

"There is nothing benign about Pine Gap, it is a war fighting base and the world knows it. Pine Gap makes us a nuclear target and threatens to have major countries like Russia and China targeting us in the event of war", said Mr Doherty. "Howard is sacrificing Australian interest for American interests".

The Anti-Bases Coalition website can be found at [www.anti-bases.org](http://www.anti-bases.org) ☘

Pete's Corner



# WorkChoices – the unsaleable IR system

Bob Briton

**Spotlight Stores has announced that it is abandoning Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) for its staff and moving over to a union-negotiated collective agreement. The Australian Cleaning Contractors Association – which represents 150 contract cleaning companies – says it is on the verge of ditching its own AWAs and looking at alternatives.**

Hockey also pretends to be happy that the Spotlight workers and cleaners will have pay and conditions restored. The Spotlight AWA became infamous throughout the country for stripping away workers' penalty rates in return for a base pay increase of 2 cents an hour. At the time, the Howard Government defended the attack saying that it would create new jobs.

The government moved quickly to stop details of post-WorkChoices

and even stopped referring to it as WorkChoices. A "Fairness Test" was introduced and a media blitz unleashed in an attempt to damp down public anger. No doubt the government hopes the latest development in the Spotlight case will help sell its ill-defined and inadequate "Fairness Test".

"We've found that found that agreements are often not fair because hourly rates have not provided fair compensation for changes

*The truth is that WorkChoices has met solid union and community opposition from day one of its introduction.*

Workplace Relations Minister Joe Hockey has tried to put the best spin he can on these developments and claimed that the recently introduced "Fairness Test" appears to be working. The truth is that WorkChoices has met solid union and community opposition from day one of its introduction and that cracks are now appearing in the government's anti-worker industrial relations edifice.

AWAs becoming public when an analysis of the first batch of agreements showed a massive grab back by employers of workers' public holiday and overtime pay, penalties and other conditions won over decades of struggle.

The scale of the attacks fuelled the union movement's Your Rights at Work Campaign. The government was forced onto the defensive. It superficially re-jigged its IR package

to conditions such as overtime and penalty rates", Workplace Authority head Barbara Bennett said last week. Spotlight was given 14 days to come up with a less unreasonable AWA and the cleaning contractors told to cough up an extra 66 cents an hour in line with award pay rates in the various states.

Spotlight and the cleaning contractors are claiming that their back down was due to the insurmountable complexity of WorkChoices take two "We had an AWA system in place that was getting rid of all the problems and complexities of awards, and now its more complex and confusing, lamented John Laws of the Australian Cleaning Contractors Association.

"Quite simply, the union movement scared the government ... We tried to remove some of the more onerous conditions and provide an AWA which was readily



## CEO gets 12.5% raise on \$3million but Foster's workers denied rights

**Workers at Foster's Brisbane brewery want to know why Trevor O'Hoy, the company's chief executive, is so handsomely rewarded – while brewery workers are denied their rights to a union agreement.**

"Trevor O'Hoy is being given a 12.5 percent cash salary increase on top of his staggering \$3 million annual salary", Ron Monaghan from the LHMU Brewery Union in Queensland said.

"All our members want is their right to a union agreement so they can campaign for decent wages and conditions.

"Under the leadership of Trevor O'Hoy the right to a union collective agreement, which would deliver benefits and long-term respect and decency to the 285 people employed at the Fosters Yatala brewery, has been consistently denied.

He said that the company had controlled ballots where the workforce has shown that they want to protect their rights at work by overwhelmingly rejecting the company's plans which would see them earning up to 35 percent less pay than workers at other Fosters' facilities.

"But Foster's only seems interested in the rights of Trevor O'Hoy and his senior executives

to enormous pay packets – not the rights of the people who have delivered the 17 percent increase in underlying net profits which was reported in the media this week.

"Union workers resent the fact that the spin doctors at Fosters promoted media headlines after the Fosters announcement about the chief executives right to a decent pay, but ignored the ballot of the Brisbane workforce demanding equal treatment when it came to decent pay.

"Foster's is a global company, and yet it refuses to respect the fundamental human right, backed up in international law, that workers have the right to union collective agreements."

The dispute at the Fosters Yatala brewery has now stretched for eight months with the company refusing to sit down with the workers and their unions to come to a decent resolution. Fosters has become the target of an international e-mail campaign, co-ordinated by the global trade union representing brewery workers, the IUF, which has delivered thousands of protests, from beer drinkers across the globe upset with how working people in Brisbane are treated by the beer company. ☘

## Print giant junks work conditions

**Workers at Australia's largest print company will walk off the job for two days in Brisbane last week, in a bid to protect conditions and win a pay rise that keeps up with living costs. Print workers in Sydney are expected to follow suit.**

PMP Print is refusing to guarantee employees at its Wacol site long-standing conditions like pre-shift overtime, penalties and pro-rata long service leave in redundancy packages, said Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) Queensland print secretary, Danny Dougherty.

During six months of negotiations for a new collective agreement the company has tried to impose longer shifts and hours per week, has removed guarantees on working conditions and limited its pay offer to 3 percent.

"Most of these workers are on \$16 or \$17 an hour. They already rely on large amounts of overtime to make ends meet. They need a pay rise of 4% and protection of their current conditions – that's all we're asking for", said Mr Dougherty.

Employees at the Wacol site, where 120 people do shift work round the clock to produce

understood, was standard throughout the country, and which would give all sides an incentive to get on with it."

The complexity argument has some justification. Spotlight previously had workers on pre-WorkChoices agreements, WorkChoices agreements not subject to the "Fairness Test" and other who were. Overwhelmingly, however, the latest developments are an indication of the strength of public opposition to the Howard Government's odious IR regime.

Some commentators see the

public back down by Spotlight in particular as part of a bosses' campaign to soften the government's image in the lead-up to the Federal Elections.

Suspicion was rife when it was revealed that the organisation behind a multi-million dollar advertising campaign to sell anti-union workplace "reform" was headed up by a Liberal Party heavyweight. The party's federal treasurer, Mark Bethwaite, was a director of the National Business Action right up to the time they began to appear on TV last month. ☘

magazines and catalogues, have voted to take protected industrial action in a secret ballot as required under the Federal Government's WorkChoices laws.

"The acceptance rate was about 99 percent", noted Danny Dougherty. "The workers have voted for a 48-hour strike, which in the current climate is a very significant stoppage."

Management at Wacol, in Brisbane's western suburbs, were taking a hard-line approach to cutting conditions and wage costs, said Dougherty. Some employees had suffered abuse and bullying from managers, he said.

PMP Print has taken a similar stance in concurrent negotiations around the country.

Industrial action is looming at the company's two Sydney sites – Moorebank, which prints catalogues and magazines, and Chullora, which prints directories and phone books.

At Moorebank, a secret ballot of 250 union members is currently under way, while an application for protected industrial action is being prepared on behalf of the Chullora workers, said the AMWU NSW print secretary, Matt Lowe.

Despite a record profit this year, PMP was looking to cut costs by robbing employees of their conditions and security of entitlements, said Mr Lowe.

Employees want to maintain the same conditions that were included in their recently-expired EBA in a new agreement, but are also concerned about their conditions and entitlements if the company is sold.

"PMP is actively pursuing a buyer, and they don't want to enter into a union-collective agreement which protects conditions and entitlements in case it affects their sale price", said Lowe

"PMP is Australia's largest employer in the print industry; it has the choice to protect conditions and entitlements in the terms of sale if it changes hands, but has so far ruled that out."

If conditions and entitlements aren't protected in the terms of sale, employees come under the Transmission of Business provisions introduced by the Howard Government, where their terms of employment are only protected for 12 months before falling back to the five minimum conditions under WorkChoices. ☘

# Poker machine exploitation at crisis level



Peter Mac

**When Tim Costello, the brother of the federal treasurer and head of World Vision in Australia, recently told Britain's House of Lords about the problem of poker machine addiction in Australia, the horrified members of that institution at first believed they had heard him incorrectly.**

Poker machines are the most pernicious form of gambling in Australia. Their widespread and uninhibited operation is indisputably linked to crime, neglect of children, domestic violence, family breakdown and suicide.

Australia has the highest rate of poker machines per head of population in the world. With more than 95,000 machines, New South Wales has by far the worst poker machine problem of any Australian state. Sydney's Canterbury-Bankstown Leagues Club, which has the State's biggest income from poker machines, has 584 machines. (Western Australia has no poker machines at all, apart from those in one of the casinos.)

Despite some reduction in the number of poker machines, (down from 66,741 in 2003 to 66,223 last November) the average NSW citizen lost \$750 last year on the poker machines, up from \$660 in 2002.

The total amount lost by NSW gamblers each year is estimated at \$10 billion. Almost 50% of this amount is lost by the state's 250,000 problem gamblers. On average, for each problem gambler another seven people are adversely affected, not counting those who have ended up in jail or are simply destitute because of their addiction.

The licences to operate poker

machines are concentrated in the state's cities, where the profits are potentially greater, and where the problem is therefore most acute. The average resident of the state's cities lost \$800 per person on average last year, as opposed to \$700 five years ago.

## State governments and the industry

The gaming industry has been accused by Tim Costello of "using their very deep pockets to donate, shmooze, lobby and even employ the services of former state cabinet ministers" to promote their interests at state government level.

Last week the Iemma government in NSW followed up its recent decision to allow the use of Keno in hotels by announcing that it would allow the sale of lottery tickets in 7-eleven stores as well as in pubs and clubs. The Government also intends to extend the trading hours of hotels.

The NSW Government earns some \$4 billion per annum from taxes on gambling revenues, but this is not the only reason for the benevolent attitude towards the gambling industry.

When Iemma was questioned in public about having possibly allowed Keno gaming in pubs because of donations by the industry to the ALP's electoral funds, he replied angrily that the accusation was "absolute rubbish".

However, the figures for both major parties paint a different picture. In the financial year prior to the 1993 election, the NSW ALP received donations of \$1.2 million from the hotel industry. Over the last eight years the Liberal Party

received donations of approximately \$1 million, and the ALP \$2.4 million, from 150 hotels.

The Coogee Bay Hotel was the ALP's biggest benefactor from this industry. The hotel has now been allowed to install special outside areas where patrons can enjoy a smoke while continuing to play the pokies, as have other hotels, despite earlier reassurances by the Government that this would never be permitted.

## The Rabbitoh's proposal

South Sydney Rugby Leagues Club's 60 poker machines now earn the club in the vicinity of \$150,000 per month – about half the club's income. The clubs two co-owners, actor Russell Crowe and businessman Peter Holmes a Court, are proposing that the club should get rid of its poker machines altogether.

Tim Costello described the idea as "Like someone striking a match in a pitch-dark room".

Holmes a Court has pointed out that since the poker machines were introduced in 1956, the clubs have flourished in poorer areas, and not in the "bloody nice suburb" in which he lives. He claims that there is strong support within the club for getting rid of the machines, and for encouraging a family environment. Other states have flourishing clubs, with no poker machines, and the clubs' junior sport promotion should be supported directly by governments, not by poker machine profits.

However, Peter Holmes a Court has made it clear that he is not following a moral crusade, just "good business", and that even though the

clubs might suffer a short term hit, there will be a longer term effect because of the large number of people who are seeking a gambling-free club.

His proposal is now awaiting approval from the Club's finance committee, and faces vigorous opposition from members of the Club's management team, who maintain that few clubs could do without the money from the machines. When asked about the proposal, South's chairman, Bill Alexiou-Huckner, snarled "Show us the money!". Others have suggested that the Club's charity, SouthCares, would be adversely affected by the move.

The proposal has been greeted with great approval from politicians of both major parties at federal level, and even from Iemma himself. However, it remains to be seen whether it will be implemented and, if it is, whether it will survive the test of time.

## Gambler stories

Elderly punters often predominate in gaming rooms. The rooms have a palpably hypnotic effect on their victims. The lights and sounds emanating from the machines are soft and rhythmical, and there are no clocks or other distractions. In many clubs there is a service button which, when pressed, will summon a waiter to bring you a drink without you having to leave your seat.

The clubs have opposed smoking bans, because they pose a threat to club profits. Smoking is an addiction which rivals gambling but if gamblers leave the club for a smoke outside it interrupts the trance-like state they experience in the gaming rooms, and increases the likelihood

that they will cut their losses and go home.

The problem of poker machine gambling has been highlighted by the cases of 20 Vietnamese Australians who have been caught trying to smuggle heroin into Australia. Some, it is said, have been motivated by their addiction to gambling. Some of these people are in jail, others are awaiting trial, and one is under a death sentence.

The Federal President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia has blamed the situation in part on "bad apples", but has also drawn attention to the factor of problem gambling in many of these cases, and has accused the state government of hypocrisy over the issue.

One club patron recently told a visiting journalist that he had just seen one woman spend \$1,200 in a glass-enclosed smoker's room, and had also been offered sex by another woman after she lost hundreds of dollars.

When interviewed last year one compulsive pokie gambler confessed that he had fed the pokies by starving himself, and had lost 10 kilos over a year. "Once you're hooked, you're in this bubble, you can't see, you can't hear anything else", he observed pointedly.

The wife of another gambler who had parted with her husband because of his addiction met him on a train one day. He claimed to have no money to buy food so she gave him her housekeeping money. At the very next station he bolted from the train and went off to the nearest club which happened to be very near to the station.

There are many other stories in this sordid and terrible saga. ★

**WA** Sat 6 October  
**ACFS – Commemoration of the Death of "Che" Guevara**  
*Argentinean BBQ with Tango and music by Son Latino*  
Venue: **Kulcha**, South Tce Fremantle (Above DOME)  
Time: **7.30 pm** 'til late  
Entry: **\$35/30** (Vegos catered for – please advise)  
Contact: Vinnie 0419 812 872 or acfsperth@gmail.com



Sun 14 October  
**ACFS – A Cuban film for members and Friends**  
Film: *Nada Más*  
A Cuban version of Amelie, Poetry, satire and humour  
This film was a sold-out feature of the Latin American film festival in Sydney last January.  
For general viewing. Not to be missed!  
Venue: **FTI 92 Adelaide Street**, Fremantle  
Time: **3:00 pm** Wine & Cheese, **4:00 pm** Film  
Entry: **\$15** Donation to a project in Havana  
Contact: Vinnie 0419 812 872 or acfsperth@gmail.com

Brisbane  
**90th Anniversary Celebration for the Great October Socialist Revolution**  
*Celebrate with a mix of Latin American and modern entertainment*

**7 pm Friday 2 November**  
**East Brisbane Bowl Club**, Mowbray Park, Lytton Rd, East Brisbane  
**\$10 on booking, \$15 on the day**

Performances by: Blue Carousel' Ovidio Orellana, Nelson Mancilla, Rodrigo Martinez, Juan Zepeda and more  
Organised by the Brisbane branch of the Communist Party of Australia  
**Ph David 0419 769 129**

**Sydney**  
Film screening followed by march  
**Constructing Fear**

The film, **Australia's Secret Industrial Inquisition – Constructing Fear** is a story of people being singled out, stripped of their rights and intimidated. What makes it so compelling as a documentary is the bravery of the few who have dared to fight back.

**Friday 28 September Free Screening! No Booking Necessary.**  
Film starts **10:45 am** at the **Mitchell Theatre**, Level 1, Sydney Mechanics School of Arts, 280 Pitt St Sydney (near Bathurst St)  
March starts **11:30 am** – After the screening march to John Howard's office in Phillip St to protest the exploitation of guest workers.  
For more info: [www.cfmeu-construction-nsw.com](http://www.cfmeu-construction-nsw.com) 02 9749 0400 Film: [www.constructingfear.com.au](http://www.constructingfear.com.au)

**WA** A special screening of  
**Constructing Fear**

A film by Joe Loh on a secret industrial inquisition on construction workers  
**Guest speakers:**  
Members from the 107 group of workers who took industrial action defending their union delegate.

**Sunday October 28** At **FTI 92 Adelaide Street, Fremantle**  
Donation: \$10 to The Guardian Special Appeal.  
**3pm** Wine, cheese and speeches **4pm** Film starts  
Contact Vinnie Molina 0419 812 872 or [vinniemolin@hotmail.com](mailto:vinniemolin@hotmail.com)

# Remembering Sabra & Shatila

Robert Fisk

Robert Fisk was one of the first journalists to be present at the scene of the horrific murders in Lebanon, September 17th, 1982. He has published a number of books and currently writes a column for The Independent newspaper. The following is extracted from his book, *Pity the Nation*.

**What we found inside the Palestinian camp at ten o'clock on the morning of September 1982 did not quite beggar description, although it would have been easier to re-tell in the cold prose of a medical examination.**

There had been medical examinations before in Lebanon, but rarely on this scale and never overlooked by a regular, supposedly disciplined army. In the panic and hatred of battle, tens of thousands had been killed in this country.

## A war crime

But these people, hundreds of them had been shot down unarmed. This was a mass killing, an incident – how easily we used the word “incident” in Lebanon – that was also an atrocity. It went beyond even what the Israelis would have in other circumstances called a terrorist activity. It was a war crime.

Jenkins and Tveit were so overwhelmed by what we found in Chatila that at first we were unable to register our own shock. Bill Foley of AP [Associated Press] had come with us. All he could say as he walked round was “Jesus Christ” over and over again. We might have accepted evidence of a few murders; even dozens of bodies, killed in the heat of combat.

Bur there were women lying in houses with their skirts torn up to their waists and their legs wide apart, children with their throats cut, rows of young men shot in the back after being lined up at an execution wall.

There were babies – blackened babies because they had been slaughtered more than 24-hours earlier and their small bodies were already in a state of decomposition – tossed into rubbish heaps alongside discarded US army ration tins, Israeli army equipment and empty bottles of whisky.

Where were the murderers, terrorists?

Where were the murderers? Or to use the Israelis' vocabulary, where were the “terrorists”? When we drove down to Chatila, we

had seen the Israelis on the top of the apartments in the Avenue Camille Chamoun but they made no attempt to stop us. In fact, we had first been driven to the Bourj al-Barajneh camp because someone told us that there was a massacre there. All we saw was a Lebanese soldier chasing a car thief down a street. It was only when we were driving back past the entrance to Chatila that Jenkins decided to stop the car. “I don't like this”, he said. “Where is everyone? What the f\*\*k is that smell?”

Just inside the southern entrance to the camp, there used to be a number of single-story, concrete walled houses. I had conducted many interviews in these hovels in the late 1970's. When we walked across the muddy entrance to Chatila, we found that these buildings had been dynamited to the ground. There were cartridge cases across the main road. I saw several Israeli flare canisters, still attached to their tiny parachutes. Clouds of flies moved across the rubble, raiding parties with a nose for victory.

Down a laneway to our right, no more than 50 yards from the entrance, there lay a pile of corpses. There were more than a dozen of them, young men whose arms and legs had been wrapped around each other in the agony of death. All had been shot point-blank range through the cheek, the bullet tearing away a line of flesh up to the ear and entering the brain. Some had vivid crimson or black scars down the left side of their throats. One had been castrated, his trousers torn open and a settlement of flies throbbing over his torn intestines.

## Eyes open in death

The eyes of these young men were all open. The youngest was only 12 or 13 years old. They were dressed in jeans and coloured shirts, the material absurdly tight over their flesh now that their bodies had begun to bloat in the heat. They had not been robbed. On

one blackened wrist a Swiss watch recorded the correct time, the second hand still ticking round uselessly, expending the last energies of its dead owner.

On the other side of the main road, up a track through the debris, we found the bodies of five women and several children. The women were middle-aged and their corpses lay draped over a pile of rubble. One lay on her back, her dress torn open and the head of a little girl emerging from behind her. The girl had short dark curly hair, her eyes were staring at us and there was a frown on her face. She was dead.

Another child lay on the roadway like a discarded doll, her white dress stained with mud and dust. She could have been no more than three years old. The back of her head had been blown away by a bullet fired into her brain. One of the women also held a tiny baby to her body. The bullet that had passed into her breast had killed the baby too. Someone had slit open the woman's stomach, cutting sideways and then upwards, perhaps trying to kill her unborn child. Her eyes were wide open, her dark face frozen in horror.

As we stood there, we heard a shout in Arabic from across the ruins. “They are coming back” a man was screaming. So we ran in fear towards the road. I think, in retrospect, that it was probably anger that stopped us from leaving, for we now waited near the entrance to the camp to glimpse the faces of the men who were responsible for all of this.

They must have been sent in here with Israeli permission. They must have been armed by the Israelis. Their handiwork had clearly been watched – closely observed – by the Israelis who were still watching us through their field-glasses.

## How many killings make a massacre?

When does a killing become an outrage? When does an atrocity become a massacre? Or, put another way, how many killings make a massacre? Thirty? A hundred? Three hundred? When is a massacre not a massacre? When the figures are too low? Or when the massacre is carried out by Israel's friends rather than Israel's enemies?

That, I suspected, was what this argument was about. If Syrian troops had crossed into



A large poster at Sabra & Shatila mass grave – 25 people

Israel, surrounded a Kibbutz and allowed their Palestinian allies to slaughter the Jewish inhabitants, no Western news agency would waste its time afterwards arguing about whether or not it should be called a massacre.

But in Beirut, the victims were Palestinians.

The guilty were certainly Christian militiamen – from which particular unit we were still unsure – but the Israelis were also guilty. If the Israelis had not taken part in the killings, they had certainly sent militia into the

# To end Iraq war, people power org

Susan Webb

**Last fall [autumn] 800,000 Chicagoans voted to bring our troops home from Iraq, but only 20,000 turned out for demonstrations or other actions, said long-time peace activist and organiser Carl Davidson. The referendum, like numerous polls across the nation, showed a national anti-war majority, “but it has no voice, it has to be organised”, he said.**

Now, Chicago's October 27 Mobilisation Committee is working to do just that. The key, said Davidson, the committee's project director, is building new organisations and involving neighbourhoods that aren't organised.

For example, he reported recently, “There has been a second meeting of Black churches, community groups and others on the South Side. They are starting with 50 church buses to bring their members to the rallies and back.” The broad outreach “will also approach both Orthodox and Black Muslim communities, and should be seen not simply as a Black effort, but as an interfaith network throughout the area”, he said.

“The question is, what will the unions do?” he said in a phone interview. Union endorsements are important, but the key is what the unions will do to bring out their members, he said. The committee is counting on labour activists

to spur membership involvement.

## Chicago demonstrations

The Chicago demonstration on October 27 is one of several regional actions United for Peace and Justice is organising around the country to end the Iraq war, under the heading “Peace is possible.”

The core of the Chicago mobilising is focused on the local area, but two peace trains will bring hundreds from St Louis and Detroit, along with scores of busloads from surrounding states including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio.

Every elected official, including Mayor Richard M Daley and state and congressional representatives, will be invited to speak, along with presidential candidates. “We are non-partisan, but we're not anti-partisan”, Davidson said. “We want the program to reflect the range of politics that actually exists on the ground.”

A poll conducted for FOX News – hardly a liberal-biased organisation – indicates that the congressional testimony of General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crockett did not change American public dissatisfaction with the Iraq war. The September 11-12 FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll showed 64 percent think the US should pull all troops out of Iraq either immediately or over the next year.

## American people not buying

“The president just had the most credible spokesperson he could have had”, a congressional aide told the *People's Weekly World*. “I don't think he got much out of that. The American people aren't buying it.”

President Bush's September 13 speech, with the peculiar theme of “return on success,” made clearer than ever that he plans to pass the war on to the next administration. The speech drew wide criticism and was seen as unlikely to budge the majority antiwar sentiment.

Calling Bush's remarks a “path to 10 more years of war”, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, “The American people reject the president's 10-year war in Iraq and want a responsible redeployment to end this war”.

Democrats are pressing a variety of measures. Some call for specific withdrawal timetables or funding restrictions. Their supporters say these measures are long overdue and are the only way to change the dynamics in Congress, compel meaningful action and make Republicans take responsibility for the war. Other measures are less binding or involve partial steps but, their advocates say, can draw sufficient Republican votes to make them veto-proof and

move toward the US exiting Iraq.

While the Democrats won control of Congress last fall, their majorities are not veto-proof.. Senate Democrats in particular are grappling with their razor-thin majority, which gives Republicans the power to block progressive legislation of any kind. And overriding a Bush veto requires 67 votes out of 100 members of the Senate.

The key to breaking the gridlock in Congress is “for us to break our gridlock”, Davidson told the *World*. So far, only the “militant minority” is involved in organised actions, he said. “We have to find a way to enable the antiwar majority to take action. We have to take away every obstacle to them participating. That's what October 27 is all about.”

## Need more local groups

Chicago has 120 neighbourhoods, but only 15 have peace and justice groups, Davidson noted. “Even if we organised 40 neighbourhood groups that would be a huge step. That's what gets the politicians' attention. When the anti-war majority is independently organised at the base, then you have popular power. That's what we need.”

When people complain about Democrats, he suggested, “Ask them how well their neighbourhood is organised”. *People's Weekly World* ☉



“No to war!” – a peace

# Are the banks in trouble?

Mike Whitney

**“The new capitalist gods must love the poor – they are making so many more of them.”  
Bill Bonner, “The Daily Reckoning”**

“The truth is that the public – even professionals on Wall Street – have no clue what the real problem is. They know it has something to do with derivatives, but none of them realise that it’s more than a \$20 trillion mountain of unfunded, unregulated paper that has just been discovered to not have a market and, therefore, no real value. When the dollar realises the seriousness of the situation – now or sometime soon – the bottom will drop out”, said Jim Sinclair, Investment analyst in July.

The *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) says: “The rising inter-bank lending rates are a proxy of sorts for the increased risk that some banks may go belly up.” (Editorial; WSJ 9/6/07)

Ironically, the WSJ editorial staff which normally defends deregulation and laissez faire economics – is now calling for regulators to make sure they are “on top of the banks they are supposed to be regulating, so we don’t get any surprise bank failures that spook the markets and confirm the worst fears being whispered about.”

## Bank uncertainty

Credit standards have tightened and banks are increasingly reluctant to loan money to each other not knowing who may be sitting on billions of dollars in toxic mortgage-backed debt. It makes no difference that the “underlying economy is sound” as Bernanke likes to say. When banks hesitate to loan money to each other; it shows that there is real uncertainty about the solvency of the other banks. That slows down normal commerce and the gears on the economic machine begin to rust in place.

The woes of the banks have been exacerbated by the flight of investors from money market funds, many of which are backed by Mortgage-backed Securities. Wary investors are running for the safety of US Treasury [bonds] even though yields have declined at a record pace. This is causing problems in the Commercial Paper market as well as for the lesser-known State Investment Volumes and “conduits”. These abstruse-sounding investment vehicles are the essential plumbing that maintains normalcy in the markets. Commercial paper is a \$2.2 trillion market. When it shrinks by more than \$200 billion – as it has in the last 3 weeks – the effects can be felt through the entire system.

The credit crunch has spread across the whole gamut of commercial paper and low-grade debt. Banks are hoarding cash and refusing loans to even credit-worthy applicants. The collapse in sub-prime loans (that is loans to customers who have little to pay back the interest, let alone the original loan) is just part of the story.

## Unconventional loans

More than 50% of all mortgages in the last two years have been unconventional loans – no down payment, no verification of income, interest-only repayments.

Even more worrisome, the large investment banks have myriad “off-book” operations which are in distress. This has forced the banks to circle the wagons and reduce their issuance of loans which is accelerating the downturn in housing.

The financial distress of many homeowners and the complete breakdown in loan-origination (due to the growing credit crunch) ensures that the housing market will crash-land sometime in late 2008 or early 2009. The banks are expected to write-off a considerable portion of their debt at the end of the 3rd quarter rather than keep the losses on their books. This will further hasten the decline in housing prices.

The investment banks are also facing enormous potential losses from liabilities that “operate off their balance sheets”.



Citigroup could be holding the bag for \$21 billion in outstanding debt? Or, perhaps, their entire \$100 billion is red ink; who knows?

Does this mean that the other large banks are involved in the same type of “hide-n-seek” strategies? Sounds a lot like Enron’s “off-the-books” shenanigans, doesn’t it?

## How did we get into this mess?

More than 20 years of dogged lobbying from the financial industry paid off with the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act which was passed by Congress following the 1929 stock market crash. The bill was written to limit the conflicts of interest when commercial banks are permitted to underwrite stocks or bonds.

In August 1987, Alan Greenspan – formerly a director of JP Morgan and a proponent of banking deregulation – became chairman of the Federal Reserve Board.

“In 1990, JP Morgan became the first bank to receive permission from the Federal Reserve to underwrite securities, so long as its underwriting business does not exceed the 10 percent limit. In December 1996, with the support of Chairman Alan Greenspan, the Federal Reserve Board issued a precedent-shattering decision permitting bank holding companies to own investment bank affiliates with up to 25 percent of their business in underwritten securities (up from 10 percent).

Sounds like a good thing, doesn’t it? This protects the overall financial system as well as the individual depositor. Unfortunately, the banks found a way to circumvent the rules for minimum reserves by “securitising” pools of mortgages rather than holding individual mortgages. (which called for more reserves) This provided lavish origination and distribution fees for banks, but shifted much of the risk of default to Wall Street investors. Now, the banks are saddled with roughly \$300 billion in mortgage-backed debt that no one wants and it is uncertain whether they have sufficient reserves to cover their losses.

Banks now behave more like securities firms, more likely to mark down the value of assets when market prices fall – even to distressed levels – rather than sitting on bad loans for a decade and pretending they’ll be paid back.

The downside of this is that once the banks write off these toxic loans; the hedge funds, insurance companies and pension funds will be forced to do the same – dumping boatloads of this bond-sludge on the market driving down prices and triggering a panic.

Regrettably, the Fed Reserve cannot hope to remove a half-trillion of bad debt from the balance sheets of the banks or forestall the collapse of related financial institutions and funds which are loaded with these “unmarketable” time-bombs. We can then expect the stock market to fall sharply and the housing recession to turn into a full-blown economic crisis.

## Who is to blame?

So, who’s to blame? The finger-pointing

has already begun and more and more people are beginning to see how this massive economy-busting equity bubble originated at the Federal Reserve – it is the logical corollary of former Fed-chief Alan Greenspan’s “easy money” policies.

Greenspan presided over the greatest expansion of speculative finance in history with the notional value of derivatives surpassing an unfathomable \$220 trillion.

On Greenspan’s 18-year watch, the assets of US government-sponsored enterprises ballooned by 830%, from \$346 billion to \$2.872 trillion.

“The greatest expansion of speculative finance in history”. That says it all.

But no one makes the case against Greenspan better than Greenspan himself. Here are some of his comments at the Federal Reserve System’s Fourth Annual Community Affairs Research Conference on April 8, 2005.

They show that Greenspan “rubber stamped” every one of the policies which have since spread through the entire US economy.

## Greenspan championed sub-prime loans

“Innovation has brought about a multitude of new products, such as sub-prime loans and niche credit programs for immigrants. Such developments are representative of the market responses that have driven the financial services industry throughout the history of our country. With these advances in technology, lenders have taken advantage of credit-scoring models and other techniques for efficiently extending credit to a broader spectrum of consumers”, said Greenspan.

“Where once more-marginal applicants would simply have been denied credit, lenders are now able to quite efficiently judge the risk posed by individual applicants and to price that risk appropriately.

“These improvements have led to the rapid growth in sub-prime mortgage lending, fostering constructive innovation that is both responsive to market demand and beneficial to consumers.”

“Improved access to credit for consumers, and especially these more-recent developments, has had significant benefits.

“Unquestionably, credit availability to virtually all income classes has vastly increased. Access to credit has enabled families to purchase homes, deal with emergencies, and obtain goods and services. Home ownership is at a record high, and the number of home mortgage loans to low- and moderate-income and minority families has risen rapidly over the past five years. Credit cards and instalment loans are also available to the vast majority, including those of limited means. Without these policies, it would have been impossible for lower-income consumers to have the degree of access to credit markets that they now have.

Greenspan’s own words show that he played a central role in our impending disaster. The problems began at the Federal Reserve and that’s where the responsibility lies. ☘



...le all from one single family are remembered.

camp. They had trained them, given them uniforms, handed them US army rations and Israeli medical equipment.

Then they had watched the murderers in the camps, they had given them military assistance – the Israeli airforce had dropped all those flares to help the men who were murdering the inhabitants of Sabra and Chatila – and they had established military liason with the murderers in the camps.

Robert Fisk is a columnist for *The Independent*. ☘

# ganises



...ce action in the US city of Cincinnati.

# Greek elections

## Significant Communist gains

The Communist Party of Greece scored a significant increase of its vote in the Greek parliamentary elections held on Sunday, September 16. The Party's vote increased from 5.9%, in the 2004 elections to 8.2% – an increase of 38%. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) was the only party that registered an increase of votes and now has 22 members of Parliament from the 12 seats it held previously.

The ruling conservative party of New Democracy saw its vote dropped from 45.4% to 41.8% and elected 152 deputies, from the total of 300, thus achieving a very slim majority. In the previous parliament New Democracy had 165 deputies. The social-democratic PASOK, even though in opposition, scored poorly and lost 2.5 percentage points of its previous vote. It registered 38.1% and elected 102 deputies down from 117 it held previously.

The Coalition of Radical Left, which had an electoral alliance with the small party Democratic Social Movement, scored 5% of the votes,

which is almost the sum total of the percentages won by the two parties in the previous elections. It elected 14 deputies.

These elections also saw the entry into parliament of the extreme right wing party of Popular Orthodox Rally, which managed to score 3.8% of the vote and elect 10 deputies.

An important aspect of these elections was the fact that the combined vote of the two major parties of the capitalist establishment, which alternate in government, fell below 80% for the first time in the last 20 years, weakening to a certain degree, the two party system and strengthening the real opposition to the anti people policies pursued by both parties, that of the Communist Party.

A statement issued by the Central Committee of the KKE pointed out that "the electoral increase of the KKE is the biggest recorded since 1993. Combined with the losses suffered by New Democracy and PASOK, it constitutes a contribution to the great cause for the rise of the

labour and the peoples movements in the fight against the centre-right and centre-left scenarios.

"The increase of the electoral strength of the KKE", continues the statement, "contains significant dynamics, by achieving high percentages among the working people and young people, specifically among those working in the private sector, the unemployed, the self employed and the poor farmers in rural areas".

The statement of the KKE calls upon all communists to give all their efforts and in co-operation with the radical forces of society, which are strengthened, to organise the peoples struggles "to repulse the anti-people measures that are going to be pushed forward by New Democracy".

The statement calls upon the working class, the youth and the broader peoples masses to be in the forefront of the struggles for the defence of people's rights and "against monopolies and imperialist policies with the perspective of people's power and economy". ✪



One of the main election rallies held in central Athens

## Message of congratulations

In a message of congratulations to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece Peter Symon, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia, said:

It is with great pleasure that we have received news of the successes of the CPG in last Sunday's general elections. The increased vote won by Party candidates, particularly among the young people and the working class, is the promise that the standing of the CPG will further increase in the future. We recognise that this is a consequence of the many years of hard, consistent struggle during which your Party has not wavered from its militant but sophisticated line in the many struggles in which the Party is involved.

The decline in the votes going to the two major Parties is also significant in that it shows a weakening of the two-Party system so beloved by the bourgeoisie in Greece and in a number of other countries such as Australia. The continued support for these two arms of bourgeois power have to be overcome by the struggles of your Party, the trade unions and the mass movements as well as the work of your and other progressive deputies in Parliament.

In this year in which we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the advances made by your Party and the world-wide struggles of the workers, farmers, intellectuals, communists and progressives, all indicate that the revolutionary movement for social change in the 21st century is going to grow stronger and stronger in the years ahead.

With warmest communist greetings.

Peter Symon  
General Secretary  
Communist Party of Australia

## Southern Africa says "No" to US military bases in region

Isdore Guvamombe

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has taken a stand against US plans to establish a permanent military presence in the region, after having been already snubbed by North and West Africa.

The SADC is an intergovernmental organisation which furthers socio-economic cooperation and integration as well as political and security cooperation among 15 southern African countries and includes South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola.

American foreign policy has attracted the retaliatory attacks the Americans call "terrorism" following its efforts to effect illegal regime change in over 50 countries in addition to invading 35 others in 56 years.

It is for this reason the SADC countries have decided to block US

attempts to establish a base for the American African Force, (Africom) to be permanently resident in Africa.

The American African Force is a new unified combatant command of the US Department of Defense to be operational by September 2008. Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld formed a planning team in 2006.

The South African defence minister Mosiuoa Lekota said "There is a certain sense in the countries of our region (SADC) that if there was to be an influx of armed forces into one or the other of our countries, that might affect the relations between the sister countries, and not encourage an atmosphere of security.

"At the interstate defence and security committee meeting held in Dar es Salaam [in Tanzania], SADC defence and security ministers took a position and recommended that sister countries of the region should not agree to host Africom [and] in particular, to host US armed forces." ✪

It is reported that when US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice hosted Mozambican President Amando Guebuza in mid-July, she dangled the carrot of humanitarian aid to try to entice Mozambique to accede to militarisation of the region. Washington released US\$500 million, as humanitarian aid to entice Mozambique.

Mozambique is strategic in that it has a vast coastal area, an ideal play ground for US marines and warships, and has huge untapped natural resources, which can be used to the advantage of the Americans.

But the SADC countries decided that an American military base would not bring any good tidings as it could either lead to accelerated exploitation of natural resources or destabilisation of the region. It remains to be seen whether Mozambique will fall for Bush's tricks. Isdore Guvamombe writes for *The Herald* (Zimbabwe) ✪

## Cuba opts for Linux, breaks with Microsoft

Cuban authorities are seriously preparing to quit the Windows operating system and use the GNU/Linux free software instead, thus avoiding any sanctions for using the Windows computer system.

More than 3,800 technicians have been already trained in the country. In one province around 600 people are taking intensive 4-month courses to learn about the use of Linux and replace the Windows system.

It's a measure aimed at breaking the dependence on programs that are

under the control of a US owner. It also anticipates claims by the owners of Windows for the use of this system in Cuba, which cannot be paid because of the US commercial embargo, among other reasons.

That is why the Cuban authorities have decided to train their specialists in Linux.

Cuba established its own Computer Club for the Young; an idea that was promoted by Cuban president Fidel Castro.

Linux came out as a free alternative to the Windows program

created by Bill Gates' company. It provides users with the freedom to access its source codes and to modify them, thus enhancing the privacy of information. And it's all totally free of charge.

The software was created in 1991 by a Finnish student called Linus Torvalds. Among other advantages, it allows compatibility with the equipment we have in the country and is immune to the majority of computer viruses.

From *CubaNow* ✪

## Russian Party getting ready for Duma elections

A special Congress of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation took place over the weekend of September 22-23. A message of greeting to the Congress was sent by the CPA:

It is with great pleasure that we send fraternal greetings to the 12th (Extraordinary) Congress of your Party. We wish you all success in determining the policies that meet with the widespread needs of the working people, farmers and other social strata which are also opposed to the criminal oligarchs that have seized control of the enterprises, resources, banks, transportation and other institutions. These are the rightful socialist property and belong to all the people of the Russian Federation.

We look forward to an advance in the votes of the KPRF in the coming Duma elections which would accord with the current trends towards the left forces in recent elections in a number of countries.

We applaud the fact that the KPRF's list of candidates includes both party members and numerous supporters who are not members of the KPRF and comprise representatives of every social stratum in Russia.

In this ninetieth anniversary year of the Great October Socialist Revolution, with imperialism waging wars of conquest, either directly or by proxy, in many parts of the globe, the people of the world are looking to the heirs of the immortal Lenin to play a significant part in the urgent task of safeguarding civilization on Planet Earth, both from nuclear weapons and from the consequences of climate change.

We are confident that the members of the KPRF will fulfill these historic tasks with honour and success.

Long Live the October Revolution!  
Long live the KPRF!

Peter Symon  
General Secretary  
On behalf of the Central Committee  
Communist Party of Australia.

# Facing scandals, Japan's PM resigns

Dan Margolis

**After his conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) suffered a crushing defeat in elections to Parliament's upper house in late July, and after vowing to tough it out, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stunned the nation on September 12 by abruptly announcing his resignation.**

While the opposition parties had been calling for Abe to quit, his unprecedented way of doing so – never in the history of Japan has a premier resigned the same day that parliamentary questioning was to begin – has drawn severe criticism.

The day before, Abe had spoken at the opening of the new session of the Diet, Japan's Parliament, laying out his policies for the coming year. His resignation therefore came as a complete surprise.

*Akahata*, the daily newspaper of the Japanese Communist Party, said the JCP and other opposition parties "severely criticised Abe's irresponsible manner, and the ruling parties were shocked".

Trouble getting the Diet to re-authorise an "Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law" was one of the main reasons Abe gave for stepping down. While Japan's "peace constitution" relegates its military to the role of defending Japan from invasion, the special measures law allows the Maritime Self-Defence Force to assist the US military in Afghanistan.

Abe's right-wing LDP has been pushing to alter or remove the Japanese constitution's Article 9, which prohibits Japan from engaging in foreign wars.

While the special measures law is not set to expire until November 1, the Bush administration leaned heavily on Abe to make sure the law was re-authorised by the Diet sooner rather than later. The July elections, which reduced the LDP in the Diet's House of Councillors to a minority party, put the re-authorisation in jeopardy.

On September 9, Abe announced he would stake his premiership on pushing the opposition parties to extend the special measures law. He made the statement during a press conference in Australia after meeting with President Bush.

"While holding onto his post in defiance of the severe public criticism delivered in the House of Councillors election", said Shii Kazuo, JCP Chair and member of the Diet, shortly afterwards, "the prime minister now says he will resign if he cannot fulfill the promise with the US". He added that Abe's policy of attaching more importance to serving the Bush administration than serving the Japanese public was a good reason for the public to force Abe to resign.

In the September 13 issue of *Akahata*, Shii was quoted as saying that the resignation showed that the policy of the LDP and its partner, the New Komei Party, was "on

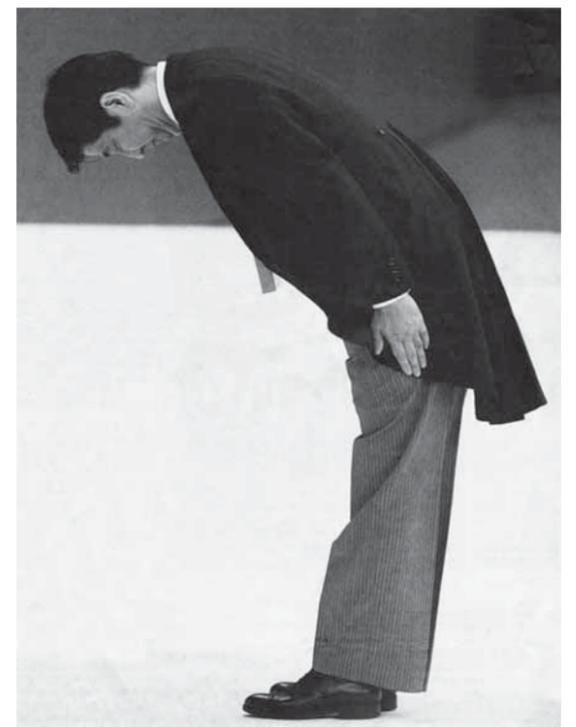
the verge of collapse". Part of this policy, said an *Akahata* editorial, was the economic "growth strategy benefiting large corporations, ignoring the increasing poverty and social gaps".

Corruption also played a role in bringing about the prime minister's downfall. In the past 11 months, five members of Abe's cabinet were forced to resign because of scandals.

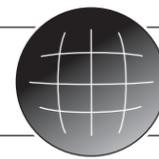
Now the LDP will have to select a new leader who will automatically become prime minister, because the LDP dominates the Diet's lower house. The fight is between Taro Aso, the current party leader, and Yasuo Fukuda, who according to opinion polls would have an overwhelming majority of LDP votes.

Fukuda is seen as dovish. For example, he criticised the former prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi, for his visits to the Yasukuni shrine honouring Japan's World War II military leaders, including prominent war criminals. However, Fukuda's positions on revising the constitution and relations with the US "war on terror" are not yet known.

In the meantime, the four main opposition parties – the JCP as well as the Democratic, Social Democratic and New People's Parties – have agreed to work together on points of unity, including measures to combat corruption. [Mr Fukuda was elected LDP leader on Sunday 23 September] *People's Weekly* ☪



Abe bows out.



## Global briefs

**SOUTH AFRICA:** On September 12, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) rejected nominees for the South African Broadcasting Corporation's board of directors proposed by Parliament, where the African National Congress (ANC) commands a strong majority. Criticising the nominations for their pro-business bias, COSATU spokesperson Patrick Craven called for a "working-class perspective on the news". The action reflects more general COSATU concerns about the ANC's leadership. Following an upcoming central committee meeting, the federation will be naming its preferences for ANC leadership to be chosen in December. At a September 11 press conference, COSATU's General-Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, explained: "We have a class interest in who becomes that leadership; we will no longer leave things to chance".

**BRITAIN:** Addressing the annual conference of the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) on September 10, Prime Minister Gordon Brown called upon public sector workers to accept "pay discipline" to fight inflation. In response, Mark Serwotka, head of the Public and Commercial Services Union, declared that workers "are not the cause of inflation; they are the victims", and cited a union study that assigns blame to the rising costs of housing and oil. Denouncing the government's privatisation practices and its use of contract workers, Serwotka urged a union fightback, proclaiming: "Unity is strength – stand together and we can win". The TUC conference unanimously backed a strike plan presented by civil service workers, and TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber announced the formation of a preparatory strike committee.

**VENEZUELA:** In Venezuela, a two-million-worker labour federation, beset since its foundation with conflict over labour autonomy versus ties to President Hugo Chavez's government, recently called upon its members to join Chavez's new United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Until now, internal divisions had kept the National Workers Union (UNT) on the periphery of change, to the point where Chavez hesitated to assign unions and workers – only 20 percent of them unionised – a leading role in building socialism. UNT leaders, still jealously defending labour's independent role, dismissed charges that their new stance toward Chavez's party was contradictory. Both the unions and the new party "are part of the same fight towards socialism", said one of them.

**INDIA:** Left parties in India united on September 4 to hold large demonstrations in Chennai and Kolkata, major ports on the Bay of Bengal. They were protesting against Indian participation in US-led naval and air exercises that party leaders view as signalling subservience to US foreign policy, especially when coupled with the proposed Indian-US nuclear treaty. Involved in the manoeuvres were 26 ships – aircraft carriers, missile frigates and destroyers – from Japan, Singapore, Australia and the United States. The protesters were targeting the ruling United Progressive Alliance, led by India's Congress Party, who they condemned for sacrificing India's sovereignty. Bangladesh's Communist Party followed suit on September 8 with a statement expressing concerns over the exercises.

## When a terrorist is "our" terrorist

Greg Godels & Walter Tillow

**Recently, a 20-year-old American, Din Dona Thin, took an American Airlines flight from Miami to La Paz, Bolivia. She declared to Bolivian customs officials that she was bringing "cheese" into the country, but a search of her luggage turned up five boxes of ammunition, each box containing 100 .45-calibre bullets.**

Waiting to meet Ms Thin at the airport was Zanabria Campbell, a woman who identified herself as the wife of Colonel James Campbell. Campbell, it turns out, is chief of security for the US Embassy in La Paz. Exposed as a deception, the "cheese" story was cast aside for another explanation: Thin was transporting the ammunition for Colonel Campbell to use for "target practice". Since Bolivian authorities were not gullible enough to swallow this far-fetched method of supplying the US Embassy's Marine Guard, the incident at the airport forced the US ambassador to get involved.

Philip Goldberg, US Ambassador to Bolivia, stuck to the story that the ammunition was smuggled at Colonel Campbell's initiative but, the ambassador stressed, Thin didn't know what she was doing, and it was all an "innocent and administrative mistake".

The incident was big news in Latin America. But, except for a short five-paragraph Associated Press story, little has appeared in the US media.

One could readily imagine what would happen if a young Bolivian college graduate tried to clear Customs at Miami International Airport with 500 rounds of ammunition which she declared to be "cheese".

But the big question is why the incident in La Paz has been ignored by the US media.

Thin took a direct flight on American Airlines from Miami to La Paz. She had to get 500 .45 rounds through the screeners in Miami. Were the metal detectors not working? Or did she have the cooperation of US security services? One would think that a security breach this big, at a major American airport, would draw the attention of CNN, AP, *Time*, the *Miami Herald* or *The New York Times* if not Fox News.

How and why did the US Embassy in La Paz engage Thin to deliver ammunition for "target practice"? Had she done it before? What does she do when she's not delivering ammunition? Did she have any other purpose in going to La Paz? Any serious, independent investigative reporter would be all over this story. But sadly, none in the US corporate media are pressing US authorities for answers.

In all likelihood, the 500 rounds of ammunition were meant for opponents of Evo Morales, the popular socialist-oriented president of Bolivia. We know from the past that US covert operations against Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua and Venezuela were conducted

in this fashion. The fact that US Embassy personnel were at the airport when Thin arrived indicates that they were there to serve as a cover should she be – as she was – exposed.

Because the US government wants to see the Bolivian government of Evo Morales fall, the US corporate media remains silently complicit in the apparent terrorist-related activities of Thin and the embassy in La Paz.

Orlando Bosch is a free man in Miami despite a Justice Department report characterising him as a terrorist and recommending that he not be granted the complete pardon the first President Bush gave him.

Luis Posada is also completely free in Miami because of the clearly deliberate criminal incompetence of Justice Department attorneys and the refusal of the Department of Homeland Security to declare Posada a terrorist.

Oliver North, who ran a terrorist network against the first Nicaragua Sandinista government, enjoys near-celebrity status as a Fox News TV personality.

Like Posada, Bosch and North, Thin seems to have joined a long line of US and US-backed terrorists who seek to assassinate, overthrow or destabilise governments and movements distasteful to the US government.

Since they are "our terrorists" the media dutifully remain silent.

Greg Godels and Walter Tillow are active in the Cuba solidarity movement. ☪

Letters to the Editor  
The Guardian  
74 Buckingham Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

## Re "China is now Australia's main trading partner"

I have been following the reporting of the APEC Conference in Sydney by many sectors of the media including, *The Australian Financial Review (AFR)*, *The Chasers War on Everything* [ABC Television program] (including the visit to the Chinese consulate in Sydney to discuss human rights), *The West Australian* and *CPA Guardian*.

The corporate media was almost solid in their portrayal of the non-binding nature of much that was discussed at the conference itself, the important business deals signed off at the side meetings and the expensive farce that was the conference security.

How ironic that Comrade Symon chose to quote from the *AFR* in regard to the economic, financial, security and geo-political benefits that would be had from aligning ourselves more closely with the Chinese government than with that of the United States.

They are however, both imperialistic, capitalistic, lacking in democratic institutions and in regard to the former would also be hegemonic if given the right conditions and opportunities.

The *AFR* regularly publishes

criticisms of the union movement, the Greens Party and is unrelenting in its criticism of anything that looks or smells like socialism including the progressive socialist governments of Cuba and Venezuela – the latter not quite socialist yet.

The *AFR* is effusive in its praise of China and its President Hu Jintao as they are after markets and profits – buying significant quantities of our mineral resources to be processed into manufactured goods, emitting copious quantities of waste into the environment in a mostly unregulated fashion, using mostly cheap and non-union labour and then selling the finished products back to Australia.

Many Australians are concerned about the large amount of natural resources that is being sold off in the short term for the benefit of the few rich members of the capitalist classes who facilitate this exploitation of labour, the environment and of the natural resources to be found there (and here).

Tellingly, President Hu Jintao had no problem dealing with either the PM John Howard or ALP leader Kevin Rudd, various business leaders and had little to say about the Howard government's appalling treatment of Aboriginal Australians which amounts to an attempt to kill off the last shards of their culture and identity by saying they should embrace individualism as the solution to their problems.

In answer to the question about those on the left who would join the corporate media in portraying China as going back to capitalism, China has become a player amongst the imperialist powers and the Western capitalists see profitable opportunities to expand markets into China to flog their various capitalist wares

to the expanding apolitical/depoliticised bourgeoisie in China.

Australians and concerned citizens around the world need to concern themselves with the short term consequences to unemployment and the balance of trade and the long term consequences of committing so much of our mineral wealth to be exported (and then leaving so little for ourselves and for us to manufacture goods here, the depletion of our non-renewable energy reserves and its cost to domestic users and finally the impact of the pollution caused by the massive amounts of processing required of these raw materials. (Have I mentioned Chinese and Russian deals for the acquisition of our uranium or did Comrade Symon?)

Now is the time for all Australians to take a more holistic view of all man's activities which go against nature and to seize the message from that displayed on large white and blue billboards across the Cuban countryside, "Consume only what is necessary".

We need to lessen our environmental footprint on this planet if we are to survive as a species and not continue to kill off others at the same time.

This signifies that the means of production need to be nationalised, collectivised and in the words of the Hungarian socialist writer Istvan Meszaros, in his canonical book, "Beyond Capital", be put in the hands of the associated producers.

Marx, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Che, Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez offer us examples of the social and political means to achieve this – as did Australia's Monty Miller.

Hasta la Victoria siempre!

Richard Titelius  
Ballajura WA

## BOOKSHELF

*Eureka and Beyond* \$12 (p&p \$2.50) Monty Miller's own story, edited by Vic Williams. This is the second printing of this excellent book drawn from Monty Miller's own writings of the Eureka Stockade and his many activities as a militant trade unionist and internationalist.

*Bush's Secret World* \$27.50 (P&P \$2.50) By Eric Laurent  
Reviewers have said of this book: "In this scrupulously researched book based on a wealth of documents, the current President of the United States comes across as nothing other than a man under the influence" (France Soir) and, "Only Christians have their place in paradise, explained George W to his own mother. If it is populated by people like him, then after reading this book one would rather go to hell (Le Canard Enchaîné) and "Bush relies on fanatical ideologues, fundamentalist Christians, shady businessmen and right-wing extremists to a degree that will surprise even the most hardened observer."

*Cuba beyond our dreams* \$20 (p&p \$5) By Silvia Martinez Puentes  
This is the most comprehensive coverage of the Cuban revolution to be published. It covers all the main issues that people want to know – the story of the revolution, the economy, the unity of society, scientists, employment in Cuba, international solidarity, health, education, sport, human rights and much more.

*Marxism – A Living Science* \$16.00 (p&p \$5) By Kenneth Cameron  
K Cameron is an outstanding American Marxist. He covers the origins of Marxism, the class struggle as the dynamics of history, evolution from farming societies, industrial capitalism, communism, women and society, ideas and art and finally, nature and society. An invaluable book to have in your library and to read.

## DVDs all at \$10 including postage:

*The Power of Community (How Cuba beat Peak oil)*

*Mountain of light (Cuban medical brigades abroad)*

*The Untold story of Fidel Castro*

*New evidence on September 11 and the truth about the Iraq war*

*Hugo Chavez and the new Latin America*

*We are the ILWU* (About the American Longshoremen's Union)

*The Motor Cycle Diaries* (Che's early journeys in Latin America)

*Terrorism made in the US (Posada Carriles)*

*The Road to Guantanamo*

*Wal Mart* (Behind the glitz of this huge department store)

Order from **SPA Books**, 74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010  
Payment by Cheque, Money Order or Credit Card (incl name on card, number & expiry date)

## Culture & Life

by  
Rob Gowland

### Property of the people and the new vandals

When the Bolsheviks led the people of Petrograd in storming the Winter Palace to arrest Kerensky's Provisional Government, the revolutionaries who actually carried out that historic task were among the poorest folk in the city: workers, soldiers and sailors.

Most had never been inside the grounds of any of the grand palaces that dotted the countryside of imperial Russia, except perhaps to work as yard-sweepers or the like.

Not unnaturally, when they got inside the Tsar's grand Winter Palace the first thought for many was to pick up anything of value that wasn't nailed down. However, chastised by their fellow revolutionaries ("Property of the people, Comrades") they not only turned out their pockets but turned around and read the riot act to their erring comrades until they too had emptied their pockets.

They were landless, poverty-stricken and uneducated, but they knew that the cry "Property of the people!" held out the promise of a better world for the poor and oppressed multitudes, and not just of the Russian Empire.

It is a slogan that recognises a fundamental truth: that the wealth

of the world is the creation of the working class and other workers – the peasants and intelligentsia. When the working people take over the factories, palaces and mines they are merely reclaiming their own, no matter what the "factory owners" call it.

However, in a society where wealth is distributed unevenly, such as it is in capitalism, notions of private property can be very seductive. And those notions remain just as seductive in societies that are endeavouring to build a socialist society.

Paradoxically, the more those preparing to build a socialist society are successful at a material level – the more they improve the living conditions of the people – then the greater the danger of petty bourgeois notions gaining ground. Individualism replaces the ideals of collectivism, and "I'm all right, Jack" becomes the slogan for more and more people.

Building a new society involves not just material things but also a change in the way people think, in their priorities and their choices. But when goods that people want are in short supply, the unscrupulous and immoral (those who continue to think in the old way, the way of capitalist society) can prosper by developing a black market, a "victimless" crime that actually undermines the very basis of a free democratic socialist society.

Capitalism, by its deliberate policy of emphasizing private ownership and downplaying and actively denigrating notions of public ownership and public responsibility, has only itself to blame if heedless youth treat public property with contempt.

They trash trains, spray graffiti "tags" over every blank surface they can find (including historic



Leader of the Russian revolution Lenin, speaks to a gathering in 1918.

sandstone structures), break pieces off statues in parks and smash tombstones in cemeteries.

Denied an education that would develop their minds socially and culturally, their imaginations have been dulled by a lifetime of non-stop advertisements extolling the virtues of the consumerist lifestyle.

They are actively taught that the role and purpose of social interaction is nothing more than self-gratification. Is it any wonder they set fire to their schools, slash train seats, or commit other acts of social "defiance"?

For they are often acts of defiance and rebellion, ill-formed and unfocussed much of the time, expressing a generalised rejection of the values of the society around them while unable to offer any alternative as yet.

And of course, they are also

taught by example to put themselves first and to put others a very poor second. So it is also not surprising that they care little for the hurt they might be causing someone else when they amuse themselves and show off to their equally mindless mates by smashing up a scout hall, wrecking a carefully restored vintage aircraft or throwing stones at a passing car.

In January, a silver 1955 De Havilland Dove, that was parked beside the runway at Warnervale Aerodrome on the NSW Central Coast, suffered an estimated \$80,000 damage at the hands of vandals.

"In a frenzied attack", said the local paper, "the vandals smashed windows and navigation lights and bent the rudder, wing tips and engine cowlings. Interior seats, radio and navigational equipment were destroyed."

What a sense of achievement for them to contemplate afterwards, eh?

The original Vandals were a Teutonic race of people inhabiting northern Germany who in the early centuries AD settled in various parts of Europe.

Their reputation for wanton destruction began when, in 455 under Genseric, they captured Rome and plundered the city. They allegedly mutilated or destroyed every work of art they could find there, and gave their name forever more to mindless destruction.

When our modern-day vandals find a cause that can give their sense of rebellion a coherent purpose, when they find the way to sort out the truth from the lies and the cant that they are fed now, they will, I am sure, discover the intense pleasure to be derived from remaking the world. ✪



Sun 30 Sept –  
Sat 6 Oct

I have not seen *Unearthing The Lost Kingdom Of Aratta*, screening in the *Lost Worlds* timeslot (SBS 7.30pm Sunday), but if you are of an archeological turn of mind it should prove of interest.

In southeastern Iran, a sudden change in the course of the Halil Roud River recently revealed traces of a previously unknown 5000 year-old civilisation on the Iranian Plateau.

Excavations have unearthed the remains of the walls of a city covering a hundred hectares. The international team leader, Professor Yousef Madjizadeh, is now convinced that he is unearthing the mythical Sumerian kingdom of Aratta.

This week the subject of *The Pursuit Of Excellence* (ABC 8.00pm Tuesday) is hair, in the form of the so-called Hair Olympics. Hair dressers (sorry, stylists) from all over the civilised world compete to “adorn stunning models in killer heels” with “vivid sculptures of hair, from peacock blue to flaming red”.

Why hair models have to totter about on five-inch stilletos is beyond me, but what do I know? This competition involves not just stylists and models, but also *coaches and trainers*.

This nonsensical trivia would not be of much interest to *Guardian* readers, I assume, except for one thing: the contest they are filming is in Moscow. The former centre of revolution in the world, the centre of world proletarian culture, is now

reduced by capitalism to hosting a hairdressing competition.

Given the nature of the event, you will not be surprised I am sure to learn that the favourites are Team USA. Months of preparation with their particular model (not to mention their trainers and coaches) are required to win this, and winning means fame and most importantly fortune.

The program notes sent out to the media by SBS for this week's *Cutting Edge* program were remarkably short: barely two paragraphs. They noted in passing that they had been written from production notes since no preview copy of the program was available.

That's a pity, considering its title: *China vs The US – The Battle for Oil* (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday). With that subject matter it could be, indeed should be, a program of great interest to us all.

The top US corporations must be getting very anxious about their future status as China's economy storms ahead, leaving imperialists bobbing in its wake and begging for China to throw them a lifebelt.

The US military as well as the government is determined to prevent China's rise to ascendancy over the world economy. They have for decades been developing their control over not just strategic military bases but also strategic resources, chief among which is oil.

The development of “secure” pipelines that direct oil away from China and Russia is a main strategic aim of US military planning. NATO's war against the former Yugoslavia was at least partially to secure a pipeline route from Central Asia and the Middle East that did not cross or even go close to Russian territory.

This program is about China's quest for sources of oil that are not tied up by the US already. The program notes refer to these states (in Africa, Iran and former Asian Republics of the USSR) as “the rogue states”, which I think gives us a fair indication of the program's approach.

So do the Notes' designation of



Michael Kitchen as Christopher Foyle – *Foyle's War* (ABC 10.25pm Saturday)

China's search for countries from which to buy oil as “the greatest threat in world geopolitics”!

In this week's repeat episode of the excellent *Foyle's War* (ABC 10.25pm Saturday), set in 1940, Detective Chief Superintendent Foyle (Michael Kitchen) encounters upper crust British fascists impatiently awaiting the German invasion to free them from the Red menace.

Their leader, Guy Spencer (played by Charles Dance), is an impressive, Mosely-like figure, who is also unscrupulous, manipulative and willing to use anyone to further his own ends.

This is one of the very few TV programs (or films) to recognise that the pro-fascist element in the British aristocracy persisted in their

pro-German stance well into (and in some cases right through) the War. Britain's enemy (by which they meant their class enemy) was “the Bolshevik and the Jew” as Spencer says, not Hitler whom they saw as the hope for the future.

Foyle's assistant, Detective Sergeant Paul Milner (Anthony Howell), a disabled veteran of the British army's botched attempt to stop the Nazi invasion of Norway, is drawn to Spencer's demagoguery. A weakness in the episode is that Milner does not discover Spencer's ideological inadequacies, becoming disillusioned with his personality instead.

Nevertheless, it is another thoughtful, densely plotted whodunnit expertly integrated into its wartime setting. The key to the series' success in this is the way its writer Anthony Horowitz has been able to show the way people *thought* at the time.

Created and written with a clever (and convincing) ability to relate the plots to the atmosphere, events and milieu of the War at home, the series was directed by Jeremy Silbertson with understated skill.

In fact, understatement might

almost be a theme of the series: the performances, David Odd's excellent photography and especially Jim Parker's very effective music are all pleasingly understated.

Foyle is played by Michael Kitchen as a shrewd, experienced and *credible* copper. At the beginning of the series he complained to his boss, Asst. Commissioner Sommers (Edward Fox), that he was wasted doing mere police work and wanted to be allowed to take a commission in the army. Fox however wouldn't hear of it.

As compensation, Sommers gave Foyle a woman driver, Sam, from the Auxiliary Transport Corps (the ATS). Sam, as played by the talented Honeysuckle Weeks, is delightfully in period: rosy cheeked, frank, inquisitive, not at all overawed by her new boss – the very picture of the young '40s woman given the opportunity by the War to step out of her designated domestic role (in Sam's case, a village vicarage).

Best of all about *Foyle's War* is that the plots are intelligent rather than merely ingenious, the supporting characters are interesting and the supporting *cast* is excellent. ☘

Special Guardian Appeal: My contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_

Receipt is required  I do not wish my name to be published

Pay by  Cheque  Money order to: Guardian Subscriptions, 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Or by:  Bankcard  Mastercard  Visa Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ Signature:..... Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Name ..... Address .....

For contributions over \$500 send free subscription to:  The above name & address  The following:

Name ..... Address .....



Special offer subscription to **The Guardian**

10 issues: \$10  12 MONTHS: \$88 (\$80 conc.)  6 months: \$45 (\$40)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE: \_\_\_\_\_

Pay by  Cheque  Money order  
to: Guardian Subscriptions  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia

or by credit card:  Bankcard  Mastercard  Visa

Card #

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Guardian**

Editorial Office  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833  
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Published by  
Guardian Publications  
Australia Ltd  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by Spotpress  
24-26 Lillian Fowler Place  
Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment  
is taken by T Pearson,  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Sydney  
**POLITICS**  
*in the pub*

September 28  
**A poetry of politics**  
Stuart Rees Prof. & Students, Centre Peace & Conflict Studies

October 12  
**“University Futures. Triumph of the Market?”**  
Carolyn Allport, Nat. Pres. NTEU  
Tom Patton, NSW Pres. NUS

October 19  
**“Dirty Environmental Politics”**  
Guy Pearse, Author, *High & Dry*  
Christian Downie, Australia Institute

October 26  
**“Fixing The National Housing Crisis?”**  
Julian Disney, Dir. Social Justice Project UNSW  
Adam Farrar, Exec. Dir NSW Federation of Housing Associations

Every Friday 6pm 'til 7.45  
**Gaelic Club**  
64 Devonshire Street Surry Hills

Pat Toms 02 9358 4834  
pbtoms@bigpond.com  
[www.politicsinthepub.org](http://www.politicsinthepub.org)

# Communist Party of Britain

## Two Steps Forward, No Steps Back

Hannah Middleton and Denis Doherty

CPA Party President Hannah Middleton and Central Committee member Denis Doherty recently returned from an extended overseas trip during which they attended two peace conferences and held discussions with a number of fraternal parties. Below *The Guardian* publishes their impressions of the work of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB).

**We were fortunate to have some lengthy talks with CPB General Secretary Comrade Rob Griffiths in London and in Cardiff, to visit the Party headquarters in London, and to speak at a CPB election meeting in Cardiff.**

Some years ago when we were in England, it was clear that the CPB was giving high priority to developing their work in the trade union field.

This produced good results. The CPB 2006 Congress document states:

"In the last few years, a significant left wing advance in the trades unions, which still form the mass base of the Labour Party, is clearly discernible ... Communists – and our allies – have played a decisive role in achieving this turn of events."

This year, however, the CPB appears to have widened its perspective and considerably increased its activities, invigorating the Party.

### Party development

Primary responsibility for Party development lies with the Executive Committee which has been working to develop activity among Branches and regions.

The CPB 2006 Congress document stated: "The building of a truly national party dictates that the EC should closely monitor and control the work of all party organisations... Individual EC members should be assigned specific tasks in connection with this."

The CPB has developed and published a Party Development Plan for 2006 to 2008, entitled *Two Steps Forward, No Steps Back*.

The Development Plan features "regularly on the agenda of Executive Committee and Political Committee meetings, helping to keep its challenges and tasks in the forefront of our considerations. As a result, more progress has been made in rebuilding and strengthening the Party recently than for many years." (*Two Steps Forward, No Steps Back*, p10)

### Education

As well as an education program for basic, intermediate and advanced levels, Communist Universities have been held in Wales, Scotland, the Midlands and London.

At first some comrades felt the project was too big and feared the Party might fail. However, the Executive Committee insisted they should go ahead and assisted with their organisation.

The Party has been delighted that they turned out to be really successful events, attracting large numbers of participants.

### Cadre development

The CPB states that: "A cadre development plan is an essential requirement of any strategy for growth and the incoming EC is charged with developing a coherent national approach, working with Party organisations, for the personal development of designated comrades, building on the existing day and weekend schools and the Communist Universities."

The Party is "developing a cadre development plan to ensure that – working with party organisations – a coherent national approach is taken to develop designated comrades through guided political activity, mentoring and political education". (Ibid p13)

### Recruitment

Communist Party of Britain and Young Communist League membership rose by ten per cent in 2006.

The Party reports that 69 per cent of all the membership applications it received were from people under 30.

However, the Party stresses that "we will only retain many of our new members if we provide them with activity and political education." (Ibid p15)

Despite the increase, the Party says: "A wider call needs to be made to labour movement, peace and anti-war activists, to black and minority ethnic communities and to the working class for the renewal and regeneration of the Communist Party." (Ibid p15)

### Campaigning

Some of the campaigning work being undertaken by the newly invigorated Communist Party of Britain includes elections, peace and fighting racism.

### Elections

The CPB's 49th Congress and the Executive Committee have "reiterated the need for Communists to make more use of electoral opportunities to project our party and its policies, to mobilise members, take up local issues and strengthen our contacts with left and progressive forces". (Ibid p6)

The new stage in the Party's electoral work began with CPB candidates contesting the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and English and Scottish local government elections on May 3 this year.

In Wales Party members raised enough money and found the cadres to stand in all five regions for the Welsh National Assembly.

This qualified the CPB for party political radio and TV programs in English and Welsh. The Party got working and recorded and filmed these programs.

They got an expected small vote in the election.

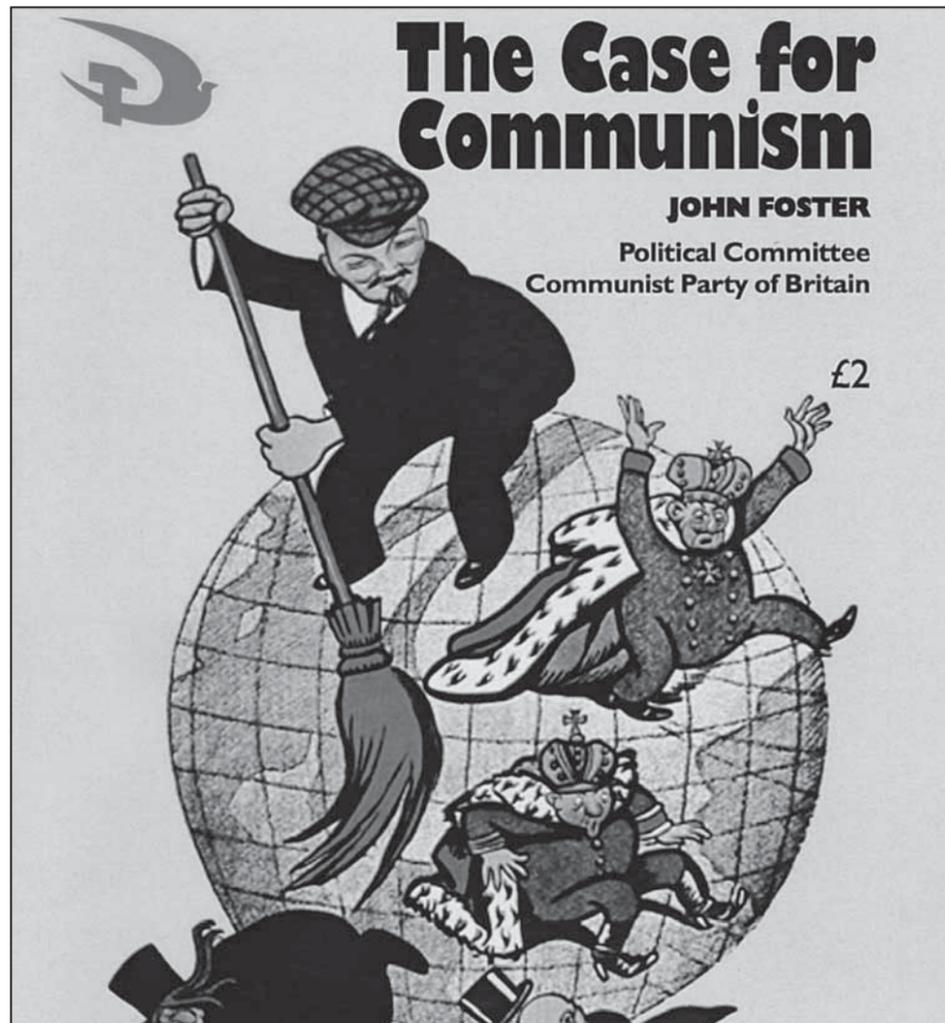
More importantly, however, on the basis of the response to the leaflets distributed and the broadcasts, they hope to double their membership in Wales.

The CPB's election programs are available on YouTube.

### Electoral alliance

In another approach to election work, the CPB has "agreed to initiate a people's unity alliance with domiciled Communists from overseas and with socialists who broadly share the strategic perspectives set out in our programme". (Ibid p6)

As the first step in this plan, a new electoral alliance has been registered with Electoral



Commission. Its registered officers are all CPB national officers.

Unity for Peace and Socialism, which draws its members from the CPB, the Association of Indian Communists and the Indian Workers' Association, is standing candidates in the north of England.

### Fighting racism and fascism

The CPB is active in the fight against racism and fascism.

"An unholy alliance of New Labour, the gutter press and the BNP continues to fan the flames of racism and Islamophobia." (Ibid p7), the CPB says.

CPB members are in the leadership of the influential magazine *Searchlight* and the organisation Unite against Fascism and many Party members are active in these and other broadly-based anti-racist campaigns.

The CPB says: "It is clear that the British National Party (BNP) and other fascist organisations are making a major push for electoral respectability and representations. Communists must be in the front line of the battle to defeat them." (Ibid p7)

CPB members took this up during the election campaign. They reacted strongly and persistently against British National Party candidates on the polling booths.

They were so effective that the BNP – with a long history of intimidation and violence – complained to the police about CPB harassment.

Comrades in Cardiff were delighted and proud of the courage and determination of CPB members on the polling booths in Wales.

### Peace

"At the beginning of 2007, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown made clear their support for replacing Trident with a generation of nuclear weapons of mass destruction in Britain. They have escalated British military intervention in Afghanistan, supported the US military 'surge' in Iraq and helped produce legislation in Baghdad to hand over huge oil profits to British and US transnational corporations. These developments underline the need for our party to help strengthen CND and the Stop the War Coalition centrally and locally, and to keep up the pressure on the British government and on Blair's replacement as prime minister." (Ibid pp3-4)

The CPB paid great attention to its work in the peace area and has cadres in leading positions in key British peace organisations.

CPB member Kate Hudson leads CND and CPB member Andrew Murray is Chair of the Stop the War Coalition.

### New confidence and energy

These are by no means all the activities of the Communist Party of Britain.

The Party says: "Party membership continues to grow. Our work is expanding as the political pace quickens. Implementing the Party Development Plan in full will strengthen and deepen this trend as the Communist Party of Britain advances 'two steps forward, no steps back'." (Ibid p15)

The Party generally has a new confidence and energy, and our visit left us both impressed and encouraged. ☺



Communist Party of Australia

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

**Central Committee:**  
**General Secretary:** Peter Symon  
**President:** Hannah Middleton  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833  
**Sydney District Committee:**  
Andrew Jackson  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833

**Newcastle Branch:**  
303 Hunter St  
Newcastle NSW 2300  
Ph: ah 02 4926 1752  
**South Coast Branch:**  
Janice Hamilton  
16/26-30 Hutton Ave  
Bulli NSW 2516  
Ph: 02 4283 6130

**Riverina Branch:**  
Allan Hamilton  
2/57 Cooper St Cootamundra 2590  
Ph: 0415 298 591  
**Melbourne Branch:**  
Andrew Irving  
PO Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall  
Lygon St Carlton Sth 3053  
Ph: 03 9639 1550 Fax: 03 9639 4199

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

**West Australian Branch:** Vic Williams  
5B Jemerson St Willagee Perth 6156  
Ph: 08 9337 1074  
**Brisbane Branch:** David Matters  
PO Box 33, Camp Hill, Qld 4152  
Ph: Tim 0423 685 220  
**South Australian State Committee:**  
Bob Briton, Rm 5, Lvl 1, 149 Flinders St,  
Adelaide 5000 Ph: 08 8232 8200

The Guardian