

Workers' Liberty



The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself ISSN 1446-0165

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Solidarity & defiance can reclaim union rights.

Support building and higher education workers!

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What now for the anti-war movement?

Small wins have come in quickly for 100,000 university staff and building workers around Australia, who went on strike on October 16 and 8 respectively. Both groups of workers are on the receiving end of Howard's anti-union war plans. In a victory for the National Tertiary Education Union, the Australian National University signed an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement in defiance of the Government, on the day of the strike.

And on 17 October the Senate set up a committee of inquiry which effectively delays the anti-union Building and Construction Industry Improvement Bill until at least February.

Where We Stand

SOCIALISM to us means not the police state of Stalinism, but its polar opposite, the self-organised power of the working class breaking the entrenched power of the billionaires and their bureaucratic state machine.

Socialism means a society restructured according to the working-class principle of solidarity. It means an economy of democratic planning, based on common ownership of the means of production, a high level of technology, education, culture and leisure, economic equality, no material privileges for officials, and accountability. Beyond the work necessary to ensure secure material comfort for all, it means the maximum of individual liberty and autonomy.

The trade unions are the product of long struggles by the working class for the right to build their own organisations to protect them from the arrogant power of the bosses. They remain the major organisations of the working class, the major vehicles of class struggle. There is no short-term prospect of them being replaced by new organisations. Since we believe only the working class liberating itself can achieve socialism, we must focus on the trade union movement, rather than on "radical" movements without a working class or socialist perspective.

Yet the unions represent the working class incompletely, unsatisfactorily, binding the class to capitalism. We must develop the unions, transform them, reinvigorate them with socialist purpose. To do that, the radical activist minority must organise itself and equip itself with clear ideas. That is our aim: to spread ideas of unfalsified socialism, to educate ourselves in socialist theory and history, to assist every battle for working-class self-liberation, and to organise socialists into a decisive force, able to revolutionise the labour movement so that it, in turn, can revolutionise society.

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Editorial

Solidarity & defiance can reclaim can union rights.

(continued from front page)

But these small wins do not end the danger that Howard's Government is to unionism. In between the 2 strikes Howard reminded us that he also plans to make it illegal for health workers, teachers and higher education workers to strike.

There is still much education and campaign building to do to turn Howard back, and defeat these attempts to demolish effective unionism and workers' rights. Immediate threats remain in both construction and higher education. The Building Industry Taskforce is still charged by the government with the task of hounding and prosecuting construction unions when the bosses won't. Many University Vice-Chancellors could withhold Enterprise Bargaining Agreements, and thus pay rises, in support of the Government's industrial relations policy, even if the Senate ends up stopping the legislation which will tie university funding to anti-union provisions.

The unions' grounds for success are the weaker than they should be since Peter Reith's earlier Workplace Relations Act was not challenged, but rather was in effect submitted to during the MUA dispute in 1998. Secondary, or solidarity strike action was not offered to the MUA workers at Patricks, even by other section of their own union, let alone by other unions. Now in a Catch 22, solidarity action is harder to take.

But the government is like a wild animal hunting, which sees its chance when its prey, the union movement, weakens. Howard, Reith and Abbott have been whittling away at the capacity for solidarity, which is the foundation of unionism. We will have to employ solidarity to reclaim our right to use it, and to reclaim the potency of solidarity as the motive, the inspiration, for being part of the union movement. It is no accident that the decline in the right and ability of unions to exercise solidarity, is accompanied by a crisis in union membership numbers. The exercise of solidarity means defiance of the anti-union laws that already exist.

Other tactics such as delay by parliamentary committees, negotiation with the Democrats to block in the Senate, campaigning for a more favourable Labor government, appealing to the ILO, might buy some time, or soften some blows. But none affects the fundamental balance of forces, the relative strength of organised labour versus the relative strength of politically organised capital, currently represented in the Howard Government, but capable of using other means of weakening unions if Howard loses government.

Howard's attack on building workers

Proposed legislation will:

- β Set up an Australian Building and Construction Commission, to investigate complaints and launch prosecutions

- β Destroy site allowances, ACIRT redundancy, top-up workers compensation and 24 hour accident insurance-worth \$200-\$300 per week.

- β Ban industry wide pay claims via pattern bargaining, thereby dividing workers with every enterprise bargaining agreement being different and expiring on different dates.

- β Make it impossible for union officials to visit workplaces.

- β Make legitimate strike action impossible by tying building workers up in red tape enforcing secret ballots and a 14 day limit on strikes

Even without legislation the interim building industry taskforce is running investigations of the unions and prosecuting matters even without employer involvement.

It would be foolish to take Howard head on at the earliest possible moment, from a weak position, without the commitment of the ranks of the unions. The CFMEU and NTEU led campaigns against Howard's latest attacks are an excellent start, and reflect the groundwork that has already been done amongst members. But in order to turn back Howard and reclaim

union rights, we need to build commitment in the whole union movement to solidarity with the construction workers and university staff, when they need to defy this government and its legal straitjacket on industrial action.

The right of workers to organise freely in unions is fundamental to the state of all civil liberties and intellectual freedom. Where workers' rights are weakened, then the freedoms and rights of the whole society are endangered, and dissent is caged. Workers' Liberty urges all unionists, students, activists and campaigners as a matter of urgency to:

- β explain the dangers of this government's attack on unionism,
- β invite speakers from the CFMEU, the NTEU and other unions involved, to meet with people in workplaces and communities, and
- β propose commitment to support these unions in their campaign for union rights.

Howard's attack on university staff

University funding will be cut unless Enterprise Bargaining Agreements:

- β Expressly allow for Australian Workplace Agreements to operate to the exclusion of the Agreement or prevail over the terms of the Agreement to the extent of any inconsistency. There must be provision to offer AWAs to a "broad spectrum of employees".

- β Contain no cap on the use of casuals.

- β Remove automatic union involvement in disputes and grievances.

- β Allow for non-union representatives on consultative committees.

- β Disallow the distribution of membership forms at University induction days.

- β Disallow union facilities and activities. In particular, institutions must not provide full-time offices on campus free of charge.

Industrial

Dangers to the building unions' campaign

There was a joint resolution put to the building workers mass meetings by the national leadership of the CFMEU, CEPU, AMWU and the Queensland BLF. It did not include an earlier intended commitment by the unions to a 48-hour walk-off from any job when the task force comes to visit. The more conservative forces which dominate the national bodies of the union are concerned to appeal to the Democrats to stop the legislation in the Senate, and judge that militancy could jeopardise that.

Danger one

A possible danger and line of attack on the building unions, is if the AWU reaches agreements with any of the major labour hire or construction companies in the industry, particularly in Queensland. Militant construction unions have been done in before only because another union puts its short

term interests ahead of the general movement, and does the government's or the bosses' dirty work. Norm Gallagher used the national BLF to shut down the NSW branch in the mid 1970s, only about a dozen years later to be shut down itself by the BWIU acting for the Hawke Keating Labor Government and the ACTU. Since then union mergers created the CFMEU, with the Construction Division covering building workers. And the AWU is a potential competing union.

The history of scab unionism in the building industry also shows that we can't rely on union leaders to do the right thing by the movement.

The left which defended the BLF in the 1980s was not strong enough to counteract those out to destroy the BLF.

Danger two

The other danger is that ACTU and ALP leaders will attempt to repeat the methods that led to the disastrous results of the MUA dispute of 1998.

They were intimidated by the already existing anti-union laws in the Trade Practices act and the Workplace Relations Act first wave. So the weight of the dispute was borne entirely by MUA members working at Patricks, no other port owners, no shipping lines were targeted in solidarity. The union movement did not challenge the government's anti-union laws. They relied on the courts and the result was a technical victory, but actually Patricks' workers, and ALL wharfies ended up with a series of redundancies, speed-ups, casualisation and weakening of the union.

NSW PSA must meet challenge of saving jobs

Leon Parissi

The fight to save over 1,000 public service education support jobs in the NSW Schools and TAFE is entering a critical phase. Carr's NSW Labor government's deadline for filling the new organisational structures is early November. Andrew Refshauge, the Minister for Education and Training, announced the restructure and job cuts program on 17 June. Since then, under threat of industrial action, management has made some concessions to demands for a fair and equitable plan for allocating the reduced number of jobs. Department of Education and TAFE delegates are convinced that much more needs to be done before the Public Service Association should concede the deletion of any jobs or the filling of any positions.

This round of job cuts is a means of government funding part of the current salaries award. The PSA signed off the present award worth 16% over 4.5 years (finishing in June 2004) with 6% of the increase not funded by the NSW Treasury. Departments and Agencies were forced to find this amount within their own budgets. Job cuts became inevitable. In defending their support for this pay deal the PSA leadership argued that in the first instance they

didn't agree to any job losses and secondly if jobs were threatened there would be a fight with the government. Now that jobs are threatened delegates are organising the campaign to protect jobs.

The most important issue now is for union delegates to find a way to successfully challenge the usual practice in the PSA of allowing the "right" of managers to manage. In previous restructures jobs have been lost. The guiding principle of opposing job losses has been submerged. The struggle to force a fair process for placing, retraining and redeploying the employees who remain and to see off those who go with as big a separation package as can be negotiated, has taken precedence.

While past PSA leaderships have opposed job cuts there have been few strong industrial fights to defeat job loss programs. Further, while the position of the union is that when a job is deleted the work of that job must also be deleted, that is not what happens in the main. Most of the work of deleted positions is left for others to pick up. This has happened time and time again over the past 10 years. To challenge this practice (called productivity savings by the bosses) is a

difficult challenge, but one that must be met by the PSA.

NSW ALP State Conference opposes the Government's cuts

Teachers Federation and the PSA have an extra tool in the fight for jobs. NSW ALP State Conference in October voted against the Carr Government on this issue. Now the challenge is to call the NSW Parliamentary Labor Party to account, to accept the decision of Conference as binding. It was done before to stop (NSW Treasurer) Egan's electricity privatisation in 1999. It can be done again.

The resolution

"That Conference restates its commitment to quality public education in NSW and the importance it plays in maintaining and further advancing an egalitarian and well-educated community.(cont'd over)

"In order to achieve this aim public education needs to be adequately resourced, and fully staffed.

"This year's NSW budget cuts education in real terms. The Government has budgeted for an increase in the budget of just 0.9%.

"The increase over last year's actual expenditure is \$75,756,000, or just 0.9%. With inflation expected to be around 3%, that's a real cut of 2%.

"Currently the Department of Education and Training and TAFE are going through a restructure. It is proposed that 1,000 jobs are to be lost in this restructure. The jobs to be lost

are positions that support teaching and learning in schools and TAFE.

"Conference calls on the NSW Government to increase Treasury funding to DET and TAFE to stop 1,000 jobs being cut."

White collar unions lead way in fight to defend Medicare

Lynn Smith

Across Australia, white collar unions are stepping up the campaign to defend Medicare from the attacks of the Howard government which is dismantling our hard-won free, universal public health scheme plank-by-plank.

β Early in October, members of the Commonwealth Public Sector Union (CPSU) joined with members of the Nurses' Federation in holding parties to celebrate Medicare's 20th birthday at hospitals and workplaces around the country. The CPSU has also completed a survey which will interest socialists wondering just how much public support there is for action to defend Medicare. The survey showed that:

β 62% of respondents feel that Howard's changes to Medicare are for the worse

β 55% of people said they would be less likely to visit a GP if he/she stops bulk billing and/or introduces co-payments

β 90% said they support a campaign to defend Medicare

β asked what they personally were prepared to do (many people chose a number of alternatives)

- 89% said they were prepared to get people to sign a petition

- 55% said they were willing to write a letter to their MP or a newspaper

- 38% said they'd attend a rally

- 30% said they'd help distribute campaign material

- 16% said they were prepared to visit to their local MP

The Finance Sector Union (FSU) and the Miscellaneous Employees Union (MEU) have both issued public statements saying that "saving Medicare is union business".

The Australian Health Reform Alliance held a summit in Canberra in August. It was attended by delegates from the ACTU, Victorian Trades Hall, Labor Council of NSW, Australian Consumers' Association, the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), the Australian Nurses Federation, Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Association, the Doctors Reform Society, the Committee of Deans of Australian medical schools, the committee of Deans of medical colleges, national council on intellectual disabilities, Royal Australian College of Physicians and others.

On October 15 Sharon Burrows, president of the ACTU, issued a statement on Medicare. "We built it. We gave up our wages for it. We had the only national strike in our history to defend its parent: Medibank" she said.

"Medicare is critical and we will fight for it. We know the Australian people will fight for it."

Asked about election talk of a tax rebate, Sharon Burrows continued "Frankly... when you cannot fund public hospitals... when you cannot fund bulk billing, then a rebate for the wealthier earners in our society if not a priority".

The Health Services Union (HSU) has taken a lead from Burrow's stance and set aside October 22 as a national day of

action to save Medicare. HSU members will hold workplace meetings and protest rallies around the country on this day.

A rally was called by the NSW Transport Workers Union on October 11 to lobby MP John Lloyd's office in Gosford. But, surprisingly, there has been little activity so far by unions with far more militant traditions like the MUA and the CFMEU (no mention of Medicare on either of their websites). And, while the AMWU's website has a detailed report on Howard's attacks and mentioned the Medicare 20th birthday parties, the leadership did not call on AMWU members to take any form of action.

The Socialist Alliance has issued in-principle statements of support for Medicare and some branches have held not-very-well-attended public meetings, but the SA seems to be at a loss as to where to go from here.

We say to our SA comrades:

- join with other trade unionists and help them build successful, well-attended public rallies in the areas where there are SA branches. If there's a local public hospital, call the hospital, ask to speak to an HSU delegate and offer the support of your branch in helping nurses and hospital service workers build a successful local rally.
 - if you're a member of a union, take up the issue of Medicare with your workmates and see what kind of suggestions they come up with
 - check out your local "defend Medicare" branch (they're springing up all over the place). Check the internet for contact details.
-

Socialist Alliance

Municipal socialism?

Janet Burstall

The Socialist Alliance in NSW will have its first chance to campaign in local government elections, which have been called for 27 March next year.

What are the issues and challenges?

Inequality in Australia corresponds very closely to where people live. Swathes of Western Sydney and country NSW have high unemployment, poverty and demoralisation along with very poor local facilities. Other parts of Sydney, especially closer to the city and the water, are undergoing huge developments of apartments, and escalating housing prices fuelled by the negative gearing tax regime that favours investors over owner-occupiers.

This gap between rich and poor areas has been widening since the mid 1970s. Capital and with it production and jobs, flows to sites of higher profitability, away from areas of lower profitability.

This has an impact on what local councils can do. Councils raise most of their revenue from local residents and businesses. Councils in NSW spend around \$5 billion a year in total, of which the Federal government gives about \$500 million. So poorer areas are serviced by poorer councils.

This combines with another trend of seriously declining capital outlays by local governments and failure of state and federal governments to take up responsibility for infrastructure. In poorer areas, the result is deteriorating facilities, buildings, local roads etc. and even less economic activity.

This combined and uneven development going on within Australia is most evident when comparing suburbs and local government areas, and needs to be understood by socialists in local government elections. Both capitalist development and the lack of it is affecting the lives of working class households (not just in the narrow sense of property development).

The unfinished business of saving Callan Park foreshores of Sydney Harbour in Rozelle illustrates the dilemma.

The State Government had been going to sell a large portion of the land to have hundreds of apartments built on it. A fierce campaign by Friends of Callan Park, built by the Councillors, local

Greens and other residents, forced the State Labor Government to back down. Now the Friends are campaigning for the State Government to fund a trust to manage and maintain the Park. The consequence of refusing capitalist over-development is the danger of "demolition by neglect."

The problem in many municipalities is that lack of investment means lack of production and jobs. "Demolition by neglect" is happening not just to buildings but to the lives of individuals and their communities. This is the dilemma that socialists must help working class communities come to grips with in local government campaigns. Even more urgent than stopping bad development in many localities is the need for local facilities, services and jobs.

'Socialism in one suburb' is unattainable. But a socialist, working class perspective can be developed. Here are seven main points worth considering in developing a local campaign.

1. Socially useful work

There is enough useful work to be done that there should be no unemployed people in any municipality. Socialist candidates can campaign for election with the same approach that we would bring to political office, by working with residents, workers and their unions to develop plans for socially and environmentally useful work, services and facilities.

2. Solidarity and union conditions for all workers

All local projects should be on union rates of pay and conditions. As a matter of principle socialist councilors would oppose staff cuts and wages squeeze on council workers, and contracting out of council work. Local union branches and workplaces should be offered support for any demands they have for better working conditions, job security, etc.

3. Democracy

The smaller scale of local government makes democratic decision making through local community and worker control a more immediate possibility than at state and federal levels. Full openness in all council business is essential to local democracy, and to preventing the tendency in local government for councilors to be in the pockets of developers and other

business, rather than accountable to the residents.

4. Redistribute wealth

No Council can raise the revenue, provide housing stock and control industry in its area to ensure that everyone is well-housed and employed. A socialist campaign needs to call for an end to negative gearing, the GST, and for a progressive income tax system that allocates needed funds to socially and environmentally beneficial purposes. Socialists oppose regressive revenue raising measures by Councils.

5. Housing for all

The State Government planning and development laws make it hard for councils to challenge and easy for developers to push up real estate prices and build homes for the most well-off, squeezing low income earners even harder with high rents, evictions, poor maintenance for tenants. Public housing is usually insufficient and not well maintained.

6. Know the local political economy

We can explain how local problems are caused by capitalism if we develop a picture of the political economy of the local area and connect it to the national and global context. And we can show that the principles of solidarity and the goal of equality apply at the local level.

7. Local candidates

Local candidates, committed to the local area are needed. For example Maurice Sibelle's good vote for the Socialist Alliance in Victorian local elections reflected his involvement in the local community.

There are about 30 Green councilors in NSW. And they have had some success at challenging development and improving the environmental management policies of councils. Environmental sustainability is being placed ahead of profitability. Green Councilors have also used their positions to speak out against state and federal government policies which socialists also oppose, against the War on Iraq, for refugees.

But the Greens do not generally advocate redistribution of wealth, reorganisation of production around social need, or organise and advocate for working class people and households.

These are the issues where socialists can make a difference. And local government might be the level at which socialists and Greens have the chance to work together most closely, and resolve some political differences.

Local government elections are potentially a starting point for building a base for improvement in the Socialist Alliance's electoral success, and to show what a working class solidarity platform has to offer that the Greens can not, and the ALP has long forgotten



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not the millionaires'*

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International

Help Iraqi workers organise!

Colin Foster

Workers in Iraq are striving to organise themselves to assert their interests amid the chaos of war destruction and the increasingly discredited occupation.

They urgently need support and solidarity for their efforts. They face powerful and dangerous enemies — not only the occupation authorities, but also Iraqi forces such as the resurgent Islamic fundamentalists — and are having to start from scratch.

Iraq had a rich history of trade-union militancy in the turbulent years between the fall of the old monarchy in 1958 and the first Baathist coup in 1963, but for over 20 years Saddam Hussein's police state prevented the emergence of even small illegal, underground workers' organisations.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions is sending a trade-unionists' delegation to Iraq in November. ICFTU general secretary Guy Ryder says "Labour and human rights questions are not receiving the kind of balanced attention they should be."

However, the ICFTU's attention seems to be more directed towards "advising the authorities" than to directly aiding Iraqi workers. New-born Iraqi trade unions will need the sort of material support from abroad that big official trade union organisations best have the resources to give, but rank-and-file activists cannot and should not rely on the ICFTU bigwigs to do what needs to be done.

Unemployed Union of Iraq

The Unemployed Union of Iraq has been initiated by the Worker-

communist Party of Iraq (WCPI), The UUI claims tens of thousands of members and has offices in Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Nasiriyah. It demands jobs, or emergency payments equivalent to \$100 a month, for unemployed workers.

It has organised demonstrations on May Day, and outside the offices of Paul Bremer, the US chief in Iraq. It has been attacked both by the occupation forces (who have arrested UUI members) and the Islamists.

Socialists and Iraq

The Worker-Communist Party of Iraq demands an end to the US/UK occupation, but also say that the Islamic fundamentalists are the "main threat" in Iraq. Some of the fundamentalists are collaborating with the US/UK occupation. One possible

Supporters of the UUI in Australia are asking for unionists to consider the following solidarity actions:

1. Send letters of support for the UUI to the US civil administration. Letters can be sent to hayder@froggy.com.au for forwarding.
2. Invite a speaker from the UUI to your union branch meeting.
3. Make donations to the UUI - "Union of Unemployed in Iraq" Commonwealth Bank - 063262 1028 6334
4. Support efforts to send a delegation of Australian unionists to Iraq to witness and report back.
5. Contact the UUI about getting more involved.

outcome is a US-sponsored regime in Iraq where the fundamentalists get sufficient concessions to cooperate without getting a full Islamic state on the model of Iran.

Socialists should also be clear that if the fundamentalists should turn militantly against the US and succeed in imposing an Iranian-type Islamic state, that would be another tragedy for the peoples of Iraq, not a progressive alternative. Likewise, a victory for the rump Baathist forces which are waging a sort of guerrilla war against the occupiers, and the restoration of the old Baathist order is unlikely. But it would be a disaster if it happened.

It is the rump Baathists and the Islamic fundamentalists (and, in the Kurdish areas, the Kurdish nationalist parties) who start out in post-war Iraq from positions of strength, wealth, ruling-class substance, and international support, already in place. The reborn Iraqi workers' movement has to start from scratch.

That makes it vital for socialists to focus our efforts on helping the workers' movement. We must insist on the right to self-determination of the peoples of Iraq. We have a fundamental opposition on principle to US/UK occupation of Iraq. We want to help a reborn workers' movement become the leader of the Iraqi peoples against the occupation as well as on economic issues.

But it would be irresponsible for us to pretend that the Islamic fundamentalists, or the rump Baathists, represent any sort of national liberation movement and limit ourselves to

simple slogans about "US/UK troops out". What do such slogans mean?

The US will not now withdraw (short of getting a government in Iraq which suits its purposes) unless it suffers catastrophic defeat on the ground. Do we want victory for the rump Baathists or the Islamic fundamentalists? Would we want it if it were possible? No more than we wanted Saddam's victory in the war. We opposed Bush's war not because we wanted Saddam to remain in power, or to win against the USA and make himself master of the Gulf, but because we stood up for the rights of the peoples of Iraq against both US hyperpower and Ba'thist regional imperialism. It's up to the people of Iraq to decide how their country should be run.

We need to maintain that stance now.

Other campaigns for Iraqi freedom

Defence of Iraqi women's rights

<http://www.equalityiniraq.com/english.htm>

This site is not updated frequently, but conveys issues facing Iraqi women. For example a recent article is Our Objections to the Policies of Ahmad Al-Chalabi.

Workers-communist Party of Iraq

<http://www.wpiraq.org/english/>

This site reports on the launch of the DSIS. It also contains Iraq Weekly : a weekly newsletter of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq Issue of 8 October for example stories include:

* Massive demonstration of the unemployed in Basra

* Layla Mohammed of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq visits Al Huda residential complex

in Baghdad. (Layla is from Sydney, and is currently working in Iraq)

The Organization for the Defense of Secularism in Iraqi Society, DSIS,

"DSIS was founded, for the immediate promotion of values of intellectual freedom, secular principals, respect to human rights, opposition to religious dogma, and its intervention in the civil society of Iraq. It promotes freedom of expression, freedom of thought, belief and conscience, freedom of being a believer or Atheist, the total freedom of dress and appearance, the unconditional freedom of intellectual and scientific research, the unconditional freedom of criticism, and promotes the principles opposing to all forms of religious or Nationalistic provocations. It also promotes principles of total and unconditional equality between women and men."

The other September 11

Bryan Sketchley

In Chile, on 11 September 1973, a brutal military coup overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende, a parliamentary socialist, and installed a military dictatorship. The result was over 13 years of military rule, the disbursement of trade unions, the smashing of all left wing parties and subordination of the media to direct control by the military. In the course of military rule, tens of thousands of leftists, unionists, poor farmers, liberals, students and journalists were murdered, tortured or fled the country. Many Chileans fled to Australia.

The British government supplied arms to the dictatorship and the US government supplied training and intelligence. Alan Bond was one who felt such a climate was conducive to business and he purchased the newly privatised phone company in Chile.

Up until the coup, Chile had been the longest continual representative democracy in Latin America. Yet despite a shortage of detailed analysis of the events of that day, or the subsequent years of terror imposed on the population by the military junta, many Chileans in Australia haven't forgotten the coup, or Allende. And indeed in Chile, the anniversary was

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recalled by large demonstrations in Santiago that were attacked by the police. In Melbourne, a week of events was organised by survivors of the coup. The Victorian Trades' Hall recognised the special significance of the coup for workers in Chile, and here, by flying the Chilean flag at half-mast.

What was it that the government of Allende had done to incur a wrath not dissimilar to what was rained down upon the Taliban of Afghanistan? For 4 or 5 years leading up to the coup, workers and poor farmers had begun to question some of the deep seated inequities in Chile. Big latifundios controlled large portions of land, from which peasants could only scratch a subsistence out of, with much of the produce of their labour going to the latifundios.

In the cities, working conditions were poor, hours long and wages meager. Workers and peasants across the country began to take matters into their own hands in redressing their grievances. Workers engaged in a number of strike waves demanding better conditions and peasants soon followed suit. Occupations of factories and land occurred and in some industries workers began to organise production and distribution themselves.

Students also joined in the agitation, restructured education to better suit their needs rather than that of industry.

On the back of this social movement, Popular Unity, led by Salvador Allende won government. Allende proceeded to legislate to 'allow' much of what had begun to happen in the country already. The massive social movement underway in Chile pushed Allende to move beyond the Popular Unity program, and saw unanimous approval by the congress of a constitutional reform that would allow the nationalisation of copper and other natural resources. Large foreign companies were also expropriated without compensation. Law and order was now being administered by workers' tribunals locally, production and distribution was to some extent being organised along lines of social need, and land was being redistributed to those who worked it.

However, the experience was short-lived. Allende and Popular Unity had won government, but not power. The richest strata of society, while politically fractured developed a number of tactics to impede Popular Unity and the workers movement. All the while, support for Popular Unity grew.

At Allende's victory, the captains of Chilean industry begun counter measures – capital flight, the illegal import of US dollars, the paralysis of certain industries, etc. The US government looked on with alarm at events that were unfolding in Chile. The country was undergoing a profound transformation, Chileans felt a sense of being able to control their own destiny socially, politically and economically. For the US administration it was a powerful and dangerous example for workers and peasants across Latin America, and the rest of the world.

The ruling elite in Chile recognised the possibility of the electoral success of a party that could play by 'their rules' was remote, and with the next presidential election not due until 1976, they turned to the military and prepared the ground for a coup. The far right sought the creation of an anti Popular Unity consciousness within the armed forces, at every opportunity presenting the country as being 'in chaos', 'under anarchy', 'ungovernable' or 'in a power vacuum'. The existence of other armed groups outside the army (with the exception of fascist gangs) was not tolerated. The coup was staged with surgical precision. Allende was shot in the presidential palace, and the Popular Unity government fell.

How was it that a government which rode the wave of a massive and profound movement of social change could not organise to win over or defeat the Chilean military? The answer lay in Allende's, and PU's politics. They believed that they could, and must, form alliances with what they saw as progressive elements of the ruling elite. Allende refused to meet pro democracy officers in the army, and did little to encourage the self-organisation of the rank and file soldiers, refusing to 'go behind the backs of the armed forces high command.'

Popular Unity in government essentially codified and gave legal recognition of what the workers' and peasants' movement had already achieved. In no sense did Allende lead the massive social movement, despite being at its head. In May 1973 a coup plan had been uncovered, and subsequently called off. A wave of occupations in factories, offices, schools and universities erupted to defend the government, the Chilean workers knew well what lay ahead if the military seized power. Popular Unity encouraged the occupiers to return to work and school, and ignored the call from some unions and factories for workers to be armed, in order to defend their gains, and give the army reason to pause least they consider

launching another coup attempt. Allende still reasoned that negotiation with the army, and the 'progressive bourgeois' could prevent any further coup attempts.

Revolutionary organisations in Chile at the time, like the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), argued that a number of things needed to be done to progress the movement forward. Critically these included the defense and expansion of the factory and office occupations, and that critical sections of the economy come under the direct control of workers committees. MIR also argued for the need to arm sections of the Chilean working class, and the absolute necessity to spread and encourage the movement in neighboring countries. But the MIR was a small player with very little support among the workers in the cities.

In the end, Allende's belief in the state of capital being able to be reformed and managed in favour of the radical workers' movement, and their gains, was to prove a tragic illusion. That illusion cost many thousands of Chileans their lives, 13 years of military dictatorship, torture, exile, and the prospect of a life of equality and opportunity forever taken from them.

International

“Roadmap” near collapse

Martin Thomas

On 20 September, six thousand demonstrators from Israel's "Peace Now" movement rallied in Tel Aviv to demand Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and condemn Israel's policy of assassinating Palestinian leaders.

It was the day after the USA had joined with Israel and two tiny US client states to register the only four votes in the United Nations General Assembly against a motion calling on Israel not to carry out its announced plans to deport or kill Palestinian Authority president Yassir Arafat. The USA had already vetoed a similar resolution in the UN Security Council.

The Israeli peace group Gush Shalom declared: "The assassination of the Palestinian president... will cause a catastrophe..."

"After his assassination, the Palestinian Authority will collapse. The Palestinian liberation movement will splinter into hundreds of violent groups, each of them intent on killing Israelis and Americans. The most extreme Islamic fundamentalists will take over... An unbridgeable abyss will open between Israelis and Palestinians, making peace and reconciliation impossible for generations to come."

Gush Shalom also reports that a group of Israeli air force pilots is about to join the "refusenik" movement by publicly refusing to take part in operations to assassinate Palestinian Authority leaders.

International support for these brave peace campaigners, and for the basic democratic right of the Palestinians to their own independent state alongside Israel, is vital. But at

present Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has the upper hand.

Yassir Arafat has made another ceasefire offer, following the resignation of Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen, but Israel has not even bothered to reply. US leaders say they will put no pressure on Israel to negotiate until there is a new Palestinian leadership.

The USA has objected to Israeli plans for the next stage of the "separation wall" because the planned route swings seriously east of the 1967 border, and talked about financial sanctions against Israel. All that remains vague, though. The "roadmap" plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace is near collapse.

European Union policy chief Javier Solana has gone to New York to try to rescue the "roadmap". The US

administration has an interest in making some gestures, if only to get more EU cooperation over Iraq. But enough to restore any diplomatic momentum? It looks unlikely.

All the more reason for socialists and democrats across the world to redouble our efforts in support of the rights of the Palestinians.

Mass arrests of trade unionists in Zimbabwe

The Mugabe regime arrested practically the entire leadership of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) on 7-8 October when unionists gathered to protest at high taxation, inflation and alleged rights abuses. Over 140 trade unionists were arrested in Harare and Mutare alone.

Wellington Chibebwe president of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) told reporters that they were protesting against high taxation, high prices of basic commodities, fuel and shortage of transport as well as against alleged human and trade union rights violations by authorities.

"Prices of basic goods have been going up on a weekly basis in Zimbabwe, where inflation is running at more than one percent a day. In August the annual rate of inflation was officially calculated at 426.6%, but economists believe the true figure is much higher than that." According to news24.com. "Under Zimbabwe's security law, public gatherings and street demonstrations are banned unless permission is obtained in advance from the police."

<http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/Zimbabwe/0,,2-11-259_1427233,00.html>

LabourStart has launched a special page on trade unions in Zimbabwe - <http://www.labourstart.org/zimbabwe/>.

Casualisation in France

In France, around 6 million people now in part-time or non-permanent

jobs, and 4 million of them are part-time workers. Part-time and insecure jobs now account for 25% of all employment, as against 16% in 1990. Two-thirds of these jobs are done by women. Between the mid-1980s and 2002, the number of people employed on a fixed-term contract tripled (from 319,000 to 897,000), those with interim contracts multiplied by five (from 114,000 to 514,000), and assisted contracts and work experience tripled (from 115,000 to 421,000). And in 1985 only some 2.7% of the working population had temporary jobs; by 2002 that figure was 8%.

Unite to beat Chirac and Le Pen!

Olivier Delbeke, France

In 1999, the joint list of Lutte Ouvriere (LO) and the Ligue Communiste Revolutionaire (LCR) allowed the election of five far-left deputies (three for the LO, two for the LCR) to the European Parliament. Unfortunately, this success was not followed by any joint activity of the two organisations to combat together the capitalist policies of the Jospin government.

In 2002, the LO and the LCR each had their own candidate, Arlette Laguiller for the LO and Olivier Besancenot for the LCR. That did not hamper the electoral gains of each, so strong was the rejection of the policies of the Jospin government among left voters. The French Communist Party (PCF) arrived behind both of the two Trotskyist candidates taken alone: a first since the founding of the PCF in 1920!

Since Chirac's victory, 5 May 2002, the bosses' and governmental offensive aims to do to the workers what Reagan and Thatcher did to the workers of their countries from the start of the 1980s. The re-election of Chirac and the right in 2007 depends on them inflicting the social defeat as quickly as possible. However, the reactions of the workers in May-June 2003 against the attacks on pensions and against decentralisation shows that the right cannot afford to celebrate yet.

On the contrary, after the trouble created on the left by the vote for Chirac, and despite the role of the

Socialist Party (PS) and the PCF, the will to resist of the militants and the workers has been displayed several times in a striking manner. Last 9 January, the majority of the workers at Electricite De France—Gaz De France (EDF-GDF) rejected the proposal to review their pensions which was supposed to accompany the privatisation of their business. From February to May, the demonstrations to defend pensions grew larger. And, finally, with the launching of strikes in state education against decentralisation, the strikes and the demonstrations against the Fillon plan for pensions brought the country to the brink of a general strike which was only averted thanks to the efforts of the trade union bureaucrats to prevent it. We can say that the size of the movement was bigger than that of November-December 1995. This situation is favourable to the emergence of a new anti-capitalist and socialist party of the workers.

Unfortunately, it is not in this state of mind that LO and the LCR are positioning themselves. The electoral law, modified to the detriment of the smaller parties, pushes the union between the LO and the LCR but only from the standpoint of cynical calculation. LO doesn't want an electoral campaign that includes groups or militants from the critical left wing of the PS or the PCF, who are numerous today. LO won't countenance voting in the second round of the regional elections for candidates of the PS or PCF left against those of the right. And LO has done all it can to caricature its position in denigrating the "another world is possible" militants and the rights of women and gays in letters it has sent to the LCR leadership.

There is reason to fear that this will be a LO-LCR alliance whose motivations are only electoralist (how many votes, how many elected for our organisations?), one which isn't concerned to assist the birth of a new political force which would effectively combat the Chirac-Raffarin government and would offer a political solution to the current social battles.

Instead of doing the same thing, conducting the same policy on the same three terrains (elections, social battles, and the construction of a new anti-capitalist force), that is to say regrouping the real left to prepare to confront the right and the bosses, they change their policies according to the

arena and who they are talking to. This cannot be productive!

The LCR congress which takes place from 30 October –2 November will be crucial to knowing how the far left is going to face the next elections.

As in 1999, LO-LCR electoral unity limited to three weeks, then no further common activity? As in 2002, everyone gets a good score but everyone stays in their little corner, in their exclusion zone?

Or else all the forces of the left, which includes of the PS, of the PCF and of the Greens, regroup to face the elections and the social battles together, thereby putting the downfall of Chirac and Raffarin on the order of the day?

France is far from being a country at peace. In a little over a year, millions of demonstrators have gone out on the streets several times. Between 21 April 2002 and 5 May 2002, against Le Pen explicitly and against Chirac implicitly. On 15 February 2003 against the war in Iraq. In May-June 2003, in defence of pensions and against privatisation/decentralisation.

That must now translate itself into a united response, not only to the elections, but also on the terrain of struggle! Not to inflict severe blows to our social gains and liberties, and it is the way to open the path to Le Pen!

Boss Watch

"Average CEO pay in the United States rose from 42 times the average blue-collar wage in 1980 to 531 times in 2000, before retreating to 200 times by 2002..." - Malcolm Maiden *The Age*, 4/10/2003

McDonalds has won a poll run by www.adbusters.org for the most infamous multinational corporation.

The burger giant, which has suffered 14 consecutive months of sales decline and had to resort to offering salads to try to climb back, got 5524 votes for worst worldwide corporate exploiter and despoiler.

Runners-up were ExxonMobil, Nike, Wal-Mart, Microsoft, and Disney, followed by Coca-Cola, Gap, AOL Time Warner, and Starbucks.

For understandable reasons, corporations with a high public retail profile topped the list, while equally and more infamous ones further back

along the production chain got off more lightly - those like Dow, Raytheon, ConAgra and Northrop Grumman.

Adidas, Reebok, and Pepsico, rivals of Nike and Coca-Cola respectively, also managed to keep off the top of the list.

A list of the world's 2000 largest corporations, compiled by Forbes magazine, includes 776 US-based companies. The next-biggest bases for giant corporations are Japan with 331, and the UK, with 132.

The magazine ranks companies by a composite measure of sales, profits, assets and stock-market value.

Ranked by profits, the biggest giants are ExxonMobil, General Electric, Citigroup, Pfizer, Altria (Philip Morris), and Microsoft.

The biggest non-US firms are Shell, Toyota, BP, HSBC, and GlaxoSmithKline.

37 Australian-based corporations, headed by National Australia Bank and BHP Billiton, make it into the global top 2000.

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Book review

Thomas Chan, Noel Tracy and Zhu Wenhui, *China's Export Miracle: Origins, Results and Prospects*, MacMillan/St. Martin's Press, 1999. in *Studies in the Chinese Economy*, General Editors: Peter Nolan & Dong Fureng

reviewed by R.F. Price.

For socialists, attempting to understand the world and the prospects for fundamental social change, the nature of China's current transformation provides food for serious thought. Some of us were misled by the slogans put forward in China in the past. It is important not to be misled again. China is one of the major nations of the world, with, as the authors point out, relative to other less developed countries (LDCs), a well educated population, and it is linked to a network of oversea Chinese numbering some 50 million. This gives it a powerful leverage in its current return to capitalism.

Also compared with most of the LDCs, China has achieved, as this book's title proclaims, an 'export miracle' since the government relaxed central control. This it did in stages, beginning in 1979 with the Special Economic Zones, and then in 1985 opening the Pearl River Delta, Southern Fujian and certain Open Coastal Cities. Later still coastal areas in the north became open to foreign trade and investment, importantly with Japan and South Korea. After 1979 local organizations were allowed to retain a proportion of foreign currency earned, a great incentive in a key period. Though in January, 1994, central restrictions were reimposed. In addition, Guangdong was able to end the central directive to grow wheat, for which its climate was not suitable, and revert to fruit and vegetables which it was able to export to Hong Kong and other areas within China.

The essential for "take-off" was the connection established between Guangdong and Hong Kong. The latter provided the capital and design and marketing expertise, while the former provided cheap land and labour which was not available in Hong Kong. It is probable that this connection will remain an important component of China's export future, though there are

problems now that HK has returned to China.

Developments in China exhibit the recent face of imperialism, sub-contracting and joint ventures rather than direct ownership. The 'export miracle' has mainly resulted from China performing assembly work for foreign companies, whether those of HK, or, in later years, such well-known names as Volkswagen (Shanghai), Motorola (Tianjin), Sharp and Sony. While this has had great benefits for China so far, there are also dangers in the long term if China is to acquire the level of expertise and range of skills for independent development.

Looking to the future the authors see a number of problems for China. The most important is its relation with the USA. Because of its very large trade deficit with the rest of the world, the US appears anxious to reduce its trade with China. The second problem, already mentioned, is China's

dependence on processing. A third problem is whether the central government will be able to maintain an export climate, in view of the fiscal problems which it is encountering.

It is, perhaps, the questions which are not specifically dealt with in this book which are of most concern for socialists. One is the relation of exporting to the general economic state of society, to its class structure, and to standard of living of its people. It is clear that the "miracle" has enabled China to import a considerable amount of modern technology which would have been otherwise unobtainable. But how will it affect the overall balance of the Chinese economy and its ability to produce and distribute those goods which the population really needs? And how much will the economy be affected by the whims and changes in the world market?

This volume hints at these issues when it refers to consumer goods,

particularly electronic ones, being sold into the interior provinces of China. It also makes clear the number of under- or unemployed peasants who have found employment in the coastal export factories, and have therefore been able to send money home. Both legitimate business and the black markets and smuggling enterprises which have arisen have also given rise to new wealthy classes. But the conflicts of interests and new class conflicts can only be guessed at. For these one must turn to other volumes in the series of which this book is a part.

Finally socialists must ask, as Marx did in a letter to Engels in 1858 (8 October), how the spread of capitalism in regions of the world like China where it had previously never completely conquered, will affect the struggle for socialism elsewhere in the world

Ideas to Make a Difference, Number 2.

Why & What Marx?

Ron Price

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were Germans who lived most of their lives in England. Marx was born in Trier, near the Belgian and French borders, of Jewish parents converted to Protestantism. He experienced the narrow-minded oppression of the German society of the time. His father was a liberal-minded lawyer, forced to convert to practice his profession. Marx went to university in Bonn and Berlin, studying law, philosophy and literature, and writing poetry.

Friedrich Engels was born in Barmen, an early manufacturing town in Germany. His father was a leading industrialist and Pietist (Puritan). Engels attended lectures at Berlin University while doing military service in 1841-2, service which gave him lifelong interest in military affairs and deepened his contempt for Prussian authority. Both Marx and Engels were early influenced by the philosophy of Hegel (1770-1831) and those followers of his known as the Young Hegelians.

Marx and Engels began their long association in 1844. In 1848-49 they took direct part in the 1848 Revolution in Germany, working on the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* together, Marx as

editor. This was a key period in the development of their revolutionary theory. 1848 is also the year they published *The Communist Manifesto*, written for the Communist League.

While Marx confined himself almost entirely to political and theoretical work Engels opted to work in the English branch of his father's cotton business, in Manchester. There he eventually became a partner, a capitalist working for communism and financially helping support Marx and other revolutionaries in need.

Throughout their lives Marx and Engels were active in support of trade unions and in advocating the formation of independent workers' political parties. Marx devoted a great deal of time to helping organize the First International Working Men's Association, founded in 1864 at a meeting in London. As one of the German members on the Central Committee he drafted a large number of documents for the International, including the statutes and Inaugural Address.

Throughout their lives they continued to combine active political work with journalistic writing, while at the same time they wrote a wide range

of theoretical works, many of which are as relevant today as when they were written. But in studying their ideas it is important to distinguish those writings they had polished for publication from others which were unpublished manuscripts, notes for future use, letters, etc. Hal Draper, in a discussion of 'How not to quote Marx' has a list of types of work 'in descending order of reliability'.

One of the problems in studying Marxism is the volume of writings, both by Marx and Engels themselves, and by people commenting on their ideas. In the academic world a huge industry of "marxology" has developed, much of which is more concerned with enhancing careers than producing genuine understanding, while some of it is seriously misleading. Another problem is that many of the writings of Marx and Engels were produced as contributions to current controversies and are therefore mainly of historical value, rather than contributing to solving today's problems. In the next issue of *WL I* shall begin with some of Marx's basic ideas which have stood the test of time.

Bob Carnegie: a revolutionary's story

In 1938 Leon Trotsky wrote about the effect on the labour movement's core radical activists of Stalinism's curves and turns in the previous decade: the Third Period of denouncing social democratic workers' organisations as worse than fascism, the Popular Fronts of class collaboration, the great purges and show trials in the USSR. "Even among the workers who had at one time risen to the first ranks", he ruefully recognised, "there are not a few tired and disillusioned ones. They will remain, at least for the next period, as bystanders. When a programme or an organisation wears out, the generation which carried it on its shoulders wears out with it. The movement is revitalised by the youth, who are free of responsibility for the past... Only the fresh enthusiasm and aggressive spirit of the youth can guarantee the preliminary successes in the struggle; only those successes can return the best elements of the older generation to the road of revolution".

In the last twelve to twenty years, we have lived through a far more drastic process of "wearing out" of older programmes and generations of working-class activists, those formed in or by the force-field of Stalinism. That has gone together with huge economic restructurings, the decline of industries previously central to the labour movement and the rise of new areas and modes of wage-labour which the unions have scarcely touched.

Now also, only the younger generations can revitalise the movement. Also true for us now as for Trotsky then is that the younger militants, to do their job well, will need help from experienced activists who have been able to resist tiredness and disillusion and learn lessons from the old setbacks. Here Bob Carnegie, an active and often leading participant in the Brisbane trade-union movement for 25 years, reviews the experience of those years.

I was 14 at the time of the Kerr coup in 1975, when the Governor-General sacked Gough Whitlam's Labor government. My dad was a seafarer

and at sea at the time. His crew went on strike, in Melbourne.

Though my household was centre-of-the-road Labor Party, they were appalled by the decision of Bob Hawke to draw in the horns and scale back the industrial action against the coup. My dad was outraged. Though he did not agree with some of the things the Whitlam government was doing for women's rights, on the whole he thought the government was trying to do something positive for working people.

Mum never worked, but her politics are more left-wing than my dad's. A sort of Keir Hardie humanitarian socialism, but she has never been politically active.

I was at school. What happened there? The events were kept from us as much as possible. Remembrance Day was given more prominence than the dismissal of the government.

Socialist party of Australia

The groundwork for the whole business of the Accord was really done at the time of the coup, by people like Laurie Carmichael. Carmichael was the leading industrial light of the Communist Party of Australia, and the leading industrial intellectual of the whole CPA/ SPA spectrum.

I did very well at school. I wanted to continue my studies, and my dad wanted that too, but my mum insisted that I leave school and get a job. She was one of 13 children, raised in poverty, and she was convinced that children should go out and start earning as soon as possible. My two sisters and my brother also went to work as soon as they could leave school.

My first job was in a bank. It was a permanent, secure job, not the sort of thing young people get for their first job these days. I was active in the Bank Workers' Union, and went on strike for a day over Medicare.

But, coming from an industrial working-class background, I felt that I didn't fit in at the bank. It was a very conservative environment.

I lasted 18 months there. Then I worked for a wine and spirits merchant as a storeman, travelled for a while, and found a job in the Castlemaine Brewery in Milton.

I was a great place to work then, with a large production workforce. The elected union delegates were respected by the workers, but also by the

management. In that same brewery now, there are very few production workers, a lot of functions are contracted out, and the union is a sideline event. Today, in most places, the management's attitude to union delegates is barely concealed contempt.

While at the brewery I joined the Socialist Party of Australia [a party which had split from the Communist Party of Australia because it disagreed with the CPA's more critical line towards the USSR].

My dad was completely opposed to me joining the SPA. He had a Wobbly streak in him, and if he had to deal with "communist" parties, he had more time for the Maoists. He had become convinced that the old Communist Party of Australia was a horrible outfit in the 1950s, when one in ten of all the seamen in Australia were CPA members. When they asked my dad to buy Tribune [the CPA paper], he said he'd rather read the Form Guide.

He had seen the CPA in action in a very famous disputed election in the union in 1959-60. The candidate who lost, Billy Bird, was my father's hero if he ever had one - a syndicalist with a Maoist streak. In recent years, when some officials in the MUA [Maritime Union of Australia] have been attacking me and smearing me, my dad has said to me: you should have seen what they did to Billy Bird.

Why did I join the SPA? I read the seamen's union journal, and they were very influential there.

Soon I was sent to Moscow by the SPA for political training. After that I lived in Denmark for a while. There, I was struck by the barbarity of Australian cultural life compared to Danish - the levels of social welfare, the relative equality between women and men, the lack of violence, the lower levels of censorship. Trade unions were an integral part of Danish society in a way they weren't in Australia.

The flipside was that the Danish labour movement was not militant. It was far too cosy between the unions and the employers. There was a certain staidness.

I returned to Australia in the early 1980s, worked as a seaman, and became involved in the seamen's union. I was a branch officer from 1988 to 1994, and in all that time I never took one cent of expenses for union activities.

It was a strong union then. We had a wonderful delegate structure. The crews then would be about 30 to 38 men, and each voyage we would elect one delegate from the engine room and two from the deck. We had monthly stopwork meetings, which were very well attended, and a monthly union journal, which was quite political. The officials were much more accessible to the membership than in other unions.

But it was very tight, very closed against "outsiders", elitist in its own way. Until 1989 the crews were all male. The average age was quite high - mid 40s for the deck hands, and early 50s in the engine room. There was a lot of heavy drinking, and that wrecked a lot of men. The union was Stalinist-dominated, not so much by the SPA as by union officials who were SPA members. The SPA's strength was not just among the full-time officials, though. Most crews would include at least one SPA member.

We had a seamen's industrial fraction in the SPA, which met, and relations between the officials and the rank and file members were all right as long as you didn't have too much to say.

Accord years

At this time, up to 1983, a split was developing in the SPA between the political and industrial wings. The issue, really, was whether the political leaders could tell the union officials what to do in their unions. There were no divisions on international issues - they all followed the USSR blindly - but there was a split over the Accord which Bob Hawke's Labor government introduced from 1983.

Pat Clancy and the leaders of the Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU), who were regarded by the SPA as their leading Marxists in the industrial field, sided with Laurie Carmichael and backed the Accord. They pushed the line that the Accord was not class-collaborationist. It was pro-worker, pro-union, and offered concrete benefits. The seamen's leadership were more circumspect, but followed the BWIU line. The SPA political leadership was against the Accord.

In the split I went with the industrial leadership. I had much more respect for the industrial leadership than for the SPA political leadership, who were very aloof, very old, and very narrow.

Although they were completely wrong about the Accord, the BWIU *Workers' Liberty* No. 33 October 2003

leaders were charming, decent people. The trouble is that despite that they could still go and play a central role in destroying the Builders Labourers Federation, and justify it. The trouble was Stalinism. And I believe that Stalinism is still a huge problem in the workers' movement today.

Why did the union leaders go with the Accord? Because the Labor government offered union officials respectability and access to power, or the appearance of it. The quid pro quo is that they would be controlled.

On another level what it signified was that the SPA industrial people had had their convictions and their self-confidence eroded. One of their central ideas was that they must never let themselves get isolated as the BLF had been. Step out of line, and you'd be destroyed.

Since the Second World War, at least, the left in Australia had been completely dominated by the CPA and the SPA, at least in industry. By the 1980s that cadre of left activists was aging and decaying politically.

The political level of the SPA industrial activists was generally low. Seamen joined the SPA because they thought it was the right thing to do, or because they believed in socialism, but some also for personal advantage, to get better jobs. There was an element of cronyism in the union's influence over employment.

There was some political education in the SPA, but not too much, nothing of the sort of thing we try to organise in *Workers' Liberty*. It was kept at a fairly low level to make sure that the officials always knew more than the rest. And there were not a lot of young people involved, teenagers or people in their twenties.

There were some SPAers in the unions who stayed loyal to the political leadership and opposed the Accord, but they were very quickly sidelined. They tended to be older and less dynamic members. By then there were some young activists in the unions who were members of the SWP [now DSP], but they were few enough to be quickly sidelined too. There was not much debate in the Seamen's Union about the Accord.

In that period social-democracy became the dominant ideology of the labour movement, right and left alike. The so-called communists were no more left wing than the Mitterrand socialists in France. In fact I believe Mitterrand has had a powerful

influence all around the world, undercutting the old Communist Party influence.

In 1985 we had the SEQEB dispute in Queensland, in which a thousand power workers were sacked, and the left unions stood by them. I was arrested nine times during that dispute - five times on picket lines, once when collecting money, and on three other occasions - and I spent 21 days in jail. That made me question the Accord process.

The SEQEB dispute and Mudginberri were decisive turning points. In the Mudginberri dispute the meatworkers' union, which had previously been a very strong union, was defeated, and now it is only a shadow of what it was. Those disputes were turning points for the whole movement.

One measure of it is this. In 1983 we used to have meetings of union delegates twice a month at the Trades Hall, with 150 to 200 delegates attending. Today, in 2003, they have delegates' meetings once every three months, with about a dozen attending, in the new building that they were given money by the State government to build so that IBM could build its offices on the site of the old Trades Hall.

The amalgamations of unions during the Accord years were an unmitigated disaster. The unions became great amorphous blobs, lost their identity, got larger and larger bureaucracies. The membership felt abandoned. Security grilles became more apparent in union offices. People needed PINs to talk to their union officials. Unions went from sharing premises in centralised Labour Council buildings to having their own offices, and links between activists in different unions became much harder.

From 1984 to 1992 I was very active in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. We gained wide trade-union backing, and organised a lot of trade-union action, but it was all totally dominated by the ANC line. The Anti-Apartheid Movement was an ANC support group. The development of FOSATU and the other new independent trade unions in South Africa had no impact here.

In 1989, I was at a Sydney stopwork meeting at the time of Tiananmen Square. The union leadership had written a letter to the Chinese government complaining about the methods used to suppress the

protesters. Maybe they wanted them to use water cannon instead of tanks - I don't know.

So an older comrade got up to speak. "Is this union criticising a socialist government?" "Yes", said the officials, " we don't agree with the way the government is handling the protests". "I don't think they shot enough of them", replied the speaker. There was something brave and admirable about his defiance of all conventional opinion, but it also showed how Stalinism had been able to confuse the whole message of socialism.

A lot of activists were demoralised by the events of 1989. A lot thought, or said, that it was all a CIA plot. But they did not really have any arguments to deal with it.

The effect on the trade union movement was that activists moved further to the right, became more conservative, more insular, and more obliging to employers. They retreated more into trying to protect their own particular unions.

War on the waterfront

In the late 1980s the seafaring industry revived a bit, due to tax benefits granted by the Labor

government. It has declined dramatically, maybe halving in size, since the mid-1990s. Even in the late 1980s, though, there were cuts in the workforce. Crews were reduced to about half their previous numbers, without any big technological change. The employers offered the older workers redundancy pay-offs, or early retirement, and they took it. The union had no strategy to deal with this. Basically the union view was that the problem was too difficult to struggle against.

On the wharves there were big cuts in manning levels, too, with massive technical changes. Again, the union had no real plan to deal with it. John Coombs [the union leader] was a fine orator, but a crisis-manager. There was a lot of fight in the membership, but there was no strategy, and that's why we lost the jobs.

A large part of the union leadership believed in their own invincibility. They underestimated Corrigan, CEO of Patricks. He had a strategy. And then he developed tactics.

A lot of the old strong points of trade unionism are now much weaker. Even in coal mining, there are now

"gypsy" coal miners, who go from mine to mine working on contracts.

Across the board workers have been casualised, marginalised, dehumanised, made to compete against each other much more. Few are in permanent jobs, and those few are usually on high wages, while the rest are fed the dream that there may be a permanent job for them somewhere if they are lucky.

There is still a working class, and it still has the capacity to change the world. But now there needs to be a huge new political infusion, to generate a consciousness among working people that their lives can be better than the shit they're living in now, that they shouldn't have to compete against each other.

We have to get in on the ground level with workers, not just in construction, maritime and metals, but in universities, schools, hospitals, call centres - the whole working class. Capitalism has universalised the suffering much more. Capitalism is much more flexible today, more difficult to get hold of, but it can still be beaten.

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Where to for the anti war movement?

Bryan Sketchley

A number of recent articles in Green Left Weekly have carried a common thread of argument in terms of what the anti war movement needs to be doing now, its strategies and goals. That line of thought was succinctly encapsulated in the editorial of GLW #544 (September 17, 2003 issue). While excellently critiquing the war crimes of the Bush administration, including the bald faced lies concerning the weapons of mass destruction and noting the fall in Bush's approval rating, the editorial concludes on a disturbing note.

'Through mobilising those opposed to the war on Iraq in large, highly visible public protests that raise the clear demand that the US and its allies get out of Iraq – thus restoring to the Iraqi people the national sovereignty that the invasion has violated – the growing public disquiet about the war can be turned into an irresistible mass political movement,' noted the editorial writer.

The unprecedented protests of 15 million people around the world on the weekend of February 14 – 16 were heralded with a similar sort of triumphalist logic. Yet the ruling classes of the US, UK and Australia paid those historic marches no heed. What was at stake was unfettered access to the lubricant of the world's economy. It's unlikely that if the marches on that February weekend were double the size they were that they would have impacted on the headlong rush to war, slowing access to the oil fields of Iraq, and impeding the rebalancing of forces in the middle east.

Those who filled the streets and lane ways around the world during those days did so, no doubt, with a heartfelt belief that their 'leaders' must surely listen to the collective voice of so many. The banners that were lofted pleaded 'no war.' The marchers were entreating the ruling class to stop, and consider other options. Predictably, the ruling classes interest in war and access to cheap oil had been decided long before, and the concerns of the marchers were not their concerns.

The simple plea, no war, made to 'our leaders' was the expression of where the anti war movement was at

then. However, eight long and bloody months have passed since that weekend, and it seems that little has been learnt. Slogans like 'stop the war' and 'stop Bush's war drive' are still pleas to somebody, anybody, to do something to stop the war, to end the occupation, to recognise Iraqi sovereignty. And who now has the power to do that but Bush and Blair?

At the same time these pleas are being made Rumsfeld is preparing to send an additional 10,000 troops, and has another 5,000 on standby. The slogans that are now being raised are really questions that need to be put to the anti war movement. How will we stop this war? How can Bush's war drive be stopped? What can we do to assist the Iraqi working class to liberate itself?

It is the responsibility of socialists, not to continue to foster the illusion that the ruling class will be put under enough pressure if we simply build 'large, highly visible public protests that raise the clear demand that the US and its allies get out of Iraq' but to make arguments in the anti war movement that can do something that will tangibly impede the war drive.

What's at stake for the oil spivs and their governmental facilitators is something that is utterly critical to their system. Socialists in the anti war movement need to make clear and unequivocal arguments that pleading to end the occupation, or stop Bush's war drive is not enough, we need to take responsibility for arguing for actions that will, in whatever way, impede their ability to continue the occupation.

Pleading with the ruling class to reconsider is not an option that is going to produce a result. But worse than that, such an orientation for the anti war movement disarms our ability to argue for strategies that can take the movement forward.

Perhaps the demand 'Bring the troops home now' will begin to evolve into strategies that will hinder troops leaving in the first place, developing of networks to support troops that refuse to go, and the like.

Jeff Sparrow wrote in the latest edition of *Overland* (issue #171) in an

article entitled *Weapons of Mass Disaffection*, 'The Left has a huge task in front of it, if rather than appealing to the conscience of men (sic) who possess none, we want to render the outbreak of the next war physically impossible. That entails rebuilding, almost from scratch, the traditions and organisations of our movement.'

He is right. We need to rebuild and reorientate the anti war movement. It is a large task, but without attempting it, we are doomed never to accomplish our stated goals.

We, as socialists, need to be arguing for a different kind of anti war movement, an anti war movement that recognises that if there is any hope of slowing down the war machine then we need to do what we can to impede their efforts, rather than plead with rulers.

By this I don't mean stunts performed by heroic individuals, but rather looking to forces that do have the organised ability and power to hinder the slaughtering machine. We need to argue with and cajole unions to emulate the actions of loco drivers in the UK in the lead up to war, where drivers refused to move war goods.

We need to be arguing in our unions that companies and government departments that have any role in the killing should themselves be the targets of goods and services bans. We need an anti war movement that will make the cost of waging the war out strip any potential benefits that the ruling classes are counting on.

While the invasion of Iraq has been completed, and coalition of the willing is struggling to manage the occupation on their terms, there are tasks for socialists in the anti war movement that are important, indeed vital. The re-emerging labour movement in Iraq is a development that deserves the active and tangible solidarity from socialists and unionists in Australia. In any post occupation Iraq, a well-organised labour movement will be the first and last bastion against fundamentalists and the US installed puppet regime.

(See article page 7-8 for more on Solidarity with Iraqi workers)