Western Teacher at 50

SSTUWA
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CA 2003: THE CLAIM

■ by President Pat Byrne

THE AEU (WA Branch) lodged its Certified Agreement claim with the employer on January 24 this year. At the heart of the claim is a 10 per cent per annum pay increase for the life of the new agreement.

Teacher unions around Australia are reflecting a range of concerns in their respective claims:

- the need to attract and retain staff
- the need to value the profession properly, and
- the need to provide a fair day's pay for the above and beyond of what teachers do.

To achieve parity for the profession, the state branches of the AEU have set a national benchmark for achievement by January 2006. The benchmark, $78,000 for the top of the automatic scale, has been decided after consideration at meetings of AEU branch presidents and is a reflection of the job being done by teachers. It is in keeping with international OECD relativities of teacher workloads and salaries.

The campaign

The AEU (WA Branch) is determined to achieve its 10 per cent claim. The quantum has been endorsed by State Council and delegates at the November 2002 meeting were well aware that a major campaign would be needed to achieve the claim.

To achieve the national benchmark, other state unions have set their claims:

- NSW: recently revised to 25 per cent over two years
- Queensland: 16 per cent over two years
- Victoria: 34 per cent over three years, and
- ACT: 26.5 per cent over two years.

Public sector education across Australia is calling on state Labor governments to back up their rhetoric and to properly support government school teachers. Certified agreement claims are lodged with state governments which have the decision-making authority to become signatory to the agreement...state governments cannot blame the Federal Government for the detail of the agreements, or for a failure to support public education through the terms of the agreement.

It is a state matter!

The Gallop State Government has waxed eloquent about one of the principles at the core of its education policy – the status of teachers. The Certified Agreement is where that must happen and the Gallop Government will be judged by teachers across the State on how well it matches its rhetoric by its deeds.

One of the public criticisms of the Gallop Government is that it isn't seen to be much different from the conservative government it replaced. The Certified Agreement gives the State Labour Government the chance to be different by properly supporting public school teachers – or it can ignore the chance and leave many teachers wondering why they supported a change of government!

Certified agreement time is not a time for sentiment. Teachers have become too cynical about governments to be seduced by platitudes like "it's a noble profession", "it's a service to the community", "teachers are the cornerstone of the society".

These platitudes, as valid as they are, rarely translate into adequate support in state budgets or certified agreements. Ministers and senior bureaucrats resort to the platitudes because they know that, in the past, teachers were susceptible to the power of the suggestion of the sentiment.

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Colourful conference **Who said national union conferences were colourless occasions? The Australian Education Union Federal Conference in Adelaide in January had plenty of colour – and movement. Here, AEU Federal Deputy Secretary Susan Hopgood (left), Federal President Denis Fitzgerald and Federal Secretary Rob Durbridge wear green and gold ceremonial shawls presented by All India Primary Teachers' Association General Secretary S. Eswaran, a speaker at the conference. More AEU Conference stories and pictures P. 2 & 31, 7**

TAFE back in education system

TAFE, schools and Curriculum Council and the Department of Education Services will come under Education Minister Alan Carpenter in the new portfolio of Education and Training.

SSTU members and officers lobbied the Labor Government through enquiries and reviews to ensure TAFE was recognised as a key part of the education portfolio in this Government's provision of education for the community.

The SSTU has consistently rejected the previous government's marketisation of TAFE colleges, and TAFE members had been disappointed by the failure of the current government to act.

Cabinet moved over the Christmas break and the union's position has been accepted.

In the interim, the current Director-General, Paul Albert, will oversee the new department, with Margaret Banks in charge of schools, Malcolm Goff in charge of TAFE and Norma Jefferies in charge of Curriculum Council.

The transition process to bring these departments into a closer relationship will be overseen by a joint implementation committee, on which the SSTU will play a central role.

SSTU submissions to the latest enquiry included the following concerns about the separation of TAFE and schools.

Communication and access

There is a wealth of confusion caused by the division created between the two systems, and additionally by the fact that TAFE colleges act as independent enterprises in competition with each other. It is difficult for many individual schools or school clusters to communicate with colleges or to access them.

When schools attempt to create relationships with colleges they are often forced to remove staff from classrooms and put them in coordinator and communication roles which results in increased class sizes in the school. Sufficient funds are not provided to enable this to happen without negatively affecting students.

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AEU wants Australia out of Iraq war

THE AEU wants Australian troops to be immediately withdrawn from the Persian Gulf, and has condemned the Howard Government for "rushing" toward a war with Iraq and for its "servile support" of the United States.

The AEU has also pledged not to support or cooperate with an unjustified war on Iraq.

"Any attack on Iraq would cost the lives of thousands of innocent children, and is therefore opposed by Australia's teachers," said to Federal President Denis Fitzgerald.

"No child's life should be lost to such a pointless war – be that child Australian or Iraqi. On the evidence so far, there's absolutely no justification for it.

"The AEU is committed to building the widest coalition of anti-war forces ever seen in Australia. We'll encourage citizens to overwhelmingly reject Howard's rush to war in Iraq."

The union's National Conference in Adelaide endorsed a motion calling for troop withdrawal from the Persian Gulf, arguing that the Howard Government's support of the US was a threat to national security.



Fitzgerald says joining an attack – simply because the US wants Australia to – is "a recipe for tragedy".

"Attacking Iraq to achieve a change in regime is not only illegal but a threat to international stability and likely to be counter productive. Not only will it fuel insecurity and poverty and threaten wider conflict in the Middle East and beyond, it will also strengthen the resolve of the repressive Iraqi government.

"This is a crisis being manipulated by the presence of forces in the gulf. Australian vessels and personnel enforcing the blockade on Iraq should be immediately withdrawn from the region to avoid any implication of involvement in a pre-emptive strike."

Fitzgerald admitted that Saddam Hussein had "a shocking record of human rights abuses, including the execution of trade union leaders and political opponents", but said that despite the AEU's profound repugnance at this, there had been no link alleged between Iraq and terrorist attacks on the West, or proof of the existence of a threat to other states.

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AEU: NO WAR ON IRAQ!

AEU resolution on Iraq

THE formal AEU resolution on possible war with Iraq includes a call on all Australians not to support or co-operate in any "unjustified" war effort, for removal of the long-standing blockade of Iraq, and for full consultation in the Australian Parliament on any decisions on a military commitment to the Persian Gulf.

The full text of the resolution is as follows:

1. That as an attack on Iraq will cause widespread death and destruction, increase insecurity and poverty in the world and threaten a wider conflict in the Middle East and elsewhere, including the South East Asian region, the AEU is opposed to war against Iraq. Attacking Iraq to achieve "regime change" is not only illegal but is likely to be counter-productive and lead to the strengthening of the repressive apparatus of Iraqi government. Joining an attack simply because the US wants Australian support is inadequate justification and has led to tragedy in the past.
2. Recourse to war is never justified before all non-violent solutions have been pursued. History is replete with examples of politicians committing other people's children to certain death, trauma and injury in war. The process of UN inspections and deliberations should not be pressured by US bullying of Security Council members into premature decisions. Neither should an Australian decision be pre-empted by a manipulated crisis created by the presence of huge US and British forces in the Gulf.
3. In view of US, British and Australian attempts to pre-empt UN processes, the Australian vessels currently enforcing the blockade on Iraq should be withdrawn immediately so as to avoid any implication that Australian forces are in any way involved in a manipulated pre-emptive strike. A similar position should apply to Australian elements serving in US and British units. The blockade continues to inflict misery on innocent people in Iraq, and so should be lifted immediately. Further the bombing within the "no fly" zones must cease.
4. The Australian Parliament must have the opportunity to consult and debate the question of any military commitment prior to any decision. At that time, those opposed to a military commitment by Australia will have the opportunity to assess any facts which the Government or any other parties bring forward and to put their views before the community and the Parliament.
5. That Education International be advised of the views of the AEU on the threat of war in the Middle East and be asked for its support in a campaign to achieve a peaceful resolution of the crisis.



At the AEU National Conference in Adelaide, the vote was unanimous in opposition to a war on Iraq.

6. The AEU commends those Australian political parties and individuals who have unequivocally opposed an attack on Iraq, including the Greens and Democrats and many ALP figures, including Carmen Lawrence and Laurie Brereton.
7. The AEU endorses the call of the ACTU for the rights of all to work and live in an environment free of harassment and discrimination on the basis of race, religion or culture and to work to increase the understanding of the international situation amongst its members.
8. The AEU will participate in and work to build the widest coalition of anti-war forces ever seen in Australian society such that the rush to war in Iraq by the Coalition Government will be rejected overwhelmingly by the Australian community and will mark the Coalition forever as unfit to govern Australia and lead to its removal at the next Federal election.
9. If the Howard Government commits Australia to an unjustified war, the AEU urges the people of Australia not to support or co-operate with the war effort in any way.

Prior to voting on the resolution, delegates to the AEU conference were given a background paper, endorsed by the AEU Federal Executive, setting out reasons for supporting the vote. Headed "The Howard Government Threatens Our Security", the paper listed 13 points, including:

- Australia's security is best achieved by building strong regional alliances through mutual development programs and independent defence and mutual security arrangements which are not tied to the US military apparatus given its current aggressive posture.
- The West faces growing criticism of and resistance to global inequality and exploitation which provides a basis for the growth of military conflict and terrorism, unjustifiable as it may be.
- Any attack on Iraq will cost the lives of thousands of Iraqi citizens including innocent children and will divert scarce resources in both Iraq and the attacking countries from dealing with the true sources of terrorism and war through addressing social security and services such as health and education.
- Instead of acting to understand and address these issues, the Howard Government has used the Bali tragedy to promote militarism and xenophobia rather than social and international security.
- The means of addressing global conflicts should lie primarily through the agency of the UN and there should be an emphasis on achieving peaceful resolution through a range of means, including sanctions and the separation of warring parties through peacekeeping forces. These should be applied consistently to all countries where conflict and breaches of conventions exist, not just to those where the West's self-interest is involved.
- International Law and UN Conventions provide a means whereby military action can be taken by states where a real and present danger exists to their security or where their borders have been violated. No such danger has been demonstrated by any nation in relation to Iraq.
- Leading military figures and veterans' organisations in Australia have opposed a commitment of Australian forces to Iraq, including General Gration who headed the Gulf War contingent, Major-General Stretton, the Returned Services League and Vietnam Veterans' Associations, as well as conservative political figures such as Malcolm Fraser.

The AEU also condemned the US and Britain for hypocrisy, pointing out that both countries were leading suppliers of weapons to Iraq in the 1980s for use against Iran. "US Defence Secretary Rumsfeld, a leading Bush Administration hawk, personally met Saddam Hussein in 1983 to negotiate loans for the purchase of US weapons including supplies of anthrax and bubonic plague from US chemical firms, when at that time Rumsfeld was a pharmaceutical company executive," the paper alleged.

UN report details humanitarian disaster expected from war on Iraq

A UNITED NATIONS report marked "Strictly Confidential" and dated December 10, 2002, spells out in harrowing detail the likely humanitarian consequences of US-led war against Iraq, according to journalist Chris Talbot, writing for an international website.

Talbot says the report, compiled by UN planners, makes clear that unlike the attack on Iraq in 1991, which it describes as a "relatively short, aerial bombardment of infrastructure, towns and cities", the western powers are now planning "potentially a large scale and protracted ground offensive, supported by aerial and conventional bombardment."

Consequently, the potential devastation will be far greater than in 1991. Whereas a majority of the population of 26.5 million at that time had family members in work and access to cash and material assets, this is no longer the case.

Neither does the report consider it valid to make a comparison with the result of the recent war in Afghanistan where the population is predominantly rural and used to being "more self-reliant". In Iraq, the people are largely urbanised and under the sanctions regime imposed after 1991 have "become even more reliant on the state to meet their basic needs" with "some 60 per cent of the population (16 million) highly dependent" on the monthly "food basket" from the government.

The report says that because of the possibility of a lengthy conflict, humanitarian access "would either be denied by one or other of the protagonists or severely hampered by security or safety concerns".

Talbot says the result will be unimaginably dire in a situation where the infrastructure on which the population are so dependent for government supplies-electricity network, railway system, roads, bridges and ports-will be, in the report's terminology, "seriously degraded".

The draft report, with a number of deletions presumably to protect the source inside the UN, was passed on to the Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq (CASI), based in Cambridge, England. CASI released it in a press release dated January 7 and it is available on their website [http://www.casi.org.uk/info/undocs/war021210.html].

While the report's opening sentence says war is "not inevitable", the underlying assumption is that the UN needs to prepare for a very large-scale humanitarian disaster. There is no indication that this is only a "worst-case scenario" and only contingency planning is involved. Rather, the report indicates that UN officials have knowledge of US military planning.

Talbot says the UN report predicts:

"In the early stages there will be a large segment of the population requiring treatment for traumatic injuries" and "as many as 500,000 people could require treatment to a greater or lesser degree as a result of direct or indirect injuries". A footnote explains this is based on World Health Organisation estimates of 100,000 direct and 400,000 indirect casualties.

"In the likely absence of a functioning primary health care system in a post-conflict situation" that those particularly affected in the south and central regions will be 4.2 million under five-year-olds, one million pregnant and lactating women, two million internally displaced persons, and an unknown number of infirm, chronically ill and elderly.

"It is estimated that the nutritional status of some 3.03 million people country-wide will be dire and that they will require therapeutic feeding [according to UNICEF estimates]. This consists of 2.03 million severely and moderately malnourished children under five and one million pregnant women."

"Damage to the electricity network will result in collateral reductions in capacity in all sections, particularly water and sanitation as well as health." As a result "39 per cent of the population will need to be provided with potable water."

"It is estimated that there will eventually be some 900,000 Iraqi refugees requiring assistance, of which 100,000 will be in need of immediate assistance".

Talbot says it is notable that none of the major English language news sources have so far taken up the press release. This is in line with the self-censorship and uncritical government support witnessed in the US media and much of the British press during the military build-up over the last months.

"The US media functions increasingly as the propaganda arm of the Bush administration and the Pentagon," he writes. "It has a vested interest in suppressing the UN's grim predictions, which are so clearly at odds with the official argument that civilian deaths will be kept to a minimum and that large-scale war casualties can be avoided.

"President George W. Bush's recent announcement that there will be a 'sweeping transition to democracy in Iraq' is shown to be a ridiculous lie considering the scale of devastation envisaged by the UN experts."

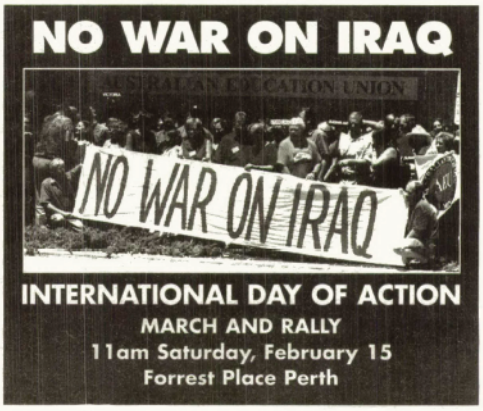
Talbot said that in Britain only the *Daily Mirror* carried a very brief report. In fact, details of the emergency UN plans, including the draft report, had apparently been available to the media for at least two weeks. A short article – cited on the CASI website entitled "UN chief issues secret orders for war in Iraq" – appeared in the Rupert Murdoch-owned Times newspaper of December 23, 2002.

"Since CASI is a British-based group, it is perhaps more surprising that the UN report has received so little coverage in the British media," said Talbot. "The explanation lies in the argument repeatedly put forward by the British government and supported in the media that Prime Minister Tony Blair has persuaded the US of the need to obtain international support for the war on Iraq through the UN."

Lest We Forget

There will be less
If war shall have its way
There will be less
To live another day
We all will be
Diminished as human-kind
And no longer conscience free
But reduced in mind.
If rockets sear the sky
More will be destroyed
Than towers reaching high
For we'll have employed
Hate to poison soil
And traded blood for oil.

Don B-Wignall



Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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