

REDFLAG



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CHILE 1973**

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Newspaper of **Socialist Alternative** www.redflag.org.au



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EDITORIAL

ALP wouldn't stop Abbott, now it's up to the rest of us

A lot of people woke up on Sunday after the election with a sore head. And not just from drowning their sorrows too determinedly the night before. The thought of Tony Abbott as prime minister is enough to make the soberest person's head hurt.

What made it worse is that Abbott got in without a fight. It is no wonder that record numbers of people didn't even bother voting, so uninspiring was the alternative: another three years of Labor.

On election night Labor politicians fell over themselves to admit that the ALP had made mistakes. Problem was, they all missed the point. "Disunity is death" they all said in unison. If only the party wasn't so divided, so wracked by infighting, it could have won.

Of course if it wasn't for the shambolic leadership wrangling, Labor might have polled better. But the reality is that infighting over the leadership was a symptom of Labor's malaise, not its cause.

The core of the problem is that Labor stands for nothing. Nothing, that is, except a watered down version of the Liberal Party, short a few silver spoons and landed gents.

Year after year Labor moves further to the right. And every time it does, it brings more disasters upon itself.

With every new catastrophe there are some who hope: maybe now they will see sense. But they never do. And now, as Labor contemplates its latest debacle, the same people are coming up with the same answers that got them down this rabbit hole in the first place.

The seemingly agreed strategy coming out of this election from the Labor MPs is unite behind a new

leader (any leader) and wait for the next election. Don't reassess any policies, don't look seriously about the deep crisis of Laborism that, having developed for the last 30 years, is now at its most acute point.

Labor has destroyed itself. But there is no point in the left sitting around moping. We need to organise resistance to the Liberals, and we need to start now.

Red Flag plans to play its role in the anti-Abbott resistance.

Over the past few months we are proud of what we have done with our new paper: reporting on struggles by workers across the country; taking up the defence of heroes like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, who have dared to expose the truth about our rulers; and giving an unapologetically left wing take on all the issues and controversies of Australian politics.

The Abbott era will give us many more such challenges. When the corporate press inevitably covers up the Liberals' lies, and makes excuses for Labor's failure, we will be standing on the side of everyone whose rights Abbott attacks: championing resistance, building solidarity, and making the case for building a new socialist movement that can unite people in a fight against every injustice of the system.

We know we will have our work cut out. So if you share our contempt for the state of politics in Australia today, we need your support.

Take out a subscription to our paper to help us keep getting out an alternative to the corporate media. Better still, get involved in the struggle alongside us, and help build an alternative to the madness of our current system.

REDFLAG

We live in a world where "political struggle" is a sullied phrase. The term evokes dishonesty and the kind of vacuous, self-serving antics that are on display whenever we look at the major parties of Australia politics. If the parliament is all there is to "politics", then it is wholly understandable that most people want nothing at all to do with it.

But there is another kind of politics: the politics of resistance and struggle. Over the past few years – from the Arab revolutions to Occupy in Europe – people have time and again taken to the streets, organised in their communities and their workplaces, and set themselves the task of fighting for a better world.

This politics of resistance is what *Red Flag* is about.

We took the name *Red Flag* because it represents solidarity, struggle and internationalism, but also because it stands for socialism – a world organised to meet human need, not the interests of the rich minority that currently in control.

Out of the struggles against the injustices of our current system, we want to be part of building a new socialist movement that can mount a challenge to the whole structure of capitalist rule. This is an enormous task. But the courage of the thousands of people resisting oppression and injustice from one side of the planet to another, gives us confidence that the future belongs to all of us.

WHAT IS REDFLAG ABOUT?

Telling the truth. The capitalist press is full of lies, distortions and right wing bias. We need an alternative press, free from corporate interests and government spin, to provide news and analysis of major developments in our world.

Supporting resistance. Those that own and control the corporate media are hostile to people fighting for their rights. They make money out of the exploitation and oppression of workers and the poor. Red Flag is a paper on the side of the oppressed, telling the story from our side and giving solidarity to those in struggle.

Fighting for socialism. Red Flag is about more than just highlighting problems with the system, or supporting individual struggles. It campaigns to win people to socialism, to convince them that the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is the solution to the problems of society.

Intervening in struggles. Red Flag's socialist politics doesn't just mean general arguments for socialism. Red Flag is an interventionist paper, bringing socialist arguments to the debates of today about how we can best mount a fightback, what tactics and strategies are needed to take on the right. And while Red Flag will fight for the views of Socialist Alternative, the paper is also a forum in which crucial questions on the left can be debated.



How Labor let the bastards in

Mick Armstrong

In what passes for democracy in Australia, the vilest of the vile has won.

Labor lost because for six years it ruled, just like the Liberals before it, for the big end of town and did nothing to advance the interests of its working class supporters.

While hospitals, education, public transport and basic social services were underfunded, the banks and the mining companies raked in record profits, on which Labor let them pay only peanuts in tax.

The most grotesque legacy of this Labor government is that under Rudd and Gillard's rule, Gina Rinehart became the richest woman in the world, while single parents had their pittance of a benefit slashed and the dole was held well below the poverty line.

Labor maintained the Howard government's core policies. It refused to abolish the anti-worker WorkChoices legislation. It extended Howard's racist Northern Territory intervention. It continued to back the brutal imperialist war in Afghanistan. It refused to legislate for same-sex marriage. It gave billions of dollars in handouts to big business.

When it came to treatment of victims of torture and persecution, Labor even topped Howard for racism and cruelty. Labor's refugee policy was depraved.

But if workers were disillusioned with Labor, there was no groundswell of enthusiasm for the Liberals. So while Labor's primary vote in the House of Representative fell 4 per cent to 34 per cent, its lowest level in a hundred years, the Coalition's vote rose by less than 2 per cent to 45 per

cent.

The two party preferred swing to the Liberals of 3.5 per cent was enough to give them a clear majority of seats, but this was no landslide. It was less than the 5 percent swing John Howard got in 1996.

Labor still gained almost 47 per cent of the two party preferred vote. And for all the pre-election talk of a Liberal surge in the working class western suburbs of Sydney, Labor held onto the great bulk of its seats there.

The Greens paid dearly for propping up the wretched ALP government. Immediately before the election, the Greens sought to distance themselves from Labor. However, their failure to provide a fighting alternative that mobilised working class resistance to Labor caused their vote to plunge from 11.8 per cent to 8.4 per cent.

The disillusionment with the major parties and the Greens was most marked in the Senate, where Labor's vote fell 4.6 per cent, the Coalition's 1.5 per cent and the Greens' 4.4 per cent. The beneficiaries were a swag of crackpot or right wing minor parties, most notably mining billionaire Clive Palmer's Palmer United Party with 5 per cent.

Another sign of the disillusionment with official politics was a further rise in the informal vote, to 5.9 per cent. In NSW, where the stench of corruption associated with Labor is most intense, the informal vote reached 7.7 per cent. On top of that, a quarter of young people newly eligible to vote did not even bother to get on the electoral roll.

So for all the talk of a crushing victory for Abbott, he has no mandate to go on a sweeping offensive against

workers' rights and conditions, no mandate for a wave of cuts.

Abbott won because Labor did not deliver for workers. He kept to his small target strategy and was very careful not to endorse publicly the wish list of anti-worker demands the Liberals' big business backers championed.

For all the talk of a crushing victory for Abbott, he has no mandate to go on a sweeping offensive against workers' rights and conditions, no mandate for a wave of cuts.

But there is no doubt about the class interests that the Liberals represent. A clear symbol of this was mining billionaire Gina Rinehart's guest appearance at Barnaby Joyce's victory celebration in Tamworth. And of course Abbott was stridently backed by his friend Rupert Murdoch's press empire.

It is only a question of how hard and how quickly they will move against us. Much will depend on what happens with the economy. If it continues to falter, then we need to prepare for an avalanche of attacks as the Liberals move to shore up the bosses' profits.

We are going to have to fight them in the workplaces, in the streets and on the campuses. Labor is not going to save us, and neither are the Greens. The only serious reforms that parliament will deliver are those for which we build mass campaigns outside parliament.

We need to learn the lessons of last time round. The Howard government was brought down by the massive union campaign against his hated WorkChoices legislation.

That campaign involved hundreds of thousands of striking workers taking to the streets and had the potential not only to defeat WorkChoices but to begin to revive working class confidence to stand up to the whole neoliberal offensive. We had a chance to begin to turn the tide and rebuild union organisation.

The trouble was that, in preparation for the 2007 elections, the ACTU leadership wound up the industrial campaign and the mass protests against WorkChoices and converted them into a vote Labor campaign.

In exchange for a few vague promises, Labor was given a blank cheque by the union leaders. In office, facing no serious industrial pressure from the unions, Labor predictably kowtowed to the bosses and preserved the great bulk of WorkChoices.

For six years of the Labor government, the union leaders have done little more than grumble – reflected in the fact that in the last 12 months, there were only 200,000 days of strike action, compared to the millions of days on strike back in the 1970s, when we were actually winning real gains.

The union leaders' failure to fight under Labor has delivered us into the hands of Abbott. We can't allow this story to repeat itself. Now is not the time to "box clever". We need to get into the ring and start delivering some punches and not allow the ALP leaders to restrain us.



Wipe the smile off Abbott's face

Diane Fieldes

We know what's coming. Upon winning the election, Abbott declared Australia to be "under new management and open for business".

Abbott's "Letter to the people of Australia", brought to us by the Murdoch press immediately after the election, shows we'll need to fight. It doesn't mark any huge departure from what we've suffered under Labor: handouts of billions to major corporations, punitive assaults on Aboriginal communities, "Operation Sovereign Borders" to attack refugees, thousands of job losses in the public service and a "review" of childcare funding that's designed to keep childcare workers' already miserable wages down. This is what the Australian ruling class wants, and Abbott is going to oblige.

So how can we resist?

There is nothing inevitable about the Liberals being able to carry out the bosses' attacks. There is an enormous disconnection between the political establishment and what the bulk of the population thinks. An Essential poll in May recorded that over 60 percent think large businesses, mining companies, and people on high incomes don't pay enough tax.

Other polling reveals that similar (or larger) majorities think the government is doing "too little" when it comes to regulating banks, or providing adequate health care, affordable public transport and quality education.

The reason so many of us think these things, despite right wing media and a barrage of "common sense" arguments for budget surpluses and the like, is that we live in a world of massive inequality, in which a tiny minority live in luxury while most struggle to make ends meet, a world of war and economic crisis that has created human misery and environmental destruction on an unprecedented scale.

Only last week, Gina Rinehart was telling us that rich people should be able to buy their way out of jail. This week Clive Palmer has shown us that rich people can buy their way into

Within six months of John Howard coming to office in 1996, 25,000 workers converged on Canberra in opposition to his anti-union laws.

parliament.

This disconnection between the reality of how workers experience the world, and the dominant ideas, is the basis on which resistance is possible.

More important than the mere existence of an Abbott government will be the extent to which people can mobilise to resist any and every cutback in the coming years. Sitting and waiting for the next attack (or the next election) will only encourage the conservatives.

Having a Liberal maggot as prime minister has never stopped struggles breaking out. In the Menzies era of 23 years of unbroken conservative rule, there were some massive and successful strikes. The high point of social movements, from women's liberation to the campaign against the Vietnam War, all took place under Liberal governments.

More recently, it is worth remembering that within six months of John Howard coming to office in 1996, 25,000 workers converged on Canberra in opposition to his anti-union laws and public spending cuts. Thousands of them broke into parliament's hallowed halls (and gift shop).

A journalist described how "impertinent but agile protesters climbed up and across the holy marble parapet ... and hung their banners there, Eureka and Aboriginal flags ... The hitherto aloof, superior and polished parliament ... seemed for a few exciting hours to be a popular amenity."

If we want to fight Abbott, we need to build a fight back beyond parliament – on the streets, on campuses and, most centrally, in our workplaces, where in our millions workers have real power. Already there are protests in defence of refugee rights and for same-sex marriage planned in the first few weeks of the Abbott government. We can guarantee there will

be strikes. The new round of attacks, while profits are sacrosanct, will see to that.

But the outcome will depend on politics and organisation. The capitalist class is acutely aware of the need for organisation – and it has immense resources at its disposal. Our side doesn't, so it is even more important that we be organised.

That means we need to build a political alternative, a new socialist movement that doesn't think it can win change through parliament, but instead looks to the struggles outside of parliament as the basis of a working class mass movement to overturn the whole rotten system. We are a long way from that yet, but we have to and can make a start now.

We need a political organisation of activists driven by hostility to every idea and institution that supports capitalism, and a desire to convince others of their arguments, whether it's the need for strike action, taking on racism against refugees or the fight for equal pay for women.

Nor is it enough to be part of struggles around particular issues without also building up a socialist organisation for the future.

These struggles, though important, are temporary. At some point, their demands are met or the struggles are defeated. But if, through involvement in those struggles, more people are won to the need to challenge all forms of injustice and oppression, the need to organise in the workplaces to change society and the need for solidarity between oppressed groups against the rich and powerful – that is, to revolutionary politics – then both future struggles and the long term goal of overthrowing the system in its entirety are strengthened.



REBUILDING FIGHTING UNIONISM

Red Flag is sponsoring an educational event in Melbourne this November for union delegates and workplace activists.

With the Liberals back in office, there is no better time to share experiences of organising at work, and learning about the radical history of the workers' movement.

Sessions will cover things like how to build rank and file groups today, the challenges of operating in non-union workplaces, how the Communist Party built militant unionism, the role of the trade union officials, and women in the worker's movement. Full program TBA.

**6pm Friday 15 November
and 10am onwards on
Saturday 16 November
Trades Hall, corner
Victoria and Lygon Street,
Carlton, VIC**

For info contact info@sa.org.au

Rising anger at mainstream parties

Tom Bramble

There is mass alienation from established politics. Increasing numbers feel that the big parties offer them nothing.

The informal vote in the House of Reps contests rose to a record high of 5.9 percent, or nearly 700,000. In NSW, informal votes reached 7.7 percent and, in a string of working class suburbs in Sydney's south and west, 10-15 percent. Although there was a swing of 0.35 percent towards informals nationally, in Sydney, the swing hit 2.5-3.0 percent in Werriwa, Barton and Parramatta and 2 percent in Chifley.

Twenty-five percent of young voters didn't even bother to enrol.

With the Labor primary vote nationally at its lowest since 1903, it's clear that the party is steadily losing its appeal to working class voters.

This election was a massive switch-off. Unfortunately, when people did vote, popular disaffection did not lead in a left wing direction but towards right wing micro parties, most obviously Clive Palmer's trophy party, The Palmer United Party, formed by the billionaire mining magnate just four months ago, managed to snare a 5.6 percent share of the lower house vote.

That someone like Clive Palmer, long-time financial sponsor of the LNP in Queensland, can claim and capitalise electorally on his supposed "outsider" status speaks volumes for the low opinion in which most mainstream politicians are held.

The limits of the Greens' leftism



From one side of the country to the other, the Greens' vote dropped in this election. In Tasmania, home of party elder statesman Bob Brown, the swings against them were between 7 and 11 percent. In Western Australia, they were 6-8 percent, in Brisbane and Adelaide, 4-7 percent.

In the Sydney seat of Grayndler, which the Greens have long earmarked as a possible win from Labor, the party's share of the vote dropped by 3 percent, and in neighbouring Sydney by more than twice as much. In both cases, Labor picked up a swing against the trend.

The Greens maintained themselves in Melbourne. Adam Bandt's win in that seat came with a positive swing of 8 percent. Elsewhere in the city, the party either got a positive small swing or kept the loss to 2 percent.

In the Senate, despite a significant swing away from them, they have managed to increase their representation.

The Greens tried to distance themselves from Labor in the run-up to the election, and to that extent they filled the space to the left of the ALP. But the left alternative that the party of-

fers is little more than the sort of wet liberalism that even former Liberal Party Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser can endorse.

As Bandt noted on Sunday, after the election, his vote came from people "right across the political spectrum who said, 'Tony Abbott doesn't represent the values of small-l liberalism that I hold.'"

The Greens have contributed to the general malaise of the left through their inability to articulate clearly a vision of the world in class terms. Where the Communist Party or the left wing of Labor in years past were able to galvanise supporters with a vision that put workers at the centre of political life, the Greens campaign for people of all classes simply to "care".

This is no basis on which to build opposition to ruling class attacks. To create a genuine left opposition to the ALP, the Greens would need to galvanise those sections of the working class tired of both tough-talking sell-out politicians, and wishy washy political hand wringers. They would need to build a base in the unions with an eye to mobilising the class to fight for its own interests.

But the party has done little in this regard, and continues to show no

The Greens have contributed to the general malaise of the left through their inability to articulate clearly a vision of the world in class terms.

interest in changing course.

The situation was clear in Tasmania, where they are in coalition with the budget-cutting ALP government and where the swing against the party was most savage. Tasmanian Greens Senator and former investment banker Peter Whish-Wilson highlighted the party's problems before the election when he described weekend penalty rates as "just a white Anglo-Saxon cultural thing that we've inherited".

Even though the party quickly rushed to disown this comment, it indicated that the party's leading figures have little intention of trying to build working class resistance to employer and government attacks.

Don't keep it to yourself. Let the world know what you think of him.

FUCK TONY ABBOTT t-shirts, available while stocks last.

Get yours at sa.org.au/fucktonyabbott





Where does real change come from?

Colleen Bolger

The radical historian Howard Zinn once said: "What matters is not who's sitting in the White House. What matters is who's sitting in!"

He was pointing to how progressive change is won. It has little to do with the political stripes of the party in government, but much to do with what happens outside parliament.

If it isn't the parliamentarians, who does run society? Most of the time the decisions about what happens are made by the tiny minority who run corporations (directly or indirectly). They call the shots in both the daily lives of workers and the decisions of their parliamentary representatives.

They dictate what people will do during the most significant period of the day – their working hours. They determine how, when and what sort of work you perform. Everything from bathroom breaks to getting sacked is their call.

Their decisions also impact on whether you can afford to own a house, what suburb it will be in, what

kind of health care you can afford, where your children will go to school. None of this changes when there is a change of government.

Company executives rely on the state to provide conditions conducive to doing business. They require favourable labour laws, taxation policies and trade deals. A police force must be at the ready for those occasions when people step out of line. And the army does their bidding beyond domestic markets.

The enormous wealth of corporate heads enables them to discipline governments and buy MPs' loyalty.

Although they wield enormous power over society, the bosses are not elected. They are answerable only to the cronies on their company's board. Their performance is measured in the company's bottom line. In all their decisions, one simple thing is uppermost in their minds: maximising profit.

Profit is extracted by exploiting workers. Therefore, the major divide in society is not between Labor and the Liberals; the major battle lines are between bosses and workers. This is where the fight for change is really played out.

The bosses have waged a one-sided class offensive that has eroded many of the gains won in the 1960s. The single biggest factor in these defeats has not been who was in government, but the weakness of our side.

The key is the relative strength of both sides in the class struggle. When working class combativity was on the rise during the postwar boom, many gains were won under Liberal PM Robert Menzies. The campaigns to win recognition for Aboriginal people in 1967 and to force desegregation show how a determined minority of Aboriginal activists and students who tore around the country on their Freedom Rides could impose their agenda, regardless of the ideology of the government of the day.

More recently, both Labor and Liberal governments have continued the theft of Aboriginal land demanded by mining companies.

The fight against the penal powers – which imposed hefty fines on unauthorised industrial activity throughout the 1950s and 1960s – is another

example. When Tramways Union Secretary Clarrie O'Shea was jailed for refusing to pay a fine, workers mobilised to bring the economy to a standstill until he was released. The penal powers became a dead letter.

However, in the last 30 years the bosses have waged a one-sided class offensive that has eroded many of the gains won in the 1960s. The single biggest factor in these defeats has not been who was in government, but the weakness of our side.

If we want progressive change, we should take Zinn's words to heart. Our side needs to get organised and rebuild a rank and file socialist current in the unions and an activist tradition on the campuses.

David confronts a goliath in yellow overalls



Jeremy Gibson

The struggle by residents against the construction of a McDonald's in the Dandenong Ranges township of Tecoma has entered a difficult new phase, with eight protesters now being sued by the company.

The campaign began in earnest in October 2012, when, after its plans to build a 24-hour outlet in Tecoma were knocked back by the local council, McDonald's appealed directly to the Victorian planning tribunal. Ignoring more than 1,000 objections to the development, the tribunal overruled the council and gave McDonald's the green light.

This kick started a determined campaign by local residents, as they asserted their right to have a say over what development was allowed in their township. The biggest boon for the campaign came in July, two days after demolition work began. The construction union, the CFMEU, advised members on the site that working in the midst of protests and disruptions put health and safety at risk, and shut down the site.

A CFMEU branch meeting then passed a motion "supporting the right

of residents to protest the store" and recommending that McDonald's "reconsider" its plans for the site. Residents have since also received backing from other unions, including the ASU and NUW.

Demolition at the site finally resumed with non-union labour in August, but only after dozens of police were mobilised to remove protesters.

McDonald's has now hauled a number of protesters into the Victorian Supreme Court, attempting to sue for damages for the disruption that has been caused to date. Dubbed the "Tecoma Eight", these campaigners have been served with injunctions, now extended to 20 September, banning them from trespassing on the site lest they face further legal ramifications.

Lawyers representing McDonald's are yet to specify the amount they'll be seeking in damages from the eight, but given that they're claiming to have lost thousands of dollars a day due to the protests, it seems likely that they'll be after a significant sum.

However, residents have shown no sign of wavering, and as support for the campaign continues to grow, so too does their confidence.



Help build the anti-Abbott resistance

subscribe to REDFLAG

The Liberals are going to be on the warpath, slashing health and education, attacking workers' rights and whipping up racist scares. The corporate media will go with them all the way.

More than ever, we need an alternative, radical media - exposing the lies, telling the truth, and championing resistance to the Liberals.

By subscribing to Red Flag, you are helping to build the fightback against Abbott and his corporate cronies.

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Disability plan is not all it seems

Lana Woolf

DisabilityCare, formerly the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), has been sold as a historic advance in the provision of disability services in Australia. With its focus on "individualised support", it's claimed that the national scheme ushers in a new era of "choice and control" for Australians living with a disability.

At the launch of the Barwon pilot program in Victoria, Liz Manning, the parent of a young woman with a severe disability, articulated the expectations of many: "For us DisabilityCare is about hope for the future, that all members of our family will have the opportunity for meaningful, dignified, manageable and enjoyable lives."

Unfortunately, these hopes are not likely to be realised. The reality is that DisabilityCare is part of a neoliberal agenda of privatisation, eroding workers' conditions and commodifying social services.

DisabilityCare is not a scheme for everyone with a disability. DisabilityCare is available only to people with a "significant or profound" disability, as assessed by the government.

Latest figures indicate that nearly 4 million people in Australia have a disability. But the government's own estimates are that about 410,000, or a little over 10 percent of all people with

a disability, will be eligible for DisabilityCare. The government is taking the amount currently allocated to fund the entire disability sector as well as levying the public, and shifting it all into a scheme accessible by only a fraction of the population living with a disability.

Kerry, a mother grappling with the likely impact of the new system, explains some of the concerns about a tick-box approach to eligibility: "My greatest fear is that it won't be enough. I fear children just like mine will continue not to receive help because they are not 'disabled enough' or don't fit a neat criteria box."

A key feature of DisabilityCare is that each person will be allocated an individual budget to manage. John Della Bosca, from the lobby group Every Australian Counts, says that the budget will provide for "whatever is necessary for people to normalise their life". This is total bollocks.

The scheme has also created positions called "planners" who will "work closely with each participant to identify what current and future supports are required to make progress with a person's goals". In practice, the job of the planners is to ensure that the support DisabilityCare "participants" receive is "reasonable and necessary" according to criteria set by the government. In this scheme, participants can make a "choice" as long as the government deems it is the right choice.

DisabilityCare is part of a neoliberal agenda of privatisation and eroding workers' conditions.

The planners are the cornerstone of a new bureaucratic layer established to administer the scheme.

Workers' rights

More than 75 percent of workers in the disability support sector are categorised as "non-professional". Low wages are characteristic of the sector, and this looks set to get worse under DisabilityCare.

DisabilityCare emphasises a move to industry-based competition in the multi-billion dollar disability and services care sector. To survive, organisations will be competing with each other for clients and their individual funding allocation. Only the largest and fiercest competitors will survive. As services battle to undercut each other, workers' wages will be one of the first things they try to slash.

In the pilot programs rolled out so far pay, the first wages offer by the federal government was up to 15 percent less than workers currently receive.

Bosses in the sector are openly talking about DisabilityCare as a "new frontier" for the disability service provision business model. The plan is for an "inefficient and costly" permanent

workforce to be replaced with "a more flexible workforce model where peaks and troughs in service provision can be accommodated with little additional cost", according to Gaynor Lowndes, who runs HomeCare Australia. She advises services readying for the new era to expect to "lose at least 25 percent of your current staff who will not embrace the new company values" dictated by DisabilityCare.

This is what the scheme is really about: competition and market forces. It is not about more choice; the already dwindling choice will shrink in an open market. It will not provide important resources that people with disabilities require to have a better quality of life, like access to public transport, housing, communication technologies and adequate income support.

It is a bogus neoliberal counter-reform. In the words of Simon Duffy from the UK Centre of Welfare Reform, "I think that Australia is in danger of building the world's worst system of individualised funding."

[Lana works in health and disabilities services.]

Egyptian military targets socialists in crackdown

Two months after it took power, the Egyptian military is widening its assault on the right to organise. The military is cynically using the bitterness millions feel towards the deposed Morsi government to try and carry out a full blooded counter-revolution and destroy all the achievements of the uprising that brought down Mubarak. For the first time since January 2011, the Egyptian ruling class is united and on the offensive. The military's moves to consolidate its power have the full backing of the media, of the key institutions of the state, and of the private capitalists whose interests have been closely intertwined with those of the military for decades.

And they are aided not only by the mass hostility to the Muslim Brotherhood, but by the appalling capitulation of many former opponents of the military who are now cheering it on.

Thousands of supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have been arrested. And now, the few revolutionary voices who both stood against Morsi, and also vocally oppose

the military takeover, are finding themselves squarely in the crosshairs of the counter-revolution.

On September 5, labour lawyer Haitham Mohamedain, a leading activist in the Revolutionary Socialists, was arrested on his way to meet clients in Suez. Haitham and the Revolutionary Socialists have been among only a small number of activists prepared to publicly condemn the brutal crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in recent weeks, including the killing of hundreds of protesters on 14 August.

Haitham was released from prison on 7 September, but according to his lawyer, Ramy Ghoneim, he was read a list of very serious charges, including:

"Leading and joining a secret organisation called the Revolutionary Socialists, the purpose of which is to deny the authority of the state, assault citizens and damage social peace";

"Incitement by verbal and written means for the purposes mentioned in the first indictment and possessing publications inciting violence";

"Attempting to change the form



Haitham Mohamedain.

of government by terrorist means through the organisation you lead";

"Jointly inciting and assisting in the destruction of state property, facilities and institutions with the intention of damaging the nation";

"Jointly inciting and assisting in the occupation of a number of public buildings and public facilities"; and

"Establishing and leading the Revolutionary Socialists organisation which agitates in favour of imposing a specific social class on the whole of society and overthrowing the social order of the state".

The Revolutionary Socialists is a small organisation, but it has the respect of many for its intransigent role from the first days of the revolution. The charge that RS members are "terrorists" or somehow pawns of Morsi is ludicrous. They stood in the streets first against Mubarak, then against

SCAF, then against Morsi. They have always been advocates of mass democratic struggle, the method that has been the driving force of the Egyptian revolution.

The fact that they are now being targeted should be a wakeup call to those who think the military can be trusted, or that it will limit its repression to the Muslim Brotherhood. In Egypt now, anyone who stands against military rule is a "terrorist".

Haitham's arrest has drawn condemnation from trade unionists and activists across the world. He has represented hundreds of striking workers in court, and is also well known for his work with victims of torture through El-Nadeem Centre. Solidarity needs to continue.

Go to menasolidaritynetwork.com and sign the statement calling for the dropping of all charges.

FEATURE



Only militant unionism will hold off Abbott's attacks

Jerome Small surveys the state of our union movement as we prepare to face a range of attacks from the Abbott government

“Fair Work Unleashes Mob Rule – And It’s Spreading!” Every day over the past year, some hyper-ventilating headline writer had the job of proving that the Labor government was controlled by militant unions. Especially in the Murdoch press, claims of “mob rule”, a “staggering” level of strikes and an “unchecked, militant culture” among unions in Australia have been commonplace.

We wish.

In fact, after six years of Labor government, rates of industrial action remain at historic lows – at just a few percent of the all time high, achieved in the wages push of 1974. The rate of unionisation has been steady at 18 percent of the workforce for the past three years.

So Murdoch’s paid propagandists can take a cold bath and calm down: unfortunately, there was no great union revival under Rudd and Gillard.

As Abbott trains his sights on our unions, it’s important to get past the headlines to see how unions have fared under Labor – which helps us assess our prospects under Abbott.

A balance sheet

While the headlines about “militant unions” running the ALP were loony, they did reflect something real

about the relationship between the former Labor government – especially under Gillard – and the unions. A lengthy list of union requests were met over the past few years.

Gillard committed several billion dollars to fund a measure of equal pay in the community services sector, after a lively and long-running campaign by the Australian Services Union. The Australian Nurses Federation secured \$1.2 billion to fund higher wages in aged care, after only a minimal, mainly online campaign. The Transport Workers Union applauded a new “safe rates” tribunal with the power to set pay rates for truck drivers – again, with little active campaigning required to get it across the line. Similarly, United Voice has won \$300 million for childcare workers under the Big Steps campaign.

The Maritime Union of Australia, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Australian Workers Union welcomed varieties of industry plans, and some high profile millions to prop up (at least for a while) some key manufacturing plants such as Alcoa’s Point Henry refinery in Geelong. The construction unions have seen the vicious anti-union taskforce, the Australian Building and Construction Commission, folded into the Fair Work Commission, with its penalties

reduced by two-thirds.

For the union movement as a whole, Labor’s Fair Work Act loosened the rules about what unions can bargain over. Importantly, unions can fight for legally binding enterprise agreement clauses that cover contracting out and casual employment, which was all but impossible under Howard’s WorkChoices laws.

The Howard-era rules about “greenfields” agreements, covering new or relocated workplaces, allowed the employer to dictate terms entirely, or to pick and choose which unions to make a deal with. After Labor’s reforms, unions are able to bargain with employers, and can pursue industrial action once a site opens if agreement isn’t reached.

At first glance this can look like an impressive checklist. It was certainly enough to convince union leaders that they were better off within the limits set by Labor, legally and politically, rather than battling issues out industrially with employers across a sector, or with governments.

However, there are severe limitations to this sort of deal making.

The extra funding for the community sector is not guaranteed to flow through to the workers, leading to a number of sharp battles with employers. A \$1.2 billion boost to aged

care workers’ wages sounds impressive, but when it is averaged over the 300,000 workers in the sector and over four years, it’s about \$20 per week.

Crucially, the core of WorkChoices remains intact. Union rights to enter a workplace, talk with workers and enforce conditions are well short of what was commonplace in the 1980s. Effective strike action is banned in almost all situations, with severe penalties for unprotected industrial action. Employers can lock workers out, and force them into unfavourable arbitration, as Qantas showed in 2011.

But a big problem with the Rudd/Gillard-era changes is that reforms easily won can be equally easily stripped away. Because many of these changes have been won through parliamentary favours, mostly without sustained campaigns – let alone strikes – they are extremely vulnerable to attack. The ruling class has little fear of an industrial backlash from abolishing the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal, because there was no industrial campaign to win this reform in the first place.

There have been occasional industry-wide stop-works in construction against the ABCC, but hardly the sort of campaign of mass disruption that could make the laws a dead letter and put the bosses in dread of another

FEATURE: Only militant unionism will hold off Abbott's attacks

A handful of stronger unions, most notably in construction in Victoria, have managed to maintain a "pattern bargain" with good common terms and conditions across much of the industry.

PHOTO: COREY OAKLEY



round of disruption if the ABCC is re-introduced.

The same is true for Labor's Fair Work laws as a whole. There was a willingness among at least a section of workers to fight Howard's WorkChoices with industrial action and civil disobedience, but that mood was channelled into a string of token one day strikes and then a purely electoral campaign. According to the script approved by Labor and our union leaders, WorkChoices was to be partially amended, by the proper authorities, after doing untold damage to workers and our organisations – not turned into a dead letter by mass working class action.

In contrast, the massive strike wave that freed jailed union leader Clarrie O'Shea in 1969 cracked open the industrial system in a way that mere changes to the law could never do. It wasn't until later in the 1970s, after a major recession, that Australia's rulers started seriously pushing back against the right to strike won in the O'Shea strike. And it wasn't until the union-policed no strike policy embodied in Labor's Accord, from 1983, that there was a sustained fall in the rate of industrial action.

So the closer we look at the balance sheet under Labor, the more striking it is not how much has been won, but how little – and how vulnerable those gains are to attack by the Liberals.

A boom for whom?

If an "unchecked culture of militancy" were really taking hold, the easiest place to find it should be in the resources sector. However, the remarkable feature of the current resources boom has been the *lack* of a wages explosion.

A short-lived resources boom in the early 1980s brought some serious disputes. Miners and construction workers in Queensland and the Pilbara won hefty wage rises, with many of these gains flowing through to other unions. Strikes in the metal industry, an 11 day national truck strike, and finally a 16 day national strike by Telecom workers smashed through the wage guidelines of the day, and workers made gains across the board.

This time around, the MUA in West Australia is one of very few unions able to boast about real gains. The high wages of miners and resource project construction workers are propped up by massive amounts of overtime, with workers doing 12-hour days, seven days a week, for weeks on end.

And if unionisation is patchy in mine construction, the actual mining remains a wasteland. Outside of coal, some 95 percent of the mining workforce is non-union. "Fly in fly out" arrangements help produce an overworked, exhausted and atomised workforce that no union, so far, has been able to make significant inroads into.

All of this has won high praise from the Reserve Bank, which noted in a recent report that in previous resources booms, "Australia's centralised wage-setting system had the effect of spreading wage increases across the economy." This time around, no other groups of workers have been able to leverage higher wages out of the boom.

Behind this remarkable fact, as the Reserve Bank notes, lies the destruction of the "award" system. A product of the great strikes of the 1890s, the system of "awards" – legally enforceable employment conditions that laid down everything from wage levels to your right to a union noticeboard – was a conservatising influence on Australia's union movement.

Nevertheless, the award system could have a dynamic that the bosses grew to hate. Because wages and conditions across an industry were governed by the same award, there was a logic to strike campaigns that spread across an industry. For instance, in the pace-setting metal manufacturing industry, mass meetings of thousands would endorse a log of claims and hammer out an industrial campaign to achieve it. Aspects of the union claim would then be endorsed by the Arbitration Commission in order to keep the industrial peace. Many awards contained relativities – particular categories of work were meant to be paid more than others. So wage rises in one section of the workforce

could be spread into other areas.

This entire architecture has now been destroyed, with awards now only a minimal set of conditions for the industrially weakest workers.

A handful of stronger unions, most notably in construction in Victoria, have managed to maintain a "pattern bargain" with good common terms and conditions across much of the industry. In many other industries, employers have been able to play divide and conquer. Because there are no common standards across an industry, for instance, companies such as Qantas can "outsource" work to another company, with workers doing exactly the same work but being paid dramatically less.

Hence the "race to the bottom" as employers cut wages and conditions to gain a competitive edge, in a way that was much more difficult when workers in an industry were covered by a comprehensive common award. Unions can be kept so busy fighting separate enterprise agreements that an industry-wide campaign seems out of the question.

No unions have come through this change unscathed, and even the strongest have not made up all the ground lost under Howard. In the MUA, wharfies' jobs and conditions were negotiated away after the Patrick dispute in 1998. While the MUA in West Australia has made real gains from its aggressive organising during boom conditions, casual employment is still widespread at the national stevedoring companies. Australian-flagged coastal shipping was decimated under Howard, and the union-controlled roster for the employment of seafarers was dismantled, with no sign of its return.

In construction, the CFMEU has held on to much of its ground, especially in Victoria, and has made some hard-fought gains elsewhere, such as with the prolonged strike at the Queensland Children's Hospital in Brisbane last year. But the fact that Grocon is building a string of the largest sites in Melbourne without union shop stewards or safety reps is a warning of where things could head. For years, many major sites in other states have been built without an active union presence, with predictable results for conditions and health and safety.

In warehousing, the National Union of Workers has made some steady gains on wages and casual conversion in warehouse enterprise agreements. The NUW has been prepared to mount some serious pickets, involving a level of solidarity from other unions and activists not achieved for some time. But there is plenty of work to do here – there are many WorkChoices era "greenfields" sheds that have still not got back to the pre-WorkChoices conditions. Manufacturing presents a similarly mixed picture.

State public sector workers have gone backwards, despite some impressive actions. Queensland unions

PHOTO: COREY OAKLEY



Left: CFMEU members rally outside Grocon site in Lonsdale St, August 2012. Above: Toll workers on strike in Somerton, Vic, July 2012.

Politically, the Coalition remains somewhat haunted by the ghost of WorkChoices, as their defensive language and “small target” strategy around their industrial relations policy indicated.

copped massive cuts with only token protests. The entire structure of the public service is under serious attack in Queensland, WA and NSW without any serious fightback, and Victorian teachers have in effect given up permanency.

We could continue the list, but the point is clear enough. The fact that the union movement, with a very small number of exceptions, has failed to make significant gains in “boom” conditions, under a legal framework as good as we’re likely to get for years, is an indictment of current strategy. The strategy will have to change dramatically if we want to confront seriously the tough times ahead.

Prospects under Abbott

Despite our side’s obvious problems, it would be a serious mistake to think it has to be one way traffic under Abbott.

Politically, the Coalition remains somewhat haunted by the ghost of WorkChoices, as their defensive language and “small target” strategy around their industrial relations policy indicates. And the *Financial Review* has fretted that Abbott is already unpopular, even among people sick of Labor, which might limit his scope for rapid action.

We also have to remember that the class struggle is capable of sharp turns. The past three decades have been a period of union retreat. But they have also shown that there can be particular times when the ruling class goes too far and creates a backlash that carries the potential for a sharp break in the situation.

If someone had told me at the start of 1998 that, by Easter of that year, I would be helping workers build barricades in the streets of Melbourne, de-

fying courts and cops in mass pickets of thousands, I would have told them they were dreaming – but we did all of that, with plenty pushing for more, in the mass pickets that defended the MUA in 1998. The Kennett protests of 1992 and the national mass rallies against WorkChoices in 2005 also presented a chance to break out of the pattern of retreat and defeat.

All these opportunities went begging – but this doesn’t reflect any fundamental lack of power in our unions.

Despite the decline, there is still a serious union presence in every key industry in the country. Most of the time, people can feel defensive and ground down. But if unions were to take concerted action during one of these sharp situations when the mood shifts, it could cause a massive crisis for the ruling class.

The fact that this hasn’t happened – in 1992, 1998, or 2005 – isn’t due to a bad set of laws, a shortage of members, or a lack of potential strength. It has been our side’s lack of preparedness to use that strength at key points that has been our downfall. That is, it has been the conservatism of the union leadership, and the lack of any significant organised left in the unions to challenge this, that remains our side’s key weakness.

Of course, there is no predicting the timing for any such crisis. But we know from history how fast things can shift. In the meantime, we’re certainly not for unionists sitting on our hands, moaning about the lack of a fight.

Four tasks for militants

First, to build workers’ collective strength where we are. There is simply no substitute for the often slow, sloggish work of recruiting the next

member, working to develop the confidence of the next activist or union delegate, and finding ways to have workers assert their collective organisation, strength and self-confidence.

For Socialist Alternative’s union members, looking for opportunities, large and small, to rebuild the collective strength of workers is our bread and butter. The old Communist Party’s slogan was “Make every member an activist.” Today, that is often a hard and patient task, carried out one member at a time. We have to have a big measure of bloody-minded perseverance, realising that every ounce of strength we build today will prove vital in the struggles of tomorrow.

Second, to show solidarity with all workers in struggle. History tells us that we all go forward together, or we all go back together. Every time workers set up a picket line, we have to find a way to support it – by motions, by delegations and ultimately by joint action.

Third, our activity has to be social as well as industrial. A crucial part of Howard’s strategy to push through attacks on working class people involved vicious scapegoating of Aboriginal people, refugees, Muslims and LGBTI people. A crucial part of our side’s strategy has to be countering these attacks. We have to remember that standing up for human rights is standing up for all of us.

Finally, we have to remember that the key to our side’s weakness is political. If we’re to do better than slow sloggish work and the large scale, sometimes heroic, failures of the Howard years, we have to apply ourselves seriously to building a political alternative to Labor’s politics of deal making, compromise and retreat.

Abattoir workers challenge non-union agreement



Liam Keats

At the Teys Australia abattoir in Beenleigh, Queensland, workers have not had a pay rise since November 2011.

Teys is one of the largest meat processors in the country. Its Beenleigh production workforce of some 730 is represented by the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union. With around 90 percent density at the site, AMIEU members have a proud history of maintaining conditions and winning wage increases.

However, a recent secret ballot to push through a company-backed agreement was won by a very slim margin and has angered workers and their union. The AMIEU has lodged an appeal with the Fair Work Commission. The union says that the company got the agreement up through dodgy tactics including allowing foremen (who aren't covered by the agreement) to vote for it, paying a \$1,000 inducement to workers for signing on and threatening to shut down the entire plant if an agreement wasn't reached.

The dispute began in late 2012, as the old workplace agreement expired and the union began negotiations for a new agreement. Matt Journeaux, AMIEU organiser for the site, explained to *Red Flag* that one of the main issues for workers was the company's insistence on moving them to a new time-based pay system. This would allow the company to speed up the "chain", forcing the workers to process more meat in the same amount of time for the same pay. The old system allowed workers some control over the speed at which they worked.

The company claims that the new agreement and pay system will provide workers with a 3 percent pay increase. The union says that the result will actually be a wage decrease of 2.8 percent, with a productivity increase of 7.5 percent – in other words, more work for less money.

Workers at the site have held two 24-hour stoppages and three four-hour stoppages. They also voted by a show of hands not to put

the company agreement to a secret ballot.

Attendance at the picket lines has been strong, and even pouring rain couldn't dampen the resolve for the second 24-hour stoppage in July, when 160 workers showed up to staff the picket. This action forced the company to give ground, but although the next agreement it put forward was improved, it was still not what the workers were after. When asked what he thought about workers being unable legally to strike outside of the bargaining process, Matt replied, "It's just bullshit."

The union says that the company got the agreement up through dodgy tactics including allowing foremen to vote for it.

The union has also taken a number of measures to counter the company's attempt to undermine pay and conditions through other means. For instance, union members have ensured that casual labourers on site receive the same pay and conditions as permanent employees.

The company also employs a number of workers under the 457 visa scheme, mostly from Vietnam and Brazil. The union has welcomed these workers and has employed translators to talk to them and ensure that they too are receiving site pay and conditions. As a result, union coverage amongst the 457 visa workers is 90 percent, a great example of not letting race, colour or creed divide workers. Matt explains that "as far as the AMIEU is concerned the only real division in the world is between capitalists and workers."

So to the workers down in Beenleigh – *Chiến thắng trong cuộc đấu tranh của bạn! A vitória na sua luta! Victory in your struggle!*

Immigration dept fails Egyptian sailors

Marg Perrott, Wollongong

Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) officials are furious at the Department of Immigration's revocation of the visas of 11 striking seamen from the Egyptian coal carrier *Wadi Alkarm*, currently docked in Port Kembla.

Maritime visas are guaranteed under international law, according to the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

The seamen had gone on strike to protest a policy of no access to food between 7pm and 7am and the halving of their wages. While in Australian waters, the workers felt confident in alerting the ITF to their grievances.

ITF Australia assistant coordinator Matt Purcell said the Egyptian government-owned coal carrier was in breach of the Maritime Labor Convention, and although Egypt is not a signatory, the carrier is bound by the convention while sailing in Australian waters.

"The men have also been called treasonous by their employer because they did the right thing and flagged their issues with the ITF", he said.

MUA southern NSW secretary Garry Keane talked to the workers aboard the vessel. The MUA organised tickets home for them and accommodation on shore until they could leave.

"The Immigration officials told them if they left the ship they would end up in Villawood Detention Centre", he said. Keane said the men have stated they would not crew the ship and would remain on strike at Port Kembla until their demands are met.

"These men want the policy of no food between 7pm and 7am reversed permanently, not just until they sail out of Australian waters, and they want their previous wages reinstated with back pay from June, when the wages were cut", Keane said.

"These blokes don't have a desire to stay in Australia; they want to go home, and to be treated like criminals by Immigration is just not on."

Clash on the coalfields

Steph Price

"In Collinsville when the fire siren goes off, the hair on the back of your neck stands up; you can be standing in the shopping centre with everyone standing frozen. Immediately your mind goes to where and if your loved ones, mates and family are working that day." – Donna Bulloch, president, Mining Communities United.

Collinsville, in Queensland's Bowen Basin, is a coal mining town. Locals say that most families have at least one person employed in the mines. It's been that way for nearly a century. But in a move that could set the scene for a major industrial battle, Anglo-Swiss resources giant Glencore Xstrata has suspended operations at the Collinsville coal mine and sacked its 400-strong workforce.

Glencore Xstrata has no plans to walk away from the Collinsville mine or the Bowen Basin, which holds Aus-

tralia's largest coal reserves. A company spokesperson told a local newspaper that it believes in a "profitable future for mining in Collinsville".

However, according to the union representing the sacked workers, the CFMEU (Mining Division), Glencore has said it won't bring anyone back on under the existing enterprise agreement and will only consider employing workers on cut price individual agreements or under a single greenfield agreement.

Publicly, the company has made no guarantees that there will be any jobs for the sacked union workers; there are reports that recruiters have been touting for a replacement workforce on the promise that they will be based in on coaches with blacked out windows.

CFMEU district president Steven Smyth has foreshadowed a serious fight, describing the dispute as shaping up to be "the Patrick's of the out-back".

Help Red Flag provide the best industrial reporting from the struggles in Australian workplaces

Red Flag aspires to be the go-to publication for working class militants who want to know about the issues facing Australian workers, and the struggles in workplaces big and small. To do that, we need your help. If you have a tip about a brewing fight we might want to report on, or can contribute an article or just give us a line on a story – let us know! We want our paper to bring together the news about union issues that you won't read in the corporate press, from the perspective of those actually on the ground standing up for their rights.

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Casual workers kick back

Simon Burns, NTEU member

Late last semester, Melbourne University management kicked some extra labour onto casual tutors in the Faculty of Arts. They didn't expect tutors to kick back.

In a series of meetings called by the National Tertiary Education Union, casual tutors in the faculty discussed their exploitative working conditions and began organising.

Following a wider call, the Melbourne University Casuals Network met for the first time in early August. We discussed the conditions of casual exploitation at the University – the huge amounts of unpaid labour that we're expected to do, as well as the anxiety of chronically insecure work.

Some of the network's first steps were to try to establish a presence. A small but vocal group at the recent education funding national day of action raised a banner for the network and casual conditions.

The network now faces the challenge of further building its profile, with casual workers spread thin on a large but decentralised campus. We must attract members by giving them opportunities to work on campaigns and public events.

Another challenge the network faces is dealing with the argument that it should not be affiliated with the NTEU. The few who argue this are right to be concerned about the network's independence and to be critical of the union leadership. But to organise outside the union would be a mistake.

The Casuals Network should organise as a rank and file group *within* the NTEU. In this way it can maintain its independence from the NTEU leadership while pushing the union to



Through industrial action, union members at Melbourne University have already fought back against the university's attempts to slash by \$10 an hour pay for professional casuals.

throw its significant industrial weight behind the casuals' fight.

The Casuals Network at Sydney University organises in this way. It meets separately from the NTEU branch. It makes its own democratic decisions, which can be carried out by the network, as an active working body within the union. The network draws resources from the NTEU branch committee but does not require its approval for decisions or action.

By pushing casual workers' issues onto the bargaining table and by par-

ticipating in ongoing strike action, it has already forced Sydney University management to agree to 80 new ongoing jobs specifically available to workers currently employed on a casual basis.

Permanent university staff are also threatened by the casualisation that is rampant in the sector. They share an interest in improvements for casual workers, just as casual workers have a stake in the struggle for decent conditions for all workers on the campuses.

Through industrial action, union

members at Melbourne University have already fought back against the university's attempts to slash by \$10 an hour pay for professional casuals working and studying at the university. They have fought off an attack on academic freedom in the form of management's grab for the right to sack academics whose work doesn't align with the university's "strategic goals". With a Casuals Network drawing casual workers into the fight, we can win even more from the EBA campaign and build for the struggles beyond that.

The Sydney University Casuals Network has won what it has so far by acting in solidarity with the collective weight of the union. If the Melbourne University Network wants weight behind any kick it delivers to management, it will need to do the same.

WA teachers issue ultimatum over cuts

Nick Everett, State School Teachers Union member

A rally of teachers, education assistants and school support staff has demanded that the West Australian Liberal government reverse a \$280 million budget cut to state school funding or face industrial action.

On 20 August, state education minister Peter Collier announced that 150 support staff would go, along with 150 education assistants and 200 staff in the Education Department's central and regional offices. Just four days before the announcement, he had told 6PR radio that there was "no allocation, no indication and no desire" for redundancies in education. Collier later defended his statement, claiming that he had misunderstood the question, believing that the interviewer was "referring to teachers".

However, information gathered from school principals by the State School Teachers Union has revealed that more than 300 teachers' jobs will also be axed from 2014. At the same

time, student numbers are expected to increase by 18,000 over the next two years in the country's fastest growing state. Class sizes will increase, support programs will be cut, and students with special learning needs will suffer.

While Collier has attempted to spin the reform as "delivering equity and efficiency", state Premier Colin Barnett has told a parliamentary com-

"There is all sorts of talk about downing tools ... For a lot of people, this will be the first time they have ever downed tools."

mittee his government could go even further and force small schools to join larger campuses, or close schools altogether.

Kevin Davey, an education assistant for 15 years, told the ABC that the

cuts will have the greatest impact on vulnerable students.

"You're talking about children with autism, Down syndrome, kids who have severe anaphylactic shock, epilepsy, things like that where you need someone one on one with those kids to make sure they're going to be okay", said Davey.

A principal, who did not want to be named, told the *Sunday Times* that the cuts would cost large senior high schools between \$400,000 and \$1 million.

"This is the biggest hurt to public education in the many decades I've been involved in education", he said. "There is all sorts of talk about downing tools ... For a lot of people, this will be the first time they have ever downed tools. People are saying that they have never been willing to down tools for pay rises and so on, but for this, they would be willing to."

After having knocked back an additional \$671 million in federal funding for state schools, as part of the Gonski plan, the state government intends to slug vulnerable students and their

families with new fees. Each child of a 457 visa holder will be charged \$4,000 annually to attend a state school, and TAFE fees are set to increase by up to 400 percent next year.

Angered at the cuts, 500 education assistants and school support staff walked off the job at lunchtime on 3 September to rally outside state parliament in pouring rain. At 4pm, they were joined by 1,500 teachers, who were addressed by officials from the State School Teachers Union, United Voice and the Civil Service Association, as well as state opposition leader Mark McGowan and federal education minister Bill Shorten. McGowan and Shorten's pledge – that an ALP government would do better – received a lukewarm response from teachers, who have for years battled with big class sizes and poor resources.

The rally issued an ultimatum to the Barnett government to reverse the cuts or a face a campaign of industrial and political action by teachers.



No NT nuclear waste dump!

Jon Lamb and Cathy Lawless

Despite clear opposition from the Aboriginal traditional owners, the push for a nuclear waste dump at Muckaty Station, 120 kilometres north of Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, continues.

The campaign led by traditional owners to stop the waste dump is gearing up for the next stage in the fight.

On 26 August, the Federal Court set June 2014 for a case to be heard on whether the nomination of the site for the waste dump followed due process. The nuclear free campaigner for the Australian Conservation Foundation, Dave Sweeney, told *Red Flag*:

"The case has been brought by a group of senior Aboriginal traditional owners who argue that both the Commonwealth and the Northern Land Council (NLC) have failed in their statutory duty to identify, engage and obtain consent from the appropriate Aboriginal owners. They are seeking to have the existing nomination ruled invalid."

Muckaty was nominated by the NLC with the support of only one of the five clan groups holding ownership and cultural ties to Muckaty Station.

The Rudd-Gillard Labor government has used divide and rule tactics, former resources minister Martin Ferguson boasting at one stage that he had offers for numerous locations across the NT for a waste dump if Muckaty Station fell through.

Opposition ignored

Barb Shaw, an Aboriginal activist with connections to Muckaty Station, told *Red Flag*, "There has always been opposition to the nuclear waste dump on Muckaty ... There has been a campaign running ever since the site was nominated and announced. There has been big opposition from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, from right across Australia."

Shaw explained: "People from four of the clan groups have travelled

around Australia talking about the nuclear waste dump. There has been a nuclear-free ride from Lucas Heights all the way to Muckaty ... People are aware of it and do oppose it, because they know it is wrong and that the waste hasn't come from this country, yet they want to put it in the country. Aboriginal people are very culturally and traditionally connected to the land ... any form of nuclear waste is not part of our culture."

Shaw is concerned by the nomination process and the role of the NLC. "There is a need for free, prior and informed consent in this issue, but there was no information given to the people. They weren't properly informed about the waste dump, and they haven't been able to give full consent if they want a nuclear waste dump there or not", she said.

Spurious excuses

The rationale for the dump is spurious. There is no compelling scientific or public safety necessity for one to be built. It has been repeatedly claimed that a specialised waste dump is required to safely store low level waste (LLW) and long lived intermediate level waste (LLIW).

Most of the LLW is derived from medical isotopes used in hospitals and clinics, while the LLIW comes almost exclusively from the nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights in Sydney. It is this latter type of waste that is of most concern because it is highly toxic and radioactive for a lengthy period.

Sweeney explains further: "In the 1990s there was a departmental decision made that the best way to manage Australia's radioactive waste was through developing a centralised remote dump or store. This decision was made by unelected bureaucrats and has since been uncritically adopted and advanced by successive federal governments. A remote dump is one way to manage waste; it is not the only way and has never been proven to

be the best way."

The push for a nuclear waste facility also ties in with a desire by the Australian ruling class to maintain a stake in the global nuclear industry. Aboriginal rights, the safety of workers and environmental concerns are being quashed or ignored in order to pursue profit.

The justification for storage of medical waste is also a complete futility. Sweeney told *Red Flag*, "The medical myth is a deeply disturbing aspect of the Muckaty story. Both major parties have consistently misrepresented the situation by claiming that the Muckaty dump is needed to ensure Australians have access to nuclear medicine for therapeutic and diagnostic reasons.

"This is not the case – and medical waste is not the driver for the planned dump. Medical and public health bodies including the Medical Association for the Prevention of War and the Public Health Association of Australia have repeatedly condemned the conflation of these issues", he said.

The promotion of the waste dump on an economic basis, including for local Aboriginal communities, also deeply concerns Shaw. "It is disgusting to talk about a nuclear waste dump as being part of economic development

because there is no economic development in nuclear waste dumping", she said.

"People around the country need to do their homework. They need to look at Mother [Nature] at work, especially when we have had accidents like Chernobyl, the tsunami in Japan and Fukushima, and of course there is the bombing of Maralinga here. The general public needs to think about whether they want to have nuclear waste travelling through their towns and their states, because accidents do happen."

Whatever the outcome of the legal proceedings, Sweeney says that a public campaign needs to continue, including a transparent discussion about what to do with existing nuclear waste – simply passing unjust legislation and railroading Aboriginal and community rights is not the answer. "We need to move from the failed search for a vulnerable postcode to a genuine commitment to a credible process. Radioactive waste lasts longer than any politician's promise, and we need to get its management right. This needs to be based on sound science and open and inclusive decision making and reflect international best practice. None of this is occurring at Muckaty."

FAST FACTS

What do they want to dump on Aboriginal land?



Some reprocessing waste will be returned from the UK and France. The government plans to store this long lived intermediate level reprocessing waste above ground at Muckaty



Long lived intermediate level waste includes reactor components, chemical residues, sealed radioactive sources from medicine and industry and used metal fuel cladding. This waste requires special handling and shielding of radioactivity and is destined for disposal in deep geological repositories but no such repositories exist

Australia already has a stockpile of about 4000 m³ of low and intermediate level waste, increasing at the rate of 50 m³ each year



Protestors target fashion festival

Ruby Healer



Models walked down the runway to chants of "Target - blood on your hands!" at Melbourne's Spring Fashion festival on Saturday 7 September. Red handprints covered the marquee as protesters smeared Target's catwalk event with paint symbolising the blood of Bangladeshi garment workers.

Days earlier, the New York fashion week launch of Nautica's spring collection was also disrupted by picketers. Activists are angry at the label's refusal to acknowledge the dangerous conditions in the factories where its clothes are produced. With placards that read "No one should die for fashion" and "Don't throw workers overboard" protesters called on Nautica to improve standards.

Public outrage over appalling sweatshop conditions has been growing in the wake of the Rana Plaza tragedy in April this year. In that incident, 1,129 workers died when their workplace collapsed around them.

Under pressure, 100 major retailers have been forced to sign an Accord on Fire and Building Safety that restricts investment in the very worst Bangladeshi factories for the next five years. However, the Accord fails to address the ongoing extreme exploitation of unskilled workers in labour intensive industries like textiles and footwear.

Garment workers in Bangladesh are paid as little as US\$40 per month while the global retail apparel industry is worth an estimated US\$1.1 trillion per year.

A number of Australian companies such as Big W and Just Jeans have refused even to sign the limited safety Accord. Moreover, none of the corporations implicated in the nearly 2,000 industrial deaths in Bangladesh in the last five years have ever paid compensation to the families of their victims.

Tragedies like the Rana Plaza factory collapse are the logical conclusion of a system in which companies, motivated by profits, deliberately and consistently degrade working conditions. The Australian corporations involved are guilty of industrial murder.

Solidarity with Bangladeshi workers!

We need free child care

Kate Jeffreys

Child care in Australia is expensive and hard to find. Even when it's available, stressed-out parents must run the gauntlet of morning traffic in the "double drop-off" - where one child attends school and another attends day care.

The childcare industry itself is in crisis. According to the Productivity Commission, unmet demand for child care currently sits at around 600,000 places. Long waiting lists mean that a pregnant woman can sign her future child up for care, and still have to wait more than a year after she's ready to go back to work for a place to open up.

For parents lucky enough to find their child a place at a day care centre, the financial cost can be enormous. The average price of long day care is around \$75 per day. Daily fees for inner suburban or high demand areas can reach \$100 or more. Even with meagre government rebates and benefits, low income families are being priced out of access to quality care.

Some parents are finding that, due to the cost of child care, they simply can't afford to work. Overwhelmingly, the role of stay-at-home parent still falls to mothers. Since women full time workers still earn, on average, 82 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts, they are more likely to be the ones to drop out of the workforce after having kids. Staying at home is a lifestyle option for wealthy women; for women in low income families, it can be a financial necessity.

With formal care unaffordable, parents seek support from their families, grandparents being the largest source of informal childcare arrangements. Research commis-

sioned by the Council on the Ageing NSW found that grandparents are performing unpaid child care to the value of \$88 million a year in that state.

In childcare surveys, grandparents often report that they value the time they spend with their grandkids, and that the joy of sharing time with them is all the reward they need. This demonstrates the love that family members show in caring for each other, but capitalism doesn't see it this way.

Child care and capitalism

To capitalism, if workers are "human resources", their kids are potential human resources. Without children, parenting, child care, education and training, there would be no future workforce. Raising a generation of workers helps sustain the whole system.

The capitalist culture of atomisation and individualism feeds us the line that we should fend for ourselves and that families - no matter how poor - should bear financial responsibility for their kids. How many times have we heard recipients of government benefits - especially single mums - denigrated as "bludgers"?

The idea that we have no right to expect help raising kids and that individuals, rather than society as a whole, should care for the young, means that bosses can get away with taking no responsibility for the care, education and socialisation of people they will eventually exploit in the labour market.

Ultimately, we need a different type of society - one that structures child care around collectivity, not atomisation, and that prioritises what's best for kids and parents, not for big business. But even far short of revolutionary social change, there

are many ways to improve the situation.

We can demand free, government-funded child care, and a scheme to expand childcare centres in areas with high demand. We could fund it through higher corporate tax rates. Crèches at large workplaces would mean women could stay in employment while being close to their kids. They would also vastly simplify the logistics of getting to day care and back.

Respect

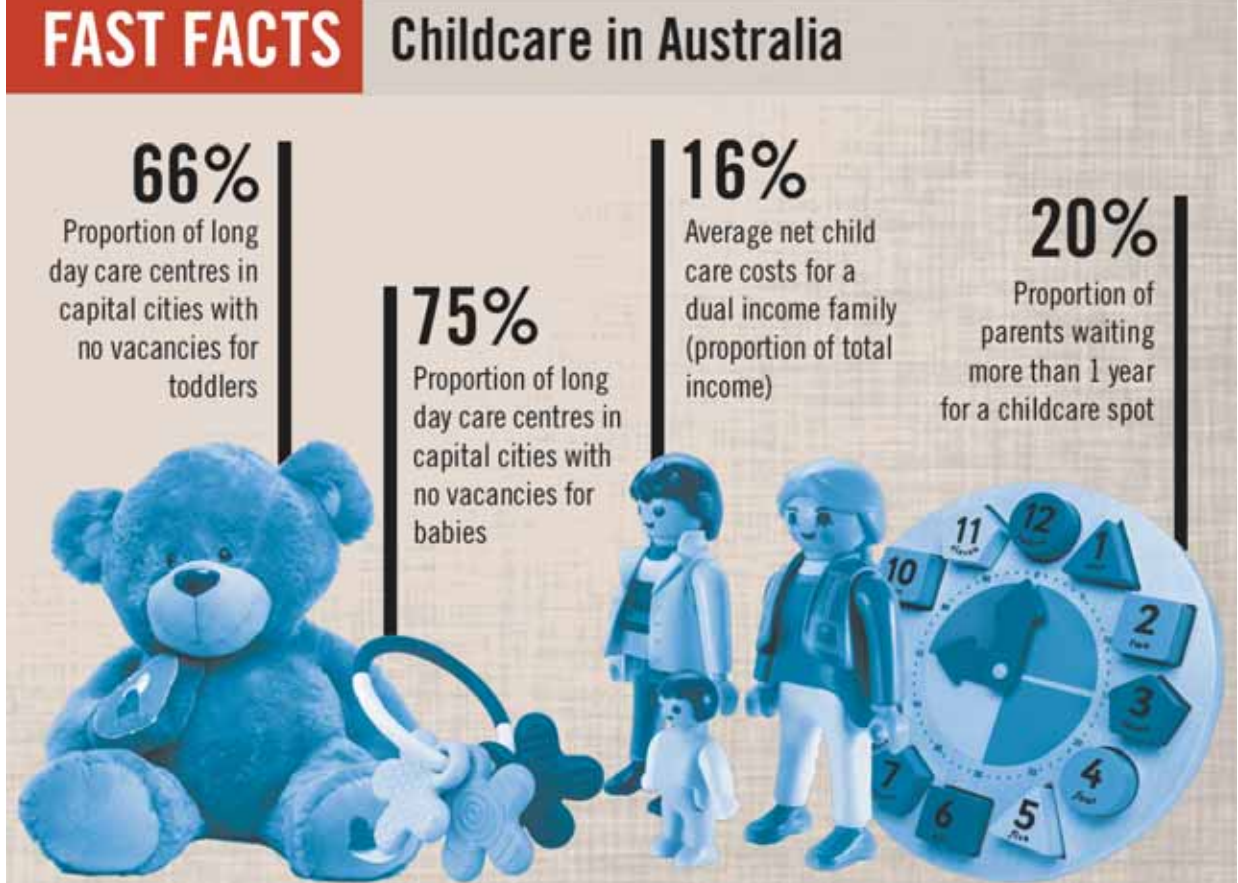
One vital step we can take toward better quality child care and more government funding is to support the Big Steps campaign by United Voice, the union representing childcare workers.

More than 97 percent of childcare workers and early childhood educators are women, and as a result wages in the industry are low. Certificate III early childhood workers earn as little as \$19 per hour - \$10 per hour less than workers with equivalent qualifications in other industries.

Low wages mean that dedicated professionals can't afford to stay in the industry. A wealth of experience is lost to staff turnover: 180 overworked, underpaid childcare workers leave the industry every week.

United Voice is campaigning for equal pay for childcare workers and early childhood educators, and for government funding to meet this claim - which would cost \$1.4 billion per year. This is a small price to pay for quality care.

Working class parents, their kids and childcare workers all have the same interests: high quality, free and accessible child care, provided by workers who are treated with respect and paid a decent wage.





Syria: Support the revolution, oppose US attack

Continued from back cover.

Shamefully, some on the left have offered intellectual cover to the Assad regime in the name of opposition to imperialism. For these people, Ba'athist anti-imperialist rhetoric is enough to declare the regime legit once and for all.

In Australia, one of the most prominent figures in this camp is Sydney academic and organiser of the "Hands off Syria" rallies, Tim Anderson. He wrote in September of last year:

"The 'consensus' from March 2011 was that President Bashar al-Assad was a 'brutal dictator'; the Syrian people had risen up against his regime as part of the Arab Spring's democratic awakening; Assad's minority Alawi group was repressing the majority Sunni group; and a rebel force had been formed from army defectors and outside forces were only helping them defend a civilian population. In my opinion, virtually every element of this picture was false."

To call into question Assad's dictatorial credentials is to spit in the face of those who suffered under the regime for over 40 years and the tens of thousands who were killed in 1982 in the Hama massacre. It is to deny those who have been fighting for land reform and trade union freedoms for decades. To question the motivations of the millions who came into the streets because their lives were made a living hell, not just by the political repression but by class injustice, is an insult. More than a third of the Syrian population lives below the poverty line. The urban and rural poor are the social base of the revolution against Assad. And they are motivated by an entirely justified rage.

Anderson also slanders the whole of the movement against the regime by suggesting that they are puppets of Western imperialism. To make such a claim is to deny the very real democratic struggles being waged by revolutionary forces. It ignores the significant structures of self-

organisation, especially in parts of the country where the regime has withdrawn.

These initiatives include the voluntary provision of emergency medical and legal support, food distribution and the turning of houses into field hospitals. In some parts of the country, local councils have taken over the running of whole towns. Despite dire war conditions, they are holding democratic elections.

'A popular revolution'

An article compiling the experiences of some of these local councils was published in issue number 13 of the newspaper *Al Khatt Al Amami* (Front Line) of the Current of the Revolutionary Left in Syria. They argue:

"This is a genuine popular revolution; the driving social forces are the workers and more broadly the impoverished urban and rural social strata ... They have created structures of self-organisation and coordinating bodies, as well as embryos of self-government, local councils and civil advice bureaus. These forms of control and administration from below are more developed in the Syrian revolution than in any other process in the countries of the region."

None of the revolutionary left forces deny divisions among the opposition. The Free Syrian Army lacks material and financial support, while the reactionary Islamist forces such as Jabhat al Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant are being funded by Gulf countries.

The militarisation of the struggle has had a negative effect on the politics of the movement and makes it more susceptible to imperialist meddling. But the taking up of arms was necessary, imposed by the violence of the regime.

As one Syrian revolutionary put it: "Whoever has lived under the same conditions as Syrian citizens, and witnessed all this repression and murder, and was forced to pick up a weapon, knows they will look for weapons from anywhere."

Historically, many movements have received their arms through one imperial source or another. Consider the Irish national independence movement (which obtained guns from Germany) or the armed wing of the South African ANC, Umkhonto We Sizwe, which was supplied guns by the USSR. While it is necessary to consider the political ramifications of such support, we can hardly condemn resistance movements for attempting to defend themselves.

It is true that some sections of the movement are calling for US intervention.

It is also clear that some forces are getting weapons via Western gun runners. Neither factor indicates universal capitulation on the part of the rebels; neither means we should support Assad.

On 31 August, a coalition of left wing organisations in Middle Eastern countries – the Revolutionary Socialists (Egypt), Revolutionary Left Current (Syria), Union of Communists (Iraq), Al-Mounadil-a (Morocco), Socialist Forum (Lebanon) and League of the Workers' Left (Tunisia) – released a statement, "We stand behind the Syrian people's revolution – no to foreign intervention".

In it, they take issue with the political complexion of some sections of the revolution against Assad and point out the imperialist meddling from all sides of the globe, saying that the aim of the Gulf states is to "control the nature of the conflict and steer it in a sectarian direction, distorting the Syrian revolution and aiming to abort it, as a reflection of their deepest fear that the revolutionary flame will reach their shores. So they backed obscurantist Takfiri groups, coming, for the most part, from the four corners of the world, to impose a grotesque vision for rule based on Islamic sharia."

These revolutionaries nonetheless maintain opposition to Western bombing and argue for international solidarity with the democratic movement in Syria. So should leftists in Australia.

COUNTERVIEW: Red Flag should not have printed chemical weapons claim

Sam King, Socialist Alternative member

In his article "No US Attack on Syria" (*Red Flag*, September 1) US socialist Lee Sustar claimed, "Evidence of a horrific chemical weapons attack by the Syrian regime against civilians has revived liberal calls for 'humanitarian' intervention by the U.S. Military."

Sustar provides no evidence the 21 August attack in Damascus was carried out by the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad and not its opponents. Despite the article's ostensive anti-war stance, it repeats, without question, the key propaganda used by the US government to prepare public opinion for it to attack Syria.

US secretary of State, John Kerry claims that (classified) evidence constitutes a "clear and compelling" case against the Syrian regime. While Obama told PBS Newshour on 29 August, "We have concluded that the Syrian government in fact carried these out." Neither statement is proven; both have been repeated uncritically by the overwhelming majority of the mainstream media.

Significant questions remain about the origins of the 21 August Chemical attack, and the previous ones. The Associated Press (AP) reported on 29 August that "multiple US officials used the phrase 'not a slam dunk' to describe the intelligence picture".

The AP article cites a report by the Office of the Director for National Intelligence "acknowledging that the US intelligence community no longer has the certainty it did six months ago of where the regime's chemical weapons are stored, nor does it have proof Assad ordered chemical weapons use, according to two intelligence officials and two more US officials."

Given that Obama had publically stated the use of chemical weapons would be a "red line" triggering a US reaction, it is easy to see why sections of the opposition in armed conflict with Assad could have used a chemical attack to attempt to bring the US into the war. Military motive can equally be attributed to Assad. We are left with no conclusive evidence. It is unclear who is responsible.

When the US government, with the support of Australia and other allied imperialist regimes, is preparing a military assault, it is important not to believe anything printed in newspapers in support of their war drive.

When our own imperialist governments make specific claims to justify their aggression it is irresponsible for socialists, or any opponents of war, to repeat those claims without evidence.

Eds: We stand by our decision to publish Lee Sustar's article, including the claims about chemical weapons.



Chile 1973

Lessons of the Pinochet coup still relevant

Jorge Jorquera

My childhood memories of Allende's Chile, sharpened by the words, tears and suffering of the adults around me, reflect now more vividly and perhaps more bitterly than ever the tragedy of a revolution half-made.

It is difficult not to remember Allende as a tragic figure, at once both a symbol of hope and a harbinger of defeat. The Allende government provided our family the first and only home of our own: a little *mediagua* we put up by ourselves on a bit of land.

Like all the reforms of the Allende administration, the political significance of handing out prefabricated homes to the working poor played out not in parliament but in the streets: families organising land takeovers and organisations like the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) and sections of the Socialist Party organising defence groups to secure the land and establishing structures of local power that substituted for those of government.

Governments of genuine social reform are a thing of the past, so it's difficult to imagine an elected government implementing policies not drawn up in the offices of right wing think tanks and capitalist corporations. At the end of 1969 in Chile, six organisations signed the Unidad

Popular Pact: the Communist Party, Socialist Party, Radical Party, Social Democratic Party, Popular Unitary Action Movement (MAPU) and Independent Popular Action.

The pact vowed to have "nothing to do with the privileged"; a Unidad Popular government would instead be a "guarantee for the overwhelming majority of the population, for the 90 percent or more". The Unidad Popular (UP) transformed public life. Party affiliations ceased to be something hollow and became positions in the class struggle.

The UP rode the tide of a rising workers movement. More than 15,000 grassroots election committees formed and helped mobilise an increasingly hopeful and class conscious movement, which on 4 September 1970 elected Allende to the presidency with a vote of 36.63 percent.

Economics first

Yet in government the UP coalition was united by a view of socialism and strategy that put economic policy, rather than political mobilisation and organisation, at centre stage.

The Socialist minister of the economy, Pedro Vuskovic, was the architect of a plan to revive the economy by stimulating demand. This involved a massive redistribution of revenues, raising salaries and increasing public expenditure. The wages of lower paid

workers increased by two-thirds, unemployment was halved and a wide range of social measures implemented, such as introducing a free litre of milk a day for more than 4 million children.

The plan assumed that increased consumption would stimulate under-utilised capacity in manufacturing and that, together with a growing Area of Social Production (nationalised industries), land reform and price controls, these policies would generate a level of growth and prosperity that would set the foundations for moving forward with the "transition to socialism".

For the Stalinist Communist Party, this transition had a classically economic interpretation – envisaged as a gradual, stagist, *statisation* of the economy and integration of the trade union movement and government. The CP thought you could advance from the "socialisation of production to the socialisation of power". The Socialist Party and most of the other UP parties, influenced by theoretical traditions ranging from Austro-Marxism to Guevara's *foquismo*, assumed that the UP's economic policy would provide the growing social support needed to advance the revolutionary agenda.

While the economy enjoyed a short period of economic growth, the main impact of the UP's policies was

to force a rapid political polarisation: the policies were too radical for the capitalist class, often devastating for small business and middle class sectors and insufficient to satisfy the growing political consciousness and combativity of the working class in the cities and the countryside. A government that tried to please everybody couldn't satisfy anybody. The class character of politics became transparent.

Reaction

On 9 February 1972, the Christian Democratic and National Party majority in parliament approved a constitutional amendment to "fix norms for the Area of Social Property". The captains of industry took the political initiative.

The several hundred thousand small retail and industrial businesses, together with the 150,000 property-owning farmers – whose profits, unlike those of big business, could barely survive the increasing costs – provided the social base for reaction.

The conservatism and vacillation of the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT – national union federation) also helped Christian Democracy maintain an important loyalty among organised workers.

At the end of Allende's first year, the UP government was increasingly impotent, facing a class struggle it re-

Chile 1973: Lessons of the Pinochet coup



By 1972, workers had begun to develop organisations that brought into question the normal organs of government administration and began to challenge the private capitalist organisation of industry and agriculture.

fused to lead and could barely continue to muffle.

By 1972, inflation was a runaway 140 percent and by year's end would reach over 400 percent; small business increasingly engaged in hoarding, and the black market was growing. Product shortages affected large numbers of workers and their families, especially those least organised and outside the direct supply lines provided by unions and neighbourhood organisations.

In an effort to abate a consumer panic and regain some semblance of control, Allende created the Juntas de Abastecimiento y Control de Precios (JAPS – Committees of Supplies and Price Control) by government order. These neighbourhood committees made use of consumer rights laws to take over powers of distribution and denounce hoarding and black marketeering on a neighbourhood level.

As with all its policies, the Allende government fell back on popular support to effect changes but simultaneously feared and denounced any development of workers' organisation autonomous from the structures of government and the law. The JAPs mobilised tens of thousands of workers on a neighbourhood level and provided them with valuable experiences of organisation, administration and workers power.

As Vuskovic recognised, the economy was a battlefield that could not

itself resolve the political struggle: "The essence of the difficulties lies in everything meant by the class character of the bourgeois state, into whose still-prevailing boundaries the new achievements have been channelled. Its whole structure, including the judicial framework and even the administrative apparatus, has been shaped to attend to the interests of capitalism. New demands conflict with this, and a large part of the workers' efforts fall on barren ground, sharpening a contradiction that will be resolved only when this bourgeois state has been replaced by a state with a different character, a people's state."

The only way to avoid defeat was to "initiate a huge mobilisation of the masses with concrete objectives to control the production apparatus and to prepare themselves for a military confrontation between the classes". Instead of advancing, Allende, with the Communist Party providing the government's troops in the labour movement, launched a campaign of conciliation. Vuskovic was replaced as minister of economy on 17 June 1972 by the Communist Party's Orlando Millas. Against Vuskovic's urging to launch a "gigantic offensive of the masses", the CP argued: "We cannot do that. Our task right now is to prevent our enemies from being provoked." The government was now increasingly guided by the Communist Party's policy of "national coexistence": "To

move toward socialism, and later to build socialism, what must come first is the development of production in all areas of the national economy. Without this, there is nothing."

Workers on the march

But ever larger numbers of Chilean workers and important sections of the left, inside and outside the UP, increasingly looked toward those words in the UP program that the CP ignored: "The revolutionary transformations that the country needs can only be realised if the Chilean people take power into their own hands and exercise it truly and effectively ... [this is not about a change of government] but about effecting the fundamental changes our national situation demands, transferring power from the old ruling elites to the workers, farmers and progressive middle classes."

The working class was growing in confidence and organisational capacity. In the first year of the Allende government, farm workers had taken over almost 1,000 farms and industry takeovers extended to 531 businesses.

By 1972, workers had begun to develop organisations that brought into question the normal organs of government administration and begun to challenge the private capitalist organisation of industry and agriculture. Sensing the need to organise against the sabotage of the bosses, workers in the dense industrial centres of San-

tiago formed *cordones industriales* (coordinating factory workers across different industries and unions in distinct geographical areas).

The union bureaucracy – in which the Communist Party and Christian Democrats remained entrenched – argued for the *cordones* to come under the direction of the CUT. The Socialist Party, which had about a quarter of the CUT national council delegates, provided the bulk of the militants and leaders of the *cordones*.

For a growing majority of the Socialist Party, the *cordones* were an "embryo of the socialist state" and, together with the *comandos comunales de trabajadores* (locally based councils), the "vanguard of the working class".

On 9 May 1972, a meeting of the UP in the important southern city of Concepcion resolved to organise a mobilisation to counter a Christian Democratic and National Party rally against the government. The local UP leadership, including the CP, the CUT and most mass organisations, agreed to involve the Movement of the Revolutionary Left and to organise to stop the right wing demonstration from occupying the streets.

At 3pm on 12 May, at the university, 15,000 workers, students and poor gathered in an open forum and prepared to take on the right. Despite severe police repression and the violence of the fascist shock troops *Patria y Libertad*, the people marched and swept the streets of the right wing demonstrators.

Despite the CP leadership urging the members of the UP to abandon the MIR and return to the fold, on 27 July the Concepcion Asamblea del Pueblo met to "denounce the counter-revolutionary character of the parliament". The assembly was supported by the PS, MAPU, MIR, Christian Left Party and the Radical Party and involved participants from some 61 unions, six peasant organisations, 17 student organisations, 32 neighbourhood organisations, 27 mothers' centres and five political parties.

From mid-1972 onwards, the MIR gained in strength and influence, joining an increasingly radicalised majority of the Socialist Party, MAPU and Christian Left in expressing the sentiments of the most advanced workers. Concepcion's Asamblea Popular resolved to: "prepare the local conditions for a national strike and protest against the manoeuvres of the reactionary majority of parliament; and to create assemblies and councils of workers in each locality".

Bosses' strike

Understanding the growing power of the organised workers, the Chilean capitalist class sought to regain the initiative. In the second half of 1972, fascist groups stepped up their sabotage. On 10 October, after the Allende government projected forming a state trucking company in the south of Chile, the Chilean Truck Owners Association called a stoppage; they were joined by the Confederation of

Retail Merchants, the private owners of minibuses and collective taxis, the Society for Industrial Development, the National Agriculture Society, the National Confederation of Production and Commerce, the College of Lawyers, the College of Engineers and some employees from the private banks.

What the capitalists did not expect was that the workers would respond, not in accordance with the timidity and capitulationist politics of the UP leadership, but rather with the combativity and creativity of a class that was ready to rule. Hundreds of thousands of workers began to march to work, walking the streets, organising the recommissioning of company trucks to provide makeshift public transport; farm workers continued to work, office workers likewise; university and high school students all joined the struggle against the bosses' lockout. Workers began to organise their own distribution chains for consumer articles, taking over the role of private supermarkets. In the factories, workers took on the administrative and technical operations and kept companies working and producing.

Enter the generals

The capitalist class and politicians pulled back. Realising they could not win on the streets, they sought a deal and further compromises from the UP politicians. Allende spoke out against the growing combativity of the workers, attacking what the UP leadership called "indiscriminate takeovers" and "extremism". On 2 November, Allende announced the addition of three generals to the cabinet: General Carlos Prats Gonzalez as minister of the interior; Admiral Ismael Huerta as minister of public works; and Air Force Gen-

eral Claudio Sepulveda as minister of mines. The army now had what the capitalist class required: the opportunity to observe and study up close the growing power and organisation of the workers. The expectation was that a victory for the right wing parties in the March 1973 congressional elections would secure the possibility of moving into a final phase of sacking the government and dismantling the new organisational structures of the workers.

The March elections proved in-

stead the growing strength of the working class movement, leaving the ruling class only one option. Throughout Santiago black paint graffiti appeared on city walls: "Jakarta is coming!"

"The reformist illusion was paid and is being paid for cruelly by the workers, their leaders and parties ... dramatically confirming the words of the French revolutionary of the 18th century, Saint Just: "Those who make revolutions in halves only dig their own graves.""

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Using its position in government and the existing Law of Control of Arms, the army mobilised to sweep for weapons in the occupied factories, worker-controlled neighbourhoods, union and left offices and even hospitals – beginning the terrorisation and securing the information it needed to prepare for the coup. Importantly, the army also intensified its campaign to clean up its own house, arresting and torturing anti-coup navy personnel in the Valparaíso and Talcahuano naval bases. On 6 August, more than 100 navy personnel were arrested and accused of organising left cells inside the armed forces and preparing a mutiny.

On 29 June, the *tanquetazo* ("tank putsch"), led by Army Lieutenant Colonel Roberto Souper, provided a rehearsal of what was to come.

The MIR warned: "Only the mobilisation and independent organisation of the workers and immediate and decisive combat" against the reactionaries could defeat an imminent coup: "We call on all workers to maintain the occupation of factories, farms and all places of work." The tactical importance of the *cordones* and the *comandos comunales de trabajadores* now

provided a basis of agreement for the MIR, MAPU, Christian Left and the majority of the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party general secretary of the CUT declared that the *comandos comunales* could begin to "translate power from the bourgeois institutionality to a workers' institutionality".

After June 1973, the capitalists knew they had to seize their chance while they had it. On 11 September they did so.

The reformist Communist Party was belligerent to the end, refusing to organise against the coup until a meeting of parliament. Meanwhile its own militants were being herded into the National Stadium, where, among others, one of its famous members, the great Chilean musician Victor Jara, would be tortured and killed.

The MIR organised frantically, arranging a meeting of left party leaders on the morning of the coup, only to be

broken up by the military.

In an underground press conference a month later, the general secretary of the MIR, Miguel Enriquez, summed up the Chilean tragedy: "The crisis of the system of [capitalist] domination ... [was] crystallised in the rise of the UP government. This generated conditions that would have permitted, if the government had been utilised as an instrument of the working class struggle, the conquering of power by the workers and a proletarian revolution.

"But the reformist project assumed by the UP imprisoned itself in the bourgeois order ... With the hope of achieving an alliance with a section of the bourgeoisie, it didn't base itself on the revolutionary organisation of the workers, on their own organs of power. It refused an alliance with the soldiers and junior officers; it preferred trying to fortify itself within the capitalist state apparatus and the officer corps of the armed forces.

"The reformist illusion allowed the dominant classes to fortify themselves in the state and from there initiate its reactionary counter-offensive. The reformist illusion was paid and is being paid for cruelly by the workers, their leaders and parties ... dramatically confirming the words of the French revolutionary of the 18th century, Saint Just: "Those who make revolutions in halves only dig their own graves."



FORGOTTEN REVOLUTIONARIES

Monty Miller, proud rebel to the last

Vashti Kenway

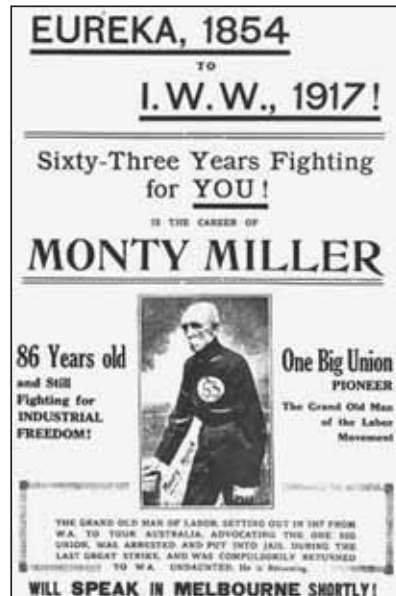
In a sweltering courtroom in Perth in December 1916, members of the outlawed radical syndicalist organisation the Industrial Workers of the World were put on trial for their campaign against conscription to World War 1.

One of the accused was lifelong working class rebel Montague Miller, who was by this time in his 80s. "The lawyer managed to get the Magistrate to allow bail for him after the final day", wrote his daughter, Annie Westbrook. "What!" said he. "Come out on bail and leave my mates in? Never!" He straightened his then slightly bent frame and walked back to the cell. A proud rebel to the last."

Miller was born in the late 1830s, the son of a carpenter. At an early age he was apprenticed as a joiner in Ballarat and participated in the Eureka uprising while still in his teens. From this moment, he nailed his colours to the mast of working class radicalism and organisation.

He spent a few years in the employ of the Australian Labor Party but quickly grew disillusioned. He became a most colourful polemicist against parliamentary cretinism. He wrote to the *International Socialist* paper in 1913:

"... capitalists have ceased to be at all alarmed at Labor in politics, that is



owing to their experience of the deterioration of principle and moral fibre of men in the sinks of political corruption, owing to the richly gilded baits of emoluments and gifts of office spread on the traps of human ambition."

Such invective found a home in the Melbourne Anarchist Club, which he helped establish in 1886. Miller was also an active member of the Rationalist Society and the Social Democratic Party of Perth. He later discovered the Industrial Workers of the World and said of it, "It is the organisation I

have been looking for my whole life."

Miller travelled the highways and byways of the Western Australian countryside, agitating for working class radicalism. He participated in hundreds of strikes.

By the time he was put on trial in 1916, he had had many brushes with the law. From his experiences at Eureka onwards, Miller understood that the courts existed to defend the status quo. So he and his co-accused insisted on defending themselves.

In a three hour speech to the

sive display, he and his comrades were found guilty of conspiracy.

Because of his age, Miller was granted a good behaviour bond, which he almost immediately broke by giving an anti-war speaking tour of Sydney. He was sentenced to six months with hard labour at Long Bay Gaol but was again released.

He had his pension denied to him, but lived on a special fund gathered by the miners at Broken Hill, who toured him across the country as a feted hero of the labour movement.

In a three hour speech to the jury, Miller argued that the IWW was perfectly justified in redressing the class imbalances of capitalist society through direct action.

jury, Miller argued that the IWW was perfectly justified in redressing the class imbalances of capitalist society through direct industrial action such as strikes and workplace sabotage. He maintained that it was only through the class struggle that workers could improve their conditions.

The speech was passionate and erudite, and even the conservative *West Australian* newspaper had to concede his defence was delivered with "a wealth of gesture and a wonderful flow of language". Despite this impres-

Monty Miller led a hard but morally upright life. He fought for working class control of society, despite repression, from the Eureka Stockade until his death.

His daughter put it like this: "He bore the marks of coercive government to the end of his life. Smarting from bayonet and bullet wound on that cool December morn, he registered a vow that he would ever be the enemy of coercive government, and he kept that vow for 66 years."

US expands arms sales to Indonesia

James Balowski, Jakarta

Human rights groups have condemned a US government decision to go ahead with the sale of eight Apache attack helicopters to Indonesia, saying they are offensive weapons likely to be employed in counterinsurgency operations in West Papua.

The US\$500 million deal is the largest since Washington lifted its embargo on selling lethal arms to Indonesia in 2005. The sale represents the latest step in a gradual rapprochement between Washington and the Indonesian Military (TNI).

Real weapons, pretend reforms

Under the 1997 Leahy law, the US is banned from providing training or other kinds of assistance to any foreign military unit if there is "credible evidence" that it has committed "gross violations of human rights". This can be waived if the secretary of state certifies that the relevant foreign government is "taking effective measures" to bring responsible members of the unit to justice.

The Bush administration attempted to circumvent these restrictions by

providing assistance through a counter-terrorism program. In 2005, the administration issued a national security waiver allowing full engagement with the TNI.

Despite a complete failure to meet any of the conditions set by Congress, in July 2010 the Obama administration lifted a 12-year ban on US training of the TNI's elite Special Forces Kopassus, accused of perpetrating some of the worst crimes against the people of East Timor, Indonesia and West Papua.

Australia – which also severed military ties in 1999 – resumed co-operation with the TNI in late 2002. Canberra's resumption of cooperation with Kopassus in 2005 was cited as a justification by the US for the lifting of its training ban.

A military tribunal is currently trying 12 Kopassus soldiers accused of storming a prison in Central Java and executing four detainees who allegedly killed a former Kopassus member in a drug-related brawl in March. The incident follows a "marathon of violence" by the TNI, rights groups reporting 51 cases of murder, attacks, intimidation, torture and land confiscation by TNI members in the first quarter of 2013.

Offensive weapons

Human rights groups say that it will be impossible for the US to dictate the TNI's use of the new hardware once the sale has gone through. "The problem is that these are offensive-only weapons. Given the TNI's history, they're more likely to be used for internal repression than for external defence", East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN) National Coordinator John Miller told *Red Flag*. "The military will use these helicopters as they want. These are weapons of war, weapons of counterinsurgency, so it would be foolish to expect that the Indonesians wouldn't use them in places like West Papua."

When it first emerged last year that Indonesia was looking to acquire the Apaches, civil society groups wrote an open letter to the US Congress warning that Indonesia's "long record of disregard for civilian casualties, corruption, human rights violations and impunity" should preclude the sale.

"These aircraft will substantially augment the [TNI's] capacity to prosecute its 'sweep operations' in West Papua, and thereby almost certainly lead to increased suffering among the civilian populations long victimised by such operations", the groups said.

Organised by ETAN and the West Papua Advocacy Team (WPAT), the letter was signed by 90 human rights, religious, indigenous rights, disarmament and other organisations based in 14 countries.

In a statement released on 26 April, the ETAN and the WPAT said the sale demonstrates that US concern for human rights and justice in Indonesia is nothing more than hollow rhetoric.

"The sale ... ignores the appalling record of human rights violations by the Indonesian military, which will operate this deadly weapons system", the statement said. "The TNI continues to conduct military campaigns in West Papua. The military's 'sweeps' and other military operations purportedly target the few remaining, lightly-armed pro-independence guerrillas. In reality, the operations are aimed at repressing and intimidating Papuans."

The groups noted with concern a statement by Indonesian defence minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro that the deal does not include any conditions restricting the use of the weapons.

[For the latest information on Indonesia, visit the APSN website at www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net.]



WHEELING MY BARROW WITH ALLEN MYERS

Naming wrongs

A few weeks ago, I turned on the telly to watch the cricket. I was surprised. Not because England trounced Australia. The surprise was discovering that I wasn't watching what I thought I was watching.

I planned to watch the Ashes. When the TV announcer said something like "Welcome to the Investec Ashes", I thought I'd tuned in a business program by mistake. I was about to switch channels when I saw cricketers walking on to the field. What does a famous cricket competition have in common with a financial conglomerate? I wondered. Silly me! It's money, of course.

And that test was not being played at the Old Trafford ground, as I expected. The venue was Emirates Old Trafford. The airline also has its name on the venue for the fourth test, Emirates Chester-le-Street. But another form of transport beat it out at the venue for the fifth test, played at what used to be the London Oval but is now the Kia Oval.

(The first time I saw the slogan "Fly Emirates" on a TV screen, I thought it was the name of an administrative region not far from the Mosquito Duchies and the Weevil Kingdom.)

Such names of sporting venues (and events and teams) are the product of "naming rites". Naming rites are also called "baptism", where religious believers take an offspring to their nearest clergyman to have the child officially named. But it's a bit like the parents planning to name their child George or Zelda but finding out too late that the clergyman has had his/her pockets

stuffed by some business, and the child is now named Kentucky Fried Zelda or McGeorge. (This is perhaps what happened to a real US person, McGeorge Bundy, who was an adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and helped to get the US more deeply involved in war in Vietnam – probably because being teased about his weird name made him antisocial.)

"Naming rites" has now been changed to "naming rights" so that we'll think it's legitimate. (Several corporations sponsored dictionary makers.)

As you'd expect, this naming business started in the USA, quite a long time ago. In fact, that country used to be called the States of America, until an airline bought naming rights and the place became the United States of America. The airline then went on and bought naming rights to the Kingdom. Later it also invested in the Manchester football team that plays at Emirates Old Trafford.

Australian corporations also participate in naming rights. For example, there's the Holden State of Origin rugby league competition between NSW and Queensland. That name is really strange because Holden's state of origin was South Australia.

Beyond sporting events and teams, there are political parties. Clive Palmer can name his party after himself since he's a billionaire. But what about the major parties? Shouldn't they carry the names of their sponsors? It's a nice idea, but impractical: there are just too many capitalists and corporations backing them.

WORLD OF STRUGGLE



NEW YORK CITY, 29 August: 100 protesters shut down a McDonald's with chants of "Can't survive on seven twenty-five!" in support of a one-day nationwide strike by fast food workers. The strike was the largest action in the "Fight for 15" campaign, which aims to more than double the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 per hour, as well as obtain the right to form a union.

The campaign began last November with just 200 workers in New York City and has now spread to 60 other cities. During that time, there have been numerous instances of bosses firing or slashing workers' hours in an attempt to stop them from unionising. But workers have responded in kind, in some cases shutting down stores and even forcing management to concede to their demands to reinstate laid-off workers.

The protests were held the day after the 50th anniversary of the

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom led by Martin Luther King. Nothing much has changed since King announced his dream for a fairer and more equal society.

A June 2013 report found that while African Americans, Hispanic and other non-white workers make up just under a third of the US workforce, they represent a disproportionate 42 percent of minimum wage earners. Women workers make up more than half of those who earn at or below the minimum wage.

Restaurant workers face higher rates of food insecurity than the general workforce. Corporations such as McDonald's, Wendy's, Taco Bell and Burger King pay poverty wages while reaping billions in profit.

In the US, the rich are getting richer at the expense of the working class. Fast food workers are showing that to fight back, you have to organise.



MANILA, Philippines, 26 August: more than 100,000 people marched through the capital to demand an end to "pork barrelling".

Thousands more mobilised in cities around the country and in Filipino communities around the world. Protesters demanded the abolition of the "pork barrel", the corrupt practice of appropriating public money for local projects through Congress.

The "million people march" was called in response to the purported theft of 10 billion Philippine pesos – approximately US\$250 million – in public funds from the Priority Development Assistance Fund over the last decade.

At the centre of the scandal is business woman and hate-figure Janet Lim-Napoles who reportedly facilitated the theft by setting up numerous bogus foundations. Napoles' claims to humble origins have been dismissed by an outraged public. She is reported to own 28 luxury houses

in the Philippines, in addition to the \$9.5 million in property her family is estimated to own in California.

The march is the largest public demonstration since Philippines President Benigno Aquino was elected in 2010 by a decisive majority on a platform of "transformational change" to tackle poverty and corruption.

The government pledged at the last minute to reform the fund. But church and civic groups, health workers, students and many left wing groups called for the fund's full abolition.

The government claimed it was on the same side as the protesters, but the protesters disagreed.

Corruption is not an adjunct to capitalism. It is finely woven into a system that preaches self-regulation for big business and mass inequality for the rest of us. Only mass struggle has the potential to win reforms that would benefit ordinary Filipinos.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

In control 1

"We believe that we can control radiation exposure by using the proper equipment and clothing." – Tepco, the company operating the damaged Fukushima nuclear power plants, after it was revealed that radiation from a water tank previously measured at 100 millisieverts an hour was actually 1,800. The earlier figure was measured on a meter whose maximum was 100.

In control 2

"... [R]ight now short-term funding concerns are taking priority over resolving the problems." – The governor of Niigata, the prefecture next to Fukushima, on how Tepco is handling the disaster.

That was then; this is now

"The president does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorise a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation." – Barack Obama during his first campaign for the US presidency.

Since it causes most of them

"[T]here is no solution to most of the problems of the world ... which does not go through the United States." – British Labour leader Ed Miliband.

Land of the fee

"It's bad when three mayors get led out in handcuffs. What's left of the public trust gets ground into little pieces." – Carla Miller, the ethics officer for Jacksonville, in the US state of Florida, after the third arrest in a month of a Florida mayor for taking bribes.



What Socialist Alternative stands for

1. SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE is a revolutionary Marxist organisation. We stand for the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a world socialist system.

2. BY SOCIALISM we mean a system in which society is democratically controlled by the working class and the productive resources of society are channelled to abolishing class divisions. Only socialism can rid the world of poverty and inequality, stop imperialist wars, end oppression and exploitation, save the environment from destruction and provide the conditions for the full realisation of human creative potential. A system under the democratic control of the working class is the only basis for establishing a classless, prosperous, sustainable society based on the principle "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need".

3. STALINISM IS not socialism. We agree with Trotsky's characterisation of Stalin as the "gravedigger" of the Russian Revolution. The political character of the regime established by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia most closely resembled that placed in power in capitalist countries by victorious fascist movements – an atomised population ruled over by a ruthless bureaucratic dictatorship masquerading behind social demagoguery. We stand in the tradition of the revolutionaries who resisted Stalinism, and we fight today to reclaim the democratic, revolutionary politics of Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky and others from Stalinist distortion.

4. SOCIALISM CANNOT be won by reform of the current system or by taking over the existing state. Only the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order and the smashing of the capitalist state apparatus can defeat the capitalist class and permanently end its rule. A successful revolution will involve workers taking control of their workplaces, dismantling existing state institutions (parliaments, courts, the armed forces and police) and replacing them with an entirely new state based on genuinely democratic control by the working class.

5. THE EMANCIPATION of the working class must be the act of the working class itself. Socialism cannot come about by the actions of a minority. The struggle for socialism is the struggle of the great mass of workers to control their lives and their society, what Marx called "a movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority".

6. FOR WORKERS to be won to the need for revolution, and for the working class to be cohered organisationally and politically into a force capable of defeating the centralised might of the capitalist state, a revolutionary party is necessary. Such an organisation has to cohere in its ranks the decisive elements among the most class conscious and militant workers. Laying the basis for such a party is the key strategic task for socialists in Australia today.

7. IT IS NOT enough for a revolutionary party to organise the vanguard of the class. For capitalism to be overthrown, the majority of the working class must be won to revolutionary action and the socialist cause. It is not enough to simply denounce the non-revolutionary organisations and political currents in the workers' movement. Revolutionaries have to engage reformist organisations via the method of the united front in order to test the possi-



Who is behind Red Flag?

Socialist Alternative is the organisation behind Red Flag. We are a revolutionary socialist group that sees class struggle, not parliament, as the key to changing society. We are organised very differently to the main political parties like Labor and the Greens. Our members don't just hand out how to vote cards for candidates in elections. We are activists wherever we are, trying to organise others, build solidarity and encourage resistance – in workplaces, on campuses, in progressive campaigns, and on the street.

As well as being involved as unionists and activists, it is crucial that we build an organisation that can combat all the lies and justifications for capitalism that spew out of the media, the education system and from the government. That's why we also hold meetings to discuss political ideas, the history of the struggle, and the issues of the day (see our upcoming events on the next page).

The following are the principles of Socialist Alternative. They provide the foundation for the organisation's broader political positions and analyses, and guide our political practice.

bility for united action in practice and demonstrate to all workers in a non-sectarian way the superiority of revolutionary ideas and practice. We support all demands and movements that tend to improve the position and self confidence of workers and of other oppressed sections of the population.

8. SOCIALISTS SUPPORT trade unions as the basic defensive organisations of the working class. We stand for democratic, militant, class struggle unionism and reject class collaborationism. We also stand for political trade unionism – the union movement should champion every struggle against injustice.

9. CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION of the working class and the natural world has created a situation where the profit system threatens the habitability of the planet. We oppose attempts to halt climate change and environmental destruction through measures that place the burden on working class people and the poor. We demand instead fundamental social and political change that directly challenges the interests of the ruling class. The environmental crisis can only be solved under socialism, where the interests of people and the planet are not counterposed.

10. SOCIALISTS ARE internationalists. We reject Australian patriotism and nationalism and fight for international working class solidarity. The struggle against capitalism is an international struggle: socialism cannot be built in a single country.

11. THE IMPERIALIST phase of capitalism has ushered in an era of military conflict that has no precedent in human history. The core element of imperialism is the conflict between imperial powers, or blocks of capital, which attempt by military, diplomatic and commercial means to divide and redivide the world in their own interests. In the conflicts between imperial powers (open or by proxy), revolutionaries do not take sides, least of all with our own ruling classes. Nor do we call for the resolution of inter-imperialist conflict by the "peaceful" methods of international diplomacy. Instead we fight for international working class solidarity and unity, and embrace Lenin's revolutionary call to "turn the imperialist war between nations into a civil war between classes". In the case of wars waged or diplomatic pressure exerted by military threat by the imperial powers against colonies and non-imperialist nations, we oppose the imperial power and defend the right of national self-determination.

12. AUSTRALIA IS an imperialist power in its own right. Through its own economic and military strength, and in alliance with US imperialism, Australian capitalism seeks to politically and militarily dominate its region and project power more broadly. This gives revolutionaries in Australia a special obligation to stand in solidarity with struggles of workers and the oppressed in our region against Australian imperialist intervention and control.

13. WE RECOGNISE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people of Australia. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and condemn the crimes of genocide and dispossession committed by European colonists and the Australian state. We support the struggle for land rights, sovereignty and economic and social justice for Indigenous people.

14. WE OPPOSE all immigration controls and support open borders. We fight to free all refugees from detention and for the right of asylum seekers to reach Australia. We oppose racism towards migrants. In particular we reject racism towards Muslims, whose right to religious and political freedom is routinely attacked on the spurious grounds of "fighting terrorism".

15. WE OPPOSE all oppression on the basis of sex, gender or sexuality. We oppose all forms of discrimination against women and all forms of social inequality between men and women. The struggle for freedom from exploitation and freedom from all forms of oppression includes the liberation of lesbians, gay men, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. We fight for an end to all legal and social discrimination against LGBTI people and all forms of sexist discrimination. We support full reproductive freedom for all women.

16. ALL THESE forms of oppression, and others like the oppression of the young, the disabled and the elderly, are used to divide the working class and to spare capital the expense of providing for the needs of all members of society. Combating them is an essential part of building a united working class struggle that can win a socialist society. Only a socialist revolution can bring about the genuine liberation of the oppressed and the ability of every human being to realise their full potential.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Socialist Alternative hosts regular public meetings across Australia on history, theory and the campaigns and struggles of today. Left wing and progressive people welcome.

Melbourne

All meetings are held in the Socialist Alternative Centre at Trades Hall, corner Victoria and Lygon Street, Carlton (enter via Victoria St)

Thursday 12 September 6:30pm

Panel discussion: Sweatshop labour in the textile industry

Perth

Wednesday 25 September, 6:30pm

George Orwell: the politics of 1984 and the new surveillance state
Citiplace Community Centre (above Perth train station)

Adelaide

Tuesday 24 September, 6pm

The horrible history of the Liberal Party
The Box Factory
59 Regent Street South

Sydney

Tuesday 17 September, 6:30pm

Chile 1973: lessons from the coup 40 years on
Socialist Alternative Centre
246 King Street, Newtown

Brisbane

Tuesday 24 September, 6:30pm

Rebel women in Australian working class history
Socialist Alternative Centre
136 Boundary Street, West End

Canberra

Thursday 26 September, 6pm

George Orwell: the politics of 1984 and the new surveillance state
Hayden-Allen GO50 @ ANU

For more details on how you can get involved with Socialist Alternative, simply visit sa.org.au or contact us at: info@sa.org.au

A twice yearly journal covering key political debates and issues from a revolutionary Marxist standpoint.
To order a copy or to subscribe visit **MARXISTLEFTREVIEW.ORG**



Introduction to Marxism discussion groups

Interested in left wing ideas? Want to know more about the fundamentals of Marxism and the politics of Socialist Alternative?

We host a series of discussions for left wing people to learn about the Marxist critique of capitalism, and about the socialist project to change the world. Every week we discuss topics including:

- What is capitalism?
- The working class and trade unions
- The capitalist state and how it works
- Revolution and socialism
- Imperialism
- Oppression
- The Russian Revolution
- Why we need a socialist organisation

You can join in any week. Each session begins with an introduction, followed by small group discussion. It is a great way to familiarise yourself with the revolutionary ideas of Marxism.

Melbourne:

6:30pm every Monday @ Socialist Alternative Centre, Trades Hall.

Sydney:

6pm every Thursday @ Socialist Alternative Centre, 246 King St (upstairs), Newtown.

Perth:

6:30pm every Tuesday @ Citiplace Community Centre, Perth train station.

Brisbane:

6:30pm every Monday @ 136 Boundary Street (upstairs), West End.

JOIN SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

If you agree with what you read in "what Socialist Alternative stands for" on the opposite page, and want to get involved in helping to build a fighting socialist organisation, why not join us? Fill out the application form below and send to

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE,
BOX 4013, MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY,
VIC 3052

You can also apply to join at www.sa.org.au

YES, I WANT TO JOIN SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE!

NAME

PHONE

EMAIL

ADDRESS

Someone from your nearest branch will be in touch soon.



SYRIA

Support the revolution

Oppose US bombing

Vashti Kenway

The heroic uprising against Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has been met with one of the bloodiest counter-revolutionary wars in living memory. Now, the Syrian revolution is facing possible air strikes by the US, with or without support from its allies. It is vital that the left in the West reject dictator apologists, support democratic uprisings and oppose all imperialist meddling.

Reject US intervention

While the levels of death and destitution in Syria have risen over the last two years, the US had declared that the use of chemical weapons would be a "red line" beyond which the Assad regime could not step. Clearly, the deaths of some 70,000 people and the displacement of nearly 5 million did not cause Obama and his cronies much lost sleep.

The current tears over civilian losses stink of hypocrisy. John Kerry, for instance, despite his recent brand-

ing of Assad as a "thug and a murderer", wined and dined this self-same dictator in 2009. More recently Kerry argued for closer relations between Assad and the US as a counterweight to the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions.

Some commentators are resurrecting the ghost of Iraq and the weapons of mass destruction scandal. But Syria 2013 is not Iraq 2003. The US has to contend with a much more volatile situation in the Middle East. The Arab Spring has changed the game.

The successful democratic uprisings against the seemingly unshakable regimes in Tunisia and Egypt inspired millions across the region to struggle against economic injustice and for political freedom. All the major imperial forces have been left scrambling to regain a foothold.

In Syria, US strategy aims at the mutual destruction of the contending forces. The US hopes that both sides will bash each other into submission. It wants to undermine the genuinely democratic movement and foment sectarian division. To this end, the

US has been walking a fine line in an attempt to achieve an outcome most favourable to its interests. As George Friedman, CEO of US ruling class think tank Stratfor, said: "The United States had a strategic interest in neither faction taking power in Syria – its Lebanonisation. That is brutal, but it is true ... The president tried to walk a tightrope between regime change and inaction (or a small action that left the regime in place)."

To this end, the US has maintained toothless sanctions against Assad while allowing US allies to supply the regime with the ingredients for chemical weapons. On the other hand, it has been offering limited funding and support (in the form of small firearms) to the least democratic elements of the resistance.

This is a calculated strategy. The US ruling class does not concern itself with destroyed lives. It treats war as an imperial chess game, shifting pieces around the board attempting to shore up its own power. If the US bombs the country – and this looks likely – it will not be motivated by a passion for jus-

tice and a thirst for democracy.

While it is vital for the left to take a stand against any US strike, it is also important to be clear about the basis for such opposition. We should oppose US intervention because it would strengthen repressive forces in Syria, while inflicting more death and destruction on an already devastated population.

Assad apologists

But opposition to US intervention should not lead us to champion Assad and the bloc of countries (Russia and Iran) and forces (Hezbollah) that support him.

The anti-intervention camp is deeply divided. Some are using US threats to defend the regime.

At recent demonstrations in Melbourne and Sydney, supporters of Assad dominated, and supporters of the Syrian revolution were threatened with physical violence if they came and put the position "No to US intervention, down with Assad."

Continued on page 16