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The Australian Government's decision not to send a senior political envoy to the summit of the U.N. World Summit on Social Development held in Geneva in June 2000, arose because the UN committee was critical of Australia's record on indigenous affairs, particularly in relation to mandatory sentencing laws in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The Foreign Minister accused the UN of 'a blatantly political and partisan approach'. Well, Australia, ever ready to criticise everyone else, can't take it and can't take the truth; and now want to distance itself from the UN.

Who is the boss in Fiji? The coup in Fiji will disrupt the Australian corporate bottom line.

Westpac, ANZ, Colonial, Qantas, Ansett Aust., QBE Insurance, News Corp, Fosters, Vodophone Pacific, and the dozens of clothing

manufacturers and wholesalers. Fiji's tourism is owned in substantial blocks by Australian airlines. News Corp. in charge of the 'news, will only tell us what they want us to know. Any news of class divisions are swept aside. The Indian people were brought to Fiji by the British colonialists and were imposed on to the indigenous people and their traditional ownership of the tribal land. The growth of the capitalist industry and the number of people who sell their labor power in order to live is coming into collision with the traditional land ownership. Whatever the outcome of the present struggle, the parliamentary system is not going solve the fundamental

problems or satisfy the workers in their struggle against reactionary leaders and the foreign monopolies. The working class will continue to struggle against imperialism, the great chiefs, the local capitalists and other reactionaries. Australian workers will support the right of the people for independence. Thousands of people of West Papua played mock battles on the streets of Jayapura and chanted "Papua Merdeka" (Free West Papua). They sang and danced for the opening of the Papuan People's Congress... "We are sick of fighting the Indonesians.. we want to gain our independence from Indonesia... We are a people in our own right... the theme of the congress is to straighten the history of West

Papua... In an arc to the north of Australia the people of the islands of the Pacific are demanding independence. These Islands are very rich in natural resources. Foreign monopolies including Australia have been

In 1953, in a toast before the New York Press Club, John Swinton, former Chief of Staff of the New York Times and the "Dean of his Profession" stated: (part extracted)

"If I allowed my honest opinions to appear in one issue of my paper, before twenty-four hours my occupation would be gone. The business of journalists is to destroy the truth; to pervert; to vilify; to fawn at the feet of mammon, and to sell this country and this race for their daily bread. We are the tools and vessels for rich men behind the scenes. We are the jumping jacks, they pull the strings and we dance. Our talents, our possibilities and our lives are all the property of other men. We are intellectual prostitutes."



reaping a rich harvest of profit from the mines and the timber, the people have other ideas. They are engaged in various forms of armed struggle for their independence. The working class in Australia, engaged in a struggle to protect their own conditions under constant attack must include demands for the independence of our Pacific sisters and brothers. The march over the Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of reconciliation with the Aboriginal people was outstanding. Half a million (some say one million) people braved cold and rain to express their solidarity with the indigenous people and in defiance of the Liberal Party in power who refuse to apologize to the indigenous people for the past crimes committed against them... There are 22 Kosovars on the run in Australia. They have escaped the clutches of the Immigration. The

government announced that anyone harbouring a Kosovar faces 10 years in jail and \$110,000 fine and yet Tasmanians are queueing up to offer help to the people on the run... In June, in the freezing cold, about 700 Middle East boat people imprisoned in Woomera and Pt Hedland broke out; they tore down the wire fences. There is not much public sympathy for a government who imprisons refugees. The government has promised to speed up the processing of the boat people. It's up to us to see they do it. Go and see you local Federal Member and tell him or her what you think.

The Asia Pacific regional meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) will be held in Melbourne on September 11-13. WEF is linked to the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO

The big monopolies will try to decide how to keep capitalism going forever at the expense of the people of the world. The previous meetings of the gang of imperialists and their lackeys have been brought to a standstill by the wrath of the demonstrating people. A coalition of organizations is organizing a fitting rebuff to these enemies of the people. Make it as big as the walk over the Bridge! Struggle is on the move all over the world; especially in Peru, Nepal, India, the Philippines where armed struggle led by their Communist Parties and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is haunting the imperialists led by the USA. Victory to our sister and brothers all over the world engaged in armed struggle... Mao said, Political power grows out of the barrel of the gun...

East Timor The news from E Timor. At present the UN is in charge of E Timor, and is reluctant to share power with the E Timor leader Xanana Gusmao. The UN chiefs predict ET will embark on independence in 2001 and the USA agrees!. Nine months after liberation more than 1000 Falantil guerillas are camped in wretched conditions around the mountain township of Aileu, still waiting a decision on their role, if any, in the new East Timor. Are the fighters who fought for 25 years to be marginalised? East Timor's UN transitional administrator Sergio Vieira de Mello says UNTAET and Australia will soon begin renegotiating the treaty on the exploration and revenues of oil and natural gas in the Timor Gap waters separating the two countries..... The World Bank and UNTAET in Dili signed agreements to bring education and agriculture programmes for ET under the

World Bank administrated Trust Fund for E Timor. Bishop Belo East Timor's spiritual leader! has written to the UN administration and foreign health and aid groups demanding a stop to the use of "artificial" family planning methods in the territory. To return to the oil, East Timor seeks a mid way boundary with Australia putting key oil projects in East Timor waters. spokesman for the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) Many hundreds of Australian workers are doing reconstruction work in E Timor many without pay, thousands of people have given money and goods for the Timorese. We have to support the Timorese so that their oil is not stolen by the oil monopolies, that the fighters are not side lined and that the UN, a very discredited body gets out and hands over the reins of power to the E Timorese. Long live the independence of E Timor! (info@eatimor.com)

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IRAQ: REPARATIONS/COMPENSATION: THE DEBT BURDEN

The endless war against Iraq continues its deadly course. A small nation of 20 million people has been singled out for harsh, inhuman punishment. The burden of punishment inflicted is worse than that meted out to Germany after World War 1. Yet the world's press has been strangely silent.

Judged by the standards of a cruel and bloody 20th century Iraq's "crime" ranks as little more than a minor misdemeanour. Yet an entire nation suffers a decade of starvation and deprivation, death and destruction. Ten years on Iraq is still subjected to:

The harshest sanctions/embargo in history

A relentless bombing campaign

Increasing malnutrition and disease

A sixfold increase in childhood leukemia and cancer related deaths linked to depleted uranium (DU) incorporated into weapons used during the Gulf War

A huge, and growing, reparations debt

Occasional media reports give limited, bland coverage of UN reports on the effects of sanctions. Brief mention is made of deaths caused by American and British bombing attacks. No mention is made of the spiraling debt accruing as reparations/compensation. Iraq is deemed liable for hundreds of claims stemming from the Gulf War and its aftermath. International claims now total a staggering 300 billion. And there is more to come. Add to this claims yet to be processed, interest, and payments to lawyers and Commissioners and you have the people of Iraq facing debt payments into the 22nd century.

This insurmountable debt burden is unacceptable. The one true fact is that Iraq can't pay--ever. There is no way on earth the claims can be satisfied. Yet teams of judges, lawyers and press officers spend their days pouring over the 2.6 million claims, lodged by 100 countries, with the Geneva based United Nations Compensation Commission. In June 1994, when the Commission had completed 18 months work, a report in The Washington Report On Middle East Affairs said "so far they have managed to pay only themselves".

HOW COULD THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS ARISE?

The UN Compensation Commission, set up under the terms of Security Council Resolution 692 in 1991, was supposed to adjudicate and pay out war claims against Iraq. Claims are for financial loss allegedly suffered as a result of the Gulf War. Compensation funds, plus funding of the Commission, were to come from Iraq's oil sales. To date the documentation involved is so massive that 3,500 square metres of warehouse space has been leased to house the papers.

Resolution 692 provides for 30% of Iraq's oil revenues to be allocated for reparations. America pressed for 40-50%. However, as is now the case, 48% is allotted for reparations (the bulk of this to Kuwait), to Turkey for use of its oil export facilities and for the UN. This is the first time since the UN was set up that humanitarian aid is paid for by the country receiving it.

In addition a further amount is deducted for UN administration, monitoring, and inspections. All UN costs in Iraq are deducted. UN personnel in Iraq receive a higher remuneration than those in other posts.

Iraq began pumping oil in December 1996. "Oil-for-food", Security Council Resolution 986 has been operating for three and a half years. In that time Iraq has pumped \$29 billion worth of oil. Iraq's share of this is under \$8bn. Not a single cent of this money is handled by the government of Iraq. All proceeds of oil sales go into an account at the Bank National de Paris in New York. The various payments and allotments are made from this. At the time these arrangements were put in place, Sandy Burgher, US National Security Advisor, said "We see this as a way of making Iraq pay its debts".

The United States, though at first unwilling to allow "food-for-oil" to proceed, saw it as a way to mitigate against mounting pressure to lift the sanctions. So "food-for-oil", promoted as a means to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, became another method of keeping sanctions in place.

The belief was that selling oil at six monthly intervals and buying food and medicines with the proceeds would relieve the dire situation in Iraq. But this is far from the case. The situation re food and medicines has deteriorated. Countless items are embargoed or "on hold". "On hold" being the euphemism for refusing entry to, or holding up, items the 661 Committee (controlled by the US and Britain) decides could be used by the military or used to make chemical or biological weapons. Such items include all parts for repair of water and sewage treatment plants, chlorine, enriched baby milk and herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers. These items are also considered to have "dual use" -- may be used to make weapons or by the military.

WHILE IRAQ SUFFERS OTHERS ARE DOING VERY WELL

Every level of UN administration in Iraq is now paid for from Iraq's oil revenues. Prior to 1996 UN expenses including the building of large spacious headquarters and a telecommunications tower were paid for by money taken from Iraq's frozen assets. In June Middle East International quoted a senior Baghdad based diplomat as saying "The programme in Iraq is worth more to the United Nations than every other programme on the planet". Similar sentiments were expressed to this writer while in Iraq in 1998. The UN, it seems, is riding a nice little gravey train.

Many of the claims made to the Compensation Commission are ridiculous to say the least. Israel, for example, has lodged substantial claims. One is for damage to its flower industry. Israel exports cut flowers, Palestinians do the work. During the Gulf War Palestinians were refused entry into Israel. It seems, the work of tending the flowers was beyond the ability of the Israelis and the flowers died. Jordan is claiming \$8.6bn, twice its gross national product for the 1991 year. The war lasted 42 days of that year. Egypt is claiming billions in compensation for lost revenue from Egyptians working in Iraq who lost their jobs due to the war. This claim is twofold, being for loss of earnings to workers and loss to the state of monies sent back to worker's families which is spent in Egypt.

THE FUTURE

Present claims amount to \$15,000 for every man, woman and child in Iraq. This burden is on people whose currency has collapsed, who battle, daily, to find ways to feed their families and where sanctions have reduced salaries of professionals to \$3-5 a month. Many future generations will be paying the price.

Even if sanctions remain indefinitely there would never be enough money to pay off all the claims. If sanctions were lifted now, for the foreseeable future, Iraq could not pump enough oil to pay off the claims. The country's earnings from oil sold on the open market would be \$15-20 billion a year at most. With a third of the earnings siphoned off to pay claims, even under the best of scenarios, no-one can predict when claims would be settled. And this takes no account of interest, inflation or currency values. The money is just not there and never will be.

None of this takes into account Iraq's own huge external debt which will have to be repaid and serviced. When the embargo was imposed a decade ago this was estimated to be \$120bn. Nor does it take account of the massive cost of rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, deliberately destroyed during the war. These costs are estimated in billions of dollars.

At some point it will have to be admitted that debts owed by Iraq are uncollectable and must be written off. But that is not about to happen. Not while America and Britain maintain the harsh economic line they have taken toward Iraq. The claims are another handy political tool to use against the government of Iraq.

A solution must be found to redress this impossible situation. This state of affairs is not only impossible for Iraq but the flow-on effect will have repercussions, economically and politically, within the region and throughout the world.

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