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# Robson: "Hollow Men" Pop Up Over The Ditch

**Wednesday, 24 October 2007, 12:26 pm**

**Column: Progressive Party**

**ROBSON ON POLITICS**

Matt Robson - Deputy Leader Progressive Party

24 October 2007

***Hollow Men pop up over the ditch: From our Oz correspondent***

The general election in Poland over the week-end delivered a new government and one of its first decisions has been to withdraw its troops from the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq.

Iraq is also proving to be a big issue in the Australian election campaign - to the benefit of the Labor Party led by Kevin Rudd, which also proposes disengaging from the Iraqi disaster zone.

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In the Sunday TV night debate between PM Howard and Mr Rudd, Mr Howard's past was a big handicap. Grilled by a panel of political journalists about his credibility in view of his record of broken election promises, he could only flounder and bluster.

On Iraq, just before the last election, John Howard said 'We believe our current commitment is appropriate and adequate and effective and doing a good job, and we have no proposals to increase it.' Within months of winning that election, the Liberal-National coalition government had instead increased troop numbers by 450, pledging an extra 40 armoured vehicles, effectively doubling Australia's military commitment at the cost of A\$300 million.

The Lib-Nats also emphatically denied they would make any changes to workplace laws prior to the last election yet the unpopular and misnamed "*WorkChoices*" programme was introduced the minute the right-wing government had the opportunity to do so after votes had been counted.

If the Liberal-National government loses the election to Labor in next month's election the two key reasons will be because the right-wing government misled the public about its plans to withdraw working families employment conditions and rights and the incompetence and lack of honesty over the war in Iraq.

Last week was dominated by the news that the Liberal Party maintains close relations with the *Exclusive Brethren* with two senior '*elders*' having lobbyist passes, giving them access to ministers' and MPs' parliamentary offices. These passes were vouched for by senior Liberal MPs.

#### The *Brethren*

fundamentalists also have an advertising account with a public relations firm that has close links with the Liberal campaign. The fundamentalist *Brethren* are currently under investigation by the Federal Police into the spending of A\$370,000 on pro-Howard Liberal ads at the last election. This seems like it could be the tip of the iceberg of what may be happening at this election between the *Brethren* '*brothers*' and Howard's political campaign.

#### National's frontbench is the one that mis-ruled in the 1990s

There are lots of lessons for New Zealand in what is happening in Australia.

Most working families in New Zealand are also against the National-ACT agenda to cut into working people's employment rights and conditions.

National and ACT bitterly opposed the Progressive Party Bill to extend to working families an extra week's minimum annual paid leave. National and ACT bitterly opposed this government's introduction, and extension, of paid parental leave entitlements. National and ACT also bitterly opposed our annual raising of the legal minimum wage.

Just look at the top tier of the National Party: Look at the names - Hon. Tony Ryall, Hon. Maurice Williamson, Hon. Bill English, Hon. David Carter, Hon. Lockwood Smith, Hon. Murray McCully, Hon. Nick Smith.