

Australia Dossier by Allen Douglas

Fascist Laws Back on Agenda

The government is whipping up hysteria over terrorism, in order to give itself police-state powers.

The government put Australia on an unprecedented “medium security alert” on Nov. 19, based upon “credible information” provided by the United States and Britain, that terrorist attacks on Australia were very likely within the next two months. The alert followed by six weeks the bombing of the Sari Club in Bali, Indonesia, in which 87 Australians were killed; and by several days the alleged latest statement by Osama bin Laden to Al-Jazeera TV, calling Australia a terror target due to its wholesale support for the United States policies on Iraq and the “war on terror.”

Such is the background, in which the Liberal/National Party government of Prime Minister John Howard is attempting, once again, to ram through draconian police-state legislation, which would turn the domestic intelligence agency, the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO), into a Gestapo with the ability to pick up and “disappear” people at will. The government-drafted bill, the ASIO Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill 2002, would allow ASIO to pick up anyone they claim might have information about terrorism (including lawyers, journalists, or anybody else), and hold them for seven days without charges. Those detained, including children as young as 14, would be held incommunicado for the first 48 hours; only after that, would they have access to a lawyer; and then, only a government-approved lawyer. Anyone deemed not fully cooperative could be sentenced to five years in prison.

The bill originally provided for indefinite detention incommunicado, in-

cluding for children as young as ten. Popular outrage, unleashed to a large degree by a mobilization of Lyndon LaRouche’s associates in the Citizens Electoral Council, led to some changes in the law, and to its finally being consigned to a Senate committee in late August, where it was expected to languish indefinitely.

But Australia’s second major party, the Australian Labor Party (ALP), has reversed its earlier, CEC-instigated opposition to the bill, in favor of a deal with the government, which could see the legislation pass Parliament as early as December.

Even without the bill, ASIO is already acting like a Gestapo. Beginning Oct. 27, under pretext of investigations tied to the Bali bombings, ASIO launched a terror campaign against Muslims in Australia, with balaclava-clad agents wielding automatic weapons, smashing down doors in the early morning, and holding all residents, including children, at gunpoint (see “Australian Raids and American Assassinations,” *EIR*, Nov. 22, 2002). ASIO’s charter only allows it to analyze and collect intelligence. But Australian Federal Police Association president Jon Hunt-Sharman told a Senate committee on Nov. 18 that the raids were organized by ASIO, which also did the interrogations, with police on hand only to “deal with the rough stuff.”

Under criticism for the raids and for his support for the police-state bill, ASIO Director General Dennis Richardson defensively told the Senate committee the same day that, “I have my views and they don’t come from a mad, driven perspective of wanting to

break laws and infringe on people’s rights.”

The federal police-state legislation is flanked by similar bills in several states, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria. N.S.W. Premier Bob Carr has introduced legislation giving the police extraordinary powers to conduct searches without warrants of vehicles, sites, or individuals for a seven-day period. Carr has additionally said that anyone who lives a “suspicious lifestyle” could expect to be investigated under the new laws. In Victoria, Premier Steve Bracks announced on Nov. 22 that if his ALP government is returned as expected in the state election of Nov. 30, he will introduce legislation allowing police to secretly break into homes or vehicles in search of “evidence of terrorism.”

While many groups have protested the government’s drive for a police state, only the CEC have blown the whistle on the cynical fraud of “fighting terrorism.” In Nov. 7 testimony to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee, the CEC cited LaRouche’s remarks on the Oct. 19 Internet radio broadcast, “The LaRouche Show”: “There are no independent powers of terrorism—it’s like some crazy James Bond thing, some secret power, supranational power, outside government, the big enemy you have to defeat. There is no such international terrorism. Terrorism is an operation, which, to the extent that it’s strategically significant, is run by governments.”

The CEC also submitted three *EIR* reports on international terrorism, which documented LaRouche’s charge, including how the United States, the British, and the Israelis founded all modern “Islamic” terrorism, through their creation of the Mujahideen resistance to the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s.