



Criminal lack of response to Katrina's victims

Communist Party USA statement demands full federal support for Katrina victims

Hurricane Katrina has inflicted an immense and unspeakable tragedy on the people of the Gulf Coast. The situation grows worse by the hour. The Mayor of New Orleans estimates that thousands have died and as many as 100,000 may still be trapped in the flooded city. Without food or drinkable water, time is running out for these men, women and children.

The Communist Party, USA expresses its fullest sympathy and solidarity with all the people who are suffering from the effects of the hurricane, especially the infants, children and seniors, who are the most vulnerable.

Five days into the crisis and the Bush Administration is going in slow motion. We, along with national organisations and local government, demand that the Bush Administration throw the full weight of the Federal Government behind rescue and recovery efforts.

The television images beamed to the world make it clear that it is the African Americans of New Orleans who are bearing the brunt of this catastrophe. It will be a racist, anti-working class crime if Bush fails to deploy enough federal resources to save them and their homes. It will take months before the levees are repaired, New Orleans is pumped out and 500,000 residents can return to their city.

Millions more across the Gulf region – many working class, from every race and walk of life – are homeless, unemployed, in need of medical attention, running out of money, food, water and time due to the disaster.

What did President George W Bush do? He was slow to return from his month-long vacation, making an aerial tour of the devastation on Wednesday. Then he convened a Rose Garden news conference and offered up a laundry list of the bags of ice, blankets, and cots he

has ordered sent to the victims. He pleaded for cash donations from individuals. The White House later announced that former Presidents George Bush, Sr and Bill Clinton would spearhead a drive for private donations.

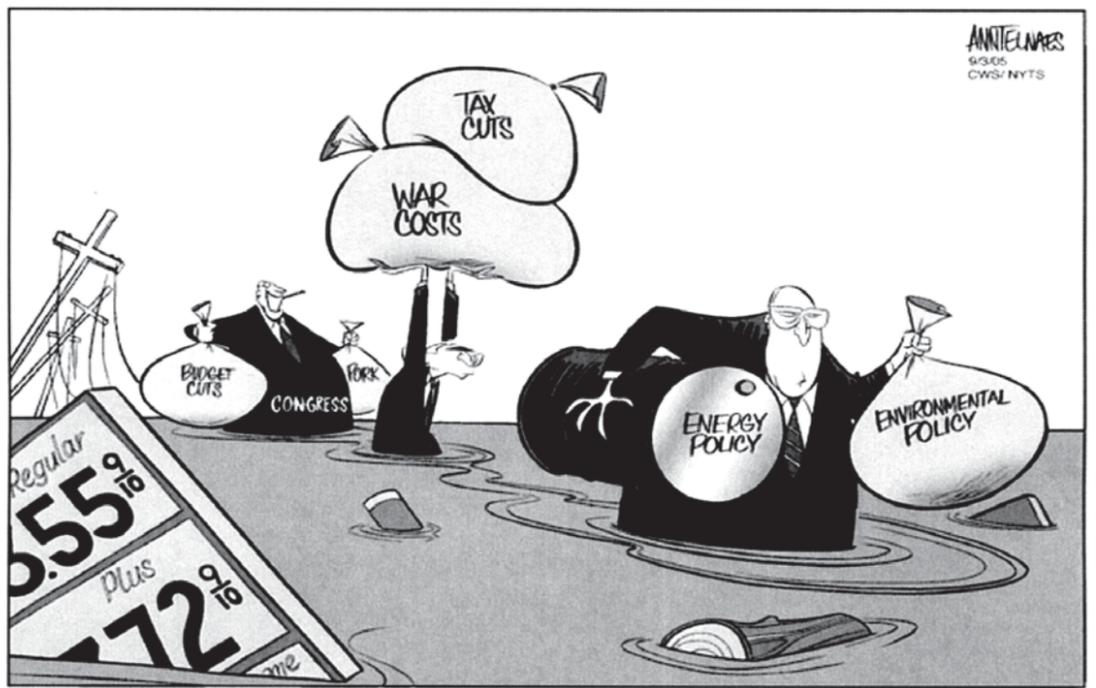
Putting the responsibility of solving this crisis situation onto individuals is a cop-out. Bush wants to dodge demands for federal aid to rebuild the shattered lives, homes, and jobs of the victims.

Bush has made only vague allusions to federal funds. What a contrast to his ruthless arm-twisting to ram through Congress \$200 billion for the continued occupation of Iraq. Much of that money flowed into the coffers of Halliburton and other military corporations with crony ties to Bush and Dick Cheney.

We demand a massive infusion of no-strings-attached federal aid to rebuild the homes and lives of all the hurricane victims.

National Guard units now needed in the Gulf Coast states are badly depleted because so many soldiers are and so much equipment is deployed in Iraq. We demand that these soldiers be brought home. Now! Assign them to assist the people in rebuilding the Gulf Coast. This calamity has brought home an inescapable truth: We cannot afford George W Bush's atrocious war in Iraq.

Could this tragedy have been avoided? The US Congress, at Bush's request, slashed \$70 million from the US Army Corps of Engineers budget for strengthening the levees that protect New Orleans. For years, engineers have warned that a breach in the levees is a "disaster waiting to happen". Bush and Congress turned a deaf ear. They needed that money to pay for the occupation of Iraq. They needed that money to pay for Bush's tax cuts for the rich.



LOOTERS

Environmental degradation along the coast and malign neglect of rural and urban communities of colour turned a natural disaster into a man-made catastrophe.

We demand that Congress reverse Bush's tax cuts and slash the insane \$500 billion Pentagon weapons budget. Use those revenues to rebuild New Orleans and other impoverished cities and towns across our nation.

We condemn corporate price gouging at the gas pump and in all sales and services in the region. Gas prices should be rolled-back at once. Corporations have done very well in recent years due to the policies of the Bush Administration. It is time for them to pay for the clean-up and reconstruction of the region. No sweetheart deals for rebuilding from Katrina!

Emphasis should be put on rescuing the victims and immediately providing food and shelter. We call for the repeal of the shoot-to-kill order on looters, many who are look-

ing for food, water, medicine and diapers in a city with no available stores or aid.

There could be more devastating storms in the six weeks remaining in the hurricane season. Global warming is heating up the south Atlantic and the Caribbean making for ever more ferocious hurricanes.

Yet our know-nothing President vetoed the Kyoto Agreement aimed at curbing global warming, calling it "unproven science". Bush is bought and paid for by the energy conglomerates that reap enormous profits from the burning of fossil fuels.

His recently approved Energy Act guarantees that millions more tons of greenhouse gases will be pumped into the biosphere. It's time to say enough! We demand that the US immediately ratify the Kyoto Agreement and implement an energy program that reduces greenhouse gases.

We applaud the efforts of the NAACP (National Association

for the Advancement of Colored People) and the [peak union body] AFL-CIO and other organisations that have mobilised to send material aid to the region. The efforts of hundreds of individual volunteers, aid and rescue workers, and courageous neighbours saved countless lives.

We stand with the suffering people of the Gulf Coast and join with the people of the world in offering assistance. Yet personal generosity is not enough. Only the federal government has the resources to end and reverse this tragedy. The best way to help is to force George W Bush to provide the federal assistance owed to the victims.

Contact your Senators and Congressional Representatives. Demand that they speak out. Call the White House. Demand full federal funding to reconstruct the Gulf Coast states and to rebuild New Orleans! And let's turnout everyone we can to join the September 24 anti-war march on Washington. Bring the National Guard home! ✪

3 page



Readin', writin' and the right wing

6 page



Vietnam turns 60

7 page

How the free market killed New Orleans

9 page

Anger rises over London shooting

12 page



The CPA - on the side of the worker

The Guardian

Issue 1244

September 7, 2005

New attempt to marry science and god

The offensive by the religious right moved up another notch last week as a proposal was advanced to introduce into schools a text-book which attempts to marry concepts of god with science. The theory is being sold under the label of "intelligent design".

In justification of this theory we are being told that the human eye is so complex that it could not have evolved over millions of years by natural selection and, therefore, must have been created by a designer. Hence the concepts of "intelligent design" and an "intelligent designer" are introduced. The "intelligent designer" is, of course, god the creator.

It is a tribute to the fantastic achievements of the many branches of science (including the widespread understanding and acceptance of evolution) that the creationists have been forced to attempt to find a way to simultaneously retain god as the creator while, at the same time, acknowledging the achievements of science and the scientific method.

This latest attempt by the creationists is not new. Some years ago the Catholic hierarchy invited a team of scientists to the Vatican with the same quest in mind. One of the scientists who fell for this ploy by the creationists is Australian Paul Davies. He proclaimed more than 10 years ago that "Materialism is dead" and claimed that "Many people have rejected scientific values because they regard materialism as a sterile and bleak philosophy, which reduces human beings to automata and leaves no room for free will or creativity..." He quoted an American scientist, Frank Tipler with approval. Tipler envisaged that not just the solar system or our galaxy but the entire universe would come under the control of a "manipulative intelligence". This is but another term for the "intelligent design" now being made fashionable.

The most recent offensive by the creationists has been stimulated by the election of George Bush as US President and by John Howard in Australia. Both are strongly committed protagonists of religious fundamentalism and take every opportunity to strengthen religious organisations – particularly by pouring money into church schools and by giving contracts to church organisations to do certain jobs for government departments such as Centrelink.

However, no matter what they do, they cannot stop the rapid expansion of scientific research and knowledge for the simple reason that scientific endeavour is, by its very nature, a search for truth, whereas the creationists are unable to produce a single scrap of evidence to back their claim that an "individual designer" is at work.

If an "individual designer" created the eye, is the same designer also responsible for "designing" the hurricane that caused such loss of life and devastation in the southern states of the US last week or for the horrendous tragedy that hit the Shi'ite pilgrims in Iraq? The ultra Right fundamentalist US preacher tells us so, his god bringing punishment on the sinners of the world.

Everyone knows, however, that weather forecasters, as a result of the steady accumulation of knowledge, make accurate predictions of the unfolding weather pattern and never call up an "intelligent designer" to explain their forecasts. The weather forecasters of the US accurately predicted the intensity and the possible consequence of hurricane Katrina – more or less exactly what happened.

In the face of the pressure and campaigning of the creationists the Federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson, has excused his failure to fight for truth being taught in Australian schools by hiding behind the slogan of "choice". He shifts responsibility from his Ministry to the shoulders of parents who are "free" to have their children taught the theory of evolution and scientific achievement and truth or to have their children brought up on suppositions which have no evidence to support them.

"Choice" opens the door for the creationists to introduce their text books into schools and, thereby, undermine the years of teaching of science, the theory of evolution and the search for truth that is the objective of most teachers.

The creationists may be fighting a rearguard action against the steady advance of scientific research and knowledge but the present offensive should not be shrugged off.

The fight for truth can never be relaxed and every attempt to push society back into ignorance must be defeated if scientific advance is to continue.

PRESS FUND

A week's a long time in politics, they say. But for the Press Fund it's never long enough! Each week we count up the contributions and check how likely we are to meet our annual target by the end of the year. At the moment we're running way behind schedule, so we're asking our supporters – and potential supporters – to make a special contribution for the next issue. However, rather than dig very deep for a "one-off", why not make a modest contribution every week or fortnight? We already have one "weekly", so why how about keeping him company? This week we offer our sincere thanks to the following for their generous support:

In memory of Tom Brislan \$100, Angelo Attard \$20, S Turner \$20, "Round Figure" \$10.50, N Shepherd \$29.50, Gary Spiers \$100, W Irving \$5, Jim \$50.

This week's total: \$335. Progressive total: \$7075

Appeal from Iraqi Unions

On August 7, the Iraqi Council of Ministers stated that the government would be "taking control of all monies belonging to the trade unions to prevent them from dispensing any such monies". The Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) is asking unions and individuals to send a protest message to the Iraqi Ambassador in Australia demanding that this decree be revoked and that the Iraqi government respect the democratic right of workers to control their own unions without interference from governments and corporations.

The decree revokes decisions taken on union rights by Iraq's provisional government and permits the control and confiscation of trade union monies by the current authorities. It also states that the right to carry out union activities is to be reviewed.

Since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, an active union movement of over 700,000 strong has been built in Iraq. "This attack on Iraqi unions is an attempt to stop their activities for justice, democracy and their challenge to foreign

ownership of Iraqi oil and privatisation", said the IFTU in an appeal sent to trade unions around the world. "We are seeking your union's urgent help to stop a vicious attack on the rights of Iraqi unions."

"A message by your union condemning this anti-union decree issued by the Iraqi government would be of enormous assistance."

The ACTU has responded by sending a letter to the Iraqi Ambassador. In that letter it states: "Our concern is that by taking control of the finances of existing unions, the Iraqi government is ef-

fectively closing down their operations and therefore removing the right to freedom of association with no indication of how long this suspension will last. This is a prima facie breach of the ILO core convention on Freedom of Association and a deeply worrying attack on human rights in Iraq.

"If the intention of the Government of Iraq is to revise the arrangements under which trade unions operate, that should be done by discussion that with the trade unions themselves, rather than closing them down." ✪

Support the campaign by writing to the Iraqi Ambassador.

His Excellency Mr Ghanim T Al-Shibli
Ambassador
Republic of Iraq
48 Culgoa Circuit
O'Malley ACT 2606
Ph: 02 6286 9952 Fax: 02 6286 9952
Email: iraqembcnb@hotmail.com

It would be appreciated if copies of emails to the Iraqi Ambassador were sent to the IFTU international representative Mr Abdullah Muhsin
Email: abduallahmuhsin@iraqitradeunions.org



Embassy protest: We won't move

Protesters at the long-running Aboriginal Tent Embassy say they will ignore any directive to move on while there is still widespread Indigenous disadvantage.

The Tent Embassy, situated on the lawns of old Parliament House, was first set up on Australia Day in 1972 to make a statement about land rights.

Over three decades there have been several attempts by government to negotiate for its inhabitants to move after complaints the embassy is an eyesore and international

embarrassment. It was revealed this month that yet another consultant report had been launched which could recommend the Tent Embassy be bulldozed and replaced with a permanent structure recognising the history of Indigenous Australians.

Tent embassy co-founder Michael Anderson said there was no incentive for protesters to leave, and a memorial was not appropriate because the struggle for rights wasn't dead.

Statistics show Aborigines are still the most jailed, impover-

ished and likely to die young of all Australians.

As such, the embassy would stay regardless of the report's findings, Mr Anderson said.

"The embassy itself demonstrates that Aboriginal people are disenchanted, they're not happy, and that there are lot of the issues that are yet to be dealt with".

"So until proper justice is done and they deal with the true issues ... the embassy will always be there and it will always be an eyesore".
Koori Mail (abridged) ✪

10th Congress Appeal

The contributions are continuing to come in and all are much appreciated no matter how small or large. This special appeal is to assist with the costs of bringing delegates from around Australia to the CPA's 10th Congress in Sydney. It is great to see the contribution from Blacktown Branch. What about the other party branches! Can you match or better still outdo your comrades in Blacktown? With less than four more weeks to Congress, there is not much time left to meet our target of \$6000. All readers, friends, supporters are urged to send a contribution, and if you have already sent one, why not a second one! You may use the form below or write your details on a separate piece of paper. All contributions will be acknowledged in The Guardian unless requested otherwise. We are offering contributors a free set of documents adopted by Congress. If you would like a set of documents, please indicate with your contribution.

We would like to thank the following for their generous contributions to the Appeal this week:
Peter Hackett \$100, Angelo Attard \$20, Blacktown Branch \$200, Jackie & Eddie \$50, Rebecca Bryant \$50, MH \$50.

This week's total: \$470. Cumulative total: \$1560.

✪

10th CPA Congress \$6,000 Financial Appeal

I, (Name)

Address.....

wish to contribute \$..... to the above Appeal.

I enclose a Cheque/Money Order/Cash for that amount. Payment may also be made by Credit Card giving the name on the card, the card number and the expiry date:

Visa Mastercard Bankcard

Name on the card

Card Number

Expiry Date ____/____/____

I agree / disagree to having my name published in *The Guardian* in acknowledgement.

I would / would not like a set of documents to be sent to me after Congress

Readin', writin' and right-wing politics – values teaching Howard-style

Bob Briton

The recent summit between invited “moderate” Muslim community leaders and government heavyweights was the perfect opportunity for Howard to lecture his guests on what will be taught in Islamic schools. “We have sought ... advice from the Islamic community as to ways in which we can be totally satisfied that the appropriate denunciations and repudiation of terrorism occurs”, the PM said afterwards. He also spoke of bringing an “Australian perspective” to the education of imams. The implication that Islamic schools are guilty of promoting terrorism until proven innocent is clear. In the process of whipping up more suspicion and intolerance, Howard has also given notice that his government will be laying down an even narrower and more conservative set of “Australian values” to be taught in all Australian schools.

Many Muslim community leaders are perplexed. What more can they do to get the federal government off their backs? Mohamed Hassan is director of Victoria’s Minaret Islamic College and the Australian Council for Islamic Education in Schools. He points out that after September 11, his council prepared a charter condemning violence and undertaking to educate students to be “proud Australians and model citizens”.

Noor Al Houda College in Liverpool, NSW, carries the following notice on the opening page of its web-site: “The Staff, students and parent body of Noor Al Houda Islamic College strongly condemn all forms of terrorism and call on the Muslim community leaders to provide clear and unequivocal leadership in countering all forms of extremism. The College is dedicated to ensuring that its graduates are exemplary Australians who live by the highest standards of integrity in a harmonious manner with their fellow citizens.”

Bill Daniels, executive director of the Independent Schools Council of Australia, reminded the media last week that Islamic schools must meet the same requirements for registration and funding under the same state and territory regulations as any other independent schools. This includes “a commitment to the national values framework”, which already stipulates flying the national flag and teaching the federal government’s current brand of “Australian Values”.

Accept “core values” or “clear off”

Education Minister Brendan Nelson has foreshadowed that kids in Muslim schools should be taught about Australian WW1 hero Simpson, who famously laid down his life for his comrades while carrying wounded soldiers to safety on the back of his donkey.

The minister is suggesting in the most patronising manner that, without this sort of example from Australian military history, Muslim students will not learn the value of sacrifice and working in the interests of others. “We want them to understand our history and culture, the extent to which we believe in mateship and giving another person a hand up and a fair go ... And basically, if people don’t want to accept and adopt and teach Australian values then they should clear off.”

Treasurer Costello agrees. He added that migrants should not come to Australia if they do not accept its “core values” of democracy, a secular society and the equality of

fact that, in the ways that matter, women have not achieved “equality” in Australian society. For a start, working women on average earn \$150 a week less than their male counterparts.

Costello has also thrown his weight behind a campaign to wipe out the independent exploration of social issues for all school students. Nelson contemptuously calls this the three Rs of “refugees, republic and reconciliation.” To counter the spread of universal, humanist and secular values the Commonwealth has for some time been imposing conservative civics courses like the *Discovering Democracy* program of 1997-2004.

The *Australian Financial Review* reproduced one of its suggested activities for middle secondary schools last week. In it, the student is to imagine that he/she is about to vote for the first time and is considering the advertising of various political parties. One of these – the fictitious Youth Party – says that the system has failed young people as evidenced by widespread high levels of unemployment. Then the student learns that the Youth Party says that this is the result of the large number of migrants and that the party’s leader had been arrested for inciting violence at a demonstration outside parliament house. The student is then asked to lodge the first of his or her mock votes.

Later, with the help of a work-group the student is invited to write a 30-second speech giving three reasons why he/she would vote for the rather unsupportable Youth Party and three reasons why he/she would

Nelson contemptuously calls this the three Rs of “refugees, republic and reconciliation”.

women. He conveniently ignores the blatant bias of his government in favour of Christian denominations [more on this later] and the

not. They are also asked to formulate a question that might embarrass the Youth Party. The students are asked to vote again. Finally, it is

revealed that the leader of the Youth Party plans to ban all other parties, stop all future elections and declare himself dictator if elected.

struggle it is giving aid to its allies in the religious right. Recently a Commonwealth grant of \$414,000 was given to the pentecostalist Hillsong Church based in western Sydney. The church, whose chairman Brian Houston has reportedly flouted the law by failing to lodge financial statements for the past three years, will use the taxpayer-funded windfall to target crime and other problems in the Sudanese community in Blacktown and the Aboriginal community in Riverstone.

The grant is seen as a reward to the Church for backing Liberal Candidate Louise Markus, who happens to be a Hillsong employee. She managed to wrest the working class seat of Greenway from Labor at the last federal elections. Maybe this is a practical example of the secular Australian values Brendan Nelson is keen to see promoted, a demonstration of “the extent to which we believe in mateship and giving another person a hand up and a fair go”. ☼



Pete's Corner



The students vote again and are invited to consider if this imaginary scenario is similar to what happened in the lead-up to the Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933. The actual lesson is that voting for other than the traditional parties and personalities associated with capitalist society is misguided and a risk to “democracy”.

Ideological straightjacket

The federal government is keen to draw the ties of the ideological straightjacket even tighter. In this

Melbourne

COME AND HEAR ACUCOCHI LIVE!

Homage to Pablo Neruda and in recognition of Aboriginal Culture and people. Proceeds to go to save Lake Cowal Campaign.

WHEN: Saturday 10 September 6pm – 12 am (ACUCOCHI will play in this block)

WHERE: Saint Brendan's Parish Hall, Cnr Bignell and Church Streets, Flemington

COST: Donation \$7 / Concession \$5

Lake Cowal is the Sacred Heartland of the Wiradjuri Nation. This precious wetland is threatened by a cyanide leaching gold mine project.

August 30 Forbes Demonstration

Denis Doherty

Wherever globalisation rears its ugly head, it is met by fierce and determined resistance from the people!

Several thousand people gathered at Sydney's Circular Quay on Tuesday, September 30 to protest against a meeting of CEOs of over 500 companies hosted by American billionaire Steve Forbes.

They were meeting to plan policies that will bring them greater profits and inflict greater exploitation and suffering on people around the world.

The demonstrators argued that capitalism and globalisation are about greed and profits at the expense of the poor, the workers and our environment.

At the rally, Warren Smith rep-

resenting the Maritime Union of Australia reminded the large police presence that they wouldn't get overtime payment for such events under the new IR legislation.

He said: "Whether we are fighting for peace, for the environment, for unionism, against globalisation, the enemy is always the same, capitalism."

The Opera House was to have been the site of the gala opening dinner. But the glitzy diners fled the people's protest and guzzled at a "safer" venue.

After the rally the demonstrators marched towards the Opera House. However, the NSW government had put a security fence around it, denying access to protestors and tourists for three days. Some of the fence was torn down and several people were arrested. ✪

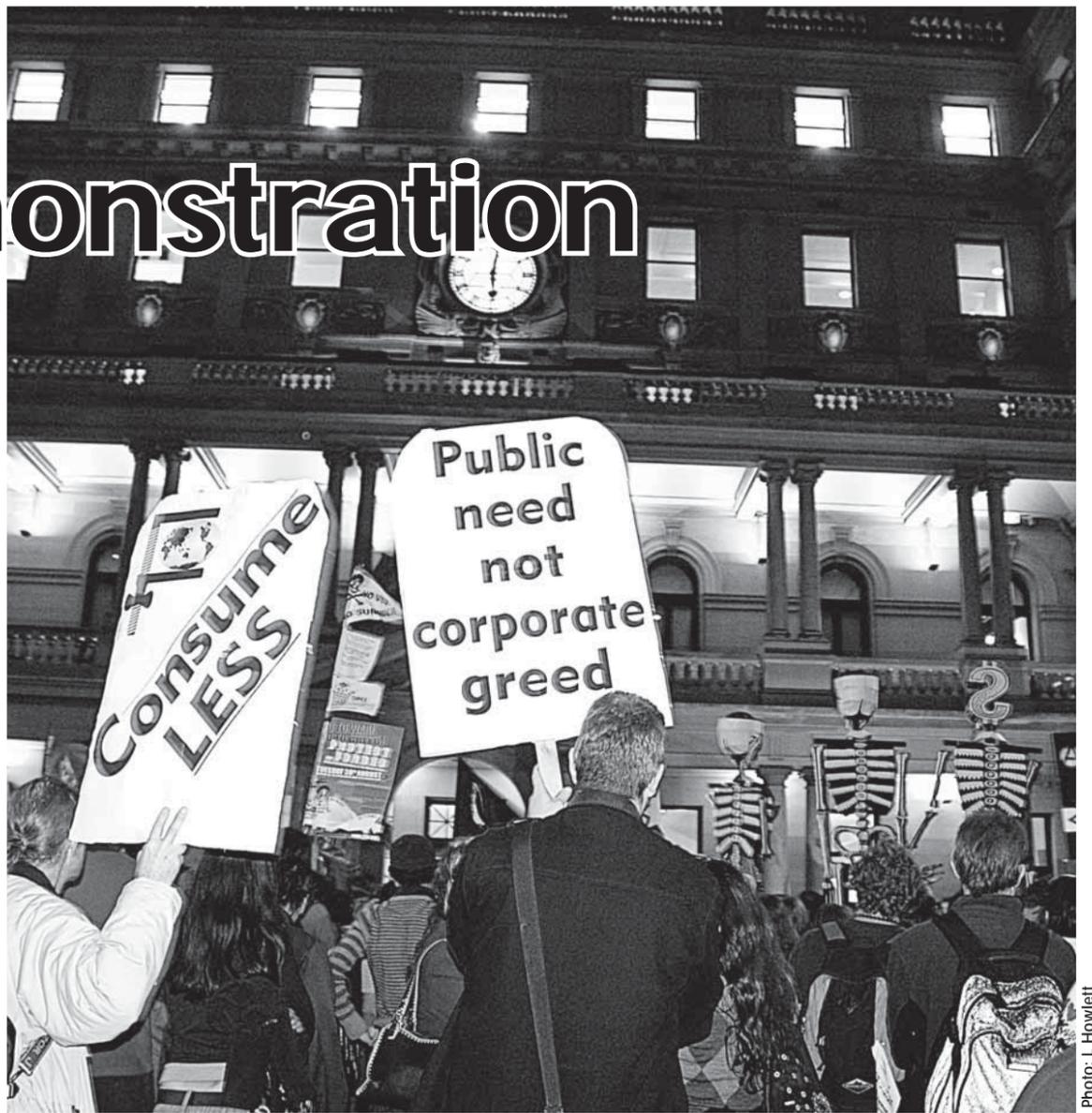


Photo: L. Howlett

Doors close on women's refuge

Community workers sacked on the spot when a Tamworth women's refuge closed are setting up their own service in the street outside. They took the drastic action after the Tamworth Women's Refuge was closed due to a service "restructure", leaving the more than 2000 families a year who use the service without adequate care.

The closure also left the six staff that worked at the refuge without a job. Workers were called to a meeting where they were sacked on the spot and told to return their keys.

"I was absolutely devastated", said Chris Solberg, a crisis worker at the refuge for 13 years. "There was no indication to any of us [that the refuge was going to close]."

Three women who were staying at the refuge at the time it closed were relocated to an Aboriginal hostel in Tamworth.

Support services for the women have been reduced from 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the refuge to 9am to 5am, Monday to Friday with a social worker.

"Apparently nothing goes wrong outside those times", said Chris Solberg. The sacked staff will set up their own service to provide support overnight.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) is providing family support services for the former residents and plans to set up a temporary refuge until a more adequate solution can be reached. They are also fighting to have the workers reinstated.

ASU branch secretary Sally McManus said the union was seeking the intervention of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission and called on the NSW Minister for Community Services to resolve the issue.

"The workers have been unfairly dismissed and the NSW Women's Refuge Movement Working Party should be held to account for its actions", she said.

Unions NSW Secretary John Robertson said this and other cases of employee mistreatment was "setting tone for workplace relations in this country".

"People think they can get away with whatever they want, whenever they want," he said. Mr Robertson pledged to stop the Your Rights at Work bus outside the refuge when it tours the North Coast if the matter had not been resolved before then to highlight the situation. ✪

Telstra workers walk out

Telstra labour-hire workers walked off the job for 24 hours last week after moves to cut their pay by up to \$9 an hour. About 800 BDS Recruit workers voted to go on strike after learning the firm and its client Telstra were cutting their wages up to 12 per cent.

Electrical Trades Union telecommunications organiser Garry Rogers said neither company would claim responsibility for the cut.

"Telstra say 'it's not our problem' and BDS Recruit say they have been negotiating with the union in good faith", Mr Rogers said.

BDS Recruit is the largest of four labour hire companies providing casual workers to Telstra for work on its general phone network infrastructure, mobile phone towers and broadband infrastructure.

Mr Rogers said industrial action would continue until the workers' wages were restored.

"We want Telstra pay for Telstra work", he said. "Is it any wonder Telstra is recording record profits when it and its contractors treat working people like this?"

Telstra recorded a \$2.3 billion half-year profit in the six months up to December. ✪

Vicious attack by National Parts

Women workers on a peaceful picket line say they are being harassed after they had to dive for safety when a truck reversed at them. Auto component manufacturer National Parts has been slammed for its heavy-handed tactics on the lawful and peaceful picket line.

The workers at the Smithfield plant in Sydney are on wages as low as \$14 an hour. They are surprised at the tactics of their employer as they stand up for wage justice.

"It is a peaceful picket, a legal picket, and the workers at National Parts have a right to strike for a better outcome from their employer", said Derrick Belan, NSW State Secretary of the National Union of Workers (NUW). "With the in-

dustrial relations changes around the corner many employers are champing at the bit to attack their workers."

There is concern for the safety of workers after the reckless actions of the company. "Last night a group of female workers had to dive for cover after a truck reversed at the picket line" said NUW organiser Justin Cody. "Additionally, we are aware that warehouse equipment has been dangerously modified to speed up productivity."

Workers are also puzzled as to why the company has called in local police to disrupt a peaceful picket line.

Mr Cody said that National Parts is basically using local po-

lice as private security. "This picket is a protected action under the Workplace Relations Act. Workers are doing nothing illegal. They are acting within their rights as workers and as citizens."

Local police have been given a delivery schedule by National Parts so they can escort each delivery with two police vehicles into the company's premises. The NUW members on the picket line are refusing to disband until the management of National Parts agrees to negotiate a fair outcome.

National Parts is an automotive parts distribution company, which also has its own franchise network of automotive retail stores under the name Autopro. ✪

Vegetable labelling campaign

Tasmanian food workers are calling on the federal government to show leadership over food labelling guidelines in an effort to save hundreds of jobs.

The workers have been joined by other industry stakeholders, including farmers, local companies and the Tasmanian government on a Vegetable Taskforce to ensure that food products are labelled accurately.

Over 400 jobs at the McCain's plant in Smithton are under threat because of a flood of imported food products. Last month food workers joined rallies in northern Tasmania after fast food giant McDonalds announced that it would no longer source the potatoes for its french fries from Tasmania.

"At the end of the day it's regional jobs and regional communities that are on the line here", says Anne Urquhart, Tasmanian Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. "We want clear and unambiguous food labelling that clearly identifies the contents of a packaged product and where it is from."

Ms Urquhart praised the Tasmanian government's work in establishing the Vegetable Taskforce and said that it was a measure of how seriously this issue was being taken that the Minister was personally involved in the deliberations of the taskforce.

The taskforce has also heard from stakeholders of how imported food products are having a negative

effect on other jobs and businesses in the food industry.

"The Tasmanian government is on side in a big way", says Ms Urquhart. "We need the federal government to show some leadership here and ensure there is accurate country-of-origin labelling."

Product labelling is administered by a body known as the Foods Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ).

Food workers fear that ambiguous or vague food labelling means consumers may believe they are buying Australian produce when in fact it is imported.

They want the federal government to ensure FSANZ moves to implement accurate food labelling. ✪

Greens offer policy alternatives

Interview with Greens candidate Sam Byrne

The surprise resignation of NSW Premier Bob Carr and two of his senior ministers in August has resulted in three by-elections being called for September 17. All three seats are "safe Labor", and with the NSW Liberals in disarray the ALP is favoured to be returned. However, former Deputy Premier Andrew Refshauge's seat of Marrickville might pose a problem for Labor – it stretches across the Greens' heartland of Sydney's inner west. In the 2003 state election the Greens scored a decisive win in a number of booths and followed that up with a strong performance in the federal election last year. Andrew Jackson talked to Greens candidate Sam Byrne about the Greens' policies and prospects in Marrickville.

Andrews Jackson: How do you see the Greens prospects in this by-election and what role can the Greens as a minority party play in the current parliament?

Sam Byrne: At this stage we are still very much an outside chance in Marrickville, I have no illusions about that.

I think one of the things the Greens can do at the moment is push the Labor government in the right direction. Two examples of where we have already been effective were the government's plans to sell off former hospital land at Callan Park and some public housing in Erskineville. As a result of the Greens taking up community concerns and campaigning strongly on those issues the government was forced to back down prior to the last state election.

So I think our role is to put forward our policy alternatives and our ideas and that pushes the Labor Party.

AJ: In a recent issue of *The Guardian* we outlined a number of acts over the last 10 years of the Carr Labor government which angered left and progressive people in NSW. For example, in 2001 the Carr government severely curtailed the rights of workers to claim compensation for work-related injuries.

SB: That change in the law was outrageous. The Greens certainly campaigned strongly against it at the time and voted against it in parliament. We will be making workers' compensation an issue in this campaign; it is a crucial issue and our stance is clear – the right of all injured workers to compensation must be restored.

AJ: There was also the Labor legislation – heartily supported by the Liberals – to "reform" the NSW electoral laws.

SB: The new law requiring a party to have 750 members in NSW in order to register for elections is a

big hurdle for smaller groups; it was a big hurdle for even the Greens at that time. We are certainly still against that rule, we would like to see it changed and then take electoral reform further – implementing proportional representation and moving away from single member electorates.

We need a broad spectrum of forces in the parliament which truly reflects the community's views. With those changes minor groups would have a much better opportunity of being represented.

AJ: One feature of the Carr administration has been to strip local councils of their planning powers – often by setting up new planning "authorities" responsible only to the premier. We've seen this in Sydney City, Leichhardt, Auburn and now in Redfern.

SB: We are yet to see what this new Labor ministry will do in this area. However, the new Planning Minister is Frank Sartor – who has even added "Minister for Redfern Waterloo" to his title – so I don't see any change. These authorities shut out the community and local government, therefore shutting out any democratic input to decision making.

What we are seeing is big business talking through the Labor Party – big developers making big donations, and this is Labor giving them what they want.

Corporate donations is something the greens have strongly campaigned on for years now and in NSW the greens do not accept corporations' donations.

AJ: One major issue that is sure to provoke a backlash against the current Labor government is the state of Sydney's rail services.

SB: I used to work on the railways as a signaller so I have some knowledge of the system. Initially Minister Costa tried to blame the staff – in particular the drivers. However, the current problems –

the late running trains, the weekly maintenance shutdowns, the across-the-board cut in services – are the inevitable result of years of chronic underfunding of the system.

To have one of the world's major cities with train services only once every half hour and a train considered "on time" even if it's five minutes late is a joke.

In addition, pensioners have had their fares more than doubled from \$1.10 to \$2.50. Sure, ticket prices need to rise from time to time but a price hike of that magnitude is outrageous and must have hit pensioners hard.

Then there are also the issues of Sydney's premium-priced privately run train stations, and the state government handing out contracts to private bus companies which offer only limited services to residents in Sydney's west.

The state government has a lot of rhetoric about environmental concern, about how we need to get out of our cars and onto public transport. These failures are just pushing more people off the system.

What we need is massive investment to provide a strong, fully public transportation system to win back the confidence of the public.

AJ: Two elections ago Bob Carr promised to halve hospital waiting lists. He did, and then they immediately sprang back to record levels.

SB: There are funding issues at both federal and state levels. The \$3.5 billion private health insurance rebate is a scandal – that money is subsidising private health insurance companies when it should be spent supporting our public health system.

The NSW state government also doesn't seem to regard our public hospitals as a priority. They've recently announced that it will be cutting 4000 public service jobs in NSW – 1000 of those in the health sector. We can't see how that will reduce hospital waiting lists or improve services, and we will be certainly pressing the government to outline exactly where those cuts are going to be made.

AJ: We've read in the news that the Liberal Party is "doing the Greens a favour" by withdrawing from the Marrickville by-election.

SB: Certainly the liberals want to do as much damage to Labor as possible in these by-elections. However, the Liberal Party candidate polled 12% in Marrickville at the last state election and I suggest one of the reasons the Liberals aren't running this time is because they don't want to face another humiliation like that. ☹



Sam Byrne



The inhumane nature of the mandatory detention of asylum seekers is highlighted by the fact that those who are locked up are forced to pay for the cost of their detention. The *Daily Telegraph* claimed a little scoop last week when it revealed that many of these dastardly asylum seekers are ducking their repayments and that Australian taxpayers have forked out \$30 million in the past year. Those who overstay their visas and those who are deemed not to be refugees are charged \$125.40 per night of detention in the prison camps here in Australia, and those locked up on Nauru \$482.90 per night. The article doesn't even mention the fact that these centres of repression and torture are run for profit by a private prison outfit based in the USA.

The work of the University of Newcastle Legal Centre is based on an ethos that everyone should have access to legal services regardless of their ability to pay i.e. they do pro bono work, with the help of volunteer students. Probably the best known recent case the Centre took on – and won – was that of Cornelia Rau, the person locked up by the Immigration Department under the assumption that she was an asylum seeker, which she wasn't. Now the Centre faces closure because of the federal government slashing university funding, which has imposed staff cuts. More than 100 students volunteer each year – most as part of a Public Interest Advocacy course. Says the university's law school founder Ray Watterson, "If we can't continue to run public interest advocacy cases then the course will effectively die".

The ACTU is challenging the government's spending of \$20 million on a propaganda campaign to promote its anti-worker industrial relations laws, claiming it breaches the constitution because it hasn't been approved by Parliament. The government had claimed it was facing an "emergency" because of the union movement's campaign exposing the objectives of the new laws i.e. that they give bosses absolute power over workers. It appears the Court agrees with Justice Michael McHugh saying, "It seems to have everything to do with the government's standing in the polls".

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is the CIA's man in Australia, Greg Sheridan. Greg, who is the foreign editor for the *Australian* newspaper, is excited. He reported last week – on the front page no less – that "US president George W Bush has issued a decree upgrading Australia to the highest rank of intelligence partner that the US has in the world". Wow! Greg informs us that "Australia's new status is equalled only by Britain ..." How appropriate that it includes three countries perpetrating the biggest crime against humanity so far this century. Of course, this doesn't mean that the public will be better informed or the government more accountable. Just the opposite.

Sydney

New Theatre

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

I WAS IN THE HOUSE, WAITING FOR THE RAIN

by Jean-Luc Lagarce

Translated and directed by Anne-Louise Luccarini Set: Barry French Lighting: Tony Youlden
With: Sam Grant-Rarua, Sharyn Magee, Sara O'Connor, Jennifer Perry & Sandra Velini

A compassionate, wise and gently humorous play that probes the joy and sadness of love given and love received.

Until 17 September Thurs - Sat 8pm, Sun 5.30pm 542 King St Newtown

\$20 / \$18 Concession Bookings: 02 9519 8958 www.newtheatre.org.au

Vietnam – a country for peace and friendship

60th anniversary of founding of Socialist Republic of Vietnam

September 2 was the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which is now the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It was a time for celebration across Vietnam and around the world. In Sydney a celebration was held by the Vietnamese Consulate at which the Consul General Mr Nguyen The Phiet gave a speech recalling the achievements and struggles over those 60 years. The following is the text (abridged) of the speech..

On the 2nd September, 1945 our President Ho Chi Minh solemnly declared before the world on behalf of the Vietnamese people that: “Vietnam has the right to be free and independent country and in fact it is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to use all their physical and mental strength, their lives and property in order to safeguard their freedom and independence”.

In those days, in the whole country, there was a joyous atmosphere. Everyone was happy after so many years under foreign domination, from the status of being an oppressed and exploited people, we became masters of our own destiny, our own land and prepared to chart out the road to build our own life. But that newly gained freedom did not last long as we had to engage ourselves in the patriotic war for national salvation. That patriotic war took us almost 30 years to complete and to unify our country.

With the unification of the country, a dream came true. The dream of becoming a free nation and free people pursuing our own and independent policies and build our own happy life.

President Ho Chi Minh, the founder of a new Vietnam, during his lifetime, always cherished an aspiration. He said, “I have only a desire, an utmost desire that our country is fully independent, our people are fully free, our compatriots all have enough food and access to education”.

After unification, we were left with so many war consequences besides international isolation. During the late '70s and early '80s, Vietnam went through a very critical social and economic crisis. Production stagnated, economic growth stood at just 0.4% per annum. Inflation became super-inflation at an annual rate of more than 700%. The poverty rate was high accounting for 70% of the population.

In that situation, we understood that if we continued to pursue our wartime policies and not to take up radical measures to face and overcome these challenges, the political independence and freedom and national unification would become meaningless.

Therefore, beginning in the late '80s and early '90s, our government and people were determined to undertake the comprehensive renovation process: The economy, previously managed in a centralised bureaucratic and planned style, was changed into a market transitional economy. We started to build the economy into a multi-sectoral economy. We also started to expand foreign economic relations and began efforts to integrate the national economy into the region and the world economy.

High economic growth rate

With tremendous efforts and determination, after 20 years of economic reforms, looking back, we can proudly say that we have made significant progress. All-round and comprehensive changes have been made. The country got out of the socio-economic crisis. Elements of market economy have been established. The macro-economic environment gradually stabilised. A high economic growth rate was able to be sustained continuously. People's living standards have been improved.

The political system and national unity have been constantly consolidated and strengthened. Our country's position in the international arena has been elevated and the

path for national development has become clearer.

Also looking back we are very happy that for the past many years we have been able to maintain the economic growth at above 7% p.a. Inflation was pushed back from 700% to single digits in the '90s and we continue to maintain that rate.

Vietnam has turned itself from a chronic rice importing country with an annual average of two million tonnes into a leading rice exporting country. Besides exporting rice, Vietnam has become one of the leading exporters of coffee, seafood, spices and some other items.

The environment for foreign investment has been greatly improved. By the end of 2004, more than 5000 FDI projects had been effective with a total registered capital of over US\$45.5 billion. Foreign investment plays an important role in our national economy, contributing to nearly 15% of GDP, more than 30% of export value and 4.9% of state budget revenue, generating tens of thousand jobs for the local people. Export markets continue to expand into all countries and regions of which USA, Asia and EU are the major segments.

Social issues

While pushing for the economic development, our government have also paid great attention to addressing social issues, spending more than one third of the total investment capital on poverty reduction, human resource development, education and training, science and technology, health and cultural life. The poverty rate in Vietnam has been reduced considerably from 70% in the '80s to 20.3% in 1995 and is now 8.3%. Vietnam has been recognised by the United Nations as one of the world's most successful countries in poverty reduction.

Citizen's rights as stated under the Constitution, including the right to freedom of belief and legal religious practice, are guaranteed. The number of religious followers and

With the unification of the country, a dream came true. The dream of becoming a free nation and free people pursuing our own and independent policies and build our own happy life.

dignitaries as well as religious establishments in Vietnam continues to increase. The legal system has been constantly improved towards the goal of building Vietnam into a country based on the rule of law and a country of the people, for the people and by the people.

The foreign policy of Vietnam has always been that of peace, cooperation and friendship. We are willing to be friend and partner of all countries. That policy has achieved concrete results. To date, Vietnam has established diplomatic ties with more than 170 countries and trade relations with 165 countries and territories in the world. Vietnam now has become an active member of the major regional and world organisations such as UN, ASEAN, ASEM, APEC and East Asia Summit. We hope that Vietnam's entry to the WTO is not far off.



Ho Chi Minh – “Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country...”

Relations with Australia

Now I would like to dwell on the bilateral relationship between Vietnam and Australia.

Since 1973, when Australia, under the leadership of Prime Minister E G Whitlam, decided to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam, our bilateral relations have turned over a new page and have seen many positive developments. That reflects vividly in the ongoing trends of cooperation in all spheres politically, economically and in trade, investment, developmental, cultural, educational aid and assistance which continue to expand both in scope and in depth between our two countries. Today, Australia is our seventh largest trading partner and is our fourth largest export market.

Many Australian projects have directly assisted Vietnamese endeavour to develop rural structure and to combat poverty. My Thuan Bridge, which was put to commission in 2000, stands out among these projects as a most vivid example of fruitful assistance from Australia to Vietnam and a symbol of friendship between our two countries.

The bilateral cooperation in education and

ic relationship, we have found that this relationship is expanding vigorously and in many areas and this momentum must be maintained in order to take it to a more comprehensive, more stable and long-standing level to meet the aspiration of our peoples.

To describe the present relationship between our two countries, I wish to give you what Mr Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, said when he announced the diplomatic appointment of Mr Tweddell as new Ambassador in Hanoi and Mr Pal Schelly as Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City recently.

He said, “Australia has a long-standing, warm and diverse relationship with Vietnam. Australia's bilateral relationship with Vietnam is economically, strategically and politically important. Defence, trade and investment ties are expanding rapidly, as is cooperation on counter-terrorism and other transnational crime, including narcotics trafficking, people smuggling and people trafficking. Australia also values its cooperative and constructive relations with Vietnam in regional fora such as APEC and ASEAN, and welcomes Vietnam's progress towards accession to the WTO.

“Total two-way trade in goods and services rose almost 15 per cent in 2004, reaching an all time high of \$3.7 billion, while Australian investment stood at around \$850 million, mainly in the food processing and heavy industry sectors. Development cooperation ties are long-standing and strong, with Vietnam the fourth largest recipient of Australian development assistance.

“People-to-people links between our two countries are strong. Some 200,000 Australians of Vietnamese origin make a significant and positive contribution to Australian society. Between three and four thousand Vietnamese students study in Australia each year – more than in any other country – making education our biggest services export earner with Vietnam. More than 128,000 Australians visited Vietnam last year.”

On this occasion on behalf of the Vietnamese government and people I wish to thank leaders and members of NSW Parliament, government of NSW, various city councils, business, humanitarian, philanthropic groups and organisations and all Australian friends who have rendered assistance ... to us in our endeavour to build a peaceful and happy land and in our endeavour to build ever growing friendship and cooperation between our two countries and also our endeavour to strengthen peace, stability, friendship, harmony and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and in our part of the world. ☀

training have contributed practically in a big way to the development of human resources in Vietnam. The bilateral cooperation in security and defence is also very encouraging, especially in the context of the threat posed against our regional, international peace by terrorism and transnational crimes.

Not only expanding rapidly in the bilateral framework, cooperation is also developing vigorously in the multilateral framework. As an ASEAN designated country for the ASEAN-Australia relationship, Vietnam has actively been coordinating between ASEAN and Australia to lift that relationship to a higher plane. We have always supported Australia to be involved in a wider and deeper scale in the East Asia integration process.

After more than 30 years of the diplomat-

How the free market killed New Orleans

Michael Parenti

The free market played a crucial role in the destruction of New Orleans and the death of thousands of its residents. Armed with advanced warning that a momentous (force 5) hurricane was going to hit that city and surrounding areas, what did officials do? They played the free market. They announced that everyone should evacuate. Everyone was expected to devise their own way out of the disaster area by private means, just as the free market dictates, just like people do when disaster hits free-market Third World countries.

It is a beautiful thing this free market in which every individual pursues his or her own personal interests and thereby effects an optimal outcome for the entire society. This is the way the invisible hand works its wonders.

There would be none of the collectivistic regimented evacuation as occurred in Cuba. When an especially powerful hurricane hit that island last year, the Castro government, abetted by neighbourhood citizen committees and local Communist party cadres, evacuated 1.3 million people, more than 10 percent of the country's population, with not a single life lost, a heartening feat that went largely unmentioned in the US press.

On day one of the disaster caused by Hurricane Katrina, it was already clear that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of American lives had been lost in New Orleans. Many people had "refused" to evacuate, media reporters explained, because they were just plain "stubborn".

It was not until day three that the relatively affluent telecasters began to realise that tens of thousands of people had failed to flee because they had nowhere to go and no means of getting there. With hardly any cash at hand or no motor vehicle to call their own, they had to sit tight and hope for the best. In the end, the free market did not work so well for them.

Many of these people were low-income African Americans, along with fewer numbers of poor whites. It should be remembered that most of them had jobs before Katrina's lethal visit. That's what most poor people do in this country: they work, usually quite hard at dismally paying jobs, sometimes more than one job at a time. They are poor not because

they're lazy but because they have a hard time surviving on poverty wages while burdened by high prices, high rents, and regressive taxes.

The free market played a role in other ways. Bush's agenda is to cut government services to the bone and make people rely on the private sector for the things they might need. So he sliced \$71.2 million from the budget of the New Orleans Corps of Engineers, a 44 percent reduction. Plans to fortify New Orleans levees and upgrade the system of pumping out water had to be shelved.

Bush took to the airways and said that no one could have foreseen this disaster. Just another lie tumbling from his lips. All sorts of people had been predicting disaster for New Orleans, pointing to the need to strengthen the levees and the pumps, and fortify the coastlands.

In their campaign to starve out the public sector, the Bushite reactionaries also allowed developers to drain vast areas of wetlands. Again, that old invisible hand of the free market would take care of things. The developers, pursuing their own private profit, would devise outcomes that would benefit us all.

But wetlands served as a natural absorbent and barrier between New Orleans and the storms riding in from across the sea. And for some years now, the wetlands have been disappearing at a frightening pace on the Gulf coast. All this was of no concern to the reactionaries in the White House.

As for the rescue operation, the free-marketeters like to say that relief to the more unfortunate among us should be left to private charity. It was a favourite preaching of President Ronald Reagan that "private charity can do the job". And for the first few days that indeed seemed to be the policy with the disaster caused by Hurricane Katrina.

The federal government was nowhere in sight but the Red Cross went into action. Its message: "Don't send food or blankets; send money". Meanwhile Pat Robertson and the Christian Broadcasting Network – taking a moment off from God's work of pushing John Roberts nomination to the Supreme Court – called for donations and announced "Operation Blessing" which consisted of a highly-publicised but totally inadequate shipment of canned goods and bibles.



New Orleans pre-Katrina: a city hemmed in by marshes and lakes, with the Gulf of Mexico less than 100km away to both the east and south. The Mississippi River flows through the centre of the city.

By Day Three even the myopic media began to realise the immense failure of the rescue operation. People were dying because relief had not arrived. The authorities seemed more concerned with the looting than with rescuing people. It was property before people, just like the free marketeters always want.

But questions arose that the free market did not seem capable of answering: Who was in charge of the rescue operation? Why so few helicopters and just a scattering of Coast Guard rescuers? Why did it take helicopters five hours to get six people out of one hospital? When would the rescue operation gather some steam? Where were the feds? The state troopers? The National Guard? Where were the buses and trucks? The shelters and portable toilets? The medical supplies and water?

Where was Homeland Security? What has Homeland Security done with the US\$33.8 billions allocated to it in fiscal 2005? Even ABC-TV evening news (September 1, 2005) quoted local officials as saying that "the federal government's response has been a national disgrace".

In a moment of delicious (and perhaps mischievous) irony, offers of foreign aid were tendered by France, Germany and several oth-

er nations. Russia offered to send two plane loads of food and other materials for the victims. Predictably, all these proposals were quickly refused by the White House. America the Beautiful and Powerful, America the Supreme Rescuer and World Leader, America the Purveyor of Global Prosperity could not accept foreign aid from others. That would be a most deflating and insulting role reversal. Were the French looking for another punch in the nose?

Besides, to have accepted foreign aid would have been to admit the truth – that the Bushite reactionaries had neither the desire nor the decency to provide for ordinary citizens, not even those in the most extreme straits. Next thing you know, people would start thinking that George W Bush was really nothing more than a full-time agent of Corporate America.

Michael Parenti's recent books include *Superpatriotism* (City Lights) and *The Assassination of Julius Caesar* (New Press), both available in paperback. His forthcoming *The Culture Struggle* (Seven Stories Press) will be published in the fall. For more information visit: <www.?????.com> ✪

Campaign against millions more deaths

A worldwide campaign is in progress to ensure that Canada halts the production of chrysotile asbestos (white asbestos). Canada is the third largest producer of chrysotile (white asbestos), which is the main form of asbestos in use today.

The Canadian industry employs fewer than 1600 miners and centres on just three mines in the eastern townships of Quebec province.

Ninety-five percent of the estimated 250,000 tonnes of asbestos produced each year is exported, mainly to newly industrialised countries (*Mining Annual Review 2004* figures).

While Japan, Australia and other developed countries in the European Union have banned chrysotile production and use, Canada continues to spread the killer fibre around the world.

Asbestos dangers in Canada's own backyard

At the same time as it tells the world that asbestos is safe for "controlled use", the Canadian government has forbidden its own politicians from changing lightbulbs or hanging pictures in their parliamentary offices because of the presence of crumbling asbestos-containing material in the Ottawa Capital building.

A 2004 report that appeared on the website of the Canadian National Institute of Public Health has confirmed high rates of pleural mesothelioma among Quebec's male population.

The researchers identified 832 cases of pleural mesothelioma between 1982 and 1996, exploding the Canadian asbestos industry's assertions that chrysotile is safe.

"Quebec men and women also show significantly higher rates of mesothelioma of the pleura than men and women in the rest of Canada and several other countries", the report states.

The government of Canada also funds an industry lobby

group, the Chrysotile Institute, which promotes the "controlled use" of white asbestos in developing countries, even though there is overwhelming evidence in Canada and overseas that exposure to all forms of asbestos has caused cancer among workers and their families.

The Canadian Government has pressured poor countries like Chile to resist moves to ban the use and production of all forms of asbestos.

It has also spearheaded the campaign to block the addition of chrysotile asbestos to the UN list of highly dangerous substances that cannot be exported to developing countries without their knowledge and agreement.

Such hypocrisy is a damning indictment on a country as wealthy as Canada.

It shows how the drive for profit and political interests override the health and safety of people in capitalist economies.

It betrays a callous disregard for the lives of workers in poorer countries who do not have the protection of strong health and safety laws.

Demand Canada join the Asbestos Ban

With over one million people dying of asbestos related diseases worldwide each year, the Canadian government must seriously consider its policies on asbestos production and export.

It must ratify the UN Rotterdam Convention, listing chrysotile as a toxic product which cannot be exported to developing countries without their prior, informed consent.

It must cease to promote chrysotile asbestos as safe for "controlled use".

Finally Canada has to stop this hypocrisy and join the worldwide movement to halt the production and use of chrysotile asbestos. ✪

Join the campaign

Raise the issue in your workplace, in your union and seek out more information. Protests will take place in Sydney on September 9.

For more information about global anti-asbestos campaigns:

Ban Asbestos Network of India contact Toxics Link:
www.toxicslink.org

International Ban Asbestos Secretariat:
www.ibas.btinternet.co.uk

On the lack of a ban in the US, EWG Action Fund:
www.ewg.org

For regular updates see Hazards and LabourStart Health and Safety Newswire:
www.labourstart.org/docs/en/000077.html

Acknowledgements to John Sutton and Trade Union International for Workers in Construction, Wood and Building Materials (UITBB)

Military families launch "Bring Them Home Now" tour

Tim Wheeler

**Caravans to meet
in Washington for
September 24 rally**

Cindy Sheehan and other military family members and supporters ended their vigil near President George W Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas on August 31, and boarded buses for a nationwide "Bring Them Home Now" tour. The tour is set to arrive in Washington for a massive anti-war march and rally on September 24.

A member of Gold Star Families for Peace told the *People's Weekly World* they were sensitive to the suffering inflicted on the southern states by Hurricane

ing momentum. The Bush administration is very self-righteous about the war and is not willing to tell the people what is really going on."

She praised Sheehan for voicing sympathy with families who believe their son or daughter died in a "noble cause". Faced by a "Cindy Doesn't Speak for Me" counter-demonstration on August 27, Sheehan reached out, inviting the participants to meet with her and others who have lost loved ones in the war.

The counter-demonstrators had vowed to bring 3000 to Crawford. "But only 200 showed up", Castillo said. "This is not about rage and anger. It is about being truthful and moral."

David Sole, a leader of the Michigan Emergency Committee



Peace activists near George Bush's ranch in Texas

**"Bring the troops home
and treat them right
when they get home."**

Katrina and may make changes in the tour. A rally had been set for New Orleans.

The first tour event was in nearby Austin. Josefina Castillo, program director for the Austin chapter of the American Friends Service Committee, told the *World*, "I joined the Crawford vigil 10 days ago. It's very encouraging to see that the peace movement is gain-

Against War and Injustice, told the *World* he and seven other anti-war activists drove 24 hours from Detroit a week before to join the Crawford vigil. As they returned home the next day, "We decided this was just too important to let it drop. We drove the van right up to Grand Circus Park in downtown Detroit. We set up a tent and called it Camp Casey, Detroit."

The police made them take down the tent, "but they have left us alone since then", Sole said. "We are keeping the vigil 24 hours a day, seven days a week, rain or shine."

Motorists honk and pedestrians give them the thumbs-up salute. He said, "We have about 40 people vigiling every day, and four to eight who stay overnight. People bring us food, water, ice."

The park is "right in the path of the Labor Day parade", he said. "We have invited people to join us that day holding placards greeting the AFL-CIO for the stand it took against the war at its Chicago convention. We are also selling bus tickets to go to Washington on September 24."

Deb Hagerman of Dayton, Ohio, whose husband is a military reservist recently returned from overseas, travelled to Crawford with several

other members of Military Families Speak Out. "I can really sense the tide is turning", she told the *World*. "People are hopeful that we have the power to reverse the destructive course our nation has been on."

To be in the presence of women who have gone through the ultimate sacrifice is very moving, she said. "I can walk away from it but they will live with their loss the rest of their lives. When I was at the Crawford vigil, I held a little baby boy whose father died in Iraq. That child will never know his father."

The veterans coming home are not being taken care of, Hagerman said. "They are even planning to shut down Walter Reed Army Medical Center. It's frightening. I am making plans right now to go to Washington on September 24."

David Cline, national president of Veterans for Peace (VFP), told the *World* that Cindy Sheehan was speaking at VFP's national convention in Dallas when she conceived the idea of heading down Interstate 35 to Crawford.

"Everybody in our convention wanted to drop everything and go with her", Cline said with a chuck-

le. "I convinced the vets to send a squad of 40 down with Cindy and our convention continued."

The movement that mushroomed from that vigil, he said, "is one of the biggest grassroots movements I've ever seen". There is a Camp Casey in Union Square in Manhattan and another in Jersey City, he said. "This is about breaking into the ranks of blue-collar people, opening the anti-war movement up to working-class people."

Cline is an infantryman who suffered multiple combat wounds in Vietnam. For many years he boycotted Veterans Affairs (VA) treatment facilities because of his bitter anger over the war. Now, with no health insurance other than VA benefits, he relies on those services.

"When a soldier goes off to war and comes back wounded, it is the responsibility of the government to care for them", he said. "Lincoln said it in his second inaugural, 'To care for those who bore the burden of battle and care for the widows and orphans'. Our message is 'Bring the troops home and treat them right when they get home'". *People's Weekly World* ☘

US representative to the UN acts to stymie UN General Assembly

It has not taken long for the newly appointed US representative to the United Nations, John Bolton, to launch an expected attack on the organisation. If successful, his attack would virtually destroy that organisation as an effective body.

Bolton was appointed by President Bush over the objections of the US Congress which refused to ratify his appointment.

In preparation for the coming annual assembly of the UN General Assembly, UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan had presented a document which proposed various reforms of the UN body and re-established its core principles.

Bolton has submitted a counter document which makes no less than 750 amendments to the original and has called for negotiations on his document.

His sweeping deletions show that the US government is out to disempower the UN body leaving the way open for the US to virtually do as it pleases in international affairs.

The proposed US policy changes would remove the targets set in 2000 - called the UN Millennium

Development Goals. Its specific targets are replaced by vague references to poverty.

The Bolton document deletes all references to the long held target for the US and other wealthy countries to contribute 0.7 percent of their gross national product to assist developing countries.

Whereas the UN calls for concerted global action to address climate change and a broadening of the Kyoto agreement to include greater participation by developing and developed nations, the US government even rejects the idea that climate change is a long-term challenge and merely stresses energy efficiency and the development of new technologies.

On nuclear disarmament the Bolton document fails to recommit to the target of eliminating nuclear weapons by Britain, US, France, China and Russia and shifts the target to halting the spread of nuclear weapons to other states. This would allow the US to avoid its own responsibilities while attacking Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Bolton also makes no reference to the International Criminal Court, whereas the UN wants this court to act against acts of genocide and other violations of humanitarian laws.

While the UN wants to facilitate membership of the World Trade Organisation for developing countries, Bolton insists that countries seeking to join the WTO must be willing and able to undertake WTO commitments in full from the very outset with no special considerations or assistance.

Gone also are the passages in the UN document which would give a larger role to the UN General Assembly and its proposal to establish a UN standing military capacity to be used for peacekeeping purposes.

The Bolton proposals will throw the coming UN General Assembly meeting into chaos and may even prevent it from adopting any document of substance unless all states take a strong stand and throw out the Bolton document and refuse to be drawn into the process of "negotiations" which would lead the Assembly into a blind alley. ☘

Voices for justice

Another Nobel Prize winner, Portuguese writer José Saramago, added his signature to an Open Letter to the US Attorney General, which more than 1500 artists, scientists, journalists and political and social activists from all over the world have signed, demanding the immediate release of the five Cuban anti-terrorist fighters imprisoned in the United States in spite of the annulment of the Miami trial that convicted and sentenced them.

The document has received considerable coverage internationally, including in US newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Houston Chronicle*, *El Diario-La Prensa*, and *Voz de las Américas*, as well as the Univisión television network, highlighting support for the letter from prestigious intellectuals around the world.

Excerpts from the letter have been published or broadcast in the Argentine dailies *Página 12* and *Clarín*; Chile's *Crónica*

Digital; Venezuela's *El Tiempo* and *Venezolana de Televisión*; the UK's BBC; and Mexico's *El Universal*.

In the United States, academic and social activist Angela Davis signed the letter a few hours before it was publicised. Her signature has great symbolic value, given that three decades ago she suffered the same types of humiliation as the Five are undergoing in US prisons. A few months ago in Berlin, Davis stated that "fighting for the freedom of the Five is fighting against terrorism in the world."

As the document's existence becomes known, other intellectuals have added their voices. These include well-known Brazilian filmmaker Walter Salles, director of *Motorcycle Diaries*; popular Puerto Rican singer Andy Montañez; dancer and cultural advocate Julie Belafonte of the United States, and outstanding Argentine novelist Luisa Valenzuela. *Granma* ☘

Hot debates over Iraq's constitution

Susan Webb

Iraq's communists say that while the draft constitution now being hotly debated is "acceptable" in its general content, they have big reservations about many aspects. They single out potential loopholes that could set back women's rights and open the door for sectarian religious control over Iraqi society.

Iraqi Communist Party spokesperson Salam Ali called the draft's vague language on women's status "a step backward" compared to Iraq's current personal status law, adopted in 1959, considered one of the most advanced in the region. Under the new draft, he said, women could be subject to religious courts in matters like divorce and inheritance. "It all depends on how it is interpreted in practice", Ali told the *People's Weekly World* in a phone interview last week. He credited the emergence of an outspoken Iraqi women's movement with keeping more extreme language out of the draft. Without the women's activism, he said, "It could have been much worse."

The ICP objected to the undemocratic way the draft was put together, in backroom deals between the two main blocs in the current government – a coalition of Shiite religious parties and an alliance of Kurdish parties. They virtually iced out other groups represented in the drafting committee, and blocked the National Assembly from discussing and voting on the draft.

The draft does reflect an acceptable consensus on federalism for Iraqi Kurdistan, decentralisation and other important issues, Ali said. Further changes may be made before it is voted up or down in a national referendum October 15. If it is approved, a new constitutional government will be elected in December. If it is rejected, voters will elect a new transitional assembly in December, and the

constitution drafting process will start over.

A wide range of liberal to left groups is planning a national unity conference next month, aiming to build a political alliance for the December elections.

The debate over the constitution is "part of a bigger political and social battle about shaping the whole of the new Iraqi state", Ali said. "This is just one step."

Ali reacted with scorn to President Bush's effort to spin the constitution battle as proof that the US war and occupation have brought democracy to Iraq. "He's desperate for success", Ali commented. "It's only for internal US political consumption." In Iraq, he said, "everybody understands his game. We have no illusions about his 'democracy'. Bush has turned

The National Assembly, recently issued a decree seizing control of trade unions' funds.

Iraq into a battlefield. They have achieved nothing but disaster."

Iraqis read newspapers reporting the announcement of a draft constitution August 29 in Baghdad.

US machinations have fuelled religious and ethnic strife, he said.

The US promoted adding well-known former Ba'athists to the constitution drafting committee. These individuals, said Ali, played a "very reactionary and anti-democratic role". They demanded that Islam be the main source of laws, and that women's rights protected in the personal status law be eliminated. They opposed any kind of decentralisation for the country outside of Kurdistan. They objected to barring top Ba'ath

officials from political office and to any mention of Ba'ath crimes under Saddam Hussein.

Many Iraqis feel these forces are really pushing for the return of a new Saddam Hussein-type authoritarian regime. But the hardline Ba'athists, Ali emphasised, do not speak for Sunni Arabs, whose political views span a broad range.

The US has also played up to Islamic Shiite religious parties, including an unusual phone call by Bush to Abdul Aziz Hakim, leader of one of these parties, that was viewed in Iraq as giving this group added political weight.

Despite the risks that Iraqis took to vote in January, conditions have only gotten worse, leaving them angry and cynical.

"What can I do with a constitution if I have no water, gasoline and electricity?" a young woman in Baghdad asked a *New York Times* reporter. With summer temperatures up to 50 degrees, electricity to power fans, air conditioners and refrigerators is often only available a few hours a day. A July UN poll found wide discontent, especially over lack of electricity, unemployment and terrorist attacks.

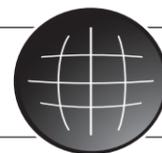
The current government is seen as impotent, and divisions are emerging within the Shiite Islamic alliance that dominates it. Fundamentalist Moqtada al-Sadr is using the opportunity to build his own base, particularly among the unemployed, sometimes in alliance with Baathists.

In one effort to shore up power, the government, without consulting the National Assembly, recently issued a decree seizing control of trade unions' funds. The religious parties are believed to be setting up their own Islamic trade union. Iraqi unions are asking the international labour movement to protest the government action.

See page 2 for the appeal. *People's Weekly World* ♣



After a car bombing in Basra – "What can I do with a constitution if I have no water...?"



Global briefs

FRANCE: In the second fire in four months to sweep through temporary housing facilities for immigrants, 14 children and three adults died on August 26. fire. Another 23 people were hospitalised with injuries as fire gutted their building in south eastern Paris. Over 200 firefighters struggled for hours to control the blaze. Four days later, a third blaze killed seven more immigrants and injured 14 others. In the August 26 fire, residents and neighbours said about 100 children and 30 adults, mostly from the West African countries of Senegal and Mali, were living in filthy, overcrowded conditions in the building, which is owned by the government and managed by the charity France Europe Habitat. Though the building was supposed to be temporary quarters, some residents had been there over a decade while waiting for subsidised housing. A fire in April at a rundown residential hotel – also largely sheltering immigrants – killed 24 and injured over 50. French officials promised a systematic investigation of similar temporary housing facilities.

ECUADOR: Ecuador's Congress acted on August 25 to lift a state of emergency in areas where protestors attacked oil wells, but talks to resolve the crisis were stalled over protestors' demand for immunity. Demanding that oil companies invest more in poor Amazon communities where they drill, demonstrators had attacked pipelines and pumping stations, greatly curtailing exports. Residents of the communities say environmental damage is severe, and they get little benefit. Ecuador is South America's second largest oil supplier to the US.

INDIA: The Kerala State Pollution Control Board on August 19 ordered Coca-Cola to shut down its bottling plant in the remote village of Plachimada, saying toxic waste from the plant was affecting drinking water in nearby villages and the plant was not providing adequate drinking water to local residents. Residents were jubilant. Soon after the plant started operations in 2001 local residents began protesting because their wells were running dry. Over two years ago, a local doctor said the water still available from the wells had become unfit for consumption. In July 2003, tests at the University of Exeter in Britain found the waste sludge the plant had given local residents as "free fertiliser" was full of heavy metals, including cadmium and lead, and was contaminating the food chain.

JAMAICA: In Jamaica last month, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and Jamaica's Prime Minister Percival Patterson signed the first bilateral agreement under Venezuela's Petrocaribe initiative to provide oil to Caribbean countries under very favourable financial terms. The pact will increase Venezuela's oil exports to Jamaica from 7000 to 21,000 barrels per day, with a grace period of two years for payment at a one percent interest rate. The PetroCaribe agreement, signed by Venezuela and all but two Caribbean countries in June, offers generous financing for oil sales to help small Caribbean economies deal with high fuel prices. Chávez has also said the Venezuelan government would sell gasoline directly to poor organised communities in the US, in order to cut costs by eliminating middlemen.

Anger rises over shooting cover-up

Roger Bagley

The family of Jean Charles de Menezes, the Brazilian electrician who was shot to death by British police on July 22 in the wake of two terrorist attacks here, have demanded an end to police "shoot to kill" tactics following revelations about the circumstances surrounding the killing.

Family members and friends have called for the policemen responsible to be jailed for life and for the laws sanctioning their actions to be repealed.

Lawyers representing the family also called for Metropolitan Police Chief Sir Ian Blair to resign, following accusations that he had promoted a campaign of "lies" over the killing.

The chief previously insisted that the incident, which took place in the Stockwell Tube station of London's subway system, was linked to the July 21 bombings.

Police shot Menezes in the head seven times at point-blank range, after hurriedly convincing themselves that he was a suicide bomber. But leaked evidence suggests that the events leading up to the killing

were vastly different from police accounts.

Police claimed that Menezes, 27, who was wearing a "suspiciously bulky coat", was challenged by officers before fleeing into the underground.

But leaked documents reveal that closed circuit television footage shows him wearing a light denim jacket, walking casually into the station and using his travelcard, not fleeing officers and vaulting a ticket barrier as police had claimed.

Tapes even show that he stopped – in the last few moments of his life – to bend down and pick up a copy of a free newspaper in the station foyer. Menezes was seen to board the Tube train through the middle doors, before sitting down on a seat facing the platform.

A spokesman for the Menezes family's campaign for justice, Asad Rehman, said, "The people of London have been told lies and half-truths about how Jean died."

"Jean was an innocent man who was shot in cold blood. We now know that he wasn't wearing a bulky jacket, that he wasn't acting suspiciously or that he was told to stop by the police. He was be-

ing restrained when he was shot and killed", he added.

"The overwhelming majority of the people of London join us in believing that there can be no alternative but the immediate suspension of the 'shoot to kill' policy before another innocent Londoner becomes its victim."

Harriet Wistrich and Gareth Peirce, lawyers for the Menezes family, said that it is clear that the "entire body of information which had been placed in the public domain since his shooting was false".

From the beginning, the "most senior of police officers and government ministers, including the prime minister, claimed the death of Jean Charles to be an unfortunate accident, occurring in the context of an entirely legitimate, justifiable, lawful and necessary policy."

"Sir Ian Blair should resign. The lies that appear to have been put out are clearly wrong. And nobody has stepped in to correct the lies", Wistrich said.

Two top Brazilian officials met with London police on August 22 as part of their own investigation of the incident.

People's Weekly World ♣

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

email: guardian@cpa.org.au



Dear Settlers

"Dear" in the most literal sense.

At long last it must be spelled out, without hypocritical pity, without "if" and "but".

We have paid billions of shekels in order to settle you in the Gaza Strip. We have paid billions to keep you there, and most of you have lived there at our expense. We paid billions to defend you, and dozens of soldiers, male and female, lost their lives doing this. Now we are paying billions (Eight? Ten? Twelve?) to get you out of there and pay you generous compensation.

But all this is not enough. Again you are shouting. Again you are being robbed. Again we owe you much, much more. Whole stretches of the country, preferably on the sea-shore, to be especially reserved for you, so that you can resettle "as whole communities". So that you can live separately. So that you can have your own separate schools. So that you can draw government salaries as employees of the local council, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defence.

I don't know whether the *Guinness Book of Records* awards a title for champions of impertinence, cheek, impudence – in short, good old Jewish chutzpah. If so, you should win it hands down. In the past we only owed each of you a luxury villa for next to nothing, as well as a source of livelihood,

land and water, now it seems we owe you everything. It is your right to help yourselves from the money needed for the sick, the elderly, the handicapped, the children, the unemployed. Because you are the best of the best. Because you are holding on to the beard of the Messiah. Because you were personally chosen by God.

I might have some sympathy for your plight, if you had uttered one word of compassion for the inhabitants of the 1500 Palestinian homes that were destroyed because of you, a greater number than all the homes of the settlers that are being destroyed now. If you had expressed any compassion for the children that were evicted from their homes within half an hour, without compensation, without hotels and psychologists. For the thousands of trees uprooted in order to supply you with "security".

As the good Rabbi Hillel said 2000 years ago, when he saw the skull floating down the river: "Because you have drowned others, you were drowned..."

And please remember: the bill is not being paid by "the State", an anonymous body, but by me and the Israeli readers of this letter, out of our own pockets.

**Yuri Avnery
Gush Shalom
Israeli Peace Bloc**

Peter Costello & lefty teachers

Peter Costello's loony theory that many Australians are anti-American because they were taught by lefty teachers has triggered much debate around the country.

Well, most of us can agree on one thing. Peter Costello is right – extreme right!

He would greatly assist this country if he resigned as treasurer and undertake a much more thorough study of social history. With his level of knowledge on the subject, he needs to.

He is not doing too good a job as treasurer either. He seems to think that his role in that position is to improve Australia's assets (like Telstra) so that he can sell them off for a song.

As a failed treasurer and failed social historian, we definitely don't want him for a PM either!

**Andrew (Andy) Alcock
Forestville, SA**

FTA bad news – US lobbyists "in the money"

There have already been some big winners out of Australia's free-trade deal with the United States – American lawyers and lobbyists. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, in answer to a question from his Labor counterpart Kevin Rudd, has revealed the government spent \$1.5 million on US-based lobbyists and lawyers to get the deal.

The firm Bockorny Petrizzo Inc was paid \$605,409 over two-and-a-half years for its efforts.

Congress insider magazine *The Hill* recently named the firm, and one of its chief lobbyists David Bockorny, as one of the most influential lobbyists in Washington. Australia paid another \$839,343 to the huge law firm Mayer, Brown, Rowe and Maw over the same two-and-a-half years for its efforts. The firm, with more than 1300 lawyers across the US and Europe, is one of the 10 largest law operations in the world.

Another \$59,649 was paid to the firm Covington and Burling for

its legal advice and lobbying over a new type of visa for Australian business people. Since the trade deal started operation this year, Australia's trade deficit with the US has worsened.

Australian exports fell \$9.4 billion over the 12 months to June this year, while imports from the US jumped \$2 billion to \$21.3 billion. The trade deficit now stands at \$11.8 billion, the largest Australia runs with any nation. (Internet report). [Sep 2, 05]

**Mary Jenkins
Perth, WA**

Support Iraqi trade unions

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau is shocked to learn the anti-labour and unfair practices, contrary to the International conventions and decisions, pursued by the Government of Iraq. We learn that "on 7 August, the Iraqi Council of Ministers stated that the government would be "taking control of all monies belonging to the trade unions to prevent them

from dispensing any such monies." This decree revokes the decisions taken on union rights by Iraq's provisional government and permits the control and confiscation of trade union monies by the government authorities. It also states that the right to carry out union activities is to be reviewed.

Since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, an active union movement over 700,000 strong has emerged in Iraq. This attack on Iraqi unions is an attempt to stop their activities for improving living standards, for justice and democracy and their challenge to foreign ownership of Iraqi oil and privatisation.

The WFTU demands that the decree be revoked and the Iraqi government respect the democratic rights of workers to control their own unions without interference from government and corporations.

We express our solidarity with the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions and appeal to all affiliates of WFTU to support the just cause of the workers of Iraq who are fighting for the rights.

**H Mahadevan
Dy. General Secretary WFTU**

Perth

Invitation

To hear Chilean guest speaker: Leo Gatica

After 32 years from that bloodiest event there are lessons to learn. These are current today for Latin America, Australia and the world.

**Sunday 11 September 11:00am
1 Salar Place, Dianella**

\$5.00 Donation Plate or drink welcomed
RSVP: Sheila 08 9276 9144 or Vic on 08 9337 1074

Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland

Washing the dirty war's linen

Last week, I dealt briefly with the efforts of Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón to extradite the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet from Britain in 1998. The Blair government, as you will recall, rejected the extradition request in 2000, and Pinochet, like virtually all of the Latin American butchers, went free.

This week we'll take a look at the seven-year "dirty war" in Argentina, another war waged by a fascist military dictatorship against the people. And here, too, Judge Garzón has a role to play.

In April of this year, the Spanish High Court found Adolfo Scilingo, 58, a former Argentine naval officer, guilty of the illegal detention, torture and murder of civilian opponents of the military junta in the mid-1970s.

In May of this year, Ricardo Oliveros, a former Argentine army intelligence officer who lives in Spain, gave lengthy testimony before a Spanish judge in the same High Court where Scilingo was tried. Like Scilingo, Oliveros testified to crimes against humanity committed during Argentina's "dirty war" 30 years ago.

Later this year, or possibly early next year, another former

Argentine Naval officer, Ricardo Miguel Cavallo, who was extradited from Mexico to Spain two years ago, will go on trial charged with genocide and terrorism. Cavallo served at the notorious Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA) in Buenos Aires, one of 250 clandestine torture centres operated by the military junta in the 1970s.

And Judge Baltasar Garzón? He is the head of the court where these cases are being heard.

The cases are lifting the legal lid off the fascist regime imposed by the Argentine military and its corporate backers (not to mention its other backer, the US government).

Human rights groups believe about 30,000 people were murdered in Argentina by the junta. The Argentine Truth Commission's 1984 report *Nunca Mas (Never Again)* found evidence of 8961 people who simply disappeared (the *desaparecidos*).

Certainly tens of thousands of the opponents of the military government were killed, mostly after unspeakable torture meted out in centres like ESMA.

Adolfo Scilingo testified that, from ESMA alone, between 15 and 20 prisoners were taken to the airport every Wednesday for at least two years. There the drugged prisoners were loaded onto Navy or Coast Guard planes and flown out over the ocean or the Rio de la Plata.

Once over open water, the prisoners were stripped and thrown – alive – from the back of the plane. People were not encouraged to ask too many questions when any of these broken bodies washed ashore on the Uruguayan coast.

One who did ask was the writer Rodolfo Walsh, whose "Open Letter from a Writer to the Military Junta" charged that mutilated bodies that

Some of the Argentine military hierarchy on trial in 1985



had washed up on the shore between March and October 1976 had been tortured.

Walsh was himself murdered in March the following year.

Scilingo's testimony has been corroborated by other officers, among them Victor Armando Ibanez, a sergeant in the Argentine Army.

Most of the people sought by the Spanish courts are safe so long as they stay in Argentina, which refuses to extradite them. This includes people like former naval officer Alfredo Astiz, another member of the "task force" at the ESMA, convicted *in absentia* in France 15 years ago for his role in the kidnapping, torture and murder of two French nuns.

Debra Watson of World Socialist Web Site reports that the nuns were "part of a group of 11 women killed for attempting to compile lists of

the disappeared at the beginning of the organisation of what became the famous Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Astiz was sentenced to life, but remains free within the protective borders of Argentina."

Unlike their French counterparts, Spanish courts cannot carry out trials *in absentia*.

The Vatican, of course, was not behindhand in supporting the junta's extermination of leftists. Scilingo told the court that the clergy deemed the death flights, which were designed to cover up the mass murder by disposing of the bodies, a humane method of execution.

"Pio Laghi was the papal nuncio to Argentina in the 1970s", writes Debra Watson. "During the Argentine repression, he was a tennis partner with Admiral Massera, one of the principal architects of the terror."

Watson also links current top

US officials to the repression in Argentina.

"Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld held the same position in 1976, overseeing the collaboration between the Pentagon and the Argentine military's repressive apparatus. Vice President Dick Cheney, meanwhile, was White House chief of staff."

Last year, Argentinean journalist Mario Pedestal, his camerawoman Mariana Veronica Cabrera, and their Iraqi driver were killed in a road accident on the way to Baghdad when a tyre blew out.

"Pedestal had told colleagues that he was determined to find a group of Argentine 'dirty war' veterans who had been hired by private security firms contracted by [US Defense Secretary Donald] Rumsfeld."

Lucky break for Rumsfeld, that tyre blowing out, eh? ☘



Sun 11 Sept ~
~ Sat 17 Sept

The inability of *Broadway: The American Musical* (ABC 7.30pm Sundays) to make a distinction between commercial success and artistic success becomes even more apparent this week, in which the success of shows in the 1970s becomes measured in terms of real estate.

Referring to the blockbuster musical *Chicago*, Shubert Organization chairman Gerald Schoenfeld says: "It was a catalyst for the improvement of this area, and of course this area is now the most desirable area in New York."

And by the end of the 1970s, Broadway had become the centrepiece of a remarkably successful public relations campaign that would lure tourists to New York for years to come.

Like Agatha Christie's *The Mouse Trap* in London, a long run on Broadway was no longer a guarantee of quality but merely of longevity. Which is not to say that there wasn't plenty of interesting product on Broadway during that decade!

One of the things that makes *New Tricks* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays) work, is the variation in the crimes that UCOS investigates. They don't just do a murder (or even several murders) every episode.

This week, for instance, it's some stolen jewelry discovered in a flat rented by a man who died in 1982. The episode is written by Karen McLachlan.

One of the guest stars is Rita

Tushingam, whom I last remember seeing decades ago in *The Knack!*

The Pardoner's Tale, this week's episode of *Canterbury Tales* (ABC 9.25pm Sundays), continues the grim retelling in modern dress of Chaucer's bawdy moral tales. The modern versions are not only a lot grimmer than Chaucer's originals, I suspect he would have thought them unnecessarily so!

Chaucer's tales had a rollicking quality. There's not a lot of humour, grim or otherwise, in the telling of these modern parables.

Three of Wallace and Gromit's classic adventures in plasticine animation are back this week, on consecutive days. A treat for all fans of director Nick Park and Aardman Animation.

In *A Grand Day Out* (ABC 5.00pm Tuesday) Wallace fancies some cheese ("some nice Wensleydale") so he builds a rocket in his cellar and takes Gromit to the moon, which is after all made of the stuff.

In *The Wrong Trousers* (ABC 5.00pm Wednesday), a new lodger turns out to be not only a penguin but a master criminal. In control of Wallace's newly-invented Technotrousers he seems set to frame the hapless inventor for robbery!

And in *A Close Shave* (ABC 5.00pm Thursday), Wallace falls in love while Gromit uncovers a plot to create a national wool shortage by stealing sheep.

The series owes much of its success to Peter Sallis (the voice of Wallace), but the overall writing is delightful.

Australian director Tom Zubrycki makes interesting and progressive films. His latest, for Film Australia's National Interest Program, is *Vietnam Symphony*, in the *Storyline Australia* slot (SBS 8.30pm Thursday).

In 1965, as the Vietnamese faced the threat of massive US bombing, students and teachers from the National Conservatory of Music were forced to flee Hanoi for the relative safety of a small village in the countryside.

With the help of villagers, they built an entire campus underground, creating a maze of hidden tunnels, connecting an auditorium and classrooms. Here, as the war raged around them, they lived, studied and played music for five years.

Black-and-white archival footage captures almost surreal scenes – of pianos wheeled on handcarts along dusty tracks, lessons held in round-the-clock shifts in subterranean caverns, performances for soldiers among heavy armaments, and the unexpected meeting of hard labour and high culture, of the pragmatic and the sublime.

This footage is combined with contemporary interviews with the people involved, who recount personal stories of danger, hunger, fear and loss, stories counterbalanced by moments of humour and beauty. And their music, of course.

Vietnam Symphony records the coming together of the former conservatory students and villagers for a reunion concert 30 years after the war, and paints a moving portrait of life in Vietnam then and now.

The comic book is alive and well. In the US and here, they sell to adults in the form of the "graphic novel", usually crime or sci-fi but always marked by striking graphic art.

In Japan, they are more traditional in form but more juvenile in content. And they are extraordinarily popular!

These comics have generated a whole new genre of TV animation – and now movie animation – called anime. Although SBS has for several years marketed these films as "cult movies", they are very restricted in their range of themes (post nuclear apocalypse cities or decadent views of the "future") and ultimately tend to bore.

SBS' latest offering from this stable is *Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (SBS 10.00pm Thursdays), a spin-off from the anime movie *Ghost in the Shell*. It's the usual stuff: a crime-fighting outfit whose members are part-human, part-cyborg. Yawn.



Wallace and Gromit fans watch out – they're back in three of their classic adventures (ABC 5.00pm Tue, Wed, Thu)

Cop shows on TV are popular everywhere, even in socialist countries. Czech TV had a big success not so long ago re-running a police series from socialist-era Czechoslovakia, much to the despair of the bourgeois media.

They could hardly accuse them of running communist propaganda, however. It was, after all, "just a cop show".

Now SBS has picked up the Danish series *Unit One* (SBS 8.30pm Fridays), comprising one hour episodes about Denmark's Flying Squad. The series is watched by nearly 70 percent of Denmark's viewing audience every week.

In November 2002, in New York, the series won the prestigious International Emmy Award for best drama series – the first time the award had ever gone to a program from outside North America or the British Commonwealth.

It will be interesting to see what all the fuss is about.

Ever since the ABC stopped Eusing fillers there have been few opportunities for short films on television. Now the ABC has come up with *SOS (Shorts on Screen)* (ABC 11.55pm Saturday), one hour of shorts back to back.

I prefer my short films interspersed among longer programs but beggars can't be choosers, I suppose. But five minutes to midnight? Why don't they repeat the program on Sunday afternoons?

Each week, *SOS* will showcase a selection of Australian and International shorts, from multi-award winning festival favourites to cutting edge student films.

The ABC is pitching the program at young people ("It has an exciting new look and feel. It's cool. It's young. It's fresh.") but anyone interested in film should find the hour interesting. ☆

Sydney

Tribute to HT Lee

Photojournalist – Independent film maker
Trade Unionist
Activist for East Timor

Saturday 8 October 2 – 6 pm
Gaelic Club 64 Devonshire Street Surry Hills Sydney (Upstairs)
Speakers, Performances by Enda Kenny, Choir

Entry by donation: Money raised will go to the HT Lee Memorial Political Film-makers Fund to assist people going to East Timor to work on film documentaries. Jointly organised by the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (Construction & General Division) and the Australia-East Timor Association (NSW).

Subscribe to *The Guardian*

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

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

Pay by Cheque Money order
to: Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia

or by credit card: Bankcard Mastercard Visa

Card #

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

Signature: _____

The Guardian

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

Editor: Anna Pha

Published by
Guardian Publications
Australia Ltd

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by Spotpress
105-107 Victoria Rd
Marrickville 2204

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

Sydney

POLITICS in the pub

9 Sept

The Palmer judgement – holding Ruddock & Vanstone to account
Julian Burnside, QC, lawyer, activist for refugees and asylum seekers
Louise Newman, Director NSW Institute Psychiatry
Kate Gautier, National Coordinator for A Just Australia

16 Sept

Iraq – the human cost
Dr Gillian Deakin, Medical Association Prevention of War
Stuart Rees, Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies, Sydney University

23 Sept

Sydney's water supply – who profits & who pays the price
John Kaye, Greens Senate Candidate 2004
Chris Sheil, School History, UNSW, author of *Water's Fall: Running the Risk With Economic Rationalism*

Every Friday 6pm 'til 7.45

Gaelic Club

64 Devonshire Street Surry Hills

Pat Toms 02 9358 4834
pbtoms@bigpond.com
www.politicsthepub.org

CPA 10th Congress

On the side of workers

Anna Pha

Over the last 30 years profits as a proportion of GDP have grown from 14.5 per cent to 23.4 per cent. Over the past few months there has been no shortage of business magazine articles welcoming a steady flow of record profits. And this week, *Business Review Weekly (BRW)* (September 1-7, 2005) features reports on some of the top performing corporations based on average returns on shareholders' investments over the past five years.

Jubilee mines has a five-year average growth rate in profits of an amazing 56.48 per cent. That means that every two years shareholders are getting back the value of their investment. The value of their investment has also been rising. Most of the top 200 companies made double digit returns over the same period.

On the profit front many of the big corporations are still turning in stellar performances. Rio Tinto, whose six-monthly profit has just doubled, and the other mining giants are wallowing in a resources boom. The smaller mining companies are "also having a picnic", reports *BRW*.

Take another look at that rise in profit share of the GDP – an increase from 14.5 per cent to 23.4. Over the same period there was also a change in the wages share of GDP – a decrease from 56 per cent to 46.6 per cent in 2004. The share of national income paid in wages fell by an amount of 10 per cent and the share of profits rose by around 10 per cent.

This is no coincidence. The two figures are connected. Wages and profits are slices of the same cake, the wealth that is created by the labour of workers. If one slice is larger the other is correspondingly smaller. Under capitalism there is a constant struggle over how that cake is cut. The aim of the Howard government's IR "reforms" is to give employers – the capitalists – an even bigger share by cutting the workers' share.

This economic struggle between workers and their employers is part of the ongoing class struggle which also takes political and ideological forms. There are two sides to this struggle. The *BRW*, *The Australian Financial Review*, the Murdoch, Packer and other mass media outlets, the various employer bodies and the Liberal Party are on the side of capital. They never let up in protecting the interests of big business and the private profit-machine. The Labor Party has historically, when it comes to action, sided

with employers and seeks to work within the capitalist system.

The working class has its trade unions which are extremely important in defending the interests of workers but it also needs a political party of its own. And that's why there's a Communist Party which, without any apology, declares itself to be a working class Party. That's the difference. The Communist Party and its paper *The Guardian* are on the side of the claims of the workers and wants to change the system to one that protects workers' interests – socialism.

The Party's Constitution says that it is "a working class Party based on the concept that the working class is the only force capable of ... achieving the revolutionary changes necessary to build a socialist society". The Party combines "defence of the best interests of the working people and the independence and sovereignty of the nation with international working class solidarity".

The Party is very democratic. When the Party's Congress is being prepared, a Political Resolution is drafted six months in advance and a copy circulated to every single member of the Party with an invitation to read and discuss it with other members of their branch and to submit amendments.

Every single amendment is written down and submitted to conferences of State and District Committees or directly to the Central Committee for consideration.

At its meeting last weekend the Central Committee incorporated in full or in part a large majority of these amendments to produce a further draft. This final draft is now being distributed to all Congress delegates.

If any delegate wishes to pursue an amendment that was not accepted, it may be taken up during the course of the Congress itself and will then be voted on by the delegates from all over Australia. It is hard to imagine a more thorough or more democratic procedure than this. When the Political Resolution is finalised it can be truly said that it is a product of the collective thinking of the Party membership.

The members of the CPA are workers (employed and unemployed), pensioners, scientists, technicians, students, writers, farmers and other people from different walks of life. They are women and men, young and old, and have different national origins. Some are religious. All are united by a commitment to work for the interests and needs of the working people of Australia.

Communist Party members have both rights and responsibilities. They can express



Photo: AVANTE MEDIA Australia

views on Party policy and activity, contribute to the Party's newspaper, *The Guardian* or other publications, and stand for elected positions on Party committees. There are opportunities for critical discussion and analysis at all levels of Party activity.

Activists

At the same time, members are expected to be activists and to carry out decisions once they have been collectively discussed and decided by a majority vote. All members pay fixed membership dues and are asked to make additional voluntary financial contributions according to their means.

Members carry out their activities in various ways. They may be activists as workers in a trade union and become a union delegate at their place of work. They may belong to a peace or an environmental organisation. They may be activists in one or another of the solidarity organisations, which have the aim of developing friendship between the Australian people and the people of other countries, and extend support to their struggles.

Or they may be active in the many other community organisations, struggling for the rights of women, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, refugees, and migrants; in defence of public education, Medicare and a fairer tax system; or in campaigns against racism, the WTO and IMF.

In addition, there are the campaigns and activities undertaken by the Party itself.

For example, the Party held stalls and collected petitions in support of Medicare and is giving its all to see the defeat of the Howard government's anti-union, anti-worker IR legislation. The Party strongly opposes the phoney "war on terror" and anti-democratic ASIO laws and the inhumane and illegal treatment of refugees.

We are against racism and have always supported multiculturalism. The Party has put forward comprehensive policies to bring full recognition and land rights to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are the original inhabitants and owners of Australia.

Independence for East Timor,

Bougainville and West Papua are other issues that Party members have actively supported.

The Guardian presents party policies and views on many issues, carries news of national and international events and promotes campaigns on economic and political questions.

Here are a few front page headlines from recent issues of *The Guardian* that tell their own story: "Enough is enough: Children out of detention!"; "Organise against Howard's anti-union laws"; "Callous welfare cuts" (2005-06 federal budget); "Nuclear weapons and humans cannot coexist"; "Tipping point looms for earth's climate"; "Banks make record profits while millions in debt"; "Resist attack on right to choose" (in reference to abortion); "Govt has no solution for jobless youth"; "End the occupation of Iraq"; "When Howard speaks tax cuts read social security cuts"; "Denying land rights 'the real injustice'"; "The New Century Belongs to Socialism".

They show which side *The Guardian* is on. Perhaps you have also come to the conclusion that the New Century belongs to socialism and want to do something about it.

You can do no better than join the Communist Party. It is a simple process. Contact the Party organisation (details below), have a discussion, get a copy of our program and constitution and other information on the CPA. If you agree with our aims, then come along to a few branch meetings, join in our activities and that way find out more about being a party member.

Even if you are not considering joining, you might like to take out a subscription to *The Guardian* (See page 11) or send a contribution to the Special Appeal for Congress or The Guardian Press Fund. (See page 2) We rely on our members and supporters – we have no corporate sponsors or government handouts. You are welcome to attend the opening of the Party's Congress which will take place on Friday, September 30, from 7-9pm at the CFMEU, 12 Railway St, Lidcombe. Refreshments will be provided.

Feel free to approach any Party member or official there for a longer talk. ☺

You are invited to the opening of the

10th NATIONAL CONGRESS COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

Friday 30 September 7 – 9 pm
CFMEU Offices, 12 Railway Street, Lidcombe, Sydney

About two minutes walk from Lidcombe Station. Parking available.
Refreshments provided

BUILD THE PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS



Communist Party of Australia

Website: www.cpa.org.au
Email: 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:
Rob Gowland
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
Illawarra Branch:
Janice Hamilton
16/26-30 Hutton Ave
Bulli NSW 2516
Ph: 02 4283 6130

Riverina:
Geoff Lawler
PO Box 1016 Wagga 2650
Ph: 02 6921 4316 Fax: 02 6921 6873
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
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

West Australian Branch: Vic Williams
5B Jemerson St Willagee Perth 6156
Phone: 08 9337 1074
Brisbane Branch: David Matters
16 Dumaresq St, Sunnybank Hills, 4109
Ph: 07 3398 9623
South Australian State Committee:
Bob Briton Rm 5, Lvl 1, 149 Flinders St,
Adelaide 5000 Ph: 08 8232 8200