Increasing racial tensions inflamed by the Howard Government’s racist policies have boiled over into violent responses by Indigenous communities. The death in custody of an Aboriginal man on November 21 sparked riots on Queensland’s Palm Island two weeks ago. And in a shocking incident last week an Aboriginal youth accused of attempted theft was dragged with a rope by the neck around a river bank for 40 minutes, near the Queensland town of Goondiwindi.

All symptomatic of a disastrous decline in relations between government and the Aboriginal community.

The Goondiwindi beating, and the death in custody of Cameron Dooomadgee in Palm Island Police Station, followed another death in custody at Normanton Police Station some time ago. The deaths at Palm Island and Normanton are both the subject of an investigation by the Independent Investigation Commission.

The events at Goondiwindi and Normanton, as well as those on Palm Island, are a clear outcome of government policies of neglect and outright hostility towards Aboriginal people.

The Government has gone out of its way to denigrate and demonise attempts by Indigenous communities to overcome poverty, discrimination and more than 200 years of dispossession.

The Howard Government has historically moved to block all campaigns and legislation favouring the rights of Aboriginal people, because they are seen as standing in the way of vested corporate interests. The Government has also consistently refused to apologise to Aboriginal people over the Stolen Generations, for the same reasons.

The deaths in custody at Palm Island and Normanton, the death of Aboriginal boy Thomas (“T.J.”) Hickey who was being pursued by police in Redfern, Sydney, and the shocking assault on Allan Boulan at Goondiwindi, are all symptomatic of a disastrous decline in relations between government and the Aboriginal community.

This manifests itself in a degree of public apathy or ignorance of the problems facing Aboriginal people, as well as blatantly racist criminal behaviour by some individuals and groups. All of this has been tacit encouragement by the Howard Government’s callous attitude and policies towards Aboriginal people.

The introduction of punitive new welfare laws targeting only Indigenous Australians is another demonstration of the arrogance and racism driving Government policy.

Aboriginal Senator Aden Ridgeway recently pointed out that the Howard Government still refused to acknowledge that there was an urgent problem concerning the treatment of Aboriginal people, despite the disproportionately high rate of Aboriginal people in custody, and the appalling incidence of Aboriginal deaths in custody.

He commented: “This country does have a major race relations problem that are escalating under the reign of the Howard Government. I believe there is a growing indifference of Australians – the great Australian silence about the increasing rates of imprisonment and deaths in custody of Indigenous people and treatment under the criminal justice system.

“Indigenous people in this country are 15 times more likely to be imprisoned than anyone else … Last year, 75 percent of deaths in custody of prisoners detained for no more than public order offences were Indigenous Australians.”

Robbie Williams, the ATSIC Commissioner for south-east Queensland, remarked grimly: “There’s been some militant red-necks who have taken the law into their own hands. There’s a few people who are starting to think it’s open season on Aboriginal people.

It started in Redfern, now it’s up on Palm Island: it could be escalating.”

In a massive property grab the Carr Labor Government in NSW has set up the Redfern-Waterloo Authority which is designed to allow the Government to bypass decision making by local councils and communities. The two inner city suburbs have Aboriginal communities which have long been seen by the Government as a hindrance to plans by developers.

In March 2002, the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project was announced to address serious social problems in the area. That was the stated intention, at any rate. But there was no movement to address the problems, which arise out of poverty and long-term racial discrimination.

There was little information and consultation from those running the Project.

Now the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, under Minister for Energy and Utilities, Frank Sartor, is to control key sites, administer a Redfern-Waterloo Fund and develop a ten year plan.

Sartor, a former Sydney mayor, will have unprecedented powers to override normal planning controls, take control of areas at will, choose developers for areas adjacent to such sites, and override the Heritage Act.

Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore is also an MP whose electorate takes in Redfern and Waterloo. She described the plan as “nothing but a grab for development-related cash” by the Government.

In Parliament Ms Moore moved amendments to the proposed Redfern-Waterloo Authority Bill, warning that it sets up a new super-authority with extraordinary powers that will be above the law.

“The Minister will be accountable to no one and will have the capacity to annex other suburban areas at will, to cherry pick the most valuable development sites, and to act as the consent authority for his developments without being hindered by inconvenient planning laws, such as the Heritage Act.”

For starters, heritage laws will no longer apply to four sites in Redfern: the Australian Technology Park, Eveleigh Railway Workshops, the 23 hectares of public housing estates, and the Block and its surrounds, where the area’s Aboriginal community lives.

Sartor claims it is “not about dispossessing Aboriginal people and sending them off somewhere else”. But there will be no place for them in Redfern and Waterloo as it will be changed into a high-income-only residential and retail area.

There are already plans for the construction of three shopping, residential and office towers over Redfern station and for residential development of Eveleigh.

It has also been revealed that another, separate, body along the lines of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority is being formed to take over what the Government describes as “run-down corridors” through-out Sydney. Although details of this body are as yet only sketchy the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, Craig Knowles, has already earmarked Parramatta Road from City Road to Granville, and set up a Parramatta Road Task Force.
People before profits

For decades governments have taken responsibility for the provision of infrastructure and essential services such as education, water, sewerage, electricity, gas, roads, public transport, post and telecommunications. In taking responsibility, they have provided public services, totally or partially funding them, and have been publicly accountable through parliament. The majority of the population in rural and semi-rural Australia (the so-called "non-commu-
ties") have taken it for granted that water would flow out of taps in their homes, that electricity would provide light and heat, or that our cars or buses would use the roads.

We paid our taxes to government and government provides the necessary services to meet the needs of the community – both individual and collective. Government subsidised those of businesses and the community at large. In some instances we might pay for the service or use of infrastructure such as electricity, telephones and rail, and in other instances it would be provided free of charge (eg roads, education).

The prime purpose of a service was its provision to meet a need. Thus, public transport was to serve the needs of people to commute to work, to school and so on. This may sound obvious and logical. After all, why else would they be provided?

That was the case before the economic rationalists took over. They set about corporatising government utilities and services and putting them on a commercial footing. This was then extended to making "reforms" to enable government "businesses" to recover the full cost of a service through "user pays" and other means.

Policy competition followed, with the abolition of crosssubsidisation and the introduction of private sector providers. The next step was to make a profit. When the service became profitable, it was sold or public ownership and provision was replaced with "partnerships" (PPPs) where the government takes financial responsibility (ensures profits flow) and the private sector provide or manage the service and pocket huge profits.

There are endless government reports on public services and how to put them on a profitable footing – or in other words fattening the turkey for the corporate table.

One of the most profitable is through the most profitable sector of a service subsidising the sectors which do not make a profit. Thus, Telstra has an obligation to fund telecommunications in regional and remote areas so the people in those areas pay the same for their services as those in the densely populated cities.

The abolition of cross-subsidisation means that services are cut or users pay more where it cost more to provide that service. This applies to many services, such as Australia Post and rail services. The concept of universal access and uniform rates is being eroded and replaced by a new regime of making everything turn a profit – focusing on every individual situation rather than the totality of the service and community needs.

The question then becomes where, every train trip, every letter delivery to every address, every phone call to every destination, every drop of water to every property – all will have to make a profit.

This process is evident in the NSW public transport system where the government has proposed emasculating rail services – focusing on peak periods and cutting services with smaller patronage (see 2).

The overriding reason for private provision of services is profit. The service itself is no longer the raison d'être: the service becomes the vehicle for generating revenue for the coffers. The service itself is no longer the raison d'être: the service becomes the vehicle for generating revenue for the coffers.

The service itself is no longer the raison d'être: the service becomes the vehicle for generating revenue for the coffers, rather than the totality of the service and community needs. Thus, Telstra has an obligation to fund telecommunications in regional and remote areas so the people in those areas pay the same for their services as in remote areas.

Cross subsidisation works through the most profitable sector of the chemicals involved on the basis that this knowledge was their intellectual property. (This made it extremely difficult for medical authorities to treat the victims in the immediate aftermath of the blast) Although only five years old, the plant had been losing money. After the accident, the company simply abandoned it. The manager, Warren Anderson, was arrested but skipped bail and lives in great comfort in the US despite an Interpol warrant for his arrest.

The company later made a small compensation payment to all the victims, but it was not until 1989, after a court case mounted by the Indian Government, that a legal settlement was reached.

The company had chosen to contest the case in India, rather than as in the US, where the damages were likely to be much larger. The Indian Government demanded US$15 billion in damages, but in the event only US$470 million was forthcoming.

Moreover, the victims did not receive anything until November this year, just under 20 years after the tragedy. The entitlement for each victim was some 25,000 rupees. At the current rate of exchange that is about AS$757, or approximately AS$38 for each year the victims have had to wait.

Not surprisingly, many of the victims felt that this did not represent a single, just outcome. The environment-organised Greenpeace and a coalition of survivor groups is now campaigning for adequate compensation, as well as for the company (which has been taken over by Dow Chemicals) to carry out remediation to the site, whose soil and water are still shockingly polluted.

An exhibition on the disaster is currently on display in Sydney. Shortly after the disaster, Indian photographer Raghu Rai visited the site to record its aftermath. Last year he again visited Bhopal to document the long-term impacts on the local residents. His haunting images, reminiscent of the post-Hiroshima photographs, form the basis of the exhibition.

The exhibition will be on display in Sydney, with half the photographs at the Top Gallery at 278 Palmer St, Darlinghurst and the other half at the George Hannah Memorial Library in King St, Mascot until January 30, 2005.

Second Hospital Appeal for Iraq

As another Guardian goes to press, many people are doubtless wondering what awaits them in 2005. The year 2004 has seen a number of setbacks, but also a number of important gains. Whatever happens, one thing is certain: the future will be determined by the mass of ordinary people in the world. In Australia, The Guardian has an important contribution to make. This week’s response to the Press Fund is very encouraging. There is only one more issue of the paper before the end of the year to make our target of $14,000.00. We know it can be done. Our sincere thanks go to all those who contributed this week, as follows:

B. Appleton $40, R. and J. Brown $200, M H $290.40, “Round Figure” $9.60, Stan Thornton $50, SA State Committee $223.50, BJ Hawke $25, R Junkerstorf $50.

This week’s total: $888.50. Progressive total: $11,778.50.

The Guardian

December 8, 2004

People before profits

For decades governments have taken responsibility for the provision of infrastructure and essential services such as education, water, sewerage, electricity, gas, roads, public transport, post and telecommunications. In taking responsibility, they have provided public services, totally or partially funding them, and have been publicly accountable through parliament. The majority of the population in rural and semi-rural Australia (the so-called “non-communities”) have taken it for granted that water would flow out of taps in their homes, that electricity would provide light and heat, or that our cars or buses would use the roads.

We paid our taxes to government and government provides the necessary services to meet the needs of society – both individual and collective. Government subsidised those of businesses and the community at large. In some instances we might pay for the service or use of infrastructure such as electricity, telephones and rail, and in other instances it would be provided free of charge (eg roads, education).

The prime purpose of a service was its provision to meet a need. Thus, public transport was to serve the needs of people to commute to work, to school and so on. This may sound obvious and logical. After all, why else would they be provided?

That was the case before the economic rationalists took over. They set about corporatising government utilities and services and putting them on a commercial footing. This was then extended to making “reforms” to enable government “businesses” to recover the full cost of a service through “user pays” and other means.

Policy competition followed, with the abolition of cross-subsidisation and the introduction of private sector providers. The next step was to make a profit. When the service became profitable, it was sold or public ownership and provision was replaced with “partnerships” (PPPs) where the government takes financial responsibility (ensures profits flow) and the private sector provide or manage the service and pocket huge profits.

There are endless government reports on public services and how to put them on a profitable footing – or in other words fattening the turkey for the corporate table.

One of the most profitable is through the most profitable sector of a service subsidising the sectors which do not make a profit. Thus, Telstra has an obligation to fund telecommunications in regional and remote areas so the people in those areas pay the same for their services as those in the densely populated cities.

The abolition of cross-subsidisation means that services are cut or users pay more where it cost more to provide that service. This applies to many services, such as Australia Post and rail services. The concept of universal access and uniform rates is being eroded and replaced by a new regime of making everything turn a profit – focusing on every individual situation rather than the totality of the service and community needs.

The overriding reason for private provision of services is profit. The service itself is no longer the raison d’être: the service becomes the vehicle for generating revenue for the coffers. The service itself is no longer the raison d’être: the service becomes the vehicle for generating revenue for the coffers, rather than the totality of the service and community needs. Thus, Telstra has an obligation to fund telecommunications in regional and remote areas so the people in those areas pay the same for their services as in remote areas.

Cross subsidisation works through the most profitable sector of the chemicals involved on the basis that this knowledge was their intellectual property. (This made it extremely difficult for medical authorities to treat the victims in the immediate aftermath of the blast) Although only five years old, the plant had been losing money. After the accident, the company simply abandoned it. The manager, Warren Anderson, was arrested but skipped bail and lives in great comfort in the US despite an Interpol warrant for his arrest.

The company later made a small compensation payment to all the victims, but it was not until 1989, after a court case mounted by the Indian Government, that a legal settlement was reached.

The company had chosen to contest the case in India, rather than as in the US, where the damages were likely to be much larger. The Indian Government demanded US$15 billion in damages, but in the event only US$470 million was forthcoming.

Moreover, the victims did not receive anything until November this year, just under 20 years after the tragedy. The entitlement for each victim was some 25,000 rupees. At the current rate of exchange that is about AS$757, or approximately AS$38 for each year the victims have had to wait.

Not surprisingly, many of the victims felt that this did not represent a single, just outcome. The environment-organised Greenpeace and a coalition of survivor groups is now campaigning for adequate compensation, as well as for the company (which has been taken over by Dow Chemicals) to carry out remediation to the site, whose soil and water are still shockingly polluted.

An exhibition on the disaster is currently on display in Sydney. Shortly after the disaster, Indian photographer Raghu Rai visited the site to record its aftermath. Last year he again visited Bhopal to document the long-term impacts on the local residents. His haunting images, reminiscent of the post-Hiroshima photographs, form the basis of the exhibition.

The exhibition will be on display in Sydney, with half the photographs at the Top Gallery at 278 Palmer St, Darlinghurst and the other half at the George Hannah Memorial Library in King St, Mascot until January 30, 2005.

Second Hospital Appeal for Iraq

As another Guardian goes to press, many people are doubtless wondering what awaits them in 2005. The year 2004 has seen a number of setbacks, but also a number of important gains. Whatever happens, one thing is certain: the future will be determined by the mass of ordinary people in the world. In Australia, The Guardian has an important contribution to make. This week’s response to the Press Fund is very encouraging. There is only one more issue of the paper before the end of the year to make our target of $14,000.00. We know it can be done. Our sincere thanks go to all those who contributed this week, as follows:

B. Appleton $40, R. and J. Brown $200, M H $290.40, “Round Figure” $9.60, Stan Thornton $50, SA State Committee $223.50, BJ Hawke $25, R Junkerstorf $50.

This week’s total: $888.50. Progressive total: $11,778.50.
The NSW Carr Government has announced a new timetable for Sydney’s trains to come into force in September next year. The extent to which the Government has allowed the service to deteriorate is evident in the proposed regime which will see 720 services a day cut from off-peak services, amounting to $500 a week. The claim that fixing the system can be achieved by slashing services is not so ludicrous if seen in connection with the Government’s longer term goal of privatisation. The scheme is being implement- ed even though it has been pointed out by commuters that with the changes taking place in the work- force – increased casualisation and shift work being prevalent among them – many workers now go to and from work during non-peak hours. Central to the privatisation pro- cess is the “clearaways” program, which will break up the rails them- selves into segregated lines. The Government says this is aimed at stopping a problem on one line from affecting other lines. Clearly the cause of such problems is not the integrated system but the failure to fully fund its maintenance. After the

lines are separated it will be easier to sell them off. Already commuters who use the Inner West line between Homebush and the city are being forced to change trains at Redfern station on the outskirts of the CBD because their service now terminates at Central’s Country Link platforms. This is because the Government has dumped what it calls “low-patron- age off-peak services” which go through the city circle line – those CBD stations on the loop between Town Hall and Museum. This change spells serious diffi- culties for disabled and less mobile passengers.

For example: this year the State Government spent $5million upgrading Summer Hill Station with lifts and ramps to allow disabled access. However, disabled pass-engers who use Summer Hill will now no longer have direct access to the city. An announcement in transit advice that passengers travelling to the city or transferring to other lines to change at Redfern Station. However, Redfern station is notori- ous for its inaccessible ness with no lifts or ramps between platforms.

Disabled passengers who stay on the train and terminate at Central are then forced to travel about 100 metres – and up and down two more lifts – before they can access a city-bound train and continue their journey.

North Shore line trains will be reduced by half between 10am and 2pm. The Southern Highlands line which services the towns between Picton and Goulburn – which were left without a direct service to the city when its weekend service were cut by 30 percent in July – doesn’t even figure in the plan; no timetable has been developed for it. For nearly a decade now people have been conditioned to accept that trains will not run on time, and in many cases not at all. This has now manifested itself into City Rail pol- icy with trains that run five minutes late officially considered as on-time.

The cuts in funding and ser- vices are also reflected in the fact that, except for the Olympic year in 2000, there has been no significant increase in patronage on the service since 1996. This has another impli- cation: Sydney has grown by almost half-a-million people in that time. This can only mean there are more cars on the road.
**Buckister Bill blocks entry**

John Howard will override state law to look after the interests of a Perth building magnate who had earned his ire. The Bill has drawn up a hit list of worker representatives. Workplace Relations Minister, Kevin Andrews, confirmed his government would restrict trade union right of entry provisions, effectively overturning a Federal Court ruling against construction multi-millionaire, Len Buckister.

Andrews promised last August, but a re-elected Coalition Government would trump a decision that workers on AWAs, the government’s non-union contracts, were entitled to on-the-job access to union advice and assistance. Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) assistant National Secretary, Dave Noonan, said this week's legislation the "Buckister Bill".

"Buckister was using AWAs to deny workers' rights to union access. What the Federal Court found was illegal, this government is moving to make legal", Mr Noonan said. The Western Australian case was sensational because it under-mined arguments that AWAs were about freedom of choice. It revealed Buckister's company, BGC, bound sub-contractors to employ AWAs labour only.

The court heard the Office of the Employment Advocate (OEA) was registering fraudulent AWAs, and green-lighting others lodged outside the time limit set in law. In uncontested evidence, industry veteran Alan Kuret, said a union AWAs had been registered in his name although he had never signed nor seen the document. He said when he refused to sign a pre-dated AWA, his employment had been terminated. Justice French rejected Buckister's argument that the CFMEU was not entitled to enter Burparr Fertilisers to speak with workers on AWAs.

Buckister has become a Hard Right hero for his aggressive moves to de-unionise workplaces. He was awarded the HR Nicholls Society’s Charles Copeman Medal for services to industrial reform, after being arguably the leader of a union activist. In accepting that award, Buckister revealed he had drawn up a “hit list” of trade unionists who had earned his ire.

Minister Andrews announced this week he would move well beyond the construction industry to override state right of entry rules, across the board. Fortunately, the CFMEU says the OEA has not taken any action over the fraudulent registering of AWAs.

This government says it has a no tolerance policy towards law breakers. Clearly, that doesn’t apply if you are an employer", observed Mr Noonan.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) submitted an independent document to the government in March in which it clearly threatened that more and more bosses would remove their workers from the state’s jurisdiction and put them into federally administered Australian Workplace Agreements. As the ACCI pointed out, the state government's decision that employers, to protect their jobs and working conditions. The conference has been set down to ensure that the new contract addresses health and safety concerns of cleaners and school communities.

"This conference is about making sure that schools are clean and our educational environments are safe and that our cleaners are safe", said Jim Lloyd, president of the union’s lawyer, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers’ Union. “While the contract delivers healthy schools, there is no move to ensure that casual workers can become permanent after six months of continuous employment – as the United Trades and Labor Council very defensively points out. The bosses have retained their “right” to sack on workers.

The Bill will, however, afford some minimum wage protection and allow for intervention by the Industrial Relations Commission where contracts are deemed harsh and unfair. It will better protect workers’ entitlements, especially those of young, non-permanent workers. Workers contracted from labour hire firms do not fail through the cracks of the state’s unfair dismissal laws. It will preserve unions’ right of entry to workplaces.

The ACCI and other SA’s organisations have been campaigning vigorously since the Bill was first drafted in December 2003. They hired pro-boss outfit Access Economics to argue that 1700 jobs will go if the Bill were enacted. Their reading of the Bill would have it that unionists could demand to enter a boss’ home to examine a business’ most sensitive documents. And pigs might fly! The Master Builders put it about that 3500 apprenticeships would be under threat.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) submitted an independent document to the government in March in which it clearly threatened that more and more bosses would remove their workers from the state’s jurisdiction and put them into federally administered Australian Workplace Agreements. As the ACCI pointed out, the state government's decision that employers, to protect their jobs and working conditions. The conference has been set down to ensure that the new contract addresses health and safety concerns of cleaners and school communities.

"This conference is about making sure that schools are clean and our educational environments are safe and that our cleaners are safe", said Jim Lloyd, president of the union’s lawyer, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers’ Union. “While the contract delivers healthy schools, there is no move to ensure that casual workers can become permanent after six months of continuous employment – as the United Trades and Labor Council very defensively points out. The bosses have retained their “right” to sack on workers.

The Bill will, however, afford some minimum wage protection and allow for intervention by the Industrial Relations Commission where contracts are deemed harsh and unfair. It will better protect workers’ entitlements, especially those of young, non-permanent workers. Workers contracted from labour hire firms do not fail through the cracks of the state’s unfair dismissal laws. It will preserve unions’ right of entry to workplaces.

Employer group Business SA kicked their ongoing industrial relations campaign into high gear last week. Half page ads appeared in the Monday edition of Murdoch’s daily Advertiser carrying the crude propagandist image of a medicine bottle clearly marked “POISON”. The supposedly deadly contents were the Industrial Relations Bill (IR Bill) being considered by the Upper House of the South Australian Parliament.

The “bitter Bill Parliament could make us all swallow” was the Rann Government’s Labour Market Relations Bill – a piece of legislation viewed as consensual by SA unions that seeks to update the Industrial and Employees Relations Act. Bosses are alarmed that the latest Bill would clarify or institutionalise developments of recent years that have worked overwhelmingly in their favour. Employers are outraged that there could be a minor pause in the legislative gift-giving season from state and federal governments.

The Bill has been watered down a number of times to meet the demands coming from the big end of town. There is no move to ensure that cleaners clean up

NSW school cleaners will have a new contract. The school contract delivers healthy schools. Cleaners will be joined by employers and government representatives at a conference held just days before the cut off date for the lucrative state contract. The contract is responsible for keeping over 2000 schools, TAFE colleges and other state agencies clean.

Earlier this year school cleaners won an important campaign to protect their jobs and working conditions. The conference has been set down to ensure that the new contract addresses health and safety concerns of cleaners and school communities.

"This conference is about making sure that schools are clean and our educational environments are safe and that our cleaners are safe", said Jim Lloyd, president of the union’s lawyer, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers’ Union. “While the contract delivers healthy schools, there is no move to ensure that casual workers can become permanent after six months of continuous employment – as the United Trades and Labor Council very defensively points out. The bosses have retained their “right” to sack on workers.

The Bill will, however, afford some minimum wage protection and allow for intervention by the Industrial Relations Commission where contracts are deemed harsh and unfair. It will better protect workers’ entitlements, especially those of young, non-permanent workers. Workers contracted from labour hire firms do not fail through the cracks of the state’s unfair dismissal laws. It will preserve unions’ right of entry to workplaces.

Employer group Business SA kicked their ongoing industrial relations campaign into high gear last week. Half page ads appeared in the Monday edition of Murdoch’s daily Advertiser carrying the crude propagandist image of a medicine bottle clearly marked “POISON”. The supposedly deadly contents were the Industrial Relations Bill (IR Bill) being considered by the Upper House of the South Australian Parliament.

The “bitter Bill Parliament could make us all swallow” was the Rann Government’s Labour Market Relations Bill – a piece of legislation viewed as consensual by SA unions that seeks to update the Industrial and Employees Relations Act. Bosses are alarmed that the latest Bill would clarify or institutionalise developments of recent years that have worked overwhelmingly in their favour. Employers are outraged that there could be a minor pause in the legislative gift-giving season from state and federal governments.

The Bill has been watered down a number of times to meet the demands coming from the big end of town. There is no move to ensure that cleaners clean up

NSW school cleaners will have a new contract. The school contract delivers healthy schools. Cleaners will be joined by employers and government representatives at a conference held just days before the cut off date for the lucrative state contract. The contract is responsible for keeping over 2000 schools, TAFE colleges and other state agencies clean.

Earlier this year school cleaners won an important campaign to protect their jobs and working conditions. The conference has been set down to ensure that the new contract addresses health and safety concerns of cleaners and school communities.

"This conference is about making sure that schools are clean and our educational environments are safe and that our cleaners are safe", said Jim Lloyd, president of the union’s lawyer, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers’ Union. “While the contract delivers healthy schools, there is no move to ensure that casual workers can become permanent after six months of continuous employment – as the United Trades and Labor Council very defensively points out. The bosses have retained their “right” to sack on workers.

The Bill will, however, afford some minimum wage protection and allow for intervention by the Industrial Relations Commission where contracts are deemed harsh and unfair. It will better protect workers’ entitlements, especially those of young, non-permanent workers. Workers contracted from labour hire firms do not fail through the cracks of the state’s unfair dismissal laws. It will preserve unions’ right of entry to workplaces.
CPA celebrates Eureka

Last Sunday at the Gaelic Club in Sydney, a great crowd assembled to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Eureka.

The program opened with a rendition of We Shall Overcome – the John Lennon song – sung by Larissa (10 years), the daughter of party member Samir Maarabi. Kassim Abood of the Iraqi Communist Party then sang a song in honour of all the Iraqi communist martyrs. Margaret Walters sang the Ballad of 1891 – when the shearers went out on their historic strike – and other Australian working-class songs.

Drew Cottle, senior lecturer in politics at the University of Western Sydney, gave the keynote speech. Drew’s speech concentrated on the economic and social conditions that added to the tension and caused the men to revolt against oppression. He outlined other struggles that have happened in the 150 years since Eureka where the first response was to raise the Eureka flag.

The flag, we heard often during the afternoon, is “more beautiful than any flag of Europe”. The flag saw the opera as one way to do this. The opera Eureka Stockade, told the meeting how the idea of the libretto began with Italian interest in the role of Carboni at Ballarat. They writers wanted to repay the support they had found in Australia, and saw the opera as one way to do this. John pointed out how Italians had enriched the culture of Australia. Chris Cain, WA Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia, declared that the lessons of Eureka were relevant today, that there had to be united resistance to the attacks on union rights. He pointed to the example of the jailing of union leader Craig Johnson, whose main crime was winning improved conditions for his union members. A petition was circulated calling for his release.

Another well-received petition called for humanitarian justice for Kasmiri asylum seeker Stephen Khan to allow him to stay in Australia.

Leech Hopkins of Women’s Studies at Edith Cowan University, held the meeting’s attention with examples of the role of women in the Ballarat struggles. She highlighted the story of Anastasia, the wife of Timothy Hayes, a leader of the miners and one of the 13 tried for high treason, and the militant influence she had on Tim and Peter Lalor.

Consistent work beforehand brought many descendants of Stockaders to the meeting. In conversation before the meeting and in the time set for discussion they added a militancy and spoke proudly of their Stockader heritage.

The singing and the music of the Working Voices Choir and other singers made for an enjoyable afternoon.

Adelaide

About 40 people attended the CPA’s lunch and celebration in the Semaphore Workers’ Club in Adelaide. Stirring Irish music was played by Sam on the pipes, Craig on the whistle and Lesley on the fiddle.

Retired unionist Cam Johnson spoke on the various interpretations of the 1854 uprising and how the enemies of the working people have consistently tried to downplay its importance. He quoted Raffaello Carboni and Mony Miller to demonstrate the united, working class nature of Eureka and the cruelty of its suppression.

The musicians then accompanied George Cochrane in a powerful, deep rendition of the Ballad of 1891.

Bob Briton thanked the gathering for their participation on behalf of the State Committee of the CPA and noted that the spirit of unity evident at Eureka is still visible in the local community. Public forums dedicated to finding ways to fight back against the right-wing Howard agenda will be held at the Semaphore Workers’ Club throughout 2005.

Contributions from Dennis Doherty, Yinnie Molina, Bob Briton

Primary schools around the country protested in 2000 against school books not being exempt from the GST. As a result the Howard Government introduced funding for primary schools to buy new books for their libraries. The Grants to Primary School Libraries program had the purpose that the new books be written by Australian authors or be published in Australia. During the four years each school bought an average of 350 books, worth a total of $45 million. Now Education Minister Brendan Nelson has refused to extend the program. Said one teacher/librarian, “The GST is still there, we still need to buy books for our schools, but we’re not getting that allowance. And during the four years the price of books has gone up. It’s going to be tough.”

Private means unaccountable, and so it was that Tara Anglican School for Girls in Sydney was being sued by a student’s parents for allegedly failing to provide adequate care during a school trip to Italy in 2001 where the teenager said she was pack raped. The school last week suddenly decided to settle out of court. And no wonder. It was a disgrace from beginning to end. Beginning with the legal representative for the school who in court told the girl she had “led the boys on, flirted and encouraged them”. He introduced a series of recent surveillance photos of her in a public place (who took them?), questioning whether her self-esteem had been affected when she was able “to sit on a bar stool with a skirt as short as that…” Back in Sydney, after the trip, the girl was reportedly ordered to write out a statement saying she wouldn’t return to the school. The principal arranged for her to do her final examines in a room by herself.

ALP policy has been backsliding since the elections. It now endorses the Government’s plans to strip back EBAs; supports the plan to remove all tariffs on textiles, clothing and footwear; has thrown away its list of rich private schools that were to have their funding reduced; will back government moves to increase the private health insurance rebate for older people; and do an about turn on its promise for an inquiry into an $800 million jobs fund for Tasmanian forests. They must have sore bottoms.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is telecommunications parasite Optus. Known for its anti-union stance and ruthless treatment of its workforce, it is less well known for its role in the trade of pornography. Until last week in the NSW Supreme Court that is. In a deal with telcos from Vanuatu to the USA it turned out that Optus’s “Yes” advertising logo has a double meaning. Porn merchants have been serving graphic sex photos and videos through its Australian data computer centres. Optus refused to comment.
War profiteering

Susan Webb

“Outrageous!” That is what many are calling the war profiteering by US corporations who have flocked into Iraq. In particular, Halliburton Corp, which Vice President Dick Cheney used to head, has come under scrutiny over its US$10 billion Pentagon contracts, many obtained without competitive bidding, its fuel-price gouging and other improper or illegal actions. Meanwhile, US cities and states are starved for cash.

In a new scandal, a top government inspector has reported that Halliburton lost millions of dollars worth of government property that it is being paid more millions to manage for the US occupation in Iraq. The missing property includes generators, trucks, laptops, armoured vests and helmets.

The Coalition Provisional Authority inspector general found that Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR) “did not effectively manage government property”, and that “its property records were not sufficiently accurate or available”. KBR was unable to account for one-third of the equipment it was supposed to manage, with a value of about US$20 million.

Associated Press reported on the audit the day after Thanksgiving, a “slow-news day”, and few media focused on the holiday shoppers lining up at 4am at discount stores. FBI and Army criminal investigators are now pursuing charges made by Army Corps of Engineers contract officer Bunnatine Greenhouse that the Pentagon improperly favoured Halliburton in awarding no-bid contracts for Iraq.

As the Pentagon continues to pour millions into the Halliburton trough, a new report by the Center for American Progress and the National Priorities Project shows that American states and cities are being short-changed. The report, Americans Pay High Price for War, shows how much tax money each state pays for the Iraq war and occupation, and how little it gets back for homeland security and “No Child Left Behind”.

Ohio, for example, spent US$7.5 billion on Iraq in fiscal year 2003. In the same period it received only US$200 million for homeland security, and US$659 million for “No Child Left Behind”. Cleveland, which sent US$153 million to Washington for Iraq in 2003, now faces a US$60 million city budget deficit, and another US$100 million deficit in its school budget.

More than 1000 teaching staff have been laid off. Seven percent of the city’s firefighters have been laid off this year, along with 250 police officers. Among the police units eliminated are those for the harbour, street crimes, auto thefts, narcotics, youth gangs and community policing.

In a recent issue of Online Investors News, Bill Ridley crowns that “the biggest dogs of the corporate world stand to eat up” by “carving up the spoils” from the Bush administration’s Iraq occupation.

The young Che’s lively and highly entertaining travel diary. This new, expanded edition includes previously unpublished photos taken by the 23 year-old on his journey across the continent. To be released as a film in Australia on December 16 – 20% off list price!!

175 pages - $20.00 + $2.45 p&p

Che Guevara Reader

The most comprehensive selection of Che Guevara’s writings in an expanded edition. The reader contains four sections: the Cuban Revolutionary War; his views on major international issues; an essay for the Latin American revolution and a selection of letters.

438 pages - $39.95 + $6.80 p&p

Haydée Santamaría

Rebel Lives

Woman guerrilla leader in Cuba whose passion for art and revolution inspired Latin America’s cultural renaissance. Contributors include Mario Benedetti, Arel Dorfman, Silvio Rodriguez, Roberto Fernández Retamar and Che Guevara.

130 Pages - $18.00 + $2.45 p&p

Amerika Phsycho

– Behind Uncle Sam’s Mask of Sanity

Richard Neville

Political satirist Richard Neville takes a hilarious, if provocative, look at US culture which he says reveals “a disturbing identification with imperial Rome”. “In these terrible times when dissent in the western world has gone into hiding, Richard Neville remains steadfast.” - Tariq Ali

126 Pages - $20.00 + $2.00 p&p

Motorcycle Diaries

Che Guevara

The young Che’s lively and highly entertaining travel diary. This new, expanded edition includes previously unpublished photos taken by the 23 year-old on his journey across the continent. To be released as a film in Australia on December 16 – 20% off list price!!

175 pages - $20.00 + $2.45 p&p

THE EUREKA STOCKADE 1854-1954 by R.D. Walshe

This important book by R.D. Walshe was originally produced for the 100th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade. With an incisive political analysis, Bob Walshe traces the development of the diggers’ struggle and the political implications of the Stockade for the movement for independence and democracy in Australia then and today. Walshe writes: “Eureka Stockade was the heroic forerunner of independent working-class activity in Australia.” and “There is much in Eureka Stockade’s story that I have often thought of in terms of the current struggle.”

175 pages - $20.00 + $2.45 p&p

Eureka – 150th Anniv. – A Portfolio of Prints

Includes 13 line-cuts of the events of the Eureka Stockade and historical commentary on this momentous occasion. The artists who contributed were Noel Counihan, Peter Miller, Pat Corrigan, Aida O’Connor, Mary Zvonec (Homend), Lee Gars, Ray Weiman, Naomi Siltsop and Mauricio Carrera. Originally produced by the Melbourne Popular Art Group in 1954 for the 100th anniversary, the Communist Party of Australia has republished the portfolio as a contribution to the 150th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade.

50 plus $2 postage & packing

CPA, 74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 Please make cheques payable to CPA Sydney District Committee Phone: (02) 9699 8844 Fax: (02) 9699 9833 Email: cpa@cpa.org.au Website: www.cpa.org.au

Send orders to: SPA Books, 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 Please enclose cheque or money order made payable to “SPA Books”. Or call 02 9699 8844 with your credit card details.
I’m a torture survivor

Tito Trico

No one can really understand what being tortured means until that fateful moment when you find yourself naked, blindfolded and tied up at the mercy of your captors. Your entire life is confined to that fragile moment when darkness becomes your enemy, yet at the same time, you are only ally, a refuge from madness.

There is neither past nor future, only the present of screams, furry and thorny into which your self-defences at the mercy of the torturer’s rage and coldness. You never know when he is going to hit, shout, kick, hang, electrocute or kill you. You wait in darkness, disoriented, trying to guess where the next blow will come from, your heart escaping through your dry mouth. As if you will resist the incessant pounding.

You just try to stay alive, breathing madly after every electric shock, because you scream so much and so loudly that you feel that even the earth’s entire air supply will not be enough for you. But you keep on screaming amidst an explosion of a thousand colours that burn your flesh and shake you body.

You can’t control electricity, you can’t tame bureaucracy, but amidst the bewildering storm of sparks and death rattles you can dream of green unicorns and the first time in three decades it has been said about bringing those human beings to justice.

So, what will prevent them from doing it again? After a year’s work, a special commission set up by the Chilean Government, after pressure from human rights organisations, issued a report about Torture and Political Prisoners in Chile during the dictatorship that ruled the country between 1973 and 1990.

The truth is that it was an open secret that at least 300,000 Chileans had been detained and tortured during that period. The report only makes official such a reality, although only 35,000 people came forward to testify before the commission. Many of those who did not testify are still afraid of their memories or simply did not believe in the commission’s work.

It was a crime against mankind and those responsible for this crime must be brought to justice, anything else simply amounts to impunity.

An offence to the victims

It is a source of pride to the victims of the repression, to all those defenceless men and women, to the 90 children who were tortured, to those who died under torture and to those of us who survived, to keep silent while the torturers laugh while they read the report.

Because there is no doubt that they enjoyed what they did, they rejoiced at human suffering, they enjoyed beating people up, fright did not only torture individuals, but also the very soul of our nation. They did not only torture somebody for a few hours or a few days, they destroyed their life forever. It was a crime against mankind and those responsible for this crime must be brought to justice, anything else simply amounts to impunity.

It is not enough for the military to admit for the first time that they did indeed torture, because we already knew that. It is not enough either for them to express their sorrow for what happened or ask for forgiveness – which they have only done in the name of justice. They have been only 161 such administrative decisions that some US soldiers had been disciplined for misconduct at the base, including a female interrogator who removed her top during questioning.

Boyle added that there is nothing in the US Constitution to prevent the military’s Combat Status Review Tribunals (CSRTs) from relying on evidence of “questions provable”, even those in authority to deem it reliable.

Answering questions from US District Judge Richard J Leon, Boyle said that the US would never adopt policies on evidence that could have prevented attacks like 9/11. He said that security is as important as freedom, that it gives a sense of security to citizens.

The government has proposed to compensate torture victims with a life pension of merely US$180 a month. Pain cannot be measured in monetary terms, however, the meagre figure offends rather than compensates for 30 years of suffering.

It is even more offensive for the minister for finance to point out that those pensions will cost to feel guilty of the fact that we will receive money depriving our countrymen of a new highway?

Why not compare these $60 million a year with the military budget? The Navy is acquiring five new warships from Holland; the Air Force is getting new F-16 from the United States. Are these war machines more important than helping torture victims whose lives were destroyed by the same people that will use them?

The fact is that the report loses a substantial and fundamental part of its historical validity if it reduces to the being of a torture survivor

The horror of the torture chamber will never go away.

Dictator Pinochet (centre) and his fellow officers have never been brought to justice

UK says evidence gained through torture

Last week US military panels reviewing the detention of prisoners at the naval base at Guantanamo Bay were given the green light to use evidence gained by torture to keep them imprisoned.

The announcement was made by Deputy Attorney General John Ashcroft before lawmakers who had been held without charge on Guantanamo. Ashcroft confirmed that prisoners, as law suits brought by 550 prisoners who have been held without charge on Guantanamo. The announcement was made by Deputy Attorney General John Ashcroft before lawmakers who had been held without charge on Guantanamo Bay.

Boyle also insisted that there is nothing in the US Constitution to prevent the military’s Combat Status Review Tribunals (CSRTs) from relying on evidence of “questions provable” if those in authority deem it reliable.

Answering questions from US District Judge Richard J Leon, Boyle said that the US would never adopt policies on evidence that could have prevented attacks like 9/11. He said that security is as important as freedom, that it gives a sense of security to citizens.

The government has proposed to compensate torture victims with a life pension of merely US$180 a month. Pain cannot be measured in monetary terms, however, the meagre figure offends rather than compensates for 30 years of suffering.

The government has stated that they value the army’s courage for admitting that torture constituted an institutional practice. How can it be courageous to admit the obvious? It is an offence to the victims of such an institutional practice. How can it be true and acceptable compensation for torture victims is justice.

Tito Trico is Sociologist Director, Center For Intercultural Studies, Illen Chile.
Primakov: Milosevic did not want to create a “Greater Serbia”

Yevgeny Primakov, former Russian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister, giving testimony in the Hague last week said that former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was a peacemaker who did not want to fight for a “Greater Serbia”. Primakov was testifying in defence of Milosevic, who is currently on trial at the Hague, accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Balkans in the 1990s.

Primakov, known as Kla, said that Milosevic “had no plans to achieve a Greater Serbia.”

“Primakov pointed out that Milosevic accepted the 1990 Vance-Owen peace plan for Bosnia and imposed an economic blockade after the Bosnian Serb parliament rejected the plan. “You wanted a peaceful solution,” he said to Milosevic.

The 1992-5 Bosnian war ended after US-sponsored talks in Dayton, Ohio. Primakov said former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had told him Dayton would not have worked without Milosevic’s support.

Primakov said Milosevic also tried to stop violence in Kosovo and told the Russian Prime Minister on a visit to Belgrade on the eve of the NATO bombing he was prepared to pull his forces out of Kosovo if NATO withdrew from the border with Macedonia.

“We never had the chance to tell what we had achieved”, Primakov said. “But somebody had to pull the plane off the airport.”

Milosevic is a graduate in law and has sought to conduct his own defence. He refused to enter a plea to the charges laid against him, and pleas of not guilty were recorded.

The court appointed two lawyers as possible on Sunday morning.

I’ll be honest: I usually sleep as late as possible on Sunday morning. So it was a major struggle to pull myself outside while the alarm went off at 4:45am. Groggily, I wiped the sleep out of my eyes and remembered why I was awake — to make the two hour trip from Atlanta to Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, for the annual School of the Americas protest and vigil on November 21.

We awoke in pre-dawn darkness I dressed, packed a lunch, and headed to campus where I met with a large group of students organised by a local Amnesty International chapter. We were warned about the School and SOA Watch’s activities for many years, this was my first time participating and I wasn’t sure what to expect.

Arriving in Columbus, we packed our lunch and made our way to the base property. The area was populated by fast food and discount stores and joined the stream of traffic making their way to the base. The protest took place on a long stretch of road, which the police closed off heading up to Fort Benning.

At the end of the road there was a small stage and behind it a new 10 foot [three-metre] chain-link fence in place of the old security barriers. Many regular attendees complained about their lack of visibility to the people on the base.

We arrived just in time for the opening ceremony — a traditional Mayan prayer saluting the four directions and giving thanks to the Earth and Creator for sustaining us. The mood was peaceful and reflective as thousands of people stood silently. We then recited a pledge of non-violence.

Soon several activists came onstage and testified about their experiences in Latin America. Many had been the victims of torture by graduates of the School of the Americas. Particularly moving was a woman who, her voice broken by sobs, told of being tortured until she mistook her son for her husband.

The vigil was followed by a funeral march, led by a large mourning puppet and a group of people dressed in black robes carrying coffins. They solemnly recited hundreds of the dead, victims of US-trained assassins and torturers. Between drumbeats, the name and age of each victim was sung and the crowd responded by chanting the word “Presente!” and raising their hands into the air.

As we neared the fence, people placed their crosses and other symbols into the chain-links to pray and reflect. The fence, minutes before a symbol of military might, had become a beautiful makeshift memorial.

From a distance we began hearing intermittent bursts of applause. I asked someone what it meant, and was told that activists were “crossing the line” over the fence and onto federal property to be peaceably arrested. Crossing the line is a powerful statement of commitment to the cause and requires planning, sacrifice and patience. Even first-timers can be prosecuted and given fines, probation or serious prison sentences.

According to School of the Americas Watch, 20 people were arrested this year in acts of non-violent civil disobedience.

The march was the culmination of the entire weekend’s activities, and with an estimated 16,000 participants, it took over two hours to complete. Afterward, my friends and I lingered, taking photos and digesting what we had just experienced.

People of all ages, races, and faiths had joined together in solidarity during the trial and to fight torture and exploitation, not just for a day or a weekend, but a lifetime of commitment that would last far beyond our goodbyes that evening. The protest had exceeded all my expectations, and I felt emotionally renewed and eager to continue the struggle.

Zimbabwe’s national airline is to start flying to the Chinese capital Beijing twice a week. The plan was announced by the Chinese media recently. There are a number of other Zimbabwe-China projects on the drawing board.

The long-standing relationship between the two countries has seen floods of cheap goods imported from China, and big construction deals going to Chinese firms.

Air Zimbabwe is thought to have only two working long-haul aircraft, although it expects another two from China thanks to the air- line deal.

China’s relationship with Zimbabwe dates back to the liberation struggle of the 1970s, when troops were trained by Chinese advisers – as well as those from North Korea and elsewhere. Once independence came in 1980, China continued a small but reliable economic interest in the country.

As Western aid dried up in the 1990s to be replaced by sustained hostility from those countries, the Chinese extended assistance.

Despite Zimbabwe’s economic difficulties China strengthened its relationship. As many as 9000 Chinese are believed to be in Zimbabwe working on a wide range of projects.

These projects include hydroelectric and coal power stations, bridges, airports, and the reconstruction of Zimbabwe’s most important border post at Beit Bridge with South Africa.

A Chinese consortium has a management contract with Zisco, the state steel firm, while technology firm Huawei has a $45m contract to supply telecommunications equipment.

Zimbabwe has rich mineral wealth, including platinum, gold and diamonds which is behind the West’s attempt to overthrow the Mugabe Government and install a puppet government.

China has also developed substantial interests in the oil resources of a number of other African countries.

In Sudan, the China National Petroleum Corporation owns 40 percent of the Greater Nile crude project, and has long-term contracts with Nigeria and Angola. It is undertaking construction projects in Botswana. In all, China-African trade is expected to top US $20bn in 2004.

Laura Massey

Big protest at “School of Assassins”

Chinese trade with African countries makes steady progress

The long-standing relationship between the two countries has seen floods of cheap goods imported from China, and big construction deals going to Chinese firms.

Air Zimbabwe is thought to have only two working long-haul aircraft, although it expects another two from China thanks to the air-line deal.

China’s relationship with Zimbabwe dates back to the liberation struggle of the 1970s, when troops were trained by Chinese advisers – as well as those from North Korea and elsewhere. Once independence came in 1980, China continued a small but reliable economic interest in the country.

As Western aid dried up in the 1990s to be replaced by sustained hostility from those countries, the Chinese extended assistance.

Despite Zimbabwe’s economic difficulties China strengthened its relationship. As many as 9000 Chinese are believed to be in Zimbabwe working on a wide range of projects.

These projects include hydroelectric and coal power stations, bridges, airports, and the reconstruction of Zimbabwe’s most important border post at Beit Bridge with South Africa.

A Chinese consortium has a management contract with Zisco, the state steel firm, while technology firm Huawei has a $45m contract to supply telecommunications equipment.

Zimbabwe has rich mineral wealth, including platinum, gold and diamonds which is behind the West’s attempt to overthrow the Mugabe Government and install a puppet government.

China has also developed substantial interests in the oil resources of a number of other African countries.

In Sudan, the China National Petroleum Corporation owns 40 percent of the Greater Nile crude project, and has long-term contracts with Nigeria and Angola. It is undertaking construction projects in Botswana. In all, China-African trade is expected to top US $20bn in 2004.

Laura Massey

Big protest at “School of Assassins”

Chinese trade with African countries makes steady progress

The long-standing relationship between the two countries has seen floods of cheap goods imported from China, and big construction deals going to Chinese firms.

Air Zimbabwe is thought to have only two working long-haul aircraft, although it expects another two from China thanks to the air-line deal.

China’s relationship with Zimbabwe dates back to the liberation struggle of the 1970s, when troops were trained by Chinese advisers – as well as those from North Korea and elsewhere. Once independence came in 1980, China continued a small but reliable economic interest in the country.

As Western aid dried up in the 1990s to be replaced by sustained hostility from those countries, the Chinese extended assistance.

Despite Zimbabwe’s economic difficulties China strengthened its relationship. As many as 9000 Chinese are believed to be in Zimbabwe working on a wide range of projects.

These projects include hydroelectric and coal power stations, bridges, airports, and the reconstruction of Zimbabwe’s most important border post at Beit Bridge with South Africa.

A Chinese consortium has a management contract with Zisco, the state steel firm, while technology firm Huawei has a $45m contract to supply telecommunications equipment.

Zimbabwe has rich mineral wealth, including platinum, gold and diamonds which is behind the West’s attempt to overthrow the Mugabe Government and install a puppet government.

China has also developed substantial interests in the oil resources of a number of other African countries.

In Sudan, the China National Petroleum Corporation owns 40 percent of the Greater Nile crude project, and has long-term contracts with Nigeria and Angola. It is undertaking construction projects in Botswana. In all, China-African trade is expected to top US $20bn in 2004.
Equatorial Guinea in the crosshairs

Ron Bunvon

Imperialist conspiracies to seize control of oil-rich Equatorial Guinea to dominate peoples of distant lands are in full swing. Apart from the Iraqi debacle, the events unfolding in the former Spanish colony of Equatorial Guinea, on the West African coast, are particularly instructive.

The discovery of huge oil deposits off the mainland and offshore, has been a catalyst for profit-driven programs of imperial conquest. Some of their agents were caught red-handed last spring.

Government investigators have established that dozens of mercenaries and co-conspirators planned to oust President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo through the use of 60 South African mercenaries and tanks, about to be delivered by airport security on the tarmac of Malabo’s Hazire International Airport on March 7, en route to Equatorial Guinea.

INVESTIGATING corruption

But not the tip of the iceberg. Evidence is mounting that British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Secretary of Defence, Michael Rumsfeld were both aware of the plot’s outlines months before it began.

In a statement given to lawyers in Equatorial Guinea, and reported by the British newspaper The Observer, Johann Smith, a former commanding officer in the South African Army, said that he “submitted a report in December 2003 of what I discovered [about the plot] to Michael Westernal of the Pentagon. … I expected the US Government to take steps to warn the government of Equatorial Guinea or to stop the coup.”

“This was also my expectation as regards the British Government, which I warned through two Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) people I knew.”

Michael Westernal is US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence in charge of special operations and combating terrorism.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw denied prior knowledge of the coup conspiracy as recently as last August. In November, however, he conceded he knew quite a bit more. The British Parliament has called for an investigation.

The trial proceedings against the suspected plotters have taken place in Malabo, the nation’s capital, and in Zimbabwe and South Africa, as well. The sentences handed out range from one year to 64 years. A political opponent to President Obiang, Severo Moto, who maintains a government-in-exile with his own appointed cabinet in Spain, received a 64-year sentence in absentia.

Mark Thatcher, an alleged financier of the coup plan, faces trial in South Africa. He was detained as he was about to fly his home in Capetown, and is presently under house arrest. A very wealthy man, Thatcher is the son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Equatorial Guinea gained political independence in 1968, under the presidency of Francisco Nguema, who in power ever since.

The country’s leadership is notorious for its corruption and for committing human rights abuses and torture. The recent trials in Malabo were criticised by Amnesty International as unfair “in view of serious procedural flaws and the admission of confessions allegedly extracted under torture.” An American co-conspirator of the coup attempt died in custody under questionable circumstances.

Before the discovery and extraction of its oil, the country’s economy was primarily based on agricultural exports, namely cocoa, coffee, and timber. Today, about 90 percent of Equatorial Guinea’s export revenue comes from oil, with output at about 360,000 barrels a day.

Whether its oil revenue has benefited the indigenous population is highly questionable. The government’s finances are anything but transparent, and its oil wealth is kept in the imperial coffers, and lacks electricity, running water and adequate nutrition.

From the vantage point of the imperialist West, however, the oil falls remains paramount. An estimated 15 percent of US oil imports come from Africa, with Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea at the top of the list.

IMPELLED by airport security on the tarmac of Malabo, the nation’s capital, and in Zimbabwe and South Africa, as well. The sentences handed out range from one year to 64 years. A political opponent to President Obiang, Severo Moto, who maintains a government-in-exile with his own appointed cabinet in Spain, received a 64-year sentence in absentia.

Mark Thatcher, an alleged financier of the coup plan, faces trial in South Africa. He was detained as he was about to fly his home in Capetown, and is presently under house arrest. A very wealthy man, Thatcher is the son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Equatorial Guinea gained political independence in 1968, under the presidency of Francisco Nguema, who in power ever since.

The country’s leadership is notorious for its corruption and for committing human rights abuses and torture. The recent trials in Malabo were criticised by Amnesty International as unfair “in view of serious procedural flaws and the admission of confessions allegedly extracted under torture.” An American co-conspirator of the coup attempt died in custody under questionable circumstances.

Before the discovery and extraction of its oil, the country’s economy was primarily based on agricultural exports, namely cocoa, coffee, and timber. Today, about 90 percent of Equatorial Guinea’s export revenue comes from oil, with output at about 360,000 barrels a day.

Whether its oil revenue has benefited the indigenous population is highly questionable. The government’s finances are anything but transparent, and its oil wealth is kept in the imperial coffers, and lacks electricity, running water and adequate nutrition.

From the vantage point of the imperialist West, however, the oil falls remains paramount. An estimated 15 percent of US oil imports come from Africa, with Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea at the top of the list.

INVESTIGATING corruption

But not the tip of the iceberg. Evidence is mounting that British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Secretary of Defence, Michael Rumsfeld were both aware of the plot’s outlines months before it began.

In a statement given to lawyers in Equatorial Guinea, and reported by the British newspaper The Observer, Johann Smith, a former commanding officer in the South African Army, said that he “submitted a report in December 2003 of what I discovered [about the plot] to Michael Westernal of the Pentagon. … I expected the US Government to take steps to warn the government of Equatorial Guinea or to stop the coup.”

“This was also my expectation as regards the British Government, which I warned through two Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) people I knew.”

Michael Westernal is US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence in charge of special operations and combating terrorism.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw denied prior knowledge of the coup conspiracy as recently as last August. In November, however, he conceded he knew quite a bit more. The British Parliament has called for an investigation.

The trial proceedings against the suspected plotters have taken place in Malabo, the nation’s capital, and in Zimbabwe and South Africa, as well. The sentences handed out range from one year to 64 years. A political opponent to President Obiang, Severo Moto, who maintains a government-in-exile with his own appointed cabinet in Spain, received a 64-year sentence in absentia.

Mark Thatcher, an alleged financier of the coup plan, faces trial in South Africa. He was detained as he was about to fly his home in Capetown, and is presently under house arrest. A very wealthy man, Thatcher is the son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Equatorial Guinea gained political independence in 1968, under the presidency of Francisco Nguema, who in power ever since.

The country’s leadership is notorious for its corruption and for committing human rights abuses and torture. The recent trials in Malabo were criticised by Amnesty International as unfair “in view of serious procedural flaws and the admission of confessions allegedly extracted under torture.” An American co-conspirator of the coup attempt died in custody under questionable circumstances.

Before the discovery and extraction of its oil, the country’s economy was primarily based on agricultural exports, namely cocoa, coffee, and timber. Today, about 90 percent of Equatorial Guinea’s export revenue comes from oil, with output at about 360,000 barrels a day.

Whether its oil revenue has benefited the indigenous population is highly questionable. The government’s finances are anything but transparent, and its oil wealth is kept in the imperial coffers, and lacks electricity, running water and adequate nutrition.

From the vantage point of the imperialist West, however, the oil falls remains paramount. An estimated 15 percent of US oil imports come from Africa, with Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea at the top of the list.

IMPELLED by airport security on the tarmac of Malabo, the nation’s capital, and in Zimbabwe and South Africa, as well. The sentences handed out range from one year to 64 years. A political opponent to President Obiang, Severo Moto, who maintains a government-in-exile with his own appointed cabinet in Spain, received a 64-year sentence in absentia.

Mark Thatcher, an alleged financier of the coup plan, faces trial in South Africa. He was detained as he was about to fly his home in Capetown, and is presently under house arrest. A very wealthy man, Thatcher is the son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Equatorial Guinea gained political independence in 1968, under the presidency of Francisco Nguema, who in power ever since.

The country’s leadership is notorious for its corruption and for committing human rights abuses and torture. The recent trials in Malabo were criticised by Amnesty International as unfair “in view of serious procedural flaws and the admission of confessions allegedly extracted under torture.” An American co-conspirator of the coup attempt died in custody under questionable circumstances.

Before the discovery and extraction of its oil, the country’s economy was primarily based on agricultural exports, namely cocoa, coffee, and timber. Today, about 90 percent of Equatorial Guinea’s export revenue comes from oil, with output at about 360,000 barrels a day.

Whether its oil revenue has benefited the indigenous population is highly questionable. The government’s finances are anything but transparent, and its oil wealth is kept in the imperial coffers, and lacks electricity, running water and adequate nutrition.

From the vantage point of the imperialist West, however, the oil falls remains paramount. An estimated 15 percent of US oil imports come from Africa, with Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea at the top of the list.

IMPELLED by airport security on the tarmac of Malabo, the nation’s capital, and in Zimbabwe and South Africa, as well. The sentences handed out range from one year to 64 years. A political opponent to President Obiang, Severo Moto, who maintains a government-in-exile with his own appointed cabinet in Spain, received a 64-year sentence in absentia.

Mark Thatcher, an alleged financier of the coup plan, faces trial in South Africa. He was detained as he was about to fly his home in Capetown, and is presently under house arrest. A very wealthy man, Thatcher is the son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Equatorial Guinea gained political independence in 1968, under the presidency of Francisco Nguema, who in power ever since.

The country’s leadership is notorious for its corruption and for committing human rights abuses and torture. The recent trials in Malabo were criticised by Amnesty International as unfair “in view of serious procedural flaws and the admission of confessions allegedly extracted under torture.” An American co-conspirator of the coup attempt died in custody under questionable circumstances.

Before the discovery and extraction of its oil, the country’s economy was primarily based on agricultural exports, namely cocoa, coffee, and timber. Today, about 90 percent of Equatorial Guinea’s export revenue comes from oil, with output at about 360,000 barrels a day.

Whether its oil revenue has benefited the indigenous population is highly questionable. The government’s finances are anything but transparent, and its oil wealth is kept in the imperial coffers, and lacks electricity, running water and adequate nutrition.

From the vantage point of the imperialist West, however, the oil falls remains paramount. An estimated 15 percent of US oil imports come from Africa, with Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea at the top of the list.

IMPELLED by airport security on the tarmac of Malabo, the nation’s capital, and in Zimbabwe and South Africa, as well. The sentences handed out range from one year to 64 years. A political opponent to President Obiang, Severo Moto, who maintains a government-in-exile with his own appointed cabinet in Spain, received a 64-year sentence in absentia.

Mark Thatcher, an alleged financier of the coup plan, faces trial in South Africa. He was detained as he was about to fly his home in Capetown, and is presently under house arrest. A very wealthy man, Thatcher is the son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Equatorial Guinea gained political independence in 1968, under the presidency of Francisco Nguema, who in power ever since.
The significance of Eureka

The Eureka Stockade of 150 years ago has been touted by some commentators as the beginning in Australia of the concept of a “fair go”. This is nonsense.

The Eureka Stockade was a rebellion against police oppression and harassment and for “no taxation without representation”. At that time there were only British colonial administrations in each state of Australia. No elected parliament and no adult franchise, not even male adult franchise.

The Stockade was in a sense Australia’s democratic revolution. After the Eureka Stockade male adult franchise was achieved and later the vote was extended to women as well. British colonial administrations survived for another 50 years to be finally replaced by Federation and the election of a Federal parliament in 1901. That started the process to end British colonial control.

In some other countries these issues were fought out in civil wars and wars for national liberation. The fact that neither civil war nor an armed national liberation struggle took place in Australia (apart from the Stockade) does not detract from their political significance.

As with many other former colonial countries full national independence has not yet been achieved.

The Guardian

December 8 2004

The Road to Life – building a sense of their own worth

In post-Civil War Russia, in the early 1920s, young boys formed with waifs and gangs of homeless children living on their wits. So serious was the problem that Lenin gave the task of rounding up these “wild” children to Felix Dzerzhinsky and the Cheka (forerunner of the KGB).

To the amazement of foreign observers, who saw the Cheka in terms of their own anti-Soviet propaganda, Dzerzhinsky’s men and women did a splendid job of rescuing kids off the streets. But what to do with them then?

The answer was revealed in what became a Soviet classic, Road to Life by Makarenko. It is the story of how he founded and ran for many years a labour camp for juvenile delinquents or “young offenders”.

Makarenko’s approach was not to punish but to build up – often very hostile youngsters whom life had treated harshly – a sense of their known worth and a pride in their own contribution to the advancement of their society.

No small achievement in the circumstances. Like the rest of the population, while being educated they also constructed, applying the skills they were learning and in the process completing projects for which they themselves were responsible.

Such a program is by no means an easy task and requires a great deal of sympathy and understanding – and resilience – on the part of the person administering it. Makarenko certainly had those qualities to spare, but he was also operating in a society that was conscious that it was building a new life for everyone.

Housing, working conditions, education, farming methods were all undergoing revolutionary changes that were altering fundamentally people’s way of life and the way they perceived their society and themselves in it. In the conditions, Makarenko’s approach was very much a product of his time and his (socialist) society.

I was reminded of Makarenko and his pioneering efforts by the transfer on November 10 of management of the Kariong Juvenile Justice Centre near Gosford from the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice to the Department of Corrective Services. The latter Department promptly demonstrated its enlightened approach to juvenile detention and rehabilitation by filling the Centre’s swimming pool with sand!

NSW Justice Minister John Hatzistergos told the Parliamentary Press Gallery that by filling the pool with sand “we are sending a very clear message to the inmates and the public that the centre is being operated in a humane way.”

Not content with this bloody-minded act, Hatzistergos announced a whole graduated system of inequality and exploitation for the Kariong facility, including the extraordinarily petty and vindictive removal of the barbecue from the visitors’ area with food only available in future from vending machines.

Other “reforms” announced by the NSW minister include daily musters and daily “hygiene checks” (a euphemism for intrusive harassment of inmates). In future, visitors will have to book their visits in advance and inmates receiving visitors will be searched and made to wear pocketless overalls.

A graduated system of “rewards and sanctions” is expected to be introduced shortly. This will allow guards to punish inmates who show spirit or defiance and to reward those who metaphorically touch their forelock (however insincerely).

Robert Stroud, the “Birdman of Alcatraz”, showed years ago how ineffective and counterproductive such prison regimes were, but it seems that with nothing positive to offer young people, punishment is the best capitalism can do.

Opposition Liberal Party MP from Gosford Chris Hatcher fully supports the government’s harsh new regime at Kariong, demonstrating in the process his belief that “corrective centre” is synonymous with “punishment centre”.

“We have long argued”, he told the press, “that Kariong was run more as a holiday camp than a corrective centre and it’s taken the Government five years and innumerable riots to accept this”.

Leaving aside the considerable exaggeration of “innumerable riots”, it has been known for decades that prison riots are the result of intolerable situations and conditions. Removing the causes, not harder, more punitive conditions is the solution.

The ruling class sits atop a system of inequality and exploitation that blatantly robs the poor to make the rich even richer. They hold that position with the help of misinform- ation and fear.

As the people overcome (and see through) the misinformation, the ruling class will have to rely more and more on fear – and outright repression. Prisons, and prison camps as used for the refugees, are going to become much better known to a much wider section of the population.

As we move towards neo-fascist conditions in Australia, we can expect to see the steady abandonment of the last vestiges of progressive prison administration and its replacement by the same cruel and brutal methods that already distinguish the prisons of the United States.

After all, under Howard and co, the USA is now our role model for everything else, isn’t it? 10
Dornember, month of shop windows full of fake snow, everybody is containing of all the parties they have to go to, and television littered with “Christmas Specials”. The latter, of course, are almost all from the Northern Hemisphere, where Christmas images of snow and sleighbells aren’t inappropriate.

For many years Australian writers strove to create a Christmas tradition rooted in the reality of this country in mid-December: heat, flies, sun and native wildlife instead of reindeer.

Regrettably, the domination of the mass media by big business means that we get mainly imported North American Christmas stories. We certainly see few stories anymore like the lovely Aussie realist classic Santa Claus in Booyong.

So, to SBS’ Christmas Special, The Christmas Tree (SBS 7.30pm Sunday), tracing the origins and associated practices of the decorated fir tree.

Apparently, it originated in Alsace in the 16th century, and spread through Germany and then elsewhere. If decorating a tree at Christmas is thus a rather recent practice, using green trees in ceremonies on December 25 dates back to long before the birth of Christ.

The Romans used evergreen trees on December 25 to celebrate the winter solstice and the return of the invincible sun god, Sol Invictus. So the next time someone says the “real meaning” of Christmas is being forgotten, tell him to get out of the sun.

C’fuss (SBS 10.30pm Tuesday) follows the trail of dubious 20th century propaganda, legitimate scientific enquiry and knee-jerk policing that produced the modern-day US narcotics policy.

Narraeted by pot activist Woody Harrelson, the program tends to restrict itself to the propaganda and often extraordinary moral arguments used to justify the criminalisation of marijuana. These included claims that pot smoking would turn America’s younger generations into “insane murderers”, “sex-crazed maniacs”, “heroin addicts” and “Communists” – and sometimes a combination of all four.

It would have been a stronger – a longer – program if it had also covered the covert campaigns by the Dupont Chemical Company, inven- tor and manufacturer of Nylon, to destroy its popular, organic and cheaper main potential competitor, hemp (derived, like marijuana, from the cannabis plant).

Of Christ.

Although the setting is north England, the series is made by BBC Scotland, and is a well-made, exciting police series laced with humour and story observation. Cole is excellently played by Don Gilet, and he receives good support from some accomplished actors such as Dervla Kirwan (from the original series of Riallissang) as a Crown Prosecution Service lawyer and Andrew Dunn (from donnachie) as a not very friendly police sergeant.

There is a type of program, almost always from the US, which seeks to demonstrate the “historical truth” of the Bible. Mons (ABC 7.30pm Wednesday) is one such program. They are all alike: they pose the

question as black or white. Either the Bible account is all fiction or it is entirely true.

That the stories of the Old Testament (and the Koran and the Torah) are a mixture of myths and legends, of embroidered oral history and outright invention augmented by tales from other lands and cultures, is raised as a possibility (to show the program’s ‘objectivity’).

But it is then dismissed, in favour of literal interpretations based on the filmmaker’s archeological evidence.

It is a pity, because a genuinely scientific program on the same subject using the same archeological evidence would be very interesting. But not nearly so certain!

The French-made Iraq: War At Any Cost (ABC 9.25pm Wednesday) essentially sets out to show that France did not try to sabotage the US in the United Nations during the leadup to the invasion of Iraq.

What the program succeeds in showing very clearly is that the combination of lying and bullying used by the US was singularly unsuccessful in persuading most other countries to support its drive.

That it was a war drive, and that the US was operating to a military timetable which required that they go to war when they did regardless of any vote at the UN, is also demonstrated clearly.

As the French Foreign Minister points out towards the end of the program, the US withdrew its second resolution on Iraq in the Security Council because it had failed to get support. Put to vote, the US would have lost.

So they simply went to war behind a smokescreen of bullshit. UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, ever the diplomat, nevertheless makes it very clear that there were no Iraq weapons of mass destruction to justify the US claims.

But it is the French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin who makes the most eloquent speech, when telling the Security Council – uncharacteristic applause from other delegates – that France will veto any resolution to go to war.

This is a fascinating piece of television journalism. Well worth watching.

The Legend Of The Tamworth Two (ABC 8.30pm Thursday) is based on a true incident from 1998: two Tamworth pigs escaped from an abattoir and eluded recapture for a week.

The tabloid media, of course, made stars of them, and the public took up their cause, sending donations and offers of homes, etc. By the time they were recaptured they couldn’t be killed, so one of the papers bought them and sent them to an animal sanctuary.

At least amusing, this tale is ripe for satirical embroidering. Unfortunately, here it labours under a heavy dose of whinny, which makes the story pall after a while.

The ABC is repeating the two Doc Martin dramas, starting this week with the first, Doc Martin (ABC 8.30pm Friday), in which successful London obstetrician Dr Martin Bamford discovers that his wife has been sleeping with all three of his best friends, and heads off to Cornwall on the spur of the moment to get his head together.

There he finds himself contemplating a possible future as a lobster fisherman while also caught up in the mystery of the “jellyman”, a local poison pen letter writer whose missives are left on villagers’ doo-steps in a plate of jelly.

Martin Clunes, from Men Behaving Badly, does quite a good job of the Doc and it is not surprising that they made a second one (to be re-screened next week) and then a whole series, to be shown next year.

Combined South East & South West Annual Union

Family Picnic Day

CFMEU CEPU AMWU AWU Building Trades Federation

Portland December 13 11.00am - 3.00pm Portland Soccer Ground End of Percy St

Portland Soccer Ground

Contact: Mark Siddy AMWU 0429 988 004; Travis Lawson CFMEU 0417 247 999; Margaret Brabender Portland 03 5523 4272; Aaron Cartlidge CFMEU 0421 5532; Chris Nesbitt AWU 0429 988 004

Tickets are available from the Union Office, job delegate, organiser or on the day at the picnic

Contact: Mark Siddy AMWU 0429 988 004; Travis Lawson CFMEU 0417 247 999; Margaret Brabender Portland 03 5523 4272; Aaron Cartlidge CFMEU 0421 5532; Chris Nesbitt AWU 0429 988 004

Tickets are available from the Union Office, job delegate, organiser or on the day at the picnic

Supported by the Portland & SE Trades and Labour Council

The Guardian

17 Buckingham St, Sunny Hills, 2010 Ph: 9696 9500 Fax: 9696 9533 Email guardian@pca.org.au

Editor: Anna Pha

Published by Guardian Publications Australia Ltd

Printed by Spotpress Smithfield Park, Marrickville 2044

Responsibility for electoral comment is taken by T Pearson, 128 Defence Road, Marrickville

The Guardian

74 Buckingham St, Sunny Hills, 2010

Printed by Spotpress Smithfield Park, Marrickville 2044

Responsibility for electoral comment is taken by T Pearson, 128 Defence Road, Marrickville

Sydney

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Book by James Lapine Directed by Peter Sellars

Designed by Wayne Lewis Featuring Jeannie Lewis as “The Witch”

Both young and old are captivated and delighted by the antics of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack, the Baker and his Wife as they go up the woods in search of “happy ever after” and deal with what they get in return.

new theatre

542 King Street Newtown

Until 18 December

Thurs – Sat @ 8pm Sun @ 3.30pm

Tickets: $30 / $25 concession Bookings: 02 9519 8958

Treasures of Palestine

From the collection of Ali Kazak, Head, General Palestinian Delegation, Canberra.

The Treasures of Palestine exhibition showcases objects that are treasured by Palestinian people, honouring the survival of Palestinian identity. Embroidered national costumes, traditional carved olive wood, mother-of-pearl, and contemporary graphic design all tell stories of skill and adaptation. They represent the integrity of a living tradition and of cultural and spiritual resilience within Palestine and throughout the Palestinian diaspora.
This is an inspiring story of courage, determination and the high principles of the men and women of the Pilbara, fighting these huge and powerful transnational corporations.

Most Australians have an image of the Pilbara – one of a vast unforgiving and red landscape, of huge holes in the ground where millions of tons of iron ore have been gouged out and railed to the coast for export overseas. This picture is one of huge dump-trucks dwarfing the anonymous workers wearing hard hats. All this is associated with the logo of BHP, the allegedly “Big Australian”. Some will know of the huge mineral resources of the region and the fantastic profits of the corporations. There may be memories of the strike Robe River and Hamersley Iron, the scene of major attacks on the Australian trade union movement, and not just the workers of these mines.

It was the mid-1980s and early 1990s, when economic rationalism was being pushed by the Labor and Liberal Parties. In 1985, the main trade unions entered into an Accord (social partnership) with the ALP with all its subsequent consequences for the trade unions. New Right ideologists such as Charles Copeman became the CEOs of major companies, including the mining companies of the Pilbara. Both State and Commonwealth Governments were enacting laws that weakened, quite severely in some instances, the rights of unionists and existence of unions.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

Employers sensed that their time had come and their objective was nothing less than the elimination of trade union influence in the Pilbara. The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The following poem by Nancy Missler, a shoveler-operator on the BHP Newman mine, was one of the most popular contributions on the union's website and is reproduced in Hard Ground.

The poem by Nancy Missler

There is a place near the fork
Where the true believers have come forth.
Shoulder to shoulder, a united band
This is where the last 500 stand.

And then in the last verse:
Now you will see our flag again
We fight the odds, we fight to win.
A watershed across the land,
We're the FIRST 500 and here we stand.

The poem by Nancy Missler

Removal of trade unions

This plan by Robe River and Hamersley Iron together with questionable union tactics and in-fighting rapidly led to the elimination of trade union influence at these two mine-sites.

On November 11, 1999 BHP moved to bring about the same result at its mines and very quickly almost 50 percent of the mine-workers signed the contracts. It appeared that the last bastion of trade unionism in the Pilbara was about to fall. Brandon Ellem’s book of 78 pages simply but graphically tells the story of the survival and revival of trade unionism not only at the BHP pits but in the Rio Tinto mines as well.

It is as well to put the whole story on the background fact that BHP-Billiton (as it is now known) and Rio Tinto are arguably the most powerful resource mining companies in the world.

In simple and very readable text the author traces the story of the last five years and poses many questions for the whole trade union movement – when to struggle and when not to struggle; what issues unite and which divide; what tactics; which are always and which never work. The answer springs out of the story itself.

Out of defeat …

Out of the trauma of defeat sprang the necessity for new forms of trade unionism such as the formation of a single negotiating unit, not a new union in its own right. It is called the Pilbara Mineworkers Union (PMU).

It is a creation of the rank and file and is an industrial union form uniting all mine-workers.

It is not just an industrial body but one that only thinks about the collective and solidarity but also about community, taking up issues of health and education and even the survival of the mining townships. Rio Tinto is attempting a new tactic called FIFO, meaning, fly in/fly out, thereby destroying the townships on which they themselves became a collective challenging the unfettered power of the mining companies.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.

The restructuring of the trade union movement by the ACTU led to bickering and in-fighting between trade unions – less than for the bodies of mine-workers in the Pilbara.