Howard grabs new police state powers

Bob Briton

The Howard government has effectively ditched its previous “be alert but not alarmed” slogan in its ongoing heat-up of domestic terror threats. Next month the PM will host a national summit on terrorism at which he hopes to get broader support for a range of attacks on the civil rights of Australians.

Among other things, he wants a ban on “inflammatory language”, longer periods of detention for people suspected of having knowledge of terror plans and a national identity card. Howard and his ministers are trying to make every post a winner in a new drive for more police state powers in the wake of the London bombings.

Howard wants the states to take a greater role and contribute more funds to the cause and it seems newly-installed NSW Premier Morris Iemma, at least, is up for it. “The state and territory governments are determined to do everything possible to bolster our defences against terrorism. That includes better intelligence, appropriate powers for security agencies and a co-ordinated response,” he announced.

People in Sydney are to face intrusive body searches and other draconian measures from September 1. “Reasonable force” may be used to deport individuals and deny asylum to people involved in “terrorism” – as if international terrorists are currently accorded that protection. “Let no one be in doubt that the rules of the game are changing”, Blair said in some chilling, inflammatory words of his own.

In Australia, Howard was warning off criticisms from concerned civil liberties groups last week with a very disturbing argument: “The most important civil liberty I have and you have is to stay alive and to be free from violence and death. I think when people talk about civil liberties they sometimes forget that action taken to protect the citizen against physical attack is a blow in favour and not a blow against civil liberties.”

Cameron Murphy of the NSW Council of Civil Liberties stated, “We’re quickly falling into the trap where the terrorists are achieving their goals by getting our government to remove those freedoms.”

Meanwhile, government and opposition heavyweights are doing their best to inflate the jihadi threat. Ruddock believes Australians would be right in being nervous about a London-style terror attack. He was referring to a recent official “confirmation” that there are 60 suspected Islamic extremists supposedly “operating” in Australia. Much has been made of the video images first shown on Dubai-based Al Arabiya TV of a supposed al-Qaeda spokesman threatening western nations with revenge attacks in what sounds like an Australian accent.

Books have been seized in recent raids and clerics have been barred from the country. Abdur Raheem Green was prevented from boarding a plane from Sri Lanka to New Zealand because it would be setting down in Brisbane. He is on the Immigration Department’s “movement alert list” for once having made statements to the effect that Westerners and Muslims cannot live together peacefully.

The corporate media has fanned all of these flames and singled out the lead of the British government which has started a program of banning Islamic organisations. Blair’s government has also given itself the power to detain “terror suspects” for up to three months without charge.

It is considering amending the Human Rights Act to make it easier to deport individuals and deny asylum to people involved in “terrorism” – as if international terrorists are currently accorded that protection. “Let no one be in doubt that the rules of the game are changing”, Blair said in some chilling, inflammatory words of his own.

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The fact that he long ago disowned those views made no difference to the government’s decision among the public.

Cleric Abu Bake has had his passport revoked for having described Osama bin Laden as a great man and suggesting Australian Muslims could be justified in fighting against occupying forces in Iraq.

Mamdouh Habib, who spent two years in the hell hole of the US prison in Guantánamo Bay without ever being charged, has had his request for the return of his passport rejected by the government.

The sinister side of the Gaza withdrawal

British PM Tony Blair

2 pages
John Winston Howard – war criminal

3 pages
Working parents’ rights

6 pages
It’s still 5 minutes to midnight...

7 pages
The globalisation of State terror

9 pages
The sinister side of the Gaza withdrawal
The Guardian
August 17, 2005

Indictment and prosecution of John Winston Howard

After arduous work, research and investigation the authors of the petition below believe they have enough facts and evidence to indict John Howard for crimes committed in the illegal invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. The petition comes from Tim Anderson, who readers will recall was wrongfully convicted of the 1978 Hilton bombing and spent years falsely imprisoned. At present “signatures” are only being collected online – via the internet. We apologise to those who do not have access to the internet, the question has been raised with the organisers of the petition and it is hoped that an alternative means of signing will become available soon. Readers are urged to sign the petition if they can. It reads:

To: International Criminal Court

We, the undersigned, called for the indictment and prosecution of John Winston Howard (currently Australian Prime Minister) for acts of terrorism and war crimes.

We believe that under Australia’s Criminal Code Act 1995, and under the articles of the International Criminal Court, there is a prima facie case for the prosecution of Howard for complicity in illegal attacks upon and mass murder of civilian populations of Afghanistan and Iraq, between 2001 and 2005.

These prosecutions should include the following crimes, committed by the accused in their capacity as officers of the government:

Complicity in the massacre of hundreds of civilians in Baghdad, Basra, Khormai, Babel, Nassariya, Najaf, Karbala and Anbar, in March 2003, through aerial bombardment, including cluster bombs, assisted by Australian “imagery specialists”

Complicity in the SAS backed murder of ten Sabri tribespeople (mostly teenagers) in Afghanistan, 16 May 2002.

Complicity in the massacre of between one thousand and three thousand prisoners, after US operation “Anaconda” operation at Shah-i-Kot, Afghanistan, March 2002.

Complicity in the maintenance of an international network of torture, from Pakistan to Iraq to Guantamano Bay (US-occupied Cuba).

Complicity in the criminal two attacks on the civilian population of Falluja, in April and November 2004 – where between one thousand and two thousand people were murdered in attacks which included the use of napalm, and the bombing of Falluja Hospital.

We reject utterly the claim that any of these crimes could be carried out under any “democratic mandate” from Australian citizens.

We urge responsible prosecution authorities such as the Australian DPP, and the International Criminal Court to take immediate action.

Sincerely,

To view the list of signatories and sign the petition visit <www.petitiononline.com/warcrime1/petition.html>

For more information: Dr Tim Anderson, Human Rights campaigner 0401 0418 or 02 604 488

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10th Congress Appeal

Over the first three days of October this year, elected delegates representing the Communist Party organisations all over Australia will gather in Sydney for the 10th Congress of the Party. A financial appeal has been launched to help defray the considerable cost of transport of delegates and accommodation during the Congress. Delegates will be coming from as far away as Perth.

We are appealing to Guardian readers, Party members and organisations and all friends and supporters of the Party to help fulfil our $6000 target as soon as possible.

You may use the form below or write your details on a separate piece of paper. All contributions will be acknowledged in The Guardian unless requested otherwise.

We would like to thank the following who were quick off the mark in sending in the first contributions to the Press Fund:

CW Reed $50, Noel Wilson $10, Sam Moutsou $100, Fred Rouday $10.

This week’s total: $170.

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10th CPA Congress $6,000 Financial Appeal

I, (Name) ……………………………………………………………………

Address…………………………………………………………………

I wish to contribute $…………………………. to the above Appeal.

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

□ Visa □ Mastercard □ Bankcard

Name on the card …………………………………………………………

Card Number ……………………………………………………………

Expiry Date ______ /_______

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

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Press Fund

It's August, those tax returns should be flowing in. It's great to receive a lump sum - sure helps to pay bills or buy something special. We keep lumps up in The Guardian too and always have bills to pay. Can you spare some of your tax return? Please give it a thought. We have so much to do, no corporate sponsors, and the Press Fund has fallen behind in recent weeks. Let's give it a big boost! We should be past the $8000 mark by now if we are going to meet our annual target of $14,000. It is your contributions that enable us to keep the price of The Guardian as low as it is. If you possibly can, please send us in a contribution for the next issue. This week our sincere thanks goes to the following, for their generous support: R Bryan $20, J Hale $27, Bert Appleton $40, J Clancy $30, “Round Figure” $13.

This week’s total: $130. Progressive total: $6325.
Childcare under attack

Peter Mac

New extensions to existing parental leave allowances are certain to be terminated under the Howard government’s new industrial relations legislation.

In a historic decision, the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) last week granted working parents the right to an extra year of unpaid parental leave and the right to work on a part-time basis until the child begins school.

The decision was not a total victory for working families. IRC rejected the ACTU’s application for broader reform, and decided that parental leave and part-time work rights should be granted unless employers could prove that they would be unable to find a replacement, or that these concessions would cause inefficiencies or customer problems, or would cost too much.

Although this seems like an obvious “out” for employers, the decision means that they have to prove their case, rather than simply being able to bluntly say no. However, even this qualified victory for workers will be scrubbed by the Howard government’s new rules.

The government has refused to include these new rights into its new five minimum working standards, which are to replace the 16 “allowable matters” in award, i.e. industrial rights granted by previous IRC decisions.

This means that under the new laws workers will have to “negotiate” for these entitlements with their employers. Kevin Andrews, federal Minister for Workplace Relations said that the government thought employees and employers should sort such matters out between themselves.

His views were echoed by Peter Hendy, boss of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who spoke in favour of “limiting future national award arbitration and creating more flexible laws governing workplace agreements and employment contracts.”

However, as industrial lawyer Charles Power commented sellingly, “Flexibility is really code for allowing employers to get rid of these provisions in the agreement making process.”

In effect, under the Howard government’s new laws, working parents will be entitled to ask for extended leave or part-time work, and employers will be entitled to refuse.

As if this wasn’t enough of a crisis, two other major problems are looming for working parents.

Firstly, access to childcare is likely to become increasingly difficult to obtain. The government’s new “welfare to work” policy means that many parents will be forced to return to work far earlier than they had anticipated. This has forced many retirees to accept responsibility for care of their grandchildren, but it also means that demand for childcare services is skyrocketing.

However, for those who do manage to secure a place in a childcare institution, there’s a second layer of problems. During the last election the Howard government promised enthusiastically that its new childcare rebate would cover 30 percent of childcare costs, but now they have limited the cost benefit to $4000 per annum.

Many parents have had to borrow money to meet the cost of childcare, but have not allowed for this limitation. Moreover, there is now a strong possibility that the government will increase the minimum number of hours that parents have to work under the “welfare to work” rules.

And just to ensure that parents are financially driven to the wall, there will now be a two-year delay in payment of the rebate. The government decided that childcare rebates backdated to July 2004 could be claimed, but then decreed that claims could not be made until after income tax returns had been submitted for the 2005-2006 financial year.

And finally, just to be thorough, the government’s policies will hit those who actually carry out childcare work. The new industrial laws would mean that most childcare workers, who are among the lowest paid employees in Australia, would lose improvements in pay and conditions won after grappling industrially struggles over recent years.

This includes the recently-won right to convert from casual to permanent employment, and the right to overtime loadings.

The nature of the work, and the intermittent employment to which many childcare workers are subject, means that they will be overwhelmingly subject to demands to sign individual work contracts under the new legislation.

Brian Elbridge, Child Care Union Secretary of the Liquor, Health and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHIMU) commented: “These contracts are secretive documents denying a whole lot of our existing basic workplace rights – including annual leave, unpaid parental leave and personal leave, as well as the weekly hours and wage rates.

“In this environment people doing the same job will be paid differently. Past practice shows us who will get the lower pay if a woman and a man are doing the same job.

Thousand of students and their supporters turned out for a national day of action last Wednesday against the Howard government’s plans to introduce Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU). VSU would hit students’ right to organise collectively and would have a direct effect on a whole range of services and activities that are funded through the compulsory fees paid by students as members of their university’s students union.

More than 2000 people gathered at Sydney Town Hall, 1500 in Melbourne, 600 in Brisbane, 200 in Adelaide, 150 in Perth and 300 in Canberra. Sydney University Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Brown reminded those at the Sydney rally of the threat VSU poses to university life.

“We have a right to set rates and services that our students are willing to pay. VSU National President Felix Eldridge noted that the proposed legislation will attack all aspects of university life. “VSU” will hit the thousands of students in need of welfare and academic advice.

“In Melbourne protestors heard speakers from the Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union, the Finance Sector Union and the National Tertiary Education Union. Assistant Secretary of the NTEU, Ted Murphy, said, “Students are the best people to determine what sorts of services they need and how to provide them.”

NUS National President Felix Eldridge noted that the proposed legislation will attack all aspects of university life. “VSU” will hit the thousands of students in need of welfare and academic advice.

“We don’t want or need tax-payers to fund our services through grants. We already have a system that works. It’s time to drop this destructive ideological garbage.”

Mr Eldridge warned that student parents will not be able to afford child care without the crucial subsidies students organisations provide. He said everything from tenants advice, employment services, advocation and representation to sporting activities will be destroyed if the government gets its way.

“The Australian sporting, arts and business communities have made their opposition clear, along with the higher education community. The question [Education Minister] Brendan Nelson needs to answer is: who actually supports this legislation?”

“The Victorian, NSW and Queensland branches of the National Party are opposed to the bill – even Liberals, including Senator Alan Eggbleston, the government’s Deputy Whip in the Senate, are opposed to the bill.

The government is effectively blackmailing the management of universities by threatening to withhold funding if they do not do what the government wants.

Pete’s Corner

Workers Radio Sydney 88.9FM!

Launched Monday August 1st, 2005

A number of trade unions, including the Construction Forestry Mining & Energy Union, Maritime Union of Australia, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Transport Workers Union, Public Service Association, Australian Services Union NSW & ACT Services Branch, National Union of Workers, and Liquor Hospitality & Miscellaneous Union have established a trade union radio program – Workers Radio Sydney. Other trade unions are in the process of adding their support.

Broadcast between the hours of 5.30 am and 9.00 am Monday to Friday.

Visit the website and download individual support forms at www.workersradiosydney.com
Defending health care

A nurse on the NSW Central Coast, forced to use individual contracts against her staff, has quit in order to lead the charge against AWAs. Genevieve Thyer letterboxed her Erina neighbours against AWAs. Genevieve Thyer quit in order to lead the charge over management tactics at the Louise Aged Care facility at Erina since resigned from the Maxine contracts to make it easier to sack security.

It’s clear public sector work-ers are going to have to fight for their rights at work. If we are stra-tegic and determined we will win.” During the 12-month stand-off, the CPSU accused the DEWR or run-ning its Minister Kevin Andrews’ anti-union agenda.

The department initially re-ject-ed a union agreement but work-ers responded by overwhelmingly voting down its non-union alternative. The final sticking point was its “Wage agreement” to put workplace disputes before the Industrial Relations Commission for resolution. DEWR folded on that position last week.

Boeing workers’ protest trek

About 20 maintenance engineers locked in a industrial dispute with their employer Boeing, went to Parliament House in Canberra last week to call on the Howard government to support their right to choose a collective agreement in their workplace. Thirty-one Boeing workers at the RAAF base at Williamtown near Newcastle had been on strike for 75 days as The Guardian went to press.

“Those qualified technicians, who maintain the RAFAF’s fighter jets, have been taking legal industri-al action for ten weeks now, which hasn’t been helped by our union families”, said Australian Workers’ Union (AWU) national secretary Bill Shorten.

“They’ve decided to make the trek to Canberra because they are fed up with the government ignor-ing their plight, or worse still, rub-bing their noses in it.” John Howard is spending mil-lions of taxpayers’ dollars on ad-vertisements telling us one of the key points of the government’s IR proposals is to ‘preserve the right of workers to have a union negoti-ate a collective agreement if they wish’.

“While, our members have clearly demonstrated they want the right to a collective agreement, rather than being forced to stay on unfair and discriminatory individual con-tracts.”

But in Federal Parliament last week Howard made his position crystal clear, stating that Boeing was “within its rights” to refuse to negotiate a collective agreement. The AWU says the existing con-tracts are in breach of the principal of equal pay for equal work, as Boeing was paying the workers up to $2 an hour less than their coun-terparts elsewhere who were do-ing the same job at the same skill level.

Three national bakery chains have used non-union Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) to rip up to $3 an hour out of the wage packets of young Australians, Judge Peter McCusker of the South Australian Industrial Relations Commission found Baker’s Delight paid teenagers “grossly less” than award rates and said they were “troubled” that the federal government’s Office of the Employment Advocate (OEA) had overlooked the issue.

The Commission found at least 50 OEA-approved contracts had un-dercut the relevant award. The finding was made after the court heard the case of a 15-year-old Deanna Renella who was paid 25 per cent less than the award mini-mum. Under current legislation, AWAs must not put employees at a disadvantage compared to their “overall” award entitlements. But unions have argued that the OEA has a “cavalier” approach to that safeguard.

Changes flagged by the federal government will do away with that requirement and see secret individu-al contracts judged against five min-imum conditions. The court also see responsi-bility for judging the acceptability of AWAs and agreements, shifted from the independent AIC to the Howard government’s OEA.

The South Australian court heard that not only was Deanna Renella underpaid, but she also had also been denied annual leave and sick leave entitlements. The court rejected a Baker’s Delight appeal and upheld an original ruling that it must pay back Renella.

Judge McCusker said young people were at a “manifest disadvantage” negotiating with experi-enced business people over awards. ACTU Secretary Greg Combet said the case proved the government should scrap AWAs, especially for young workers.

“This is one of the most dis-gusting and graphic examples of how the government’s AWAs are al-ready used to exploit workers, par-ticularly young people”, Mr Combet said.

Twelve out of 29 staff have since resigned from the Maxine Aged Care facility at Erina over management tactics at the home. Ms Thyer will tell a rally of over 1100 health care workers at Gosford Hospital this week how management wanted her to put staff on short-term contracts in order to sack them.

“As well as insecurity of jobs it affects the resident care of the el-de-ry”, she says. “They are in a set-ting where they need the safety and security of strong relationships with staff.”

Staff at the aged care facility are refusing to return until its Director of Care is reinstated, a move she will be joined at the rally at Gosford Hospital on Saturday by former campaigner Bernie Banton, who has thrown his support behind community concerns about the federal government’s in-dustry relations changes.

It’s clear public sector work-ers are going to have to fight for their rights at work. If we are stra-tegic and determined we will win.”...
The Guardian
August 17, 2005

Revolution and roses

Bob Britton

Last week in Adelaide a new anthology of poetry, Juan Garrido-Salgado was launched. Many of the poet’s friends and colleagues joined him in major rooms of the Adelaide Writers Centre to hear fellow poets tell of the struggle to get to his art and the struggle for social justice reflected in it.

Juan’s latest Collected Poems is divided into three sections representing major areas of concern in his life since arriving in Australia as a refugee from Chile in 1990. The poems are very personal. They talk about his battle to master a new language and a strange new way of living in the country that gave him sanctuary from the Pinochet regime. But always the collective, global experience of capitalist oppression and the resistance to it come to the fore. Juan’s poetry is personal but not at all self-absorbed or individualistic. It is unmistakably socialist verse of the straight-talking variety.

There are recollections of his time in detention at the hands of Pinochet’s secret police and the tragedy of the coup on September 11, 1973. There are tributes to the community that does tireless work with the disadvantaged of Adelaide. There are outrage and the sense of frustration and isolation that realism creates, the work is ultimately optimistic and a good read for those needing a boost in these dark days of high imperialism. The last poem signs off on this note. Entitled Revolution and roses, it says that the peoples of Venezuela, Cuba, East Timor, Northern Ireland, the Sudan and Chile will have peace and progress.

Even if the soil of the country is invaded
By lies and corruption
These people will know;
Justice and Freedom
Are for us,
Are for the world: bread and roses
Roses like dreams
Bread like revolution.

Excerpt from the poem Revolution and Roses

Washington’s man in the Ukraine, President Viktor Yushchenko, not only faces the growing anger of the populace over the country’s worsening economic crisis, but is also becoming condemned for privatising the symbols of the so-called “orange revolution”, the US-bankrolled campaign that saw him come to office seven months ago. The new owner of the copyright for the symbols is none other than his son, a university student who gets around in a BMW and has a personal bodyguard and fancy digs in the middle of Kiev. The orange slogans and symbols are real money makers, being reproduced on t-shirts, hats and other fashion items as well as sporting goods. Nepotism comes with the capitalist territory.

Police unlawfully stormed houses on Palm Island after last year’s riot, an inquiry by Queensland’s crime watchdog has found. The report released by Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson, the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) said heavily armed officers did not have the power to burst into the homes of the Aboriginal community after the disturbances in November last year.

Finding came as a senior police officer admitted the investigation into the death in custody of a 13-year-old boy and that more could have been done to help the victim’s family.

Under the Public Safety Preservation Act 1986, police should not have entered and searched the private houses because the riots had ended and there was no longer a state of emergency, the CMC said.

However, the CMC said it could not substantiate allegations police had assaulted residents when they stormed the houses.

One resident accused police of hiring with a Thompson sub-mag gun and a baton, while another alleged police had said they “could kill them and no one would know what happened to them”.

The report did not find any grounds for disciplinary action against the officers involved. Palm Island mayor Erykah Kyle said the CMC report did not help the community move on from its breakdown with the police, sparked by the release of a post-mortem examination of Mulrunji Doomadgee, 36, which revealed he died from a punctured lung while in police custody.

“It’s quite upsetting still for us that our people have experienced such an ordeal”, Cr Kyle said. Palm Island resident Rick Johnson said his five-year-old son was “very terrified” of the police working with the Aboriginal community, located off the Townsville coast in north Queensland.

“Every time he sees the coppers now he runs away and hides”, Mr Johnson said.

However, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie defended the police’s action in the days following the riot by up to 300 residents, in which the police station and adjoining court house were burnt to the ground.

“For God’s sake, you know there was a riot, the police station was burnt down, there was police in fear of their lives … I haven’t seen a lot of sympathy for that.”

Queensland Indigenous Affairs Minister John Mickel refused to comment on the CMC report. “You would appreciate that the matter’s before the police and the courts.” It is entirely inappropiate for me to comment on that”, he said.

Detectives gave evidence at a committal hearing of the 21 people charged over the violent riot.

Unlawful

Palm Island police raids illegal

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Collective action against union busting

Over 2000 rail workers employed by the union busting Chris Corrigan walked off the job last Friday in the face of attempts to stop the union from out of negotiations on a new collective agreement.

Large turnouts at peaceful assemblies at rail depots from Perth to Port Kembla by workers at Pacific National – a joint venture between Corrigan’s Patrick Corp and road transport giant Toll Holdings.

“This is something we have to do”, said the Rail Tram and Bus Union’s Sean Thornton. “Joining the union is the only way to keep the government from the gates of the Sydney Freight terminal at Chullora. “And so, we are prepared to do it again if we have to.”

RTBU national secretary Bob Hayden described the turn out as “fantastic”.

“RTBU members showed their solidarity with each other and their desire for a single union collective agreement”.

“Workers have delivered productivity and profits under the current collective agreement. But the return for their loyalty and dedication must not be job insecurity, erosion of conditions and wages and the contracting out of current collective agreement jobs.”

“The decision has not been taken lightly, members are giving up a day’s pay because they care about their job security.”

The RTBU members have been negotiating with Pacific National for five months in an effort to secure a collective agreement.

Pacific National recently announced a nine-month net after tax profit of $78 million, a 39 per cent increase from the previous nine months.

CAPITALIST HOGS OF THE WEEK 1 & 2: ARE Katie Lahey and John Ralph. The takeover of public services and assets is both overt and insidious. Lahey is chief executive of the Business Council of Australia alongside former Western Mining Company head Hugh Morgan, who is president of the Business Council. Lahey, who says she works quite happily with the parasitic and fascist-minded Morgan, has also been chief executive of such public bodies as the Victorian Tourism Commission and the Sydney City Council. Ralph is a Christian fundamentalist – a member of the Catholic Lay Order and the Equestrian Knights of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. He is also the deputy chairman of Telstra and the former head of mining corporation CRA, which is now Rio Tinto.

Collective Poems

Juan Garrido-Salgado
Five Islands Press
Melbourne, 2005
ISBN 1 74128 009 3
RPP $18

Washington’s man in the Ukraine, President Viktor Yushchenko, not only faces the growing anger of the populace over the country’s worsening economic crisis, but is also becoming condemned for privatising the symbols of the so-called “orange revolution”, the US-bankrolled campaign that saw him come to office seven months ago. The new owner of the copyright for the symbols is none other than his son, a university student who gets around in a BMW and has a personal bodyguard and fancy digs in the middle of Kiev. The orange slogans and symbols are real money makers, being reproduced on t-shirts, hats and other fashion items as well as sporting goods. Nepotism comes with the capitalist territory.

It’s the technology, stupid, dept. Internet search engine Google has been told by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation to remove an aerial photo of the Lucas Heights reactor from its Google Earth program. The satellite image is the first to come allows anyone with a computer anywhere in the world to zoom in on any site. They can super-ficially censor sites but the technology will always be levels and bounds ahead of any attempt to rein it in. And like the idiocy of building a cement wall around Parliament House in Canberra, if anyone was actually intent on causing damage do you think they’d have trouble finding the country’s only nuclear reactor?

The privatisation of the military is chugging along apace with the maintenance of the Air Force’s F111s to be contracted out to a private company. The contract would go beyond the planned 2010 withdrawal of the aircraft from service, meaning that Air Force aircraft maintenance would remain in private hands. Next they’ll be contracting mercenary pilots to fly them.

So that’s why they didn’t sign the Kyoto agreement: the Howard government denies that global warming exists and that burning coal releases greenhouse gases. Their position was exposed last week in court defending the approval of two new coal mines in Queensland. Who said “flat earth society”?

Excerpt from the poem Revolution and Roses

Roses like dreams
Bread like revolution.
Carah Ong is the research and advocacy director for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in the US and the director of the Washington DC office. The Foundation is a non-profit, non-government organisation which focuses on education and advocacy to advance initiatives to eliminate the nuclear weapons threat to humanity, to empower young people to make a difference and to foster the rule of international law. During a recent visit to Australia, she spoke with Anna Pho of The Guardian and described some of the policies and programs being undertaken by the Foundation. She also gave her views on a range of issues related to nuclear weapons and energy that are of concern in the US and worldwide.

Carah Ong: What brings you to Australia?

G: I was always wanting to come to Australia, so this is a dream come true for me. There’s so much more important to have been invited by the Hiroshima Day Committee in Australia for the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Foundation is putting forward a new course for US non-nuclear policy. I actually just moved to Washington DC last week, so I’m here for a few months. What we are focussing on is legislation in Congress, educating members of Congress on the current situation because I think a lot of people don’t actually know the threat that is being passed and the even more dangerous policies that the US is pursuing.

For example, the United States is spending right now one and a half times what it spent at the height of the Cold War on nuclear weapons when adjusted for inflation. And most members of Congress don’t realise this. There are also a number of members of Congress who are actually putting forward really great legislation which are steps towards the ultimate goal that we envision which is a nuclear weapons-free world. So we’re actually monitoring the legislation and educating Congress and telling grass roots groups across the country is really a great piece of legislation that calls for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. That’s the positive one.

The administration is pursuing new missile defence. And the thing is that you can never count on the US not having a nuclear weapons program because it’s too expensive to do anything else. It is going to be funded for the next five years on defence. Of course, the United States abrogated the anti-ballistic missile treaty in 2002 so that it could pursue missile defence and now it’s devoting quite a bit of funding to it.

In fact last year they shipped six interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska, and at Vandenburg air force base in California, which is very near where I’m from. I’m from Santa Barbara, California so it’s just in my backyard there. Missile defence is one of the things that I started organising on when I first started in this field. But missile defence is extremely expensive and – what’s actually very disturbing about it – scientists and experts have come out and said that this is something that is not going to work but yet we’re still pursuing it. The last two tests of the system have been dramatic failures but it’s also a system that incorporates the international community quite quickly. So it’s not just about the US but it’s also quite international.

The US has been quite successful in trying to sell this program, for example, to Japan and asked Japan to invest money into it. And also Japan, they converted to a nuclear weapons program. If you had grandfather’s axe and you replace the head and you replace the next five years on missile defence. Of course, the United States abrogated the anti-ballistic missile treaty in 2002 so that it could pursue missile defence and now it’s devoting quite a bit of funding to it.

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What greater gift could we give to the people than to eliminate nuclear weapons this century? with the current situation with Iran, they say they’re pursuing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes but, of course, everybody is worried about it because they know that if you have nuclear technology for peaceful purposes you can convert that into a nuclear weapons program. In fact that’s how India and Pakistan developed their nuclear capabilities as did North Korea. They had tech knowledge for peaceful purposes that they converted to a nuclear weapons program. The other side of that coin is that nuclear energy has recently been touted as the solution to global warming and to climate change. It’s the new clean, green energy source. Of course in the United States President Bush has touted this and here in Australia there is also a push to open up new reactors and all over here, also there is a push for new nuclear reactors.

But the thing is that nuclear energy is not clean. First of all, the processing of mining and milling uranium creates more carbon dioxide than the processing of coal or

Carah Ong: Let’s start with the positive one – the reliable replacement warhead program. This is an actual program that the United States is looking to maintain its nuclear arsenal indefinitely. They’ve actually spent money last year and it’s also got an increase of funding this year to produce the robust nuclear earth penetrator – it’s also called the bunker-buster – that money was eliminated a very dangerous program over to the reliable replacement warhead program.

CO: What does that program entail?

G: Well it’s actually very unclear but the reliable replacement warhead is. They’re not really telling us what it is. I don’t think they’d allow the National Laboratory or the scientists know, themselves. But it was a way to get some funding from the time being. Basically, they want to modify existing warheads.

As Lynton Brooks, the head of National Nuclear Security Administration, said quite recently, if you had grandfather’s axe and you replace the head and you replace the

What greater gift could we give to the people than to eliminate nuclear weapons this century?
The rising wave of militarism has been accompanied by an equal and opposite retreat in civil liberties and personal freedom.

The globalisation of State terror

Mike Whitney

“This is not an isolated criminal act we are dealing with; it is an extreme and evil ideology whose roots lie in a perverted and poisonous misinterpretation of the religion of Islam.”

- Prime Minister Tony Blair

The “evil ideology” that underscores the war on terror is predicated on two basic theories: pre-emption and enemy combatants. Both of these run counter to fundamental principles of human rights and democratic governance. Both must be met head-on and defeated. There is no wiggle-room for appeasement; this ideology is the greatest manifestation of fanaticism in the world since the rise of Nazism in the 1930s and must be collectively challenged. As Tony Blair says, “This is not an isolated criminal act” but “an extreme and evil ideology” thrusting us towards global war and ever-increasing human rights abuse.

The pre-emptive doctrine overturns the conclusions of the Nuremberg Tribunals that “War is the Supreme Crime” from which all the lesser crimes naturally flow. It elevates war to a viable form of foreign policy; an acceptable means of establishing one state’s superiority over another.

In the case of Iraq, where the theory was applied with the most success, it has been exposed as a cruel facsimile of unprovoked aggression against a harmless enemy. The horrific after-effects have been the destruction of Iraqi society, the death of over 100,000 civilians and an enduring conflict with no end in sight. These are the predictable consequences of a pernicious theory that glories force above all else.

The principle at the heart of “enemy combatants” is no less sinister than that of pre-emption. The theory presupposes that there is a category of people that are intrinsically underserving of any human rights whatever.

“Enemy combatants” is not intended to selectively deprive people of particular rights; it is a blanket condemnation of everyone, of anyone the President arbitrarily chooses to name; stripping them of their civil liberties without any legal recourse. It overturns every meaningful precedent of international law and American jurisprudence. Due process, habeas corpus and the presumption of innocence are all rescinded by executive edict. “Enemy combatants” is the language of tyrants; it represents the denouement of the rule of law and the birth of the imperial presidency.

We have no choice but to categorically reject both these theories as a direct assault on the constitutional system, representative government and the inalienable rights of man.

It is clear now that the neocons, in their rise to power, developed a strategy to eliminate the obstacles in their path. They pursued a programme of international approval of war and the checks on presidential power. The monothers of “enemy combatant” and pre-emption, minted in neo-fascist think-tanks, have concealed the re- al objectives of their creators behind modern-sounding jargon. The goals, however, remain the same; declaration of a permanent state of war and the supremacy of the President. That’s where we are now; the world tilting further and further to the right and the litany of horrors growing by the day. Torture and indefinite detention have become staples of the new foreign policy everywhere; from the gun-towers over Guantánamo, to the concertina wire surrounding Fallujah, to the cement abutments enclosing the White House. The rising wave of militarism has been accompanied by an equal and opposite retreat in civil liberties and personal freedom.

The full-force of the econom ic-political-military establishment...
Dan Margolis

Unable to win Senate confirmation of John R Bolton as the next US ambassador to the UN, President Bush sidestepped lawmakers and appointed Bolton to the post during a congressional recess on August 1, 2005. Bolton’s support for the ultra-conservative Bolton has provoked an outcry both in the US and abroad. Among other things, Bolton once remarked that the UN’s headquarters could lose 10 floors and “it wouldn’t make a bit of difference”.

“The appointment of Bolton really shows how disingenuous is the commitment that the Bush administration has for the UN, to appoint someone who frankly doesn’t really believe in the mission of the UN”, said Kevin Martin, executive director of Peace Action. “It’s a huge slap in the face.”

During Senate confirmation hearings, Bolton was criticized for his brash style and provocative actions, including his opposition to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, claiming it would undermine American security; using inflammatory language about North Korea during negotiations on nuclear issues; and falsely asserting that Cuba was producing biological weapons.

Bolton played a role in Bush’s rush to war with Iraq as well. According to Democrat Representative Henry Waxman, Bolton pushed for the inclusion of the false claim that Niger had sold uranium to Iraq in the president’s 2003 State of the Union speech.

Bolton’s critics point out that now is an especially bad time to send someone like him to the UN, which is currently involved in discussions about its future. The topic will be addressed at the General Assembly in September, which is shaping up to be the largest gathering of heads of state in history.

Bolton’s input to this debate is likely to be dangerous because, as Martin told the ‘People’s Weekly World’, “He doesn’t put a whole lot of stock in international law, international treaties or working cooperatively with other organisations.

[“Bolton’s] line is basically that the projection of US power, particularly military but also political and economic, is the only thing that we can reasonably put any trust in. Working with the rest of the world, to him, is just some sort of pipe dream, even though most of the people in this country think we should be working with the rest of the world.”

Bolton, formerly the Under-Secretary of State for arms control and international security, faced unprecedented opposition in the Senate. His nomination was referred by the Committee on Foreign Relations to the full Senate without the recommendation of a vote for or against him. Even though the committee is Republican-controlled, its members could not agree on a recommendation, particularly in view of the deep misgivings of Republican Senator George Voinovich.

Democrat Senator Christopher J Dodd, writing in the ‘Washington Post’, said, “The recess appointment shows that the president is more concerned with political battles than sending the most capable representative to the United Nations, and this manoeuvring has made this already questionable nominee less legitimate to the members of the United Nations.”

At the same time, Peace Action’s Martin said that Bush’s recess appointment was a victory of sorts for those who opposed the nomination. Martin called it a sign of Bush’s weakness. “It also shows just how deeply unpopular Bush’s foreign policies are right now”, he said.

To underscore the point, Martin noted that when Bolton first arrived in New York at the headquarters of the US mission to the UN, people in the press conference area stood up.

Bolton will simply be a messenger – albeit a rude and strongly dislikable messenger – of Bush administration foreign policies, Martin said. The main thing now, he added, is to focus on changing the policies of the Bush administration.

Chavez visit to Uruguay

President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela last week initiated an official visit to Uruguay, where he met with his host, President Tabaré Vázquez.

Uruguay and Venezuela moved forward in their relations with the signing of a letter of intent on March 1 this year, when Tabaré assumed the presidency.

On this occasion, the two leaders discussed integration issues involving both countries, such as the Venezuelan investment in the state fuel refinery ANCAP.

Similarly, technical personnel and ministers from the Venezuelan delegation followed up on the business side, including Uruguayan exports of meat, milk and their derivatives.

The foreign ministries are likewise working to establish a Uruguayan-Venezuelan Joint Commission to formalise agreements between the two countries.

Chávez and Vázquez met at a time when the former is heading the Andean Community of Nations, while the latter is currently acting president of the Southern Common Market.
The goal is to create a demographically pure Jewish state and alongside it a stunted, phantom Palestinian state for the region's Palestinians.

Jonathan Cook

Until last weekend Israel's one million Palestinian citizens had stayed out of the debate about the country's imminent disengagement from Gaza. “It's not our story”, they said when pressed, “this is an Israeli affair”. The Palestinian minority, however, is refusing to be dragged into a confrontation with the settler majority. At least, the government appears to be siding with Arab citizens against the extremist settlers. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who lost no time in denouncing Zada as a “bloody terrorist”, needs no time in denouncing Zada as the extremist settlers. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who lost no time in denouncing Zada as a “bloody terrorist”, needs no time in denouncing Zada as the extremist settlers.

But what about the day after the disengagement? The government's greater concern is that an area of permafrost spanning a million square kilometres – the size of France and Germany combined – has started to melt for the first time since it formed 11,000 years ago. This sub-Arctic region of western Siberia, the world's largest Arctic basin, is the world's largest Arctic basin.

The 19-year-old gunman, Eden Mazar, who has been described as a “bloodthirsty terrorist”, needed no time in denouncing Zada as the extremist settlers. General Eival Gadi, an adviser to Sharon, has said there is likely to be “major collateral damage”, that is civilian, deaths, if Gazans refuse to keep quiet post-disengagement. In such circumstances, it is difficult to believe Palestinians and Israelis will be able to move into another round of bloodletting.

So what will be the battleground of a third intifada? Most likely, it will be shaped by Israel's obsessive policy of “ethnic consolida- tion”, of which disengagement is only a small part. Israeli demographers believe that today's slim majority of Jews in the land between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan – 5.2 million Jews to 4.9 million Palestinians – will be eroded within a decade.

The disengagement will instantaneously erase at least 1.2 million Gazans from the balance sheet. But what will the atmosphere be like? What will it be like to breathe again into the atmosphere to which we have been accustomed? That is what the Five were never going to get a fair trial in Miami. The persist- ence by authorities in holding the trials was not only in the face of the Five's greater concern is the “unfinished business” of 1948, the 20 percent of the indigenous Palestinian population who were not expelled from the newly founded state of Israel 57 years ago.

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The role of "The Toad" in Australian life

The toad, in the guise of a human being, has acquired two of the worst traits of the human race.

1) A clear and lair hypocrite, as well as "it" has developed the ability to play on the weaknesses of others, particularly themselves, in an attempt to maintain their supremacy.

2) The toad expressing concern for the security of the Australian people and then introducing measures to curtail their human rights and civil liberties.

Conclusion: when the toad expresses concern for you, run for cover and strengthen your defences, you are about to come under attack.
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Ph: 02 9959 6944 Fax: 02 9959 6933
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The Fight in the Hot Docs timeslot (SBS 10.00pm Tuesday)

He never has a team of more than his sergeant even though his police station is full of coppers apparently just walking about. Except for the police surgeon none of the other coppers seem to have any role other than to string blue and white striped tape around the scene of the lastest murder.

And Midsomer and surrounding district does seem to be crawling with murderers. Dead bodies pop up in numbers that rival the Black Death.

However, as I said in June, this new series is better written than the previous ones, particularly as regards the colourful English village settings. This week’s episode, Dead In The Water, takes place during Midsomer’s regatta week, and it’s the body of the Chairman of the Rowing Club that inconveniently bobs up during the first race.

The mixing of middle class gentility (with a dash of the upper classes thrown in) and murder is a very English literary tradition, and this TV series unashamedly apes that tradition. And as you would expect of middle class gentility, it is mildly amusing and mildly intriguing.

The second episode of Lost Highway: The Story of Country Music (SBS 10.10pm Saturdays) charts the transition of country music from folk art to purely commercial enterprise, and the effect this had on the music itself.

The “hillbilly” music that came out of Kentucky and Alabama blended two distinct forms: on the one hand the language and traditions of 18th century rural England and the English reformed churches (“Chapel”), on the other the African inspired work songs and gospel style of the black rural labourers.

This folk form was popularised with the spread of records and radio. In Texas, however, conditions caused it to change. There the music was performed in “honky tonks”, bars catering to oil workers that dispensed music, dancing and liquor in equal proportions.

The raucous nature of these joints called for louder, more insistant music styles with microphones and electric guitars, and “honky tonk” was born, quickly becoming – thanks to radio and records – the dominant form of country music. It is epitomised in the drink-sodden, grief-ridden career of Hank Williams.

Then along came Elvis and rock ‘n roll, and the kids deserted honky tonk for the new music. The execitve companies of the record companies with an investment in country music responded by abandoning country music’s roots and changing its form to a more mellow, commercial pop music (called “the Nashville sound”) deliberatly aimed at the audience that did not like rock.

The “hillbilly” form of country music would now be restricted to folk festivals. The new attitude is epitomised in this series by a very popular singer (millions of country records sold) who clearly didn’t give a toss about the musical commercial takeovre of country music: “I was out there to sell records!” (which is another way to say “I was out there to make money”).
have become a chief obstacle to military recruiters, adding that he was also “lamenting the failure” of the media to report all of the “positive successes” of the military along with the news of bombings and growing insurgency.

In reality, as Editor and Publisher reported the day before Chu gave his testimony, the news media has actually been failing to report the horrors of war, as “few graphic images from Iraq make it to US papers” and as Newsweek war correspondent Joe Cochrane observed just three days before Chu gave his testimony, one reason for the lack of positive press coverage is that reporters no longer dare venture out from Baghdad’s barricaded Green Zone “unless they’re embedded with US soldiers.”

That wasn’t the case early last year, when foreigners could walk the streets outside the Green Zone, shop in local markets, and, most important to journalists, talk to the Iraqi people. Those days are long gone.

School monitors

The Pentagon has also developed an elaborate PR strategy for outreach to schools. In autumn 2004, the Pentagon published a 98-page guidebook for high school (HS) recruits—students, leaving behind what some saw as a real-world group of attractive, young women gamers who go by names such as ‘Frag Doll’ and ‘Acid,’ and “fix” are paid to promote Ubisoft products. At a computer gaming show last year, the Frag Dolls were deployed as booth babes at the America’s Army game demo, where they played the game and posed for photos and videos (now available on the America’s Army website).

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On the Frag Dolls blog [internet term], founder Kellie, describes her project as the “Combat Conveyor Experience”: “You have this gigantic Hummer in a tent loaded with guns, a rotatable turreted, and a huge screen in front of it. Jinx took the wheel and drove us around this virtual war zone while shooting people with a pistol, and I switched off from the saw turret on the top of the vehicle to riding passer

Non-virtual realities

Unsurprisingly, the babes-and-bullets fantasy world celebrated in these games contrasts markedly with the experiences that real soldiers are facing in Iraq. A report by the Pentagon’s own Mental Health Advisory Team—completed in January of this year, and found that 54 percent of soldiers stationed in Iraq described morale in their individual units as “low or very low.”

In recent testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, US Undersecretary for Defense David Chu, who is in charge of personnel recruitment for the military, admitted that there is a reduced propensity to join the military among today’s youth. Due to the realities of war, there is less encouragement today from former military teachers, and other influencers to join the military.

Chu said parents and other “old-advisers to young Americans” whose views on military service were shaped by the Vietnam War

specific advice included the following:

“Be so helpful and so much a part of the school scene that you are in constant demand.”

“Cultivate coaches, librarians, admission personnel and guidance counselors...”

“Know your student influencers...”

“The HS athletic director and arrange for an exhibition basketball game between the faculty and Army recruiters...”

Grand theft privacy

The Pentagon’s recruitment effort also entails massive information-gathering efforts aimed at both students and their parents. Upp and a little-publicized aspect of Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” education program, the military has gained what the Chicago Tribune described as “unprecedented access to all high school directories of upperclassmen—a mother lode of information used for mass-mailing recruiting appeals and telephone solicitations.”

Before No Child Left Behind took effect in 2002, 12 percent of the nation’s public high schools—some 2500—denied the military access to student databases. According to the Washington Post, “Recruiters have been using the information to contact students at home, angering some parents and school district officials around the country.”

In addition, the Post reported in June that the Pentagon has contracted with BeNOW, a private database marketing company, to “create a database of high school students ages 16 to 18 and all college students to help the military identify potential recruits.”

The new database is described on a Pentagon website as “arguably the largest repository of 16-to-25-year-old youth data in the country, containing roughly 30 million records.” According to the military’s Federal Register notice, the information kept on each person includes name, gender, address, birthday, e-mail address, ethnicity, telephone number, high school, college, graduation dates, grade-point average, education level and military test scores.

Questioned about the database, Undersecretary David Chu responded: “If you don’t want conscription, you have to give the Department of Defense, the military services, an avenue to contact young people to tell them what is being offered. And you would be naive to believe in any enterprise that you’re going to do well just by waiting for people to call you.”

Then why not simply restrict the data fields to name, address, telephone number?, a reporter asked.

“Information that goes beyond that comes off of commercial lists. Anybody could buy that information. We’re not, this is not a commercial file, commercial providers. So we’re not intruding—and typically that information has come off of forms people have voluntarily filled out to a commercial source. So I don’t see the...”

They may not have intended it to be the property of the US military, the reporter observed.

Privacy rights groups have been sharply critical of the database. According to a joint statement by a coalition of eight privacy groups, the database violates the Privacy Act of 1974, a law intended to reduce government collection of Americans’ personal data. The database plan, they wrote, “proposes to ignore the law and its own regulations by collecting personal information from commercial data brokers and state registries rather than directly from individuals.”

Privacy groups also warned that data collected by the Pentagon could be used for other purposes besides military recruiting. According to the Washington Post, “The system also gives the Pentagon the right, without notifying citizens, to share the data for numerous uses outside the military, including with law enforcement, state tax authorities and Congress.” Defense Department spokesperson Ellen Kremke said the Pentagon does not do this, but the Federal Register notice says the military retains the right to do so.

Cindy Sheehan and Bill Mitchell, who have both lost sons in Iraq, comfort each other at a protest outside the Bush ranch

The Pentagon has contracted with BeNOW, a private database marketing company, to “create a database of high school students ages 16 to 18 and all college students to help the military identify potential recruits.”

Sheldon Rampton

War is fun as hell

Years of writing about public relations and propaganda has probably made me a bit jaded, but I was amazed nevertheless when I visited America’s Army, an online video game website sponsored by the US Department of Defense (DoD). In its quest to find recruits, the military has literally turned war into entertainment.

“Ameri...