The rise of anti-Muslim racism in Australia: who benefits?

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Since the mid 1990s, Australia experienced a cascade of moral panics and racist campaigns against Aborigines, Arabs, refugees and Muslims. The targetting of Muslims in Australia by the Howard government intensified dramatically from mid 2005. The paper outlines this offensive, the circumstances in which it occurred and answers the question 'who benefits?', using a framework neglected in even some of the richest contributions to the recent critical literature on racism in Australia.

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Since the mid 1990s, Australia has experienced a cascade of moral panics and racist campaigns against Aborigines, Arabs, refugees and Muslims. The rise of racism in Australia is well documented. But the treatment of the logic of the construction and reconstruction of racism has been less satisfactory. This paper examines recent developments in some detail and identifies the importance of class interests in explaining them. The section below outlines the resurgence of racism and argues that it is an effort to undo the achievements of anti-racist movements and the complement of neo-liberal economic policy. The following two sections draw on several very valuable studies to survey the shift in the Howard Government's racist attention towards Muslims, about 1.5 per cent of the population, roughly 300,000 people, and to sketch the historical background to anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism in Australia. In 2005, the Coalition Government's targetting of Muslims in Australia became much more explicit. An original analysis of this move and the dynamic behind it is the subject of section four. The next two sections assess arguments about who benefits from racism, and how racism is (re)constructed. The final section looks very briefly at implications for resistance to racism in Australia.

The actions of governments and mainstream political parties are at the centre of this study. The mass media and movements from below can also have a major impact on levels of racism. But there is a tendency to regard racial prejudice as a more or less static feature of Australian society, particularly on the part of those, like Blainey, Hanson and Howard, who defend it. A focus on deliberate political actions highlights the way racism is constructed and can, therefore be deconstructed, not through playful postmodern discourse analysis but by means of the practical, concrete political struggles of ordinary people, especially on the streets and in workplaces.

Rollback

One of the Howard government's priorities has been to roll back gains made by struggles against racism from the 1960s through to the 1990s. Decades of campaigning by Aborigines and white supporters eroded genocidal and paternalistic policies that denied civil rights and decent living standards to Aborigines, and stole their children. Through legislation, court decisions, pressure and purchases a few Aboriginal groups were able to regain a degree of control over some traditional lands. Much wider layers of people recognised that Aboriginal disadvantage was created by white society and Australian governments at all levels, and can only be overcome by shifts in public policy.

In relation to immigration, conservative governments diluted and then the Whitlam Labor Government in 1973 abolished the White Australia Policy. In addition to the decline in the flow of suitable 'white' immigrant labour for Australian industry and the growing importance of trade with Asian countries, anti-racist campaigning played a role in this shift. Particularly from the 1970s, migrants from areas outside North-western Europe and North America faced less prejudice and discrimination. At an official level, tolerance of non-Anglo cultures was embodied in the policy of 'multiculturalism' which became a system of government patronage through ethnic 'community leaders'.[1]

1   Andrew Jakubowicz, Michael Morrissey and Joanne Palser 'Ethnicity, class and social policy in Australia' *SWRC reports and proceedings* 46 Social Welfare Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Kensington, May 1984; Stephen Castles, Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis and Michael Morrissey *Mistaken identity: multiculturalism and the demise of nationalism in Australia* Pluto, Sydney 1988, pp. 53-54, 66, 70-78; and Jock Collins, Greg Noble, Scott Poynting and Paul Tabar *Kebabs, kids, cops and crime: youth, ethnicity and crime* Pluto, Annandale 2000, pp. 214-215.

It was not mainstream politicians but a prominent 'traditional' intellectual and a business leader who started rehabilitating racism, in the guise of defending mainstream culture in Australia.[2] Geoffrey Blainey, a conservative historian who made his name writing corporate histories, attacked the migration of Asians to Australia. Hugh Morgan, as the chief executive officer of a mining corporation and former president of the Mining Industry Council, had material interests threatened by Aboriginal land rights. Morgan was a prominent member of the Liberal Party and played an organising role in two rightwing think-tanks and was later, between 2003 and 2005, president of the Business Council of Australia. He denigrated Aboriginal culture, arguing that land rights would promote cannibalism and infanticide.[3]

In the racism of Morgan and Blainey, John Howard saw a formula for political success. He 'understood that economic liberalism on its own would not win elections' and complemented the politics of privatisations, cutting the welfare state and deregulating markets, especially the labour market, with 'a conservative social politics focused on the traditional nuclear family, individual responsibility and chauvinistic nationalism.'[4] In 1988, when he first tried to serve up this dish of profit-boosting economic policy and racism, it was not received well. He retreated from his initial position and, in May 1989 lost the leadership of the Liberal Party. But Howard continued to criticise the level of immigration and endorsed Blainey's denunciation of a 'black armband view of history', as presenting too 'gloomy' an account of Australia's past.[5]

'The Liberal Party turned back to embrace Howard's approach when they lost the "unlosable" 1993 federal election on a narrowly economic rationalist platform.'[6] By then Howard had fine-tuned his policy. He no longer emphasised the limited 'capacity of the community to absorb'[7] people from Asia and, in the context of the first stages of recovery from the recession of the early 1990s, his reservations about levels of immigration in general did not threaten to impose constraints on short term economic growth. The intensification of racism in Australia that Howard has promoted became an aspect of a ruling class agenda, the core of which is neo-liberal economic policies designed to restore profit rates. In this way, he came up with a distinctive answer to an important question: how do politicians and parties attract or maintain mass support even though their policies do not serve the interests of most of the middle class let alone the working class people (a large majority of the population) who vote for them?[8]

2   Here racism is understood as activity which constitutes or reinforces the oppression of a population defined in terms of its alleged biological or cultural characteristics. Racism has no real basis in either biology or cultural difference. Racism is ideas and practices of oppression constructed by racists. For a discussion of the use of cultural differences to justify racism see Paul Gilroy 'One nation under a groove: the cultural politics of "race" and racism in Britain' in Goldberg, David Theo (ed.) *Anatomy of racism* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1990, pp. 263-82. Gilroy points out that in recent racist discourses,

   culture is conceived along ethnically absolute lines, not as something intrinsically flued, changing, unstable, and dynamic, but as a fixed property of social groups rather than a relational field in which they encounter one another and live out social, historical relationships. When culture is brought into contact with race it is transformed into a pseudobiological property of communal life. (pp. 266-267)

   Also see Pierre-André Tagiueff 'The new cultural racism in France' *Telos* 83 Spring 1990 pp. 109-122; Kenan Malik *The meaning of race* Verso, London 1996, pp. 143-144, 184-188, 193-198.

3   Andrew Markus *Race: John Howard and the remaking of Australia* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest 2001, pp. 57-72.

4   Phil Griffiths 'Racism: whitewashing the class divide' in Rick Kuhn (ed.) *Class and struggle in Australia* Pearson Australia, Frenchs Forest 2005 p. 169, which draws on Markus *Race* pp. 85-86, 220-221; and conservative journalist Paul Kelly *The end of certainty: the story of the 1980s* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards 1992, pp. 418-419.

5   Geoffrey Blainey 'Drawing up a balance sheet of our history' *Quadrant* July-August 1993, 37 (7-8) pp. 10-15; Mark McKenna 'Different Perspectives on black armband history' Australian Parliament, Parliamentary Library, Research Paper 5, 10 November 1997, www.aph.gov.au/LIBRARY/pubs/rp/1997-98/98rp05.htm, accessed 30 January 2007.

6   Griffiths 'Racism' p. 170.

7   Geoff Kitney 'Howard push for curb on Asians' *Australian financial review* 2 August 1988, p. 1.

8   I am grateful to Scott MacWilliam for a discussion which helped me formulate this question more clearly.

Throughout Howard's term in office, racism has had an analogous function to Labor's Accord with the union movement. Both secured support for governments pursuing neo-liberal economic policies that were not themselves popular. The Accord and racism have, of course, operated in very different ways. The Accord was a formal and informal arrangement with institutions of the labour movement that delivered notable benefits for senior trade union officials–influence over policy, closeness to ministers and therefore an improved profile with members, positions on advisory and statutory bodies, and limited public funding for some union activities–while promising, but not delivering, workers sustained living standards and job security.[9] Racist rhetoric and policies, on the other hand, draw on and reinforce long traditions of attributing people's problems to racial others, embodied in the practices of public and private institutions and individual attitudes.

During the 1996 election campaign, immigration was not an issue, but the conservatives claimed that there was an 'Aboriginal industry', that Aboriginal land rights were a threat to ordinary Australians and that the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Commission (ATSIC) was corrupt. Widespread disillusionment with the Labor government's neo-liberal economic policies and the appeal of the Howard's contrasting claim that he would make Australian's 'comfortable and relaxed' were crucial factors in the conservatives' victory, but their racist tactics also played a role.[10]

After coming to office, Howard soon expressed 'understanding' for the racist concerns raised by the right-wing populist Pauline Hanson, as support for her grew between 1996 and 1998. She railed against immigration and allegedly preferential treatment given to Aborigines and Asians in Australia and rejected neo-liberal measures which, it quickly became apparent, were at the core of the new Coalition Government's approach to economic policy.[11]

The new conservative administration followed through on its Aboriginal affairs policies with a series of measures which curtailed ATSIC's activities and, in 2004, finally abolished the Commission. Separate programs for Aboriginal health, education and welfare were 'mainstreamed' away from organisations under ATSIC into government departments. In the area of education, a consequence of this transition was that $181 million allocated to Aboriginal education in 2004-2005 was not spent.[12] Just a few further examples–many others are available– of the consistency of the Coalition's attacks on Aborigines follow.

Amendments to the Native Title Act in 1998 further constrained Aboriginal land rights. The Keating Government's original Act had itself limited the impact of the High Court's Mabo decision which had recognised native title in 1992. Under the rubric of 'mutual obligation', Aboriginal communities were persuaded to enter into agreements with the authorities to ensure, for example, that the faces of children were regularly washed and that they attended school, in return for the construction of public facilities. Non-Aboriginal communities do not have to agree to highly publicised arrangements about individual behaviour in order to secure a petrol pump or swimming pool.[13]

9   See Tom Bramble and Rick Kuhn 'Social democracy after the long boom: economic restructuring under Australian Labor, 1983 to 1996' in Martin Upchurch (ed.) *The state and 'globalisation': comparative studies of labour and capital in national economies* Mansell, London 1999, pp. 20-55.
10   John Howard edited transcript of interview on 'An average Australian bloke', *Four Corners* ABC Television, first broadcast 19 February 1996, transcript 5 October 2004, www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2004/s1212701.htm, accessed 24 January 2007.
11   Rick Kuhn 'Rural reaction and war on the waterfront in Australia' *Monthly Review* 50 (6) November 1998, pp. 30-44.
12   'Minister underspends $181m in Indigenous education... then gets a promotion' *National indigenous times* 99, 23 Feb 2006 www.nit.com.au/News/story.aspx?id=6554, accessed 25 January 2007.
13   Ruth McCausland 'So just who is sharing the responsibility in Indigenous policy?' *NewMatilda.com* 9 March 2005, www.newmatilda.com/home/articledetailmagazine.asp?ArticleID=519&CategoryID=-1, accessed 25 January 2007; Kim S. Collard et al. '"Mutual" obligation in Indigenous health: can shared responsibility

Invoking the poor state of Aboriginal housing, the Government moved to allow individual Aborigines to excise house blocks from collectively owned land. It was 'human nature', the Prime Minister asserted, that 'when people own something they take greater care of it', suggesting that much Aboriginal housing was 'appalling' because Aborigines did not look after their homes properly.[14] This ignored the long term absence of funds to build and maintain suitable accommodation, let along provide public infrastructure such as adequate schools, health facilities and running water, which is the main reason for the generally very poor conditions in which many Aborigines live. But the 'Australian dream' of home ownership does serve to undermine collective Aboriginal land ownership in the Northern Territory by making it possible for government agencies, rather than Aboriginal Land Councils, to make some decisions about leases on Aboriginal land.[15]

When Health Minister Tony Abbott advocated a new policy of 'paternalism' towards Aborigines, he was accurately labelling the Government's existing approach. Too accurately. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs had to reject use of the term.[16]

Xenophobic racism

The Coalition initially cut back Australia's migrant intake. The Keating Government had introduced a six months waiting period before the majority of migrants could access most welfare services. The new conservative regime increased this to two years.[17] Since 1997-1998, however, the Howard Government has raised levels of migration every year. Twenty nine per cent of migrants were admitted on strictly economic (as opposed to family reunion or humanitarian) grounds in 1995-96 but 69 per cent in 2005-06.[18] Over the same period there has been a rapid expansion of the number of Business Long Stay Visa holders, who are essentially guest workers.[19]

Primarily for economic reasons, the conservatives did not concentrate on mobilising racist support around the issue of the overall scale of immigration or the number of migrants coming from east Asia. But, building on the work of their Labor predecessors, who introduced the practice of locking up asylum seekers, including children, who had arrived in Australia by boat in concentration camps the Coalition demonised such refugees. From 1999, it generated a moral

agreements be truly mutual?' *Medical journal of Australia* 182 (10) 16 May 2005, pp. 502-504; Jane Robbins 'Life after ATSIC: Indigenous citizenship in an era of mutual obligation' paper presented to APSA Conference, University of Otago, Dunedin, September 2005, www.otago.ac.nz/politicalstudies/conferences/apsa05/IP1%20Robbins%20abstract.pdf, accessed 5 February 2007.

14   John Howard interview with Pat Morrish, transcript, ABC Radio, Cairns 25 October 2005 www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/Interview1651.html accessed 23 January 2007.

15   As Larissa Behrendt put it 'The debate about home ownership is the Trojan horse', Chris Graham 'Howard's war on terra' *National indigenous times* 4 (83), 23 June 2005, pp. 4-8. Mal Brough, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs, media release 'Northern Territory Indigenous people now free to choose' 17 August 2006, www.atsia.gov.au/media/media06/5806.asp; Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment Act 2006.

16   Tony Abbott speech launching *Australia's Health 2006*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare conference, 21 June 2006, www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/health-mediarel-yr2006-ta-abbsp210606.htm?OpenDocument&yr=2006&mth=6#, accessed 16 February 2007; 'Brough rejects "new paternalism" call' ABC News online, 23 June 2006, http://abc.net.au/news/australia/qld/cairns/200606/s1669771.htm, accessed 16 February 2007.

17   James Jupp *From White Australia to Woomera: the history of Australian immigration* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, p. 152.

18   *Population flows: immigration aspects* 2000 pp. 16 and 24; and 2005-2006 pp. 21 and 31.

19   In 2004-2005 49,855 Business long-stay visas were approved for 28,042 workers and their families, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union Temporary *Skilled migration: a new form of indentured servitude* July 2006, pp. 14, 17, 42, www.amwu.asn.au/images/skilled-migration-0706.pdf, accessed 8 February 2007.

panic about them and reduced their rights.[20] Where previously they could immediately apply for Permanent Residence Visas, they were only eligible in the first instance to receive three-year Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs). A TPV holder cannot legally leave and then re-enter Australia. Marr and Wilkinson have noted that, having identified the appeal of racism in Australia through its own polling, the Liberal Party employed racist themes to increase its own popularity. They argued that '[i]n his first term [Howard] targeted voters resentful of Aborigines. As his second term ended, he was pursuing voters who feared their country was being invaded by Muslim boat people'.[21] In the process his Government was also *creating* voters who feared such an invasion. In 1999-2000, the number of asylum seekers arriving by boat in Australia peaked at only 4,175 people. [22]

The Tampa and 'children overboard' affairs were key episodes in the Coalition's strategy for the 2001 election. The government did not allow refugees, picked up from a small, sinking boat by the Norwegian freighter Tampa, to land on Australian territory. Instead they were sent to an Australian-funded concentration camp on the independent Pacific island of Nauru. Later Howard and his ministers falsely claimed that refugees on another boat threatened to throw their children into the sea if a nearby Australian naval vessel didn't pick them up. In fact they were signalling for help because their boat was sinking.[23]

Attacking refugees, who mainly came from the Middle East and Afghanistan, tapped into and reinforced anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism in Australia. A large proportion of the refugees arriving by sea were Muslims. 'I certainly don't want people of that type in Australia' John Howard said during the 'children overboard' affair, leaving Australians to draw their own conclusions about the 'type' he was referring to. Commentators in the mass media joined the dots, for those slow on the uptake. The government encouraged racism about Arabs and Muslims without being explicit, denying any racist intent. Given the recent rapid decline in support for One Nation and hence the absence of serious competition to the conservatives' right, they broadened their electoral appeal to include both those who could hear the dog-whistle (very lightly coded but not explicit messages) of racist politics and those who might have been disturbed by more overtly racist statements.

Despite internal conflicts over the issue, the Labor Party assisted by voting in favour of the Government's measures to remove the right to claim asylum from people who arrived in some off-shore Australian territories. In this way, the Government wedged Labor: dividing sections of its base from the Party.

The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 took place in the lead-up to the election. The Government used them to intensify public anxiety and promote perceptions of its own ability to defend the country. Its rhetoric fuelled discussion of terrorism in the mass media that invoked anti-Arab and anti-Muslim attitudes. Ministers identified refugees as potential terrorist threats.[24] Even before the Gulf War, research in 1989 had already 'indicated that Muslim and Arab Australians were key "out groups", just ahead of Asian and Aboriginal Australians'. By comparison, a survey conduct during October-December 2001 found 'an expanding

20   Scott Poynting '"Bin Laden in the suburbs": attacks on Arab and Muslim Australians before and after 11 September' *Current issues in Criminal Justice* 14 (1) July 2002, pp. 46-49.
21   David Marr and Marian Wilkinson *Dark victory* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest 2003, p. 175.
22   Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 'Outcome one performance tables' *Annual report* 2000-01 www.immigration.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2000-01/report21.htm, accessed 13 February 2007.
23   For an excellent, brief account of these developments see Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason 'The resistible rise of Islamophobia: anti-Muslim racism in the UK and Australia before 11 September 2001' *Journal of sociology* 43 (1) 2007, pp. 78-81. For a detailed account of the 2001 election campaign see Marr and Wilkinson *Dark victory*.
24   Scott Poynting, Greg Noble, Paul Tabar and Jock Collins *Bin Laden in the suburbs: criminalising the Arab other* Institute of Criminology, Sydney 2004 p. 60.

Islamaphobia [sic]'.[25] An upsurge in racist attacks against Muslims and Arabs followed the events of 11 September 2001. Poynting and Noble's survey of Muslims and people with Middle Eastern backgrounds found that two thirds had experienced more racism after the terrorist attacks.[26]

The moral panics about refugees and terrorism, which the Government initiated or encouraged and regarded as its best assets, had frightening consequences for Arabs and Muslims in Australia. But they served their purpose. Despite sluggish economic growth, they helped the Coalition win the election on 10 November 2001.[27]

(Re)defining the enemy

The vilification of refugees and 11 September, stewed together in the electoral casserole that was the main course offered by the Coalition in 2001, used ingredients of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab racism manufactured by politicians and mass media in earlier periods. Until the late 1990s, Muslims and Arabs generally played minor roles in Australia's racist demonology. From the colonial period through to the 1990s Arabs and Muslims were not regarded as an immediate threat. In domestic terms, until the 1970s, this was largely because there were very few Arabs or Muslims in the country. Already before federation in 1901, the White Australia policy forbade the immigration of non-Europeans. Following the relaxation of the policy in the late 1950s, more, mainly Christian Lebanese began to migrate to Australia. Assisted migration from Turkey began in 1967. With the abolition of the White Australia policy in 1973 and particularly after the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 there was a dramatic increase in the immigration of Lebanese Christians and especially Muslims.[28]

Nor were Muslims and Arabs a major issue in Australia's international relations, until recently. The Arab world was a long way away. Most Indonesians were Muslims. They were believed to be contained by the Dutch empire until World War II. Subsequently, the extent to which Australian governments and commentators regarded them a threat was due less to Islamic beliefs than their alleged racial characteristics and, before 1965, widespread support for Communists in Indonesia. Only with the fall of General Suharto's repressive New Order regime in 1998 and particularly after the Bali bombings of October 2002 did Indonesian Islam become a serious issue in Australia.

The treatment of international issues, especially in the Middle East, by the press and Australian governments has long been the most important factor in shaping Australians' attitudes to Muslims and Arabs.[29] Support for the colonial policies of the British Empire in the Arab world was crucial through to the 1960s. Soldiers from New South Wales to join the unsuccessful British campaign against the Mahdi's religiously inspired revolt in Sudan in 1885 were the first troops dispatched overseas by a responsible Australian government.[30] Official Australian attitudes to and press coverage of British-controlled Arab territories–before World War I, Egypt,

25   Kevin M. Dunn, James Forrest, Ian Burnley and Amy McDonald 'Constructing racism in Australia' *Australian journal of social issues* 39 (4) November 2004, p. 416.

26   Scott Poynting and Greg Noble *Living with racism: the experience and reporting by Arab and Muslim Australians of discrimination, abuse and violence since September 11 2001* Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004, pp. 5-6; also see Tanja Dreher *'Targeted': experiences of racism in NSW after September 11, 2001* UTS Shopfront Monograph Series 2, 2005.

27   Marr and Wilkinson *Dark victory* pp. 277-278.

28   See Bilal Cleland 'The history of Muslims in Australia' in Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh *Muslim communities in Australia* UNSW Press, Kensington 2001 pp. 12-32;

29   Howard Brasted 'Contested representations in historical perspective: images of Islam and the Australian press 1950-2000' in Saeed and Akbarzadeh *Muslim communities in Australia*, p. 211; Peter Manning 'Australians imagining Islam' *Muslims and the news media* I. B. Tauris, London 2006 pp. 130; Peter Manning *Dog whistle politics and journalism: Reporting Arabic & Muslim People In Sydney Newspapers* Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, University of Technology, Sydney 2003 p. 44.

30   K. S. Inglis *The rehearsal: Australians in the Sudan, 1885* Kevin Weldon and Associates, Sydney 1985.

Sudan, Aden etc.; after 1918 expanded to include Iraq, Jordan and Palestine–and repression of resistance was overwhelmingly favourable. Arabs were presented as people who had to be controlled by outsiders; sometimes they were the enemy. Conservative and Labor governments have consistently supported Israel against both the Palestinians and Arab states.[31] During the 1980s, to the extent that Governments and the media dealt with Muslims, it mainly consisted of condemning the Islamist regime in Iran, particularly over the 1980 US Embassy hostage crisis and the *fatwa* issued against Salmon Rushdie in 1988. Association with terrorism and oil price rises also shaped the image of Arabs and Muslims.[32]

The war against Iraq, after its invasion of Kuwait, in 1991 intensified earlier hostile attitudes towards Arabs. Unlike other foreign policy issues relating to the Middle East, Australia was directly involved in the Gulf War, through the dispatch of troops to join the US-led coalition. Under Bob Hawke's Labor Government, Australia was now fighting Arabs. The Arab Welfare Council expressed concern about the way some media coverage was promoting racism. Racist vilification was particularly blatant on talkback radio, from hosts and callers. There were many racist attacks on people thought to be Arabs, especially women wearing headscarves, as well as mosques and Muslim schools. In NSW, under Liberal Premier Nick Greiner, a high level reference group of representatives of government and the Arab community met regularly to discuss the victimisation of Arabs. A bilingual hotline was set up so people could report incidents of harassment, and school principals were briefed on how to deal with racism. A desire to win votes in the May 1991 State election from traditionally Labor-supporting Arab-Australians may help explain the priority Greiner, in comparison to Victorian Labor Premier Joan Kirner and Hawke, gave to the issue.[33] At the same time, however, Greiner gave credibility to suggestions by federal agencies that ordinary Australians faced a severe terrorist threat from Iraq.[34]

Ten weeks after being requested to make a statement condemning attacks on Arabs in Australia, Bob Hawke's formulation, as Ghassan Hage pointed out, implied that 'there are some Australian citizens capable of terrorising other Australian citizens and getting away with it. Be charitable and protect their victims', instead of demanding that 'we must not allow [the persecutors] to have this power'. The statement did not challenge the power of those who represent the still dominant Anglo culture. In the same period, after a visit from a Jewish delegation, Hawke immediately condemned anti-semitic attacks.[35]

In mainstream politics, the Labor Premier of NSW, Bob Carr pioneered the explicit racist targeting of Arabs and Muslims in Australia. As Collins, Noble, Poynting and Tabar have demonstrated in their impressive studies, Carr and sections of the mass media used the stabbing death of a teenager and then a drive-by shooting at a police station in October and November 1998 to create a moral panic about law and order and 'Lebanese gangs', in the period before the 1999 State elections. The Premier and the police commissioner also argued that the 'Lebanese community' should take responsibility for dealing with such crimes, not a normal response when people from Anglo backgrounds are accused of wrong-doing. At least for a period, the Liberal

31   Labor was, however, critical of the Anglo-French occupation of the Suez Canal Zone in 1956.
32   Brasted 'Contested representations' pp. 213-216.
33   Christine Asmar 'The Arab Australian experience' in Murray Goot and Rodney Tiffen (eds) *Australia's Gulf War* Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1992, pp. 64, 67-68, 70-72 and 79; *Racist violence: report of the national inquiry into racist violence in Australia* Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1991, p. 145.
34   Bruce Jones 'Threats to families: ASIO acts' *Sun herald* 2 September 1990 p. 2; Bernard Lagan 'Arabs under police scrutiny' *Sydney morning herald* 25 January 1991, p.1; Sue Neales 'Australia takes on terror threat' *Australian financial review* 25 January 1991, p. 12.
35   Ghassan Hage 'Racism, multiculturalism and the Gulf War' *Arena* 96, 1991, p. 12; Asmar 'The Arab Australian experience' pp. 71-72; Joseph Wakim 'Terrorist alerts in Australia: Have we learned the lessons?' paper presented to Australasian Middle East Studies Association Conference, 22 September 1996, www.aac.org.au/media.php?ArtID=5, accessed 9 September 2006.

Party, still keen to win votes from people with a Lebanese background, did not play along with the hysteria. Liberal leader Peter Collins criticised the Government for dividing the community along ethnic lines.[36]

There was a similar moral panic and targetting of Lebanese and Muslims in 2000-2001 over pack rapes in the Bankstown area of Sydney. Carr, his police chief, and sections of the media emphasised the Muslim and Lebanese backgrounds of the men eventually convicted and portrayed the rapes as racially motivated crimes, although the judge stated that 'There is no evidence before me of any racial element in the commission of these offences'.[37]

From the early 1990s, at the latest, Carr as opposition leader had agitated for lower levels of immigration into Australia. In August 2001, he 'called for the tightening of immigration policies to reduce ethnic crime on Sydney's streets'.[38]

Soon it was mainly alleged associations with international terrorism, rather than domestic crime, that were directed against Muslims and Arabs in Australia. Government and mass media portrayals of international development again became very important in shaping local ideas about them. After the events of 11 September, John Howard declared that there was a 'terrorist threat from bin Laden cells in Australia'.[39] Although no arrests or charges resulted, by the end of the month raids by Federal Police and ASIO, sometimes with the media in tow, drove home the message.[40] So did the restriction of civil liberties entailed in new Commonwealth legislation passed in 2003 and further curtailments of these rights in 2005, in the name of combatting terrorism. State Labor governments enacted complementary or even more extreme measures.[41]

The concrete message of Australian participation in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the preparations for them was that the Muslim inhabitants of Afghanistan and Iraq did not have the right to themselves settle accounts with their oppressive rulers; these incompetent (Muslim) people needed the strongest state in the world and its allies to impose new rulers and institutions on them.[42]

Shortly after the 11 September attacks, however, John Howard said 'I think the most special of all measures is for me to use the authority of my office to remind all Australians that our quarrel is not with people of Arab descent, our quarrel is not with people of the Islamic faith.'[43] His Government was very careful not to overtly identify all Muslims and especially Muslims in Australia as a problem. In concrete, practical ways, especially its wars against Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Government promoted anti-Muslim racism, while condemning it in the abstract.

36   Jock Collins, Greg Noble, Scott Poynting and Paul Tabar *Kebabs, kids, cops and crime: youth, ethnicity and crime* Pluto, Annandale 2000, pp. 3-4, 6-7, 8, 29 and 56; Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 88-91; Manning 'Australians imagining Islam' p. 130.
37   Poynting *Bin Laden* p. 131.
38   Nick O'Malley, Geeshe Jacobsen and Les Kennedy 'Military past may keep out migrants' *Sydney morning herald* 17 August 2001, p. 3.
39   Geoffrey Thomas, Gay Alcorn, Christopher Kremmer 'World airlines face shutdown' *Sydney morning herald* 20 September 2001, p. 1.
40   Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 168-171.
41   Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 175-176; Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason '"Tolerance, freedom, justice and peace"? Britain, Australia and anti-Muslim racism since 11 September 2001' *Journal of intercultural studies* 27 (4) November 2006, p. 380; Tom Richardson and Mark Dodd 'States go further than PM on terror' *Australian* 14 September 2005, p. 1; Louise Dodson, Andrew Clennell and Stephanie Peatling 'Premiers give go-ahead to terrorism laws' *Sydney morning herald* 3 November 2005, p. 2.
42   For the realities of strategic power and oil behind the rhetoric of the US and Australian governments, see Chris Harman 'Analysing imperialism' *International socialism* 99 Summer 2003, pp. 3-81.
43   John Howard transcript of press conference, Melbourne, 8 October 2001, www.pm.gov.au/News/interviews/2001/interview1368.htm, accessed 12 February 2007.

Following the Bali bombings, which killed 202 people, including 88 Australians, Minister for Workplace Relations Tony Abbot was on message, 'I think it is very important that we don't do anything to become Al Qaeda recruiting agents and generalisations about Islam have that tendency'.[44] Through raids by ASIO and the Federal Police which focussed on Muslims with Indonesian backgrounds, the Government signalled that it was in control of the situation. While the raids did not lead to anyone being charged with terrorist offences,[45] they did demonstrate that the kind of people through whose doors the police came crashing were a threat. The Attorney-General, however, implausibly asserted that 'We are not targeting any community group, we are not targeting any religion and we're definitely not targeting the Islamic community'.[46]

Conservative politicians had made turned Muslim women's clothing into a useful political issue in France and Germany. But when it arose in Australia the Prime Minister, after a brief hesitation, stuck to the script. A member of the tiny Christian Democratic Party in the NSW upper house, Fred Nile suggested that the chador be banned in public places. Howard's initial response was ambiguous. But, within a day, he unequivocally rejected the idea, although this received less publicity.[47]

For almost four years after 11 September 2001, his Government refrained from explicitly identifying Australian Muslims in general as a problem. It was not, however, prepared to publicly criticise those elements in the mainstream media which argued differently. Such elements were, in fact, dominant. Peter Manning has demonstrated that, overall, the Sydney daily press portrayed Arabs and Muslims negatively both before and after September 2001.[48] The events in New York and Washington were, moreover, followed by a dramatic increase in hostility and violence directed against Muslims and Arabs, especially women, in Australia.[49]

The Coalition Government knew that questions of race, especially when tied to supposed physical threats to Australians, provide good ground for it, compared with industrial relations reform, privatisations and cuts in social welfare. But, from 2004, the Howard Government's ability to mobilise support on basis of its accustomed racist focus on refugees and implicit attacks on Arabs and Muslims declined dramatically.

The prolonged campaign by activist groups against the harsh treatment of refugees and their imprisonment was turning public opinion around, to the extent that even a few Liberal parliamentarians started raising public criticisms. Then the scandals of the detention, as an illegal immigrant, of Australian permanent resident Cornelia Rau and the deportation of Australian citizen Vivienne Alvarez Solon to the Philippines erupted.[50]

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44   'Abbott urges Australians to embrace Muslim community' ABC news, 31 October 2002, www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200210/s716037.htm, accessed 2 February 2007.
45   Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 171-172.
46   'Govt denies targeting Muslims in wake of ASIO raids' ABC news 1 November 2002, www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200211/s716149.htm, accessed 2 February 2007.
47   Fred Nile 'Question without notice' Legislative Council Hansard extract, 20 November 2002, pp. 7058 - 7059, article 27, www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC20021120027, accessed 29 January 2007. Compare and John Howard 22 November 2002 transcript of interview with John Laws, radio 2UE, 21 November 2002, www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/2002/interview1995.htm, accessed 29 January 2007; John Howard transcript of interview with Phillip Clark, radio 2GB, 22 November 2002, www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/2002/interview2000.htm, accessed 29 January 2007. Similarly compare Mark Riley, Kelly Burke 'PM's veiled comments on how Muslim women dress' *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 November 2002, p. 1; with Mark Riley 'PM rejects chador ban after backlash' *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 November 2002, p. 10.
48   Manning *Dog whistle politics and journalism.*
49   Poynting and Noble *Living with racism* pp. 17-19.
50   See William Maley 'PM suddenly finds a heart' *Australian* 24 March 2005, p. 13; Michelle Grattan 'How Howard got himself out of detention' *Sunday age* 19 June 2005, p. 19; 'Australia immigration policy softened by release of children, court ruling' Agence France Presse 28 July 2005, through Factiva; 'Australia ends offshore detention of refugees' Agence France Presse 14 October 2005, through Factiva.

These events and the inquiries into them thoroughly discredited Australia's immigration detention policy and administration.[51] The Government initiated reforms and released a large proportion of the imprisoned refugees.

It was now much harder to generate fear of desperate and destitute people arriving in boats. This became particularly apparent in 2006. Forty three West Papuans fleeing Indonesian repression arrived in north Queensland in January. All of them were eventually granted refugee status, outraging the Indonesian government. Australian governments' efforts to maintain hegemony in southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific is made easier by supporting friendly regimes, no matter how repressive they are. A continuous stream of West Papuan refugees claiming asylum in Australia would highlight human rights violations by the Indonesian authorities, undermining cooperation with the Indonesian government and its stability.

The Howard administration attempted a final solution to the problem of refugees arriving by sea: previously some off-shore islands had been 'excised from the migration zone' to prevent such people claiming political asylum, now the entire continent was to be excised. But a revolt on the Coalition backbench forced Howard to withdraw his Immigration Bill from the Senate on 14 August 2006.[52]

Picking on Muslims

In 2005, John Howard used the London bombings to recast his use of racism. His government began a campaign that attacked Australian Muslims explicitly for the first time, claiming that some mainstream Islamic leaders in Australia were not 'as strong in denouncing these acts as they should have been'.[53] NSW Labor Premier Carr agreed.[54]

A summit with Australian Muslim leaders on 23 August 2005,[55] was modelled on a similar event in Britain, although the NSW Premier had organised his own meetings with Lebanese community leaders in 1998 and 1999 which suggested that crimes allegedly perpetrated by Lebanese-Australians were 'an ethnic community issue, not society's issue'.[56] Howard's summit demonstrated to the public that the Government regarded Muslims as a problem and security threat. To make this message absolutely clear, Treasurer Peter Costello organised for his comments calling on radical Muslim clerics to leave Australia to be published on the day of the gathering. 'Foreign Minister Alexander Downer compared fundamentalist Muslims to Nazis as he defended the decision not to invite radical clerics to the summit.'[57]

Taking up a theme Costello had linked to the oath of citizenship, Brendan Nelson, Minister for Education, said that special steps were being taken to teach Muslim children about 'Australian values', especially about Simpson and his donkey. People who 'don't want to live by Australian values' could 'clear off'.[58] It is worth contrasting the response to this *public* statement with that

51 Michael Grewcock 'Slipping through the net? Some thoughts on the Cornelia Rau and Vivian Alvarez inquiry' *Current issues in criminal justice* 17 (2) November 2005, pp. 284-290.

52 Sophie Morris and Laura Tingle 'PM backs down on asylum seekers' *Australian financial review* 15 August 2006, p. 1.

53 John Howard transcript of doorstop interview, Claridges Hotel, London 23 July 2005 www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/Interview1477.html, accessed 5 February 2007.

54 'Bob Carr says that he was impressed by the work of the London' Sydney Statewide Mornings Sally Loane, ABC Radio 2BL 702 Sydney, Federal Government Broadcast Alerts, Media Monitors Australia, through Factiva, 25 July 2005.

55 23 August 2005 Muslim summit with PM. 'John Howard will meet a range of religious and cultural leaders from the Islamic community, in light of the London bombings' 22 August, 2005 www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200508/s1442962.htm, accessed 5 February 2007.

56 Collins *Kebabs* p. 8.

57 Samantha Maiden 'Costello tells firebrand clerics to get out of Australia' *Australian* 23 August 2005 p. 1.

58 Peter Costello interview with Ray Martin, *A Current Affair* 23 August 2005, www.treasurer.gov.au/tsr/content/transcripts/2005/124.asp?pf=1, accessed 5 February 2007; Brendan Nelson

to a similar concern Nelson had expressed during the 2003 invasion of Iraq in a letter 'to State education ministers raising concerns that Islamic schools may be encouraging anti-Christian and anti-Western feelings in students'. In 2003, the Queensland Labor Government made the letter public and denounced it, and Nelson backed away from the issue.[59] In 2005, 'John Howard warned that the Government was prepared to "get inside" mosques and schools to ensure they're not supporting terrorism'. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Jenny Macklin, embraced the values agenda: 'In this environment it's extremely important that we have all students in all schools studying and understanding the importance of tolerance, understanding the importance of our civic, our civic and legal responsibilities as Australian citizens.'[60]

John Howard regarded some potential policy reversals as too embarrassing. A few days after Nelson's reflections on Simpson and his donkey, Liberal members of the House of Representatives Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Panopoulos joined in by demanding that headscarves be banned in schools. But, perhaps providing an insight into why Bishop was dropped from Cabinet in 2001, she failed to consulted the script and forgot that Howard had already pronounced on the issue of Muslim women's clothing in 2002. Howard quickly ruled the proposal out.[61] *Official* discrimination against Muslims on the basis of their clothing was not on the agenda, but the experience, during the Gulf War and after 11 September 2001, of many women wearing the headscarf indicated, others would act on official *cues* rather than *policies*.

The Government soon invoked its revised racial demon to good political effect. Just before ACTU mass rallies against new industrial relations legislation, on 15 November 2005, ASIO and the Federal Police staged raids on Muslims allegedly plotting terrorist acts and scheduled debates on anti-terrorist legislation.

The shift in the conservatives' manipulation of racism helped to create the political climate that led to mob violence against Muslims and Arabs in the Sydney beach-side suburb of Cronulla, on 11 December. Just as John Howard had always said that his own policies had nothing to do with racism, in commenting on the Cronulla pogrom he denied that there is 'underlying racism in this country'.[62] This echoed Bob Carr's response to the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board's account of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim coverage in the mass media: 'I treat with contempt any report that brands Australians as racists.'[63]

In February 2006, the Coalition was in a sticky situation. Evidence presented to the inquiry into bribes paid by AWB, the monopoly marketer of Australian wheat, to secure sales to Saddam Hussein's Iraq became very embarrassing. The Prime Minister and Treasurer again criticised Muslims. According to Howard, 'there is a small section of the Islamic population in Australia that, because of its remarks about jihad, remarks which indicate an extremist view, that is a

transcript of doorstop interview Art Gallery Of New South Wales, Sydney 24 August 2005 www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Nelson/2005/08/tran240805.asp, accessed 5 February 2007.

59   'Concerns over Islamic schools' 28 March 2003 *Daily Telegraph* p. 8; Scott Emerson and Sascha Hutchinson 'Nelson's Islamic school "slur" *Australian* 28 March 2003 p. 5; Ashleigh Wilson 'Nelson bid to reassure Islamic schools' *Australian* March 2003 p. 6.

60   'Teach Australian values or "clear off", says Nelson' *PM*, ABC Radio National, 24 August 2005 www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2005/s1445262.htm, accessed 6 February 2007.

61   'School headscarf ban impractical: Howard' ABC news online, August 29 2005 www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200508/s1448543.htm, accessed 29 January 2007. Howard was no doubt aware that his statement 'that you can't in a democratic society pass laws telling people how to dress' would be quoted back at him, Howard interview, 22 November 2002.

62   Scott Poynting 'What caused the Cronulla riot?' *Race and class* 48 (1) July 2006, pp. 85-92; John Howard transcript of press conference, Phillip Street, Sydney 12 December 2005 www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/Interview1723.html, accessed 6 February 2007.

63   *Legislative Assembly Hansard*, Corrected Copy, Thursday 1 May 2003 www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hanstrans.nsf/v3ByKey/LA20030501, accessed 15 February 2007; Nick O'Malley 'Carr savages Puplick's race report' *Sydney morning herald* 2 May 2003, p. 7.

problem… It is not a problem that we have ever faced with other immigrant communities who become easily absorbed by Australia's mainstream'.[64]

To maintain the anti-Muslim momentum, the Government linked fear of Muslims to the tightening of citizenship laws. This was the particular task of former director and election campaign manager of Howard's Liberal Party, parliamentary secretary Andrew Robb. He acknowledged that 'Muslim communities in Australia have been stigmatised unfairly' but concluded that they had to assume 'primary responsibility' for becoming 'integrated and connected to the mainstream community [which] is the best way to prevent extremists getting a toehold in Australia'. This was blaming the victims for their plight: if Muslims are suffering it is mainly their problem and not a responsibility of government to stop encouraging attacks on them. Robb tied successful integration to the Government's decision to introduce a test of fluency in English and adherence to Australian values before applicants could become Australian citizens.[65]

The campaign against Australian Muslims entered top gear in August 2006, while the Government was finding the going heavy because of a jump in petrol prices, higher interest rates, the unpopular privatisations of the state-owned telecommunications giant Telstra and the health insurer Medibank, slower growth, and the collapse of its plans to prevent any refugees arriving by boat in Australia from claiming political asylum.

John Howard asserted that 'a small section of the Islamic population… is very resistant to integration'. There was, he said, a 'need for everybody who comes to this country to fully integrate and fully integrating means accepting Australian values, it means learning as rapidly as you can the English language… [and that] men and women do have equality'. The Prime Minister had, however, appointed Tony Abbott, whose opposition to women being able to decide to terminate their pregnancies was public knowledge, as Minister of Health. Despite the vagueness of his definition of 'Australian values', Howard asserted that 'there are some who see appeals for people to fully integrate into the Australian community, they try and turn that into some kind of act of discrimination against them'.[66] To coincide with the anniversary of the

64   'PM critical of "extremist" Muslims' ABC News, 20 February 2006
      www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200602/s1573689.htm, accessed 6 February 2007. Peter Costello 'Worth
      promoting, worth defending Australian citizenship, what it means and how to nurture it', Sydney Institute, 23
      February 2006, www.treasurer.gov.au/tsr/content/speeches/2006/004.asp, accessed 6 February 2007; 'Costello
      pushes nationality "test"' ABC News, February 24, 2006,
      www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200602/s1577182.htm, accessed 6 February 2007. Kim Beazley's response
      was 'Costello's in power, he's been in office for 10 years if he's got a problem with people who've come into
      this country who are committed to Jihad or committed to any form of violence why doesn't he do something
      about it?', 'Costello's Muslim comments "a diversion"' ABC News 24 February 2006,
      www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200602/s1578080.htm, accessed 6 February 2007.
65   Andrew Robb 'Australian migrant integration - past successes, future challenges' speech to Sydney Institute,
      27 April 2006 www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/sydney-institute.htm, accessed 7 February
      2007; Later Robb stated that
      'It is true that terrorist activities around the world have seen many members of Muslim communities in
      Australia and other parts of the world unfairly stigmatised.
      'However, after months of discussions with Muslim communities I believe that this unfair stigmatisation will
      not change materially until all Australian Muslims take responsibility for addressing the situation they find
      themselves in.
      'Each Australian Muslim in their own way and in their own circumstance should seek to address the fears and
      misunderstandings of the broader community.' Andrew Robb media release 'Key Initiatives National Action
      Plan' 16 July 2006 www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/media-releases/2006/04306.htm, accessed 8
      February 2007.
66   John Howard transcript of interview with Chris Smith, Radio 2GB, Sydney, 31 August 2006
      www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/Interview2111.html, accessed 6 February 2007; also 'The World Today'
      ABC Radio 2BL 702 Sydney, 1 September 2006, Federal Government Broadcast Alerts, Media Monitors,
      through Factiva. Also Luke McIlveen 'Costello tells Muslim leaders it's time to be accountable: speak up to
      protect us all from terrorism' *Daily telegraph* 4 September 2006, p. 5; Peter Costello interview with Laurie

September 11 attacks, he again raised concerns about the integration of Muslims in Australia.[67] Not to be outdone on the question of Australian values, Labor leader Kim Beazley demanded that *all* applicants for visas to visit Australia should 'sign off on those values'. His own colleagues soon repudiated this bizarre suggestion.[68] But he helped maintain momentum on the issue until the Government launched more detailed proposals for testing the values of applicants for citizenship.[69]

Since late 2006, the Government has used commentary on current events to help keep the issue of anti-Muslim racism alive, ably assisted by the mainstream media. Howard defended the Pope against criticism of his association of Islam with violence. Sexist comments and remarks critical of the White House by the Mufti of Australia, Taj al-Din al-Hilali, provided an opportunity to implicate Muslims in general.[70]

The Coalition has also demonstrated that Islam is a problem in Australia by publicising collaboration between Muslim communities and police; funding a new conservative, Melbourne University-based National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies, to the tune of eight million dollars; initiating programs to promote the integration of Muslim kids; and promoting some community initiatives.[71]

Meanwhile, by early 2007, in the lead up to State elections there was 'a bidding war between NSW Labor and the Opposition about who [could] sound tougher on Muslims', in relation to Australian values, terrorism and crime.[72]

Australian values, citizenship and terrorism are likely to be themes in the Australian government's official racism in the next federal election campaign. Thus, in the ministerial reshuffle of January, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs was rechristened Immigration and Citizenship, now in the charge of a devout Catholic. Kevin Andrews demonstrated his capacity to kick heads as Minister for Workplace Relations, responsible for the implementation of the Government's most far-reaching anti-union legislation.

Who benefits?

A series of impressive studies–by Manning, Poynting, Noble, Tabar, Collins, Hage and Dunn– drawn on in previous sections, has thoroughly demonstrated the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Australia. They offer a variety of partial explanations for this phenomenon, but do not get to its roots in the capitalist structures of Australian society. All identify anti-Muslim racism as an extension of the long history of racism in Australia. But the historical pattern of racism, on which Manning's explanations are particularly reliant, is not sufficient to account for the contemporary reproduction of racism. This remains the case when recent developments in Australia are identified as 'orientalist' and 'a cultural ascendancy'.[73] Edward Said's 'orientalism'–the way the east, especially Arabs and Arab lands, has been portrayed as inferior and 'other' in western literature and academic studies–is essentially a (problematic) descriptive

Oakes *Sunday* Nine Television Network, 3 September 2006,
www.treasurer.gov.au/tsr/content/transcripts/2006/130.asp, accessed 8 February 2007.

67   Rhianna King 'PM launches fresh attack on Muslims' *West Australian* 11 September 2006 p. 1; Ross Peake 'Howard attacks hostile Muslims' *Canberra times* 11 September 2006, p.1.

68   Michelle Grattan 'Beazley proposes visitors, migrants agree to values' *Age* 12 September 2006, p. 5; Mark Kenny 'Beazley warned on values pledge' *Advertiser* 14 September 2006, p. 13.

69   Nicolette Burke 'True blue test' *Daily telegraph* 18 September 2006 p. 1.

70   For example, Russell Skelton 'Hilali fans fires of furore with defiant declaration on White House' *Age* 28 October 2006 p. 3; Danielle Cronin 'Muslims move to end Hilali crisis' *Canberra times* 30 October 2006 p. 1.

71   Andrew Robb media release'Key Initiatives National Action Plan' 16 July 2006 www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/media-releases/2006/04306.htm, accessed 8 February 2007. Prominent specialists in Islamic studies who have been critical of Australian and US foreign policy are not involved in the National Centre.

72   Tom Allard 'Iemma, Ruddock disagree on Muslim ban' *Sydney morning herald* 29 January 2007, p. 3.

73   Manning 'Australians imagining Islam' pp. 140-141 and Manning *Dog whistle politics and journalism* p. 44.

rather than an analytical category.[74] After media treatment of Muslims and Arabs has been identified as predominantly 'orientalist', questions about how and why racist discourses become and stay dominant, and the interests that they serve still have to be answered.

Poynting, Noble, Tabar and Collins, in *Bin Laden in the suburbs*, and Hage, in *Against paranoid nationalism*, have provided answers to these questions that address three aspects of the rise of anti-Muslim racism that are crucial if we are to formulate and implement effective response to it: the immediate advantages that its most powerful proponents derive from their racism; the reasons why racist ideas may have a mass appeal; and the connections between these and the systemic functions of racism.

The promotion of racist ideas can have material advantages for politicians, those in control of the mass media and parts of the state machine. Populist tactics can be successful by invoking, reinforcing and modifying widespread racist traditions, helping politicians maintain support and win elections. In NSW, the Carr Labor Government successfully played the race card in its law and order campaigning for the 1999 election. At the federal level, the Coalition combined the issues of race, border security and the threat of terrorism in the 2001 election. On other occasions too, Howard has served up new racist dishes when the popularity of his Government has been in decline.

'Politically opportunist and sensationalist paper-selling "attacks" in headlines lead to and give ideological licence to racist attacks in shops, streets and workplaces.' They benefit those in control of the media precisely by selling newspapers and building radio or TV ratings. '[R]epressive arms of the state responding to and dependent on' politicians and the media use similar language and take complimentary actions.[75] We can extend this argument: by playing up racist threats, the senior officers of various police forces and military units justify their existence, the expansion of their organisations and the extension of their own power.

Secondly, *Bin Laden in the suburbs* argued that, in an increasingly alienated society, racist ideas can seem to provide explanations of and solutions to real problems that ordinary people have.[76] Hage makes a similar point. When neo-liberalism leads the motherland to be less nurturing, 'avoidant nationalists' blame 'the other' rather than recognise that the contradiction between the reality and their fantasy about the nation.[77]

The third aspect of the revival of racism in Australia, its systemic underpinnings, was underdeveloped in *Bin Laden in the suburbs*. It could be extrapolated from the proposition that 'penal populism is linked to wider problems of state legitimacy in a neo-liberal environment of "crisis management" which too easily uses punishment as a political device in the context of the dismantling of welfare programs and policies'.[78] Poynting et al., like Markus who observed that Howard's populist racism facilitated his implementation of broader 'free market' economic policies, did not elaborate on the class logic of neo-liberalism.[79] They also regarded the chauvinistic and racist features of Australian nationalism as replaceable by a nice nationalism: 'Our notions of both national belonging and cultural identity must be inclusive not exclusive; they must be about the possibilities of extension and intermingling, not borders designed to keep others out. They must be mechanisms for acting together, or shaping mechanisms of collective

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74   For critical assessments of 'orientalism' see Aijaz Ahmad 'Orientalism and after: ambivalence and metropolitan location in the work of Edward Said' in his *In theory: classes, nations, literature* Verso, London 1992, pp. 159-219; and Irfan Habib 'Critical notes on Edward Said' *International socialism* 108 Autumn 2005, www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=141&issue=108, accessed 17 February 2007.

75   Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 177-178, 237-238.

76   Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 244, 261.

77   Ghassan Hage *Against paranoid nationalism: searching for hope in a shrinking society* Pluto, Annandale 2003 pp. 41-43, 61-65.

78   Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 250, 253-254.

79   Markus *Race* pp 85-86.

agency, which recognise our shared humanity first and foremost.'[80] But this conception is utopian because it ignores the historical reality of nationalism as an ideology of (or for) territorial, bordered and exclusive capitalist states.[81]

It is certainly worth fighting for 'some serious effective social policy',[82] but this can only be achieved to a very limited extent within existing political and economic structures. Attacks not only on the welfare state but also on the capacity of workers to defend and improve their living standards are necessary to restore profit rates and economic growth, given the features of contemporary capitalism. These define the interests of the capitalist class and underpin its exercise of political power. Both the Coalition and Labor, even if they sometimes use different methods, are pursuing a common fundamental agenda.

The statement that 'penal populism' 'has short-term benefits for the parties involved, and sells newspapers, but it has no benefits for a humane and effective system of policing, law and imprisonment'[83] may be true. But the benefits of 'penal populism' and the racism often associated with it are greater than the advantages they confer on particular politicians. I will outline below mechanisms that link short-term advantages to these *systemic* benefits, that is to the interests of the broader capitalist class.

Hage did suggest a relationship between the Australian ruling class and racism: 'economic, social and historical circumstances… made dominant sections of the capitalist class, their political agents and the media develop an interest in the reactivation of White Australia colonial paranoia and in bringing it back to the fore as a potent political/cultural force.' But his elaboration of this point was particularly sketchy when it came to the relationship between material interests and ideas.[84]

In Australia, racism has served capitalist class interests, in several ways. From the very start of the colonial period racism justified the appropriation of Indigenous land. This continued as the frontier extended across the entire continent and again became important as land rights legislation and court decisions threatened to restore to Aborigines ownership over relatively small areas, often in a very limited form. Anti-Aboriginal racism also divided the working class and justified the super-exploitation of Indigenous labour, which remained crucial for the profitability of the pastoral industry into the 1960s.[85] Discrimination against the Irish and Catholics (overwhelmingly of Irish background until after World War II) reproduced in Australia a division Marx observed in the British working class.[86] The hold of sectarianism on Australian workers, notably public servants, remained an obstacle to solidarity against employers into the 1960s.[87] Prejudices against non-Anglo immigrants, were already present during the 19th century and became more widespread with the mass migration program from the 1940s.[88]

If the ideology of 'white Australia' divided white workers from black and Asian workers, both on the continent and internationally, it also asserted the common interests of white workers and

80   Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 262, 266.
81   See Eric Hobsbawm *Nations and nationalism since 1780* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991; Alex Callinicos 'Marxism and the national question' in Chris Bambery (ed.) *Scotland: class and nation* Bookmarks, London 1999 pp. 37-48.
82   Poynting *Bin Laden* p. 238.
83   Poynting *Bin Laden* pp. 253-254.
84   Hage *Against paranoid nationalism* pp. 48, 62-68.
85   Mick Armstrong 'Aborigines: problems of race and class' in Kuhn *Class and struggle in Australia* pp. 143-146.
86   Letter from Karl Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels selected correspondence* Progress Publishers, 1975, pp. 220-224 (written: 9 April 1870), www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/letters/70_04_09.htm, accessed 11 March 2007.
87   Michael Hogan *The sectarian strand* Penguin, Ringwood 1987. Peter J. Tyler 'Your most obedient servants' paper presented to seminar 'Serving the people through responsible government: representation, accountability and public service' Sydney, 24 May 2006, p. 7, www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/docs%5Cpetertylerseminar.pdf, accessed 18 February 2007.
88   Griffiths 'Racism' pp. 168-168.

their white employers and has consequently helped sustain the white ruling class control against threats from the local working class and rival ruling classes.[89] This was a feature of Australian national identity. Into the second half of the 20th century, the dominant discourse of Australian nationalism constituted Australians not only as white but also as British. National/racial unity was also unity with the Empire or at least with its white components. But whiteness was already used to justify friendly though essentially casual relations with the United States from the late 19th century. The visit of the 'Great White Fleet' of the US Navy in 1908 was the cause for the greatest public celebrations since Federation in all the Australian ports it visited. From War II the US alliance was formalised and deepened into the cornerstone of Australian 'defence' policy.

Racism can also fulfil a red herring function not only for particular politicians and parties, but also for the capitalist class as a whole. For example, employers benefitted from the Coalition's diversion of public attention from its new industrial relations legislation to the alleged threat of Muslim terrorism in November 2005. This was also the case with the racist 'penal populism'— blaming oppressed racial groups rather than poverty for crime and promising to 'get tough'—that has been a perennial feature of NSW politics since the 1990s, as governments cut public services. More generally, if racial issues are occupying headlines then there is less space for material–about, for example, job security, wages and conditions, profit rates, executive salaries or the profits versus the wages share of national income–that has greater potential to raise doubts about the wonders of capitalism.

And how?

Just because a policy or stance benefits the ruling class does not mean that it magically comes into existence (the functionalist fallacy). Nor is the pursuit of ruling class interests by governments (often) the consequence of conspiracy. We have to identify the mechanisms that bring such policies about.

The capitalist class is wracked by internal competition and lacks unitary organisation. But its actions are coordinated by responses to common class interests (at the most basic level in the separation of workers from control over the means of production) and messy processes of interaction amongst individual capitalists, enterprises, the organisations that directly represent capital (like lobby groups, trade associations and peak bodies), and institutions that serve capitalist interests, notably the state and mainstream political parties.[90]

Sometimes, much of the capitalist class mobilises directly in its own interests. Ultimately, when is united, it can veto or at least dramatically undermine policies or governments that it regards as damaging to its vital interests. This involved mass organising against the Chifley Government's attempts to nationalise the banks in the 1940s. When the recession of the mid 1970s destroyed the Whitlam Government's policy agenda and sense of direction, there was a similar ruling class mobilisation. The mainstream media and Coalition mounted a political campaign while the wider capitalist class engaged in an investment strike, prompted by its pessimism about profitability under Labor, otherwise known as 'a collapse in business confidence'.[91]

On other occasions, a section of the class acts, and the rest goes along with it. That has been an aspect of the increase in anti-Aboriginal racism, sponsored by the mining industry worried about land rights, from the 1980s. Hugh Morgan helped make anti-Aboriginal racism respectable in the mid 1980s. The Mining Industry Council mounted campaigns against land rights legislation in 1983-84 and over the 1992 Mabo decision.[92] 'Thirty of Australia's most respected business leaders', including the president of the Business Council signed a statement supporting the

89   Griffiths 'Racism' pp. 162-166.
90   Sam Pietsch 'To have and to hold on to: wealth, power and the capitalist class' in Kuhn *Class and struggle in Australia* pp. 25-34.
91   Pietsch 'To have' pp. 29-31.
92   Markus *Race* pp. 54-55; Frank Brennan 'Undermining Mabo' *Age* 4 October 1993, p. 13.

Government's 1997 legislation that restricted the impact of the High Court's 1996 Wik decision which found that pastoral leases did not extinguish native title.[93]

Alternatively politicians committed to managing capitalism and to operating within its framework, may formulate policies that serve their own immediate interests. If capital or sections of the capitalist class don't like the results, they are not shy about letting parties and governments know. On the other hand, passivity over public policies indicates that capitalists are either happy with the measures or don't care. Given the advantages that racism can bring, the capitalist class has no principled objection to it.

The revival of racism in Australia and its latest anti-Muslim inflection, for example, has been mediated by the specific interests of sections of the capitalist class. Private media proprietors have gained audiences through sensationalist racist headlines. Top ABC management has been less preoccupied with ratings and more with appearing to maintain a 'balance', whose pivot is the conservative point between Coalition and Labor, and the desire to avoid pissing off the government which funds it. Politicians have used racism to mobilise support around issues that advantage their own parties or have capitulated to it in order to neutralise issues which they think will damage them.

The wider capitalist class did not initiate the shift toward anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism but it has been a major beneficiary. This racist campaign and its predecessors have helped maintain the popularity and electoral viability of a government that has acted in capitalist interests with privatisations, corporatisations, land rights legislation, welfare reform, the Goods and Services Tax, and attacks on trade unions and workers rights. Furthermore, racial fears have justified foreign policies which served those interests while distracting attention from issues and perspectives that are less comfortable for corporate Australia.

We have seen that sections of the Australian capitalist class have actively promoted certain forms of racism, and the class as a whole has been passively complicit in others, initiated by governments and the media. In recent decades, leaders and organisers of capital and particular capitalists also actively shaped racism in Australia through initiatives against forms racism they regarded as a threat to their class's general interests. Because less was a stake and they in any case quite easily achieved some success, these activities were very modest in comparison with the campaigns against the Chifley and Whitlam governments. But it is not possible to understand evolution of Australian racism without taking them into account.

When John Howard started to do the dance of the seven veils around anti-Asian racism in 1988, it seemed that business might find it enticing. In early 1988, the lobby of the largest corporations, the Business Council of Australia, expressed its views about immigration. It wanted a lot more: a fifty per cent increase over the current annual level to 180,000. However, the Council made concessions to Blainey's views, affirming that 'The migration program has not been "open door" and control of the mix of migrants has so far been relatively successful. That balance must be maintained. If we increase the immigration program we must be sure that we are able to cope with the influx and that our program of cultural diversity does not become one of cultural division.'[94]

The Liberal Party was internally divided over Howard's criticism of migration from Asia. While hostile to multiculturalism, other sections of the right in Australia regarded immigration as important for economic development, were favourably disposed to Vietnamese immigrants[95] (presumed to be a constituency for conservative politics), and worried about the risks of antagonising important trade partners.

93   Lenore Taylor 'Business unity on Wik' *Australian financial review* 25 November 1997, p. 1.
94   'The Australian immigration program—a business view' *Business Council bulletin* 40 February 1988, pp. 17.
95   Castles *Mistaken identity* p. 132 and 134.

But, Howard's statements about immigration in August were opposed by 'wets' in the Liberal Party, and important sections of the capitalist class; not only individuals in private but also the peak employers' body, the Confederation of Australian Industry, publicly. Economists, professionally concerned about the health of Australian capitalism, rebutted Blainey's and Howard's approach to immigration policy at a symposium at the Australian Economists Association conference.[96]

Howard retreated quickly. The episode counted against him in his ongoing tussle with Andrew Peacock over the Party leadership. Key Liberal parliamentary, extra-parliamentary and business leaders (notably Party President and CEO of Elders IXL John Elliott, Party Treasurer and big businessman Ron Walker, and Hugh Morgan of Western Mining Corporation) engineered Peacock's successful challenge in May 1989.[97] Howard subsequently distanced himself even further from his earlier position and particularly from anti-Asian racism.

In the context of slow growth in 1992, the Labor Government and the ACTU proposed cuts in the level of immigration and the conservative opposition outbid them. The Business Council responded by stressing the economic benefits of a stable, long-term program, rather than using migration 'as a short term, counter cyclical, economic policy instrument'. It asserted that '[t]here should be no racial bias in Australia's immigration policy'. While favouring greater emphasis on selecting migrants who could contribute to the economy, the Council opposed putting more weight on the ability of prospective immigrants to speak English.[98]

In the lead-up to the 1996 election, the Business Council continued to make a case for expanded immigration, particularly from Asia.[99] After taking office in March, the new Howard Government nevertheless cut back the inflow of migrants,. But, by February 1998 the Council was again, very publicly, calling for a higher intake, especially of skilled workers.[100] As we have seen, the Government's subsequent immigration policy was much more expansive.

Pauline Hanson vilified Asian immigrants and John Howard let her rip, defending her right to attack Aborigines and Asians. Already in 1996, the president of the Business Council criticised Howard for 'misconceptions among regional neighbours concerning Australia's commitment to Asia'.[101] Hanson's One Nation Party won a quarter of the votes in the June 1998 elections in Queensland. In the run up to the October 1998 federal elections, concerned about rising support for the anti-Asian thrust of One Nation, important sections of the capitalist class intervened. The Business Council joined the ACTU, the Council of Social Services and Christian and Jewish

96   Glenn Milne 'Bosses spell it out to Howard' *Sydney morning herald* 31 August 1988, p. 1; Brad Norington 'Employers denounce racist policies' *Sydney morning herald* 3 September 1988, p. 4; Michael Stutchbury 'Asian immigration would grow with a greater emphasis on skills' *Australian financial review* 14 September 1988, p. 14; Mike Seccombe 'Elliott: Asian debate "stupid"' *Sydney morning herald* 22 September 1988, p. 4.

97   On the mechanics of the coup against Howard see Kelly *The end of certainty* pp. 467-486, especially 476. Also see Geoff Kitney and Robert Reid 'Howard faces renewed leadership pressure' *Australian financial review* 16 August 1988, p. 1.

98   Greg Earl 'Business now real muscle in push to boost Asia ties' *Australian financial review* 2 March 1992 p. 7; 'Immigration update' *Business Council bulletin* 86 May 1992 pp. 20. The Council sought to shape the entire economic policy debate by means of a campaign around Paul Anderson (ed.) *Australia 2010: creating the future Australia* Business Council of Australia, Melbourne 1993, which was also issued in an 'Education edition' in 1995. The document supported a substantial immigration program but was ambiguous about excluding racial criteria:

>   Clearly, ensuring that immigration does not produce an overly fragmented nation is a desirable national goal. How such a goal is pursued while at the same time allowing the expression of cultural differences… is still an issue requiring further research. It is true that Australia has hitherto been successful in providing an environment in which people of diverse backgrounds are able to live in peace. But this record may be put under pressure if differences are accentuated by the economic circumstances of the nation or by external events that arouse hostility between minorities. (p. 143)

99   Ian Salmon 'Immigration works' *Age* 8 January 1996, p. 11.

100 Lincoln Wright 'Govt may boost Asian migration' *Canberra times* 28 February 1998, p. 1.

101 Michael Dwyer 'Tourist operators fear backlash' *Australian financial review* 4 November 1996, p. 2.

religious leaders to attack One Nation over the issue of Asian immigration. Although Hanson and her Party were at least as venomous about Aborigines, they were not mentioned in the joint statement.[102] Fruit juice manufacturer Berri also paid for television commercials that attacked racism. At the time the company was also trying to open up new markets in Asia.[103]

While a few individual business people have sometimes spoken out, we have seen no such mobilisations by capital or its organisations against further targetting of Aborigines or the campaigns against refugees, Muslims and Arabs.[104] Given its tremendous power, this indicates that not only Governments and sections of the mass media but the capitalist class as a whole has benefitted from and been complicit in these forms of racism.

Fighting racism

Concerted political action from above has (re)constructed racism in Australia. Struggle from below can trash it.

Although little has distinguished the federal Labor opposition's position on values, terrorism and citizenship from the Government's, there has been resistance to the agenda of anti-Muslim racism. Former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and commentators warned of 'a Muslim election, as a while ago it was the Tampa election', while some commentators and Greens politicians have identified the racist nature of the Government's tactics.[105] Popular expressions of hostility to racism and the policies that support and justify it are even more significant.

A concerted campaign of demonstrations and pickets by anti-racists against One Nation's public meetings in large cities prevented Hanson's party from building an effective presence in metropolitan areas.[106] Years of campaigning by imprisoned refugees and the solidarity movement on the outside eventually led to very widespread opposition to the Government's policies of locking up 'asylum seekers'. The Howard Government had to water down its own policies.[107]

A week after the Cronulla riot, between one and two thousand people protested 'United against racism' in Sydney. During August 2006, demonstrations of up to 50,000 people protested against

102 Michael Raper et al. 'The perils of straying from reality' *Australian* 27 August 1998, p. 11. For criticisms of the Liberal Party by former business donors with migrant backgrounds see Margot Saville 'Migrant backing lost by Howard's wavering' *Sydney morning herald* 10 August 1998, p. 3.

103 Phillip Hudson 'Berri puts squeeze on racism' *Age* 17 August 1998, p. 2.

104 Mining millionaire Joe Gutnick an exception in his criticisms of the Government's 1997 land rights legislation, Barry FitzGerald 'Gutnick refuses to join Wik push' *Age* 26 November 1997, p. 3. Stan Wallis, president of the Business Council, was also worried about Howard's tactic of threatening a double dissolution election if the Senate did not pass his new land rights legislation because it might not lead 'definitive and effective resolution' i.e. it might result in further litigation and uncertainty. The Business Council did not actually oppose the legislation and asserted that the it was *not* racist, Lenore Taylor 'Wallis calls for calm on Wik' Australian financial review 12 November 1997, p. 4.
     When the conservative foreign editor of the *Australian* criticised the Coalition's racist campaign for the 2001 elections, he quoted former public servants, former senior Liberal MPs and academics, but no business people, Greg Sheridan 'The stain of shame spreads' *Australian* 8 November 2001, p. 11. Members of the private capitalist class were similarly absent from the *Sydney morning herald's* list of prominent critics of the Government's and opposition's refugee policies, Marian Wilkinson and David Marr 'Howard, Beazley lashed over race 8 *Sydney morning herald* November 2001, p. 1.

105 Malcolm Fraser 'Who matters? How many' Law and Justice Address, 2006 Justice Awards, Parliament House, Sydney, 31 October 2006, www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/app/&id=FC34E2F5AC8773B5CA257218001DCFAC, accessed 9 February 2007; Mike Carlton 'Fabricated fear of Muslims is a cancer among us' *Sydney morning herald* 4-5 November 2006, p. 28; ; 'Australian PM says Muslim integration calls not discrimination' Agence France Presse, 2 September 2006; and Laura Tingle 'Labor vulnerable as PM changes tack' *Australian financial review* 8 September 2006, p. 83.

106 See Rick Kuhn 'Rural reaction and war on the waterfront in Australia' *Monthly Review* 50 (6) November 1998 pp. 30-44.

107 Maley 'PM suddenly finds a heart'.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon and the Howard government's support for it. These and Hezbollah's defeat of the Israeli army helped rebuild the self-confidence of Australian Muslims and Arabs.[108]

Given the link to Australian foreign policy and overseas developments, scepticism about Australian participation in the war in Iraq can raise questions about the plausibility of anti-Muslim racism. A majority of people in Australia and the largest demonstrations in the country's history opposed the invasion of Iraq in 2003. While support for the Government grew in the course of the invasion, four years of resistance to the occupation (in Iraq especially and elsewhere) meant that by January 2007 62 per cent of people polled in Australia opposed its handling of the war. At the same time, 56 per cent 'opposed the Government's treatment' of Australian Muslim convert David Hicks, captured in Afghanistan with Taliban forces in 2001 and held, with the agreement of the Australian Government, in the US prison at Guantanomo Bay.[109] This was not a spontaneous shift in public opinion but the result of a campaign from below.

In the longer run, however, to effectively combat racism we need more than movements that challenge it directly or indirectly. The main mass appeal of racism is as an explanation of real problems faced by large numbers of people and as a program for dealing with those problems. Economic insecurity, overwork, unemployment or falling wages provide more favourable circumstances for racism the more other responses have failed and the more strategies that challenge capitalism are invisible or seem far fetched. Hence the need for alternative accounts of everyday life and strategies for overcoming its problems through struggles against those who are the class beneficiaries of racism and an exploitative system that necessarily creates economic insecurity and periodic economic crises.[110]

108 Wendy Frew 'Out in force to foster harmony' *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 December 2005 p. 4; Diane Fieldes personal communication, press estimates of Sydney rallies were lower e.g. 15,000 Alyssa Braithwaite 'Marchers around world plead for peace to be given a chance' *Sydney Morning Herald* 24 July 2006, p. 9; although the *Canberra times* called one 'massive', 'Fury as Israel steps up war in Lebanon' 23 July 2006, p. 6.
109 Matthew Franklin 'Public loses heart for Howard's war' *Australian* 23 January 2007, p. 4, for details, see www.newspoll.com.au/image_uploads/0103%20Hicks%20and%20Iraq.pdf, accessed 9 February 2007. A poll in December 2006 found that 71 per cent of people thought Hicks should be brought home Jonathan Pearlman and AAP 'Most want Hicks to return - poll', *Sydney morning herald* 14 December 2006, p. 4.
110 For an introduction to economic logic of capitalism see Chris Harman *The economics of the madhouse: capitalism and the market today* Bookmarks, London 1995.