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SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

EDITORIAL

**W**e have written many times about our abhorrence of this illegal and immoral invasion in which we are sadly and disgracefully involved, so is it possible that today on this terrible anniversary we can feel even more ashamed than we were before? Unfortunately, the answer is yes.

It is impossible to adequately emphasise the carnage, the destruction of a once-noble country, the appalling death toll on both civilian and military lives, the flight of thousands from their homes,

to the US/Australian relationship outweighs any sense of responsibility or statesmanship.

We don't want ever again to hear figures as described by the UN claim that 34,000 died in Iraq in 2006. Contemplate 36,000 men, women and children and relate those figures to your own city; how many of your city would be dead in one year. Figures that two million Iraqis are now refugees; imagine two-thirds of Melbourne streaming out of the city looking for safety, peace and justice. If Iraqi polls are anything to go by then the fact that 100% of people in Baghdad

## ANNIVERSARY OF SHAME: Fourth Year Anniversary of the Iraq War

the lack of jobs, water and electricity, torture and shooting of civilians including many children, the lack of medical facilities and medicines as described by doctors and surgeons; nothing can fully describe or bring home to those of us here the enormity of what we have done in allowing our government to participate in the gross and self-serving 'Coalition of the Willing'. Even the name disgusts – 'coalition of the willing to do anything to anyone and for dubious reasons' would perhaps be a more appropriate title.

We need to think carefully about what the statistics on the war really mean in terms of human suffering and destruction of a nation and why it is happening, because if we don't we condemn ourselves to that old truism, 'If you don't learn from the lessons of history, you are forced to repeat them'. Members of this church never want to be placed again in a position of feeling the appalling sense of shame for what has happened in the name of Australians because of a craven prime minister whose commitment

have little or no confidence in the US-led forces would surely suggest even to our Prime Minister that the role we are playing and the road we are traversing is wrong. Instead, this man who cannot say sorry or 'I was wrong' continues along the same path of bloodshed and misery for the Iraqi people.

Indeed, he was yesterday quoted in the Age (20/3) as saying, 'I want the Australian people to understand that the government remains very committed to its policy'. He also said that a withdrawal now would be disastrous for the US-led coalition and for Western interests around the world.

**We need to ask how many Iraqis and soldiers are expendable in order to protect 'Western interests around the world'? How much more bloodshed and destruction are we prepared to wreak in Iraq in order to avoid 'disaster' for the US-led coalition?**

Whose interests are best served by a continuation of these policies? Not the people of the 'Coalition of the Willing' but the multinational companies who are purloining the assets of Iraq.

# Human rights abuses in the Philippines (PART ONE)

A TALK GIVEN AT THE MELBOURNE UNITARIAN CHURCH ON 25TH FEBRUARY BY  
**SENATOR GAVIN MARSHALL**, AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

I'd like to thank the Committee of Management for their kind invitation to attend your church today and I'd also like to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words about an issue I am deeply passionate about – human rights in the Philippines.

I thought I would draw on some of the values that underpin the philosophies of your church when talking about this issue, specifically, the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, compassion in human relations and the goal of peace, liberty and justice for all.

As a unionist and labour activist I too believe in these values and it is these rights that are being denied to the citizens of the Philippines by the very people who are entrusted to uphold them – the State and its security forces.

***The Philippines has a well-documented past of political unrest, with the suppression of workers, unionists, social justice advocates, political activists and indeed, church members. Many of you will vividly recall the toppling of the disgraced Marcos regime over twenty years ago in what became widely known as the 'People power revolution'.***

The Marcos regime was an era marked by a period of martial law, widespread corruption, dubious elections, the incarceration of members of the Opposition, torture, abductions and summary executions. The regime finally ended when Filipino citizens took to the streets, at great risk to their personal safety, to stand up for their rights against this oppressive government.

Following this monumental event and the media and public attention that ensued, many of us could easily assume that human rights are upheld and democracy is alive and well in the Philippines; however this is simply not the case.

Since Gloria Arroyo came to power in January 2001 there have been over 820 'extrajudicial' killings and assassinations of Filipino citizens. Those who have been killed include unionists, environmentalists, lawyers, municipal councillors, human rights activists and journalists.

In fact, the Philippines has the dubious title of being the second most dangerous country for journalists, second only to Iraq. This is a status that was stressed in the

past week when a newspaper editor was murdered in a drive-by killing in Mindanao Province.

Pastors, priests and lay members of the various churches in the Philippines are also amongst those who have been killed during Arroyo's time as president.

In addition to these killings, many more left activists have had threats made against them, assassination attempts made on their lives and many others have been held in detention without warrant – including my good friend and fellow parliamentarian, Crispin Beltran, someone whom I will talk about in a few moments.

The common factor in all these murders and violations of human rights is that all of the victims have been outspoken on issues of poverty and justice. They have advocated for poor and oppressed people in the Philippines, for workers' rights, for civil liberties and for human rights. Many of them have also been directly critical of the Arroyo government. Most notably, and perhaps most tragically, the common link between these deaths is that they could have been prevented through government intervention. In almost all of the murder cases, the primary suspects are government military intelligence units. Very few of them have

been adequately investigated and the perpetrators of these heinous crimes have not been brought to justice.

And despite being a signatory to a number of international treaties protecting human rights and having the protection of human rights enshrined in legislation, these abuses continue today.

In the past few years many international human rights organisations have turned their attention to the Philippines and have produced reports into the political killings, widespread government corruption and human rights abuses.

In August of last year Amnesty International produced its latest report on the Philippines. Entitled *Political Killings, Human Rights and the Peace Process*, this report revealed that the numbers of political killings in the Philippines are continuing to increase, and many of them show a common methodology to the attacks. The report also reveals that attacks on individuals rarely lead to charges or prosecution of the perpetrators and reveals a continued failure of the Government to prosecute and convict those who are suspected of these crimes.

The report states that, and I quote:

*The common features in the methodology of the attacks, leftist profile of the victims, and an apparent culture of impunity shielding the perpetrators, has led Amnesty International to believe that the killings are not an unconnected series of criminal murders, armed robberies or other unlawful killings. Rather they constitute a pattern of politically targeted extrajudicial executions taking place within the broader context of a continuing counter-insurgency campaign.*

The report goes on to state that they remain concerned at the number and repeated credible reports that members of the security forces have been directly involved in the attacks, or else have tolerated, acquiesced to, or been complicit in them.

A failure of the State to thoroughly investigate the cases of murders and a lack of a commitment from the government to protect human rights has resulted in many organisations concluding that the killings have received tacit approval from the government of the Philippines.

In response to the recurrent murders, President Arroyo has made numerous statements condemning them and vowing to bring to justice those responsible for these atrocities. However, there is yet to be any meaningful evidence of genuine action or reform by the Government.

In August of last year, following the release of the Amnesty report, Gloria Arroyo announced an inquiry into the extrajudicial killings, which was headed by former Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo. The findings of the report that were presented to Gloria Arroyo last month found that 'elements in the military' were behind the fatal shootings. Melo publicly stated that 'It's a small group in the military who are doing these things with the tolerance of some commanders, but it is not the policy of the entire armed forces of the Philippines'.

Community groups have condemned the report as a whitewash, claiming the findings of the Melo Commission Report were already public knowledge and merely confirmed the statements that human rights organisations, survivors and the families have been making for years. Other community groups have claimed the report was nothing more than a toothless tiger and that the scope of the investigation should have been extended to allow the investigation of the Government itself.

Whilst any attempt to expose these atrocities is encouraged, the proof will be in the response to the report. It is simply not enough for Gloria Arroyo to condemn the killings. Something we have seen from her before. She needs to back these statements up with clear and decisive actions.

In the past, investigations instigated by Mrs Arroyo have amounted to little more than a public relations exercise with minimal results. They have served to do little other than create pretence that the Government has a genuine want to institute change.

These investigations must be independent and the results must be made available to the international community for scrutiny and action. Despite repeated

calls from international organisations including the European Union and the United Nations, the report was only released a few days ago after UN investigator Phillip Alston criticised the military for being in a 'state of denial' about the murders.

Professor Alston, a Human Rights academic and senior UN official, spent ten days investigating the murders in the Philippines and has recently presented his report to the UN Human Rights Council. In statements to the media this week Professor Alston criticised the Armed Forces of the Philippines for remaining, and I quote 'in a state of almost total denial of its need to respond effectively and authentically to the significant number of killings which have been convincingly attributed to them'. He went further saying 'The President needs to persuade the military that its reputation and effectiveness will be considerably enhanced, rather than undermined, by acknowledging the facts and taking genuine steps to investigate'.

Gloria Arroyo needs to positively respond to and heed the advice of the United Nations report. She also needs to act on her claims that she will amend the court system to make it more accessible to Filipinos. Judicial scrutiny of human rights abuses and murder cases in the Philippines is greatly hindered by the lack of an adequate witness protection scheme, lengthy judicial processes and significant judicial fees.

As I mentioned earlier, I think the case of my good friend Mr Crispin Beltran is symptomatic of what is going on more broadly in the Philippines.

Today marks the first anniversary of the detention of Crispin, a member of the Philippines Congress. On the 25th February last year, Crispin, a well-known member of the House of Representatives and outspoken critic of the Arroyo Government, was brought in for questioning by the Filipino police. His arrest warrant was based on a rebellion charge filed back in 1985 by the Marcos regime. Despite the fact the warrant had long been quashed, the police refused to release him. Later that day and in ensuing days, new trumped-up charges of rebellion were brought against him. He continues to be detained despite successive charges against him being thrown out by the courts.

Mr Beltran is a former member of the Bayan Muna Party, one of the major opposition parties in the Philippines. It seeks to be a progressive voice within the Filipino Congress.

Since Arroyo became President, The Bayan Muna Party and other progressive political parties in the Philippines, such as the Gabriela Women's Party, have been subject to these 'extrajudicial' killings.

Under the Arroyo government, 127 members of the Bayan Muna Party have been killed, including 37 last year.

Four members of the party have already been killed this year, including Professor Jose Maria Cui, a university professor, unionist and human rights activist. Professor Cui was shot and killed last month in front of his students at the University of Eastern Philippines by two assassins who fled on motorbikes.

**Part 2: Continued next Issue of Beacon**

# Ten Years to Catastrophe

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS AN EDITED VERSION OF **SENATOR BOB BROWN'S** ADDRESS TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB ON 1ST NOVEMBER 2006.

**T**he world as we know it has profoundly changed. The all-pervasive impacts of global warming, intensifying over the past thirty years and now accelerating at an alarming rate, are affecting everyone. The American National Academy of Sciences said last month that the world is now the hottest it has been in 5000 years.

We have only 10 years left to prevent catastrophic climate change. It is very sobering. It is a huge human rights issue – in fact, it is a challenge to human existence on the planet. Prime Minister Howard may have been the man for the complacent, comfortable and self-serving times, last century. But he is not the person to steer the nation on a new course, this century. He does not see the problem. And he does not see the solutions.

He still castigates those seeking action on climate change as wanting to destroy the economy. He does not see that the economy's health depends directly on the environment; that the economy must be our servant, not our master.

Peter Costello did not even identify climate change as a risk to the economy in his May budget. Amanda Vanstone refuses to accept that people displaced by climate change are refugees, and she will not consider the consequences of millions of people displaced by climate change. Management of climate change will feature energy efficiency. Australia cannot achieve real emissions reductions without establishing a national energy efficiency target. What is energy efficiency? Turning off the light. Putting sensors into spasmodically used places to turn lights, heaters, and hot water supplies off when people are not there. Delivering lower temperature water for showers. Heating water where it is used, not seven storeys or 13 hotel units away. It is commonsense.

On the supply side, we must price carbon through a national emissions trading scheme, a carbon tax, a feed-in law and a mandatory renewable energy target. The amount of money the government has spent on renewables is tiny compared with what the private sector would spend with the right market signal.

Germany has introduced a feed-in law that has triggered a solar revolution. The European Union has an emissions trading system, nine American states have done the same. The inconsistency in Australian government policy is mirrored in Labor's response. On the one hand it will ratify the Kyoto Protocol but on the other, it will not stop deforestation. Globally the destruction of forests produces more emissions than urban transport.

But Labor backs the Howard government's plans for decades more destruction of Tasmania's ancient forests, which are also our largest carbon sinks, including Gunns destructive proposed pulp mill. The Greens want

Australia to have, and the world must have, an 80% or 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This nation should be the world leader in environmental technology, environmental business, environmental exports and wealth and job creation.

The Greens would also end the decades of starving funds from trains, trams, buses and ferries. Our ideal is free public transport. We would retrofit our cities to bring fast, clean, on-time trains, buses and trams to every populous precinct. Before John Howard came to power, Australia produced as many solar panels as Japan. Now Japan produces nearly half the world's solar panels and Australia produces less than one per cent. That is because the Japanese government has both financed research and development, and priced carbon to drive investment in commercialisation.

The constant government refrain that we need to develop new technology is disingenuous. We already have the technology to achieve deep cuts in greenhouse emissions. What is desperately needed is a market to provide the incentive to commercialise existing technology. Beyond climate change and besides rising interest rates, there are other issues stalking the Howard government's future.

In 2003 I challenged President Bush here in our Parliament, to end the incarceration, after torture but without trial, of Australian David Hicks at Guantanamo Bay. Four unforgivable years later, the Prime Minister should ring the President and have Hicks returned to Australia's justice system immediately.

Australia's involvement in the Iraq war is entirely John Howard's mistake. He ignored hundreds of thousands of his fellow citizens who turned out across the nation in early 2003 calling for Australia, like Canada and New Zealand, to stay out of this reckless and bloody Bush administration venture.

Australians have more material wealth now than ever before but we are no happier because we live on the treadmill of the market economy. We have no time. We work harder, longer hours over seven days a week and it has been made worse by the Howard government's industrial relations legislation.

There is less and less family time. Weekends have gone. Our old people are too often lonely and our children are too often at risk. There is not enough time for recreation, school sport, visiting friends, socialising, thinking, reading for pleasure, staying healthy, being actively involved in the civic life of our communities.

How can you describe a government that has put its people on a treadmill and devised ways to keep families from spending time with each other as having family values?

We want to help grow more of our own food as a nation and as a community, and become more self-reliant. We especially back organic food – healthy, drought-resistant, family-farm organic food. Who does not want to support our own farmers and rural communities? Yet, free trade agreements, like the US Australia Free Trade Agreement, end up exemplifying market failure.

And isn't it time global air and sea transport paid properly for its massive cost in terms of climate change? It makes no sense to effectively subsidise imported orange juice from Brazil while farmers in the Riverina feed their oranges to cattle. Water is another example of market failure. Commonsense says that cotton and rice irrigation are not a good idea on the world's driest continent.

**Adelaide Voices** December 2006-January 2007

# Howard's Australia: Division, Deceit and Distraction

**GREG COMBET** DELIVERED THE ANNUAL HAWKE LECTURE AT ADELAIDE TOWN HALL IN NOVEMBER 2006. THE FOLLOWING IS AN EDITED VERSION OF HIS LECTURE.

**A**lthough Australians differ amongst themselves over many issues, our national identity and beliefs have been broadly underpinned by a shared aspiration for economic prosperity, the attainment of a fair society, and security from external threat.

Our nationhood was founded in a policy consensus around these three pillars.

But at this early point in the 21st century there is no consensus. Rather, there is division and deliberate deceit and distraction from the real issues.

Political opportunism, divisiveness and disregard for civil rights and democratic principle is evident at unprecedented levels. The long-term economic, environmental, social justice and security issues are not being effectively addressed by the current Federal Government.

***The times demand a national debate about some fundamental questions: What are our economic challenges? What can Government do to address them? What work-place rights should underpin future economic prosperity? Is our system of government able to meet the coming social and environmental challenges? What can be done to improve the quality of our democracy and public policymaking?***

We have a government that has consolidated its power through division, dishonesty and opportunism. It is prepared to unleash every evil spectre including racism, xenophobia and contempt for those unable to fend for themselves, for political gain. It is shameless in the face of exposure of its dishonesty and incompetence about Iraq, refugees throwing their children overboard, and the AWB.

This is a government which is prepared to indefinitely imprison men, women and children on desolate islands for the crime of seeking a better life; a government which has squandered the proceeds of an historic economic boom while failing to invest in long-term prosperity; a government which has handed massive tax cuts to people who don't need them while cutting off meagre benefits from those who most need help.

The assertion of the labour movement's values, our commitment to tolerance, our aspiration for social and

economic justice, our respect for civil and democratic rights, these are the foundation stones of our alternative agenda. They stand in sharp contrast to the values demonstrated by the Howard government.

Democratic values translate into practical rights. Collective worker organisation through freely operating trade unions is a central element of democracy, and yet unions are under threat in this country.

The right to organise and freely associate in a union belongs with the right to vote, to assemble peacefully, to speak openly and to be tried in public by one's peers. Free trade unions, not controlled by governments or employers, are important guarantors of democratic rights.

We have a government that has consolidated its power through division, dishonesty and opportunism.

In our own country, the fight of the shearers and other workers in the 1890s was formative to our own democratic history. The industrial turmoil of the time directly contributed to the formation by the trade unions of the Australian Labor Party, to the support of the labour movement for Federation, and the establishment of a constitutional means for preventing and settling industrial disputes.

This history demonstrates the significance to our democracy of the right of workers to join together in and be represented by a union. It is basic to consideration of the Howard government's industrial relations laws.

The Howard government's attack on workers' rights is an attack on democratic values that goes well beyond industrial relations. It is part of a concerted move away from the consensus that has characterised much of Australia's history.

Initiatives like Medicare, Family Benefits, additional payments to low-paid workers under awards, and universal superannuation were all directed towards combining economic competitiveness with fairness - an approach ultimately abandoned by the Howard government.

John Howard's industrial relations laws demonstrate the belief that economic prosperity and fairness are mutually exclusive - that we can only compete internationally by attacking workers' rights and the safety net.

National economic wellbeing and fairness in the workplace are not mutually inconsistent. In fact, I assert the contrary proposition - that the achievement of economic prosperity demands that workers' rights be respected. Experience demonstrates, particularly in the Australian context, that cooperative workplaces deliver productivity.

*continued page 10*

# IMPERIALISM'S 'WAR ON TERROR'



**W**e live in a world of one superpower. Unlike previous periods of a certain level of temporary balance between superpowers, we now have a world dominated by the most massive economic and military power in history.

Whilst the USA/US imperialism is being challenged to a degree and at certain levels by other centres of capital, centres driven by the profit motive (such as EEU, Japan, Russia, China and India), US imperialism is still the superpower of the world.

The US maintains approximately 769 military sites in 39 overseas locations. It has approximately 386,000 troops deployed outside its territory. It maintains a military presence in more than 155 countries and territories. In addition, it has 127,000 troops (approx.) deployed on sea.

In economic terms, if we look at just the area of East Asia and Oceania, our area is the fastest growing region in the world, mainly driven by growth in China. The net annual FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) of \$54 billion (US dollars) has doubled in the last ten years.

The US is the biggest foreign investor in the region surpassing even Japan in the area and the region represents about one-third of all US trade and the region's largest trading 'partner'.

The major vehicles facilitating the US economic offensive

in the world and in our region (in competition against China and Japan in particular) are the IMF, WB, WTO, so-called free trade agreements, ASEAN and APEC.

The US and other centres of capital have as their foreign policy objectives the seeking and securing of:

- cheaper labour
- cheaper raw materials and material resources
- greater productivity
- new fields of investment for surplus capital
- free markets and free trade (so-called) so that the strong can dominate the weak

Free Trade Agreements are the predominant weapons used to further the imperialist offensive.

Their military power is used to protect and defend the most favourable conditions for capital, for the owners of capital in their home base.

*'The hidden hand of the market,' Thomas Friedman, the Pulitzer-prize winning foreign policy columnist for the New York Times opined, 'will never work without a hidden fist – McDonald's cannot flourish without a McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.'*

The administration of George H W Bush initiated a reconsideration of US national security policy in light of the changing global situation. The report, completed in March 1992 and known as the *Defense Planning Guidance*, was written under the supervision of Paul Wolfowitz, then undersecretary of policy in the Defence Department. It indicated that the chief national-security goal of the United States must be one of 'precluding the emergence of any potential global competitor.'

In recent years the US has invaded Iraq and Afghanistan and prepared the way for the invasion and occupation of Somalia by their puppet government in Ethiopia by direct aggression and military intervention against the government of that country.

In previous years, just to mention a few they supported Saddam Hussein's invasion and aggression against Iran in 1980, intervened in Lebanon in the early 1980s, intervened to help overthrow the Nicaraguan government, intervened in Guatemala and El Salvador, invaded and occupied Granada in 1983, invaded Panama in 1989, and used Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait (which it did not discourage), for large scale military intervention in the Middle East in 1991.

In the 1990s the US intervened militarily in the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

These are but a few examples of the US exercising its imperial ambition.

We are told constantly that the reasons for the United States military adventures are purely altruistic - to remove a tyrant, to prevent bloodshed, to spread democracy or

to fight terrorism - the world's policemen, they infer.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

For example: what could be the reason for the US supporting the overthrow of the government of Somalia, a government that had restored stability to Somalia after years of lawlessness and the rule of clan warlords. It was the first time the people of Somalia had had peace in over 15 years.

The shops and airport were opened for the first time, people were beginning to be mobile again, the local business community and people supported the peace and stability and now it is destroyed by the US and its agents. Why?

Two reasons. Oil and gas! Four US oil giants, namely Conoco, Chevron, Amoco and Philips had been granted concessions to oil and gas in nearly two-thirds of Somalia by the overthrown warlord dictator just prior to the establishment of the first stable and peaceful government in over fifteen years.

Now again their concessions are secure. Somalia is also a strategic location at the mouth of the Red Sea and the gateway to the Suez Canal and the Middle East.

Afghanistan and Iraq are similar cases in point.

At 11am on September 11th the Bush administration had already announced that Al Qaeda was responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York.

This was before any in-depth police investigation. At 11pm that night the 'war on terrorism' had been launched.

The decision was made to wage war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Barely four weeks later Afghanistan was bombed and invaded by US troops. How long does it take to prepare for a major war like that?

We know now of course that Al Qaeda was in fact the creation of US CIA, created to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden was also a CIA asset. Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda were also used by the CIA to help trigger ethnic conflict and destabilise Yugoslavia.

We must note that the US seems to have dropped all interest in pursuing Osama bin Laden. Is he still a CIA asset?

The war on terrorism has also been used as a pretext to not only wage war in Afghanistan and Iraq but to repeal constitutional rights and aspects of the rule of law in the US and other countries including Australia.

We also now know that the Taliban government, overthrown by the USA in Afghanistan, came to power as a direct result of US military aid in 1996.

No sooner had the Taliban taken Kabul in 1996 than a delegation was whisked off to Houston Texas for meetings with officials of the Unocal Corporation regarding the construction of the Trans-Afghan oil pipeline.

It should also be pointed out that Osama bin Laden was on the FBI's most wanted list and had a multimillion dollar price on his head well before September 11 because of other terrorist attacks on US embassies.

Yet again we now know that negotiations took place between Osama and the CIA two months prior to September 11 at an American hospital in Dubai where bin Laden was seeking treatment. This was while he was on the FBI's most-wanted list.

Enemy No.1 in a US hospital in Dubai negotiating with the CIA, the US's head of station in Dubai?

According to Le Figaro: *Dubai ... was the backdrop of a secret meeting between Osama bin Laden and the local CIA agent in July (2001). A partner of the administration of the American hospital in Dubai claims that 'public enemy number one' stayed at this hospital between the 4th and 14th of July. While he was hospitalised, bin Laden received visits from many members of his family as well as prominent Saudis and Emiratis. During the hospital stay, the local CIA agent, known to many in Dubai, was seen taking the main elevator of the hospital to go (up) to bin Laden's hospital room. A few days later the CIA man bragged to a few friends about having visited bin Laden. Authorised sources say that on July 15th, the day after bin Laden returned to Quetta (Pakistan), the CIA agent was called back to headquarters. In the pursuit of its investigations, the FBI discovered 'financing agreements' that the CIA had been developing with its 'Arab friends' for years. The Dubai meeting is, so it*

***We are told constantly that the reasons for the United States military adventures are purely altruistic - to remove a tyrant, to prevent bloodshed, to spread democracy or to fight terrorism - the world's policemen, they infer. Nothing could be further from the truth.***

would seem, within the logic of 'a certain American policy'. [America's War On Terrorism – Chossudovsky]

According to Dan Rather, CBS: *bin Laden was back in hospital one day before the 9/11 attacks, on September 10, this time courtesy of America's indefectible ally Pakistan. Pakistan's military intelligence (ISI) told CBS that bin Laden had received dialysis treatment in Rawalpindi, in a military hospital at Pak Army's headquarters. [America's War On Terrorism – Chossudovsky]*

*If the CBS report is accurate and Osama had indeed been admitted to the Pakistan military hospital on the evening of September 10 (local time), courtesy of America's ally, he was in all likelihood still in hospital in Rawalpindi on the 11th of September when the attacks occurred. Even if he had been released from the hospital the following morning on the 11th (local time), in all probability his whereabouts were known to the US officials on September 12, when Secretary of State Colin Powell initiated negotiations with Pakistan with a view to arresting and extraditing bin Laden. [America's War On Terrorism – Chossudovsky]*

The US war on terrorism is a sham. It is being used to try to cover up the imperial ambitions of the biggest US corporations and their government.

The people of the US, the American people have got it right, as the recent elections in the US show. How dare this Australian Prime Minister of ours criticise those who want to get out of Iraq.

The US people want out, the Australian people want

out and the world's people want out. Howard knows that. What does democracy mean to him in reality when he flies in the face of world opinion?

I quote Pat Buchanan, Conservative US politician prior to the Iraq war.

*'We will soon launch an imperial war on Iraq with all the 'On To Berlin' bravado with which French poilus and British tommies marched in August 1914. But this invasion will not be the cakewalk neo-conservatives predict ... for a militant Islam that holds in thrall scores of millions of true believers will never accept George Bush dictating the destiny of the Islamic world ...*

*The one endeavour at which Islamic peoples excel is expelling imperial powers by terror and guerrilla war. They drove the Brits out of Palestine and Aden, the French out of Algeria, the Russians out of Afghanistan, the Americans out of Somalia and Beirut, the Israelis out of Lebanon ... We have started up the road to empire and over the next hill we will meet those who went before.'*

*Pat Buchanan ended his prophecy with imperishable words: 'The only lesson we learn from history is that we do not learn from history.'*

Let us look at our world of the one dominant capitalist superpower.

We have militarism, war, foreign military bases, aggression and occupation.

We have mass poverty and starvation in the world.

We have a relentless destruction of the environment.

We have millions who are homeless and who have been driven from their land.

We have the growth in the use of torture as government policy, the undermining of the right to a fair trial, the right to representation, the right not to be unfairly detained, losing the right to exclude so-called evidence gained from torture and extreme pressure.

Poverty, starvation, environmental destruction, homelessness, erosion of democratic rights and human rights are not just phenomena or concerns in the Third World or the poverty stricken parts of the world.

In Australia, for example, the labour laws are the most undemocratic and oppressive in the OECD countries, the anti-terror and sedition laws seriously threaten many democratic rights, workers' wages and conditions are being driven down as we speak, the treatment of many refugees is amongst the worst in the so-called civilised world, and the Federal Government has shown contempt for the most basic of human rights, such as the right to a fair trial and the right not to be detained without charge.

These are the trends and directions in most of the so-called advanced capitalist countries.

These are trends away from liberalism and pluralism to authoritarianism and even fascism.

What can be done? What is being done?



Only, the world's people, united, can liberate human kind from this catastrophe. The corporations in their drive for profit above all else will not do it because they are the cause of our problems. The politicians who represent big business won't do it because they have chosen the wrong side.

Only the people of the world on the move, awakening, protesting, resisting, fighting, can liberate the world and build a new world based on peace, stability, wellbeing and justice.

***The people of the world are on the move. Change for the better is the order of the day in Latin America. Opposition to aggression and war in Iraq is massive and widespread in the world. It has all but finished Bush and Blair politically and hopefully it will finish Howard.***

Struggles for freedom, independence and liberation are occurring in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Philippines, Colombia, Palestine, India, Nepal and many other parts of the world.

Just before Christmas I attended four international conferences in ten days in Cebu, the second largest island in the Philippines. The conferences were on the subjects of jobs and justice, the US war on terror and the International League of People's Struggles (ILPS).

This was the first ILPS East Asia and Oceania consultative conference. There were one hundred and forty-four participants from eleven countries in Asia, Europe and the Americas.

The ILPS is a worldwide body representing anti-imperialist and democratic mass peoples' organisations, established to promote and develop the struggles of the world's peoples, including workers, peasants, farmers, women, youth, professionals and others; struggles against oppression and exploitation.

It was established just a few years ago (2001) to be part of the worldwide mass actions against military alliances and wars of aggression, against foreign military bases and economic plunder and exploitation.

The origins of the ILPS can best be described from their booklet of 2001 called 'Dare to Struggle for a New World'.

*We come from various democratic and revolutionary traditions and currents in various countries. We are a broad range of mass formations, taking the anti-imperialist and democratic line and seeking to build an international united front in order to arouse, organise and mobilise the people in their hundreds of millions.*

*Our League is inspired by the anti-imperialist and democratic mass struggles that have arisen since the beginning of the 20th century. It also reflects and draws strength from the recent anti-imperialist and democratic mass struggles that have arisen since the decade of the 1990s.*

*Among our delegations in this assembly are those that have waged various forms of mass struggles for national independence, democracy and socialism in their own countries and on an international scale.*

*They have participated in international protest campaigns against US wars of aggression such as those against Iraq and former Yugoslavia, and against such US-dominated multilateral formations as the APEC in Manila in 1996 and in Vancouver in 1997, the WTO in Seattle in 1999, the IMF and World Bank in Washington DC in 2000, the Group of 7 in Okinawa in 2000 and World Bank in Prague 2000 and so on.*

*It is appropriate and in its best interests for the League to trace its origins from the great revolutionary mass struggles against imperialism. The League seeks to attract and mobilise the broadest possible range of mass formations for the anti-imperialist and democratic struggle.*

It has a charter which supports and struggles for the following:

- *the cause for national liberation, democracy and social liberation*
- *socio-economic development for oppressed and exploited countries and nations and social equity for all working people*
- *human rights*
- *the cause of just peace and struggles against wars of aggression, and against nuclear, biological, chemical, missile and other weapons of mass destruction*
- *promotion of trade union and other democratic rights, improvement of wage and living conditions against all forms of intensifying exploitation of labour and the destruction of the working class organisations in their pursuit of the historic mission of fighting for social liberation*
- *agrarian reform and rights of peasants, farm workers and fisherfolk*
- *the cause of women's liberation and rights against all forms of sexual discrimination, exploitation and violence*
- *rights of the youth to education and employment*
- *children's rights against child labour, sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation*
- *rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities*
- *the rights of teachers, researchers and other educational personnel*
- *the right of the people to health and the rights of health workers*
- *science and technology for the people and development, environmental protection against the destruction of the foundations of human life – the right to safe and healthy food and water, and opposition to manipulation of genetic technology for profit*
- *arts and culture, and free-flow of information in the service of the people*
- *justice and indemnification for the victims of illegal arrest and detention*
- *rights and welfare of homeless persons, refugees and migrant workers*
- *rights of aged people towards a life of dignity and secure existence*
- *rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people against discrimination, intolerance and homophobia.*

*It shall have a broad mass character, shall not be subordinate to any political party, government or religious authorities and shall afford equality to all participating organisations. It shall strive to realise the unity, cooperation and coordination*

*of anti-imperialist and democratic struggles throughout the world.*

The ILPS is an international rallying force for the people in their struggles.

The ILPS, arising from these pre-Christmas conferences I attended, is seeking a number of considerations by people in Australia as well as other parts of Oceania and South-East Asia.

1. To coordinate and support and popularise the struggles of the people in various parts of the region.
2. To coordinate and support opposition to militarism and foreign military bases in the region.
3. To organise a major international conference or another event to expose the real purpose of APEC when the APEC conference takes place in Sydney in September of this year.
4. To contribute to the research and exposure of the impact of imperialism, militarism and economic plunder on the people of South-East Asia and Oceania.

To help do all of this they are hoping that Australians will establish a chapter of ILPS in Australia and ultimately throughout Oceania as an organising vehicle - as a vehicle for a mass peoples' movement in Australia.

At these conferences in Cebu I heard firsthand of the magnificent and courageous struggle being waged in the region by the various peoples against militarism, war and plunder in enormously difficult conditions.

In the Philippines for example: from 2001 to 6th July 2006 more than 700 political killings have been documented. Three hundred belonged to cause-oriented organisations and the rest were civilians who have been accused of being active in, or supporting the people's democratic movement. There were 26 human rights workers, 44 media persons, 16 church ministers and leaders, 20 peasants, 65 women, 60 workers, 43 children and 10 lawyers. This year alone more than 90 civilians were summarily executed, including 9 lawyers and I judge.

Yet there the struggle goes on, vigorously, with enthusiasm and optimism.

Whilst I was in the Philippines four more activists were assassinated on the streets - three unionists and one human rights lawyer. The assassins simply walked away.

The US authorities and intelligence apparatus and the corrupt Philippines government (a close ally of the US war on terrorism), hope to wipe out the democratic liberation movement by terrorism, assassination and oppression. They will fail; they are failing. The corrupt, fascist president of the Philippines has her days numbered because of the mass opposition movement of the Filipino people.

The Australian people are on the move also. They are beginning to see through Howard. They are demanding justice for David Hicks. They are demanding action to save the globe. They are demanding withdrawal from a disastrous and unjust war in Iraq.

Times are good for major social and political change. All it takes is organisation and commitment. The people united will never be defeated.

**Howard's Australia:** division, deceit and distraction (cont'd)

Adequate investment and leadership in infrastructure and innovation is one of the keys to productivity improvement, which will ensure that all our citizens will have access to decent living standards.

Much of the infrastructure investment and reform that is required is within state jurisdictions, and yet a national approach is needed. Just consider some of the priorities - water, electricity and energy, transport, facilities to deliver education and skills training - all are state responsibilities.

A national infrastructure council with the task of identifying priorities, rationalising regulation and establishing clear responsibility for each sector with one tier of government, whether state or Commonwealth, could help to strip some of the political posturing from the process.

The union movement is heavily involved in superannuation. We would support the creation of a market for nation building infrastructure bonds, allowing workers' retirement savings to be invested in the future of the country.

A further great economic task is to encourage innovation, particularly in manufacturing.

Education and skills will also be pivotal issues around which to develop a democratic consensus. We currently face manifest problems in these areas.

In Australia, we need to confront some substantial educational issues. In particular, the lack of support for quality public education for all our children.

Climate change is an important challenge that also falls into this category. If we don't meet the challenge of climate change, we will be sentencing ourselves not only to the widely discussed environmental impacts, but also to growing social division and international instability.

Since September 11, 2001 and the subsequent Bali bombing, Australians have focused more on external threat than at any time since World War 2. Five years on from September 11, it appears to me that a substantial reappraisal of our position is required.

No matter how repugnant the regime of Saddam Hussein, there can be little doubt that the invasion of Iraq has been disastrous. It has escalated the terrorist threat. Arrogance, false and concocted intelligence, opportunism, corruption, naivety and the paving stones of good intentions have all contributed.

The Australian community deserves to be engaged in an honest reappraisal of these issues and the mistakes that have been made.

Free trade unions, not controlled by governments or employers, are important guarantors of democratic rights.

In conclusion, we need as a nation, more than at any time since Australian Federation, to develop a new democratic consensus for the future and the core of this consensus must involve an honest appraisal of the economic, social and political challenges at present and in the future.

**Courtesy: Adelaide Voices** February/March 2007

*The Melbourne Unitarian Church sends its best wishes to Jeffrey Teagle.*

## Signing Off

My period of office as General Secretary will draw to a close when I pass the chalice across to the Reverend Steve Dick, as Chief Executive, at our British General Assembly Annual Meeting at the University of Hertfordshire on 13 April 2007. Evidence of the forthcoming change will become obvious when Steve and his new PA, Peter Teets, commence work at Unitarian Headquarters later this week.

I have greatly enjoyed my thirteen year tenure, especially when networking with Unitarians and Universalists – at home and abroad. Soon after coming into office I was privileged to be involved in the formation of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU). I am pleased that this body has taken root and will continue to provide a vital link with our worldwide communities.

Our British General Assembly finances took a heavy downturn in 2001 and with the consequent staff downsizing and general economic constraints I had to greatly restrict any plans for overseas travel. I am glad to report that I leave the General Assembly in a much-recovered state thanks to reforms in the leadership, governance and funding structures.

I would like you to know how much I have valued the regular arrival of *The Beacon*. This has kept me abreast of your news and events, just as if your church was on my doorstep.

My parting wishes are that you move from strength to strength and keep Steve Dick just as well informed.

Yours sincerely

**Jeffrey J. Teagle**

General Secretary 1994 - 2007  
British Unitarian General Assembly

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# from our readers



## Dear Peter

Appreciated as ever for enlightening BEACON.

Sincerely

**R. Daly, NSW**

## Dear Beacon readers

It is with much sadness that I write this letter having been informed that Sonny Brown, an old friend, had passed away recently.

As members of the now defunct Australia/USSR Friendship Society, it was Sonny and husband Bruce, (Bruce predeceased Sonny by some years) who had given to me, in the early 1980s, my first copy of the Beacon.

Both Sonny and Bruce were staunch supporters of the Beacon and advocates for socialism, having on two occasions visited the USSR before its demise as a socialist society.

On several occasions during her long support of The Beacon, Sonny had expressed her views on the 'Our Readers' pages.

Sadly missed by all who knew Sonny.

In friendship

**W. Mudge, Qld**

## Greetings

Congratulations to US (that's NOT the Un-united States!) for the Hicks campaign so far.

One avenue that hasn't yet been pursued is the Office of the Governor-General of Australia.

A couple of years ago I was issued a faulty passport (faulty in that when it got damp in the tropics from body sweat, the ink ran) and at Brisbane Immigration Control I was told that it was illegible and had to be replaced.

Not a problem?

When I applied for a replacement I was charged the full price (at the time \$138) and only paid under protest as I was again going overseas and needed the document.

After much discussion I reverted to my multi-mail system and sent out a bunch of letters, all with the footnote 'cc Other Interested Parties' (let each one of them sweat and dare not to ignore, not knowing who else is on the case).

My list started with the Governor-General and worked down (or up if you're a Republican) to my local representative whose office initially asserted 'that when you are in Opposition there's nothing you can do'.

In my letter to the Governor-General (I was lucky - William Dean was the only gentleman in the whole paper trail), I told him the story and explained that:

'I understand that YOUR office generally does not concern itself with these matters BUT As Australian passports are issued in YOUR name and (then) under YOUR signature, I think it only right that you should be made aware of the nonsense being perpetrated in your name'.

I got a quick reply from his clerk thanking me for informing the GG and confirming that it was not his general function.

Soon after that I started to get movement on my claim (for partial refund only - I had had 6 months use from the faulty document).

It wasn't as simple as that really and the fight went on for about 6 months more - but I eventually got the FULL refund of my replacement passport with the explanation that mine was only one of three passports of that edition with which they had complaints.

I tell this story as in the David Hicks case the 'Government of the Day' has proven itself both negligent and incompetent - and as an arm of that government under the Westminster System the Governor-General must either 'give advice' or 'share the blame'.

Survival of our democratic system demands no less.

Regards

**G.J. (Jim) Stevens**

**BANYO**

## Dear Peter

I only recently subscribed to the Beacon and the February issue was the best yet.

From far away I am coming to identify with the Melbourne church and only wish it was here in my backyard. I'd love to go to each Sunday service and become personally involved in your church.

Hey, how about starting a shuttle bus service between the Gold Coast and East Melbourne each Sunday? I'll be the first in line to buy a season ticket.

Oh well, if I can't be with you all every week, at least the wonderful Beacon will keep me close to so many important issues.

Thank you for restoring my faith in humanity. Thank you for making so much sense. Thank you for making me feel complete and thank you for making me feel simply good.

Sincerely

**Noel Marchiandi**

**Qld**

## Dear Friends

I have been a subscriber to the Beacon for more than 40 years and your publication has always been a leader in information, taking the side of facts and events not brought to our notice by the billionaire media barons who own our newspapers, radio and TV stations.

Maintain the rage, indeed as must we all.

**D. Lombard**

**NSW**

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IN THIS ISSUE:

**Human rights abuses in the Philippines**

**Ten Years to Catastrophe**

**Howard's Australia: Division, Deceit and Distraction**

**Imperialism's 'War on Terror'**

**Signing Off (by Jeffrey J. Teagle)**

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Loris Schlotterlein

Julie Stafford

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Opinions expressed in articles and letters etc., in **The Beacon** are those of the writers themselves and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the Melbourne Unitarian Church.

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