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## YELTSIN'S BLOODY CRACKDOWN

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ON OCTOBER 3 BORIS YELTSIN brought in the military. He made it clear on whose side force was. There was more bloodshed on Moscow streets than during the Russian Revolution. Now no organised consistent opposition exists to his pro-capitalist programme in the Moscow region. His Stalinist and fascist opponents were either killed, jailed or condemned to silence. He has the full support of the imperialists, especially Bill Clinton of the USA.

One political lesson stands out. The Russian armed forces are on the side of the nascent bourgeoisie. On a personal level Yeltsin was perfectly happy to rid himself of old personal rivals. But this was much greater than a personal conflict. He had a mission -to create capitalism in the CIS, an extremely difficult task: Most industry in the Soviet Union was developed not to compete in the market place but to serve the bureaucracy in a very bureaucratically distorted variant of planning. In the old Soviet Union there was gross inefficiency and scarcity of many commodities. But there was a degree of job security and price control unknown under capitalism. To make the economy "efficient" (meaning obey the laws of capitalism) requires a massive upgrading of technology and the creation of "flexibility in the work force" (the capacity to put workers on the scrap heap at will and totally undermine their rights and decent working conditions). Yeltsin needs to create a bourgeoisie with its political and legal superstructure. He has to deal with old inefficient factories and the remains of a physically extant bureaucracy.

Capitalism throughout the world is in massive crisis. Everywhere there is mass unemployment. No imperialist power can afford to help Yeltsin economically in his project to any significant degree. The CIS needs capital but the capitalist system can't afford to give it much. No capitalist can afford to invest in uncompetitive, inefficient industry.

Yeltsin's other problem lies with the co-ordination of what was the old Soviet Union. When the USSR existed, industry could be co-ordinated. Yeltsin now has to deal with movements for local autonomy. Support for his agenda varies. Whilst in Moscow the Stalinists have received a massive setback, in Bashkortostan, they are making strong **headway**. As austerity deepens Yeltsin will get more and stronger resistance. He will respond with brute force.

Democracy of any sort is not on the agenda in Yeltsin's new Russia. To re-establish capitalism Yeltsin needs to smash not only what remains of the Stalinist bureaucracy but also the organisation of the working class. He may not succeed in imposing capitalism which is his aim. But he will succeed in imposing austerity, starvation and state repression against working people. The Yeltsin counterrevolution must be resisted. His regime must be smashed. Unfortunately the only visible alternative is an alliance of Stalinist Communists and fascists. The latter oppose Yeltsin with a Russian nationalist point of view.

Such an alliance exposes the total bankruptcy **d the** Stalinists. Yeltsin understandably uses this alliance **against** them. People also remember the inefficiency of **the previous** regimes. They realise that going back is no **answer**

Communist Tendency has consistently **opposed** Yeltsin. No matter what progressive demands he has raised, even before coming to power, he clearly **represented** aspiring bourgeois forces committed to the exploitation of the working class. The alternative to Stalinist bureaucratisation is not exploitation, even "democratic" exploitation, but proletarian power. It is this that we are committed to re-establish in what was the Soviet Union. against the old bureaucrats and the new bourgeoisie.

## Baryulgil: mass murder by James Hardie

BARYULGIL is a small community near Grafton on the Clarence River Northern New South Wales. Most of the hundred or so people who live there are Koories of the Bundjalung tribe. For the past forty years there has been one major form of employment - mining and packaging asbestos for the multi-national James Hardie. The asbestos mined there, white asbestos, although not as deadly as the blue variety, is still fatal. The miners, their partners who washed their clothes, the children who played in the tailings and even those who passed through the town such as bus drivers. Virtually, the whole town is being killed by asbestosis and asbestos-related diseases. James Hardie is guilty of mass murder.

Not only did James Hardie refuse to warn people of the dangers of asbestos, they actually assured them that asbestos was safe. Workers were even encouraged to spread it around their homes! James Hardie super-exploited these workers. They were paid below the award. Their union, the Australian Workers' Union, paid only one visit there to collect dues. The AWU does not have a policy of banning asbestos. Their policy is to inform workers of the dangers but they didn't even bother to carry out this minimalist task. They didn't warn the workers or the community either. The workers were forced to breathe asbestos dust without protesting. Asbestos contaminated the water supply.

Despite knowing that the dust exposure would be fatal after more than a month's exposure, James Hardie Industries denies liability. They aren't prepared to hand over any compensation. The community has had to fight to receive anything. So far only one claimant has received any compensation. Ruby Mundine received \$3,000 compensation for the death of her husband Cyril who worked there for 22

years - disgraceful. Of course the miners are forced to "prove" that they were killed by asbestos. Debbie Brennan in her article in **Freedom Socialist** points out that former miner Charles Moran explained that every time miners went to see a doctor in Grafton "the report was always the same: if you drank it was alcohol related, if you smoked, smoking was the cause of death. Because we were Black". Asbestos has killed many workers. In Witternoom, Western Australia, workers and the community were killed by the negligence of CSR. However it is due to the racism of Australian society, including the labour movement, that these workers have remained isolated. James Hardie and the monopolies have been allowed to treat them with contempt.

James Hardie must be forced to pay. It is the responsibility of the workers' movement to see that it does. A programme of working class direct action must be drawn up and carried out until it does. Strike action must be organised in solidarity with the Baryulgil people in factories, mines or plants owned, part-owned or who have dealings with James Hardie or its subsidiaries. Black ban: must be carried out against James Hardie products. The union movement must back, to the hilt, the Baryulgil people in their legal cases. Action and organisation must begin now.

The information here is from an article by Debbi Brennan **Freedom Socialist** Bulletin no.8 and from Charles Moran N.S.W. Asbestos Ex-miners Aboriginal Corporation at his address in Sydney. Send letters of solidarity to:

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## Shorter working week in Europe and Australia

TALK OF A SHORTER WORKING WEEK hasn't been heard in Australia for a long time. In the seventies metal workers' main campaign was for a thirty five hour week which they said would provide "more jobs, more leisure" As the crisis intensified this became modified to a call for a thirty eight hour week. And anyhow the demand was linked to a promise of increased productivity deals, and absorbed in overtime. Today the unions are more interested in collaborating with the bosses than fighting for workers. The campaigns for a shorter working week - as unsatisfactory as they were - have been well and truly buried. Bosses have even talked about an increased working week for their benefit. A shorter week is now used in the sense of part-time work only.

In France and Germany, the demand for a shorter working week is well and truly on the national agenda. German car manufacture Volkswagen has just made a deal with the union, I.G. Metall, for a shorter working week. Unions had agreed to cut working hours to 28.8 or 36 hours per week as an alternative to Volkswagen laying off 30,000 workers. Unfortunately this is linked to a reduction in pay. Juergan Peters, head of I.G. Metall union negotiators, said annual losses workers would suffer would be less than 10% - hardly comforting for those who rely on their full wage to pay off their mortgage.

In France they have announced legislation for a shorter working week. Already the French Senate has approved legislation rewarding companies who give their staff a shorter working week and take on new staff. There is also talk of legislation for a shorter working week, but part of the package is a reduction in pay. According to the European Policy Institute, which is actively promoting the policy, opinion poll show that most support a reduction of the working week and a reduction in pay of about seven percent. The union movement is debating supporting pay cuts. Any cut in pay must be consistently opposed. The Government is concerned with the high rate of unemployment and the high cost in welfare and social services that result from the millions unemployed. Bosses are prepared to co-operate to a degree but don't want legislation.

The call for a shorter working week is well and truly on the agenda in Europe. Revolutionaries must take up the challenge. It's time to raise, not merely a shorter working week but a sliding scale of hours and wages. This is an important demand from the Trotsky's Transitional Programme -the founding programme of the Fourth International. To call for a thirty-eight or thirty-five hour week is not merely enough. We need a reduction until everyone is employed. We need wage rises. In fact we need wage rises linked to the increase in the cost of living. We can only trust the organised working class to calculate this increase. Previous indexation schemes have been rigged to disguise the real increases in costs for working people. Indexation has been a legalised form of wage cut. Unless the call for a continuing shorter working week is linked to wage increases than it will merely be another way in which working people are forced to carry the burden of the economic crisis.

The right to work is the only guarantee that we have to subsistence under capitalism. We may have a dole in Australia today - but in no way is it guaranteed that there will always be a dole. In many countries if you lose your job, you either beg for charity or go hungry. By working the ruling class is at least forced to pay us a minimal amount to exist. Hungry workers can not produce profits. Unemployment not only enforces workers to go hungry. The threat of unemployment is used by the bosses to undermine the wages and conditions of the employed workforce. By fighting for the right to work we are fighting for the balance of forces in class struggle to be on our side. A sliding scale of hours and wages is a very important way of doing this - on our terms. Revolutionaries also raise the need for a programme of meaningful public works, such as schools, public transport and hospitals to be carried out under Award rates of pay and conditions. With the intensifying economic crisis no capitalist government will carry out such a programme. This does not mean that we don't raise the demands as working people need housing, hospitals and schools. This will only be consistently be carried out when we have a workers and small farmers government.

A sliding scale of hours and wages we must organise for now - through our own organisation and direct action on the shop floor. Factory committees are an important part of this organisation. A sliding scale of hours and wages is a key demand in organising the unemployed. It is vital that the unemployed have unions. Unemployed unions must deal in day-to-day attacks such as oppressive Newstart agreements, day-to-day harassment by bureaucrats, lack of child care at dole offices and other issues. However unless we are fighting for the right to work we are only fighting for the unemployed to remain in their existing poverty. Unemployment is an unacceptable condition which must be fought. A sliding scale of hours and wages unites employed and unemployed to fight the system. Unemployed people can fight the system. In fact they can detonate revolutionary struggle. But unless united with the organised employed working class their militancy will go nowhere. Unemployed can be used to undermine award wages and conditions. By organising for the right to work, for a sliding scale of hours and wages to spread the work around on our terms we prevent this from happening.

The bosses will actively resist our organisation for a shorter working week. That is why the Transitional Programme goes beyond it. Workers must resist the bosses and state through workers militias, win over sections of the middle class and organise for a revolutionary workers and small farmers' government.

The debate on the shorter working week in Europe reveals a glaring distinction between the workers' movement there and in Australia. In Australia, thanks to the notorious Accord, workers have been forced to surrender the struggle for a shorter working week and "agree" to pay cuts. In Europe a shorter working week is on the agenda and many unions are opposing pay cuts. We hope European workers break through and win not just the shorter working week but also the wage rises that they deserve. To do this consistently, important political lessons will have to be learnt about their existing leadership and a revolutionary alternative built.

## No nostalgia for Whitlam

EIGHTEEN YEARS have passed since the Whitlam government got the sack. Today, Whitlam's tradition is still very much a factor in Australian politics. To the Right, he represents the socialist bogie, the epitome of big spending government. To the Left and not so left, he represents Labour tradition. In these days of monetarist budgets and Hawke's and Keating's blatantly pro-imperialist foreign policies, Whitlam has an aura of principle. It is no accident that today Paul Keating raises the question of the republic and promotes the fact that he was a minister under Whitlam. Keating has been trying to promote himself as maintaining the Labor tradition, to sell himself to the Labor traditionalist alienated by Hawke's rampant reaction. Of course, the defeat of the Left, inside and outside the Labor Party means that he can define "maintaining the faith" very minimally indeed.

Communist Tendency has no such nostalgia for Whitlam. His sacking by Sir John Kerr and the subsequent angry militant reaction from working class people has turned him into a kind of martyr. When Whitlam was sacked workers fought heroically. The memory of the struggle has blinded many as to what his real policies actually were. **A serious examination of his record shows that Whitlam was a right-winger, even within the reformist tradition:**

### Whitlam's rise to power

The Federal election of December 1966 was a nightmare for Labor supporters and the left. The Liberals, led by Holt, won with a landslide majority. The election was fought around the question of Australia's participation in the imperialist intervention. The Liberals advocated on a programme of support for the American war effort. The economy then was relatively prosperous with an unemployment rate of about of about one percent. And this is why many would have voted Liberal. But nevertheless the Liberals still had a mandate to intervene in Vietnam.

The left dreaded not just the Liberal victory - they feared the person who was preparing to take over as Labor Party leader, Gough Whitlam. He was, at that time, a clear supporter of the US alliance, not prepared to oppose the Vietnam issue lest this alliance be jeopardised. Arthur Caldwell, in his last major act as leader of the parliamentary Labor Party, led demonstrations and rallies against US puppet President Ky of South Vietnam who was invited to tour Australia in early 1967. Ky was exposed as an admirer of the Nazis and this made him an easy target to rally support against. Caldwell addressed rallies with clergy, trade unionists and peace activists. A notable absentee was Edward Gough Whitlam, then preparing his support to become leader.

The Labor leadership candidate for the left was Jim Cairns, of the middle class Fabian tradition. He supported parliamentary nationalisation. Whitlam identified with the German social democrats in wanting a more modern socially concerned capitalism. He claimed to, support nationalisation as a principle. But modernising, minimalist reforms, such as decent education, federal support for local government, took priority. After the Second World War, there was a temporary stabilising of capitalism linked to the defeat of the working class. There was a growth in the productive forces and in living standards. Many middle class people and revisionists such as Pablo and Mandel, considered that this meant that worker's traditional demands such as wages and conditions were redundant and new issues such as alienation were on the agenda. The alternative was two middle class candidates. Dr Cairns represented the more idealistic wing and Whitlam, the more pragmatic one. Cairns was linked to Stalinism, Whitlam was backed by the right. Cairns was openly opposed to the Vietnam war. The Left were solidly behind him. His resulting defeat meant that Labor had a leader not committed to opposing the war.

The ALP is a party of the trade union bureaucracy. In the sixties this was even more so. The fact that Whitlam became its leader showed the bureaucracy's bankruptcy. Merely because he was leader did not mean Labour was fully committed to the Whitlam road. To achieve this, Whitlam had to declare war on the party machine, especially the left wing. In 1968 he resigned and recontested leadership over the refusal of National Conference to recognise Brian Harridine. Harridine was and is a rightwing grouper who deserves no place in the labour movement. Whitlam's desire to defend him clearly showed his political colours.

Mr. Whitlam also declared war on the Victorian State Executive. In Victoria, virtually the whole party supported views consistent with what became the Socialist Left. The "democrat", Gough Whitlam, demanded new office bearers. From this the Socialist Left was established as a faction. Whitlam was still campaigning for a watering down of ALP policy on Vietnam.

The 1969 Federal election saw a decisive swing to Labor. It was then clear that the imperialists were being defeated in Vietnam. Prime Minister Gorton stated that withdrawal was on the agenda. By then all the horror, immorality and brutality of the allied intervention was being exposed. Whitlam could point out that the Americans were realising that the Vietnam war was wrong so opposition to the war no longer endangered the alliance. The Liberals were being exposed both on Vietnam and the economy. Inflation and unemployment were on the increase. The Liberals no longer had the high ground as responsible economic managers.

By 1969 the working class had begun to move. There was a near general strike over the jailing of trade unionist Clarrie O'Shea. Workers and even some trade unionists talked about taking on the system. The challenged penal clauses, although they remained on the books, were effectively smashed. This exposed the Gorton Government's impotence. That right-winger Whitlam remained leader showed the gulf between the working class's militancy and its political leadership. Whitlam was preparing for government. Despite Australia's relative affluence, the level of social welfare and development of the public sector were well below that of comparable affluent western countries. For this reason sections of the middle class and even sections of the capitalist class were rallying to Labor. Whitlam was showing them that it was he, and not the trade union base, that was fundamentally in control.

### Whitlam in office

The Whitlam Government was inevitably elected on December 3, 1972. The Liberals were incapable of withdrawing from the imperialist mess of Vietnam. After twenty three years of conservative rule people wanted change. There was an air of expectation.

For the first month Whitlam moved at a cracking pace. An interim, two person, cabinet composed of himself and his deputy Lance Barnard were appointed. Conscription was abolished and draft resisters were released from prison. Australian forces were completely withdrawn from Vietnam. Mao Tse Tung's People's Republic of China was recognised as the legitimate government of China as opposed to the regime on Taiwan. These reforms, promised by Labor, were

immediately delivered. He also announced a series of measures to hamper foreign takeovers of Australian companies, made statements opposing French nuclear testing and US bombing of the Vietnamese cities of Hanoi and Haiphong then taking place. He also opposed the trade union movement taking action in solidarity with the Vietnamese against the bombing. It was then announced that Australia would give independence to Papua New Guinea.

This new approach soon became clear as just a new variant of imperialist strategy. Whitlam visited Indonesia and showed his solidarity with the murderous regime of Dr Suharto. Whitlam was preparing a mini-imperialist foreign policy with Australia controlling imperialist interest throughout the south Pacific. This required him to differentiate from the policies of the US. By recognising the Peoples' Republic of China, he hoped to facilitate trade and business penetration.

Clyde Cameron announced his support for the thirty-five hour working week. Whilst this appeared progressive, the overall context wasn't. Cameron was using it as a carrot to get workers, in particular unions, to take responsibility for capitalism and its profitability. Penal powers were unenforceable. So the Whitlam plan was co-option.

### **The crisis of inflation**

Whitlam's measures were initially very popular. But already problems were lurking. Inflation was on the increase. There was no apparent end in sight. His first move the introduction of a Prices Justification Tribunal, only justified the ruling class putting up their prices. Stalinists of the CPA and SPA, through their front CARP, put forward a reactionary alternative for controls on exports. His next measure was to reduce tariffs by a flat rate of twenty-five percent. The aim was to reduce prices by making more readily available goods from overseas. The ruling class congratulated him for his boldness. This decision was made with absolutely no consultation with the trade union movement. Whitlam once again showed his contempt for the working class. Tariffs and protection are reactionary and cannot be defended. He introduced Special Readjustment Assistance which was supposed to give any worker laid off by tariff reduction an amount almost equivalent to a wage. But in practice this was extremely difficult to get as a worker had to prove that the reason for being laid off was the reduction in the tariff level.

Whitlam then held a Premiers' Conference, aiming to co-operate with the likes of Rupert Hamer for support for a referendum on wages and prices. The latter was held in December 1973 and Whitlam Government's plans to control wages and prices were defeated. Working people understandably and reasonably feared that the real aim was to control wages. Throughout his period as prime

minister Whitlam tried his utmost to attack workers fighting for decent wages.

Inflation was a world-wide phenomenon. Simultaneously, many advanced capitalist countries were suffering a high rate of inflation. The inflation that intensified in 1973 was not Whitlam's responsibility, nor that of the millions of workers who fought to have their pay catch up to this accelerating rate of inflation. As Whitlam has pointed out himself just recently, metalworkers (and others) can't be blamed for an increase in the cost of farm products which were rapidly rising before the AMWU made its initial wage claim. But, at the time, Whitlam attacked workers "pricing themselves out of a job".

### **Whitlam against the workers**

There was a push for wages. Workers understandably wanted to break out of the wage freeze imposed by the previous McMahon Liberal Government. The Vietnamese revolution had a massive effect on Australian society. It inspired working class militancy. This militancy also coincided with the onset of the economic crisis. Workers were angry with inflation, unemployment, the wage freeze and anti-union laws. Much of the militancy was linked to Stalinism. The Communist Party was then more militant although its militancy was within a Stalinist perspective. The CPA distanced itself from Whitlam and promoted militant tactics such as workers' control. Whilst the CPA promoted militancy it also contained it within a framework acceptable to the trade union bureaucracy.

In July 1973 there was an upsurge at the Ford plant at Broadmeadows. Bureaucrats initiated a "guerilla" campaign for a 45% wage rise but were prepared to settle for the 5% wage rise offered by Ford. Throughout the campaign there were militant picket lines which were attacked by the police. Having fought so hard for so little, workers jostled their bureaucrats, in particular, the "militant" Laurie Carmichael. He was forced to apologise. He had to, to maintain credibility. The working class showed their power. Whitlam's response was to urge union bureaucrats to control their members. But the strength of the working class was such that even Bob Hawke was to proclaim the union movement's independence from the Whitlam Government.

### **The right-wing backlash**

Whitlam had passed quite a few minor reforms. But he was limited by Constitutional problems. Those undemocratic institutions, the states and the Senate, were a major hindrance. The Askin Government permitted the Rhodesian Information Centre, contrary to Federal Government policy of formally opposing the racist Smith white-dominated regime. Joh Bjelke-Petersen made it clear that his Government would stand in the way of any attempt to renegotiate the border with the newly independent Papua New Guinea. Labor didn't have a clear majority in the Senate although the independent Liberal Steele Hall said that he wouldn't block supply. Whitlam tried to resolve this by persuading Senator Gair of the Democratic Labor Party to resign and be appointed Ambassador to Ireland. This incident, known as the "Gair Affair" prompted a double dissolution. Labor won the election held May 1974 with about the same proportion of the vote and about the same number of seats. But the results were interesting because they showed a class polarisation. Labor gained ground in the urban working class electorates but lost ground in the country - especially in Queensland. There was a semi-fascist backlash to Whitlam's minor reforms. This backlash was promoted by Joh Bjelke-Petersen who was committed to bring down the Whitlam Government. Sir Charles Court, premier of Western Australia, also introduced an Emergency Fuel Bill aimed at jailing unionists. This was met with a statewide general strike.

### **The crisis of unemployment**

Inflation continues to plague the Whitlam Government but by the end of 1974 Whitlam was to be faced with another serious problem - unemployment. Treasurer Cairns stated that his government was prepared to accept a degree of unemployment in order to combat inflation. This shows his reactionary priority of making the working class pay in order to resolve the crisis in the boss's favour. But the crisis went way beyond that. The last half of 1974 saw a collapse in the building industry with twenty to thirty thousand jobs disappearing and companies collapsing, including the giant Mainline. The major Leylands car factory in Alexandria closed down laying off thousands of workers. So too did many electrical and white goods factories. By the end of the year over 200,000 were on the dole - in those days considered massive. No amount of unemployment should be considered acceptable. Many of the lay offs were met with occupations and work-ins.

There were fundamental changes taking place in the Australian economy. Australia has a colonial economy. On the whole its economy has been centred on the export of rural products and minerals. Whilst there has always been a small manufacturing sector, on the whole this has been for local consumption. Manufacturing developed after the second world war under the umbrella of tariffs and protection. It was a product of the post-war boom when the productive forces expanded. Whitlam

Government was not responsible for the crisis of manufacturing. But as a capitalist government it had no answers. Whitlam was loyal to the capitalists and actually helped them to lay off workers. Leyland lay offs were actually subsidised yet the workers received a minimal amount in redundancy pay and no guaranteed future.

### Whitlam caves in

Whitlam now was on his knees to the bosses. There was a pathetic attempt to offer tax concessions for wage cuts. This workers correctly rejected. With inflation still rampant, workers couldn't afford to cut back. Their pay rises had been hardly adequate.

The Terri gal Conference of the Federal Labor Party marked the total collapse of Labor -all they could now offer was servile loyalty to the bosses. Cairns and Whitlam proclaimed their commitment to restoring and maintaining profits and a "profitable public sector". Under the pressure of the ruling class offensive, Labor began peddling backwards. But it could never peddle backwards fast enough for the ruling class. The ruling class was divided on the timing of Whitlam's downfall. Bjelke-Petersen wanted to remove him as soon as possible whereas Fraser wanted to give him time to show his inadequacy to the Australian public. The Hayden budget of 1975 was the first to cut back on social service spending since the second world war. There were all sorts of scandals to trip the government up such as the Loans Affair.

In October 1975 Senate blocked supply. Whitlam had tried to manipulate the Senate but Bjelke-Petersen showed that he could play that game too. It was a custom that when there was a Senate vacancy, the government of the state in which it occurred would appoint a replacement from the same party. But Bjelke-Petersen replaced the Labor Senator with right-winger Bert Field. Field was effectively a Grouper in allegiance. He claimed to identify with the labour movement but was actually committed **to the right**. With his support, supply was blocked through the **Senate**.

On November 11 the Governor General Sir John Kerr, a Whitlam appointee from the right-wing Labor **tradition**, sacked the Whitlam Government and replaced it **with an** interim Fraser Government. The response from working class people, the left and sections of the middle class, **was** militant rage expressed in pickets, rallies and stoppages. The far left had a chance to show in action the inability of the Whitlam government to defend itself because of its loyalty to the Constitution and the capitalist state. The far left were either tailing the militancy (CPA, SWP) or were not addressing the political questions which concerned the workers. Revolutionary propaganda was posed in an abstract way. The failure of this militant response paved the way for Fraser who won the December election with a landslide majority.

### A balance sheet

So what did the Whitlam Government amount to? It has to be stressed that what was attempted was not really that radical. Especially when realised that in the early seventies the bourgeoisie itself recognized that changes were needed to modernise Australia.

Many remember Medibank as an extremely popular health scheme. But it was not as good as the health scheme that New Zealand had at the time. Nor was it as good as the health schemes of many western European countries.

Labor had a nationalist reputation for Rex Connor's initiatives to "buy back the farm". In the early seventies there was international concern about the role of multinationals. It was exposed that the largest world multinational, General Motors, would be when compared to the world's Gross National Product of nations, twenty-ninth on the list, ahead of countries such as Malaysia. Australia was not the only country to be worried. Canada Development Corporation bought back the holdings of Texas Gulf Oil. Compared to this Whitlam's attempts were pretty modest. The government invested in Mary Kathleen uranium. But on the whole Whitlam didn't want to stop multi-nationals, he wanted government intervention to influence the way that they operated. He planned to do this through the Australian Industrial Development Corporation. The AIDC was established under the Gorton Liberal Government. Essentially the AIDC could participate in joint ventures guaranteeing local equity, but it couldn't stop multi-national capital. This really was all Whitlam wanted to do.

Whitlam Government offered a different approach on the question of Black people. His government was philosophically committed to land rights. His government was hamstrung by bureaucracy - a white racist bureaucracy. This, Whitlam could have changed a bit with the appointment of more Black advisers - but didn't. There was an increase on spending but very little found its way into the hands of Black people. Most went to the bureaucracy. The Whitlam Government sacked Black bureaucrat Charle Perkins for publically attacking the bureaucracy's racism but there was no action except minor criticism against D Patterson for his racist red neck statements insulting black people.

The Whitlam Government did offer a programme urban renewal. Money was spent on housing Woolloomooloo. The Glebe Estate was nationalised. All bury Wodonga and Bathurst/Orange were to be developed it growth centers. Although minor, this was of some benefit. The Australian Assistance Programme gave money community organisations. It also co-opted them: for example, the Aboriginal Legal Service lost its funding for supporting the Black Tent Embassy.

Whitlam's foreign policy amounted to a new mini-imperialism. Whitlam granted independence to Papua New Guinea but ensured there was a new indigenous elite committed to maintaining Australian and imperialist control. He nurtured the PANGU Pati to do just that. He openly supported repressive regimes such as Suharto in Indonesia, facilitating its bloody takeover of East Timor. It was ALP policy then to oppose US bases on Australian soil. Whitlam avoided the issue. There was no effort to remove these reactionary bases as this would have endangered Whitlam's beloved US alliance.

All of the above does not amount to a very radical government. He was a moderate moderniser of capitalism who stood for a degree of intervention for social **welfare**. He also believed in some intervention to control but **not stop** multi-national penetration of the economy. These **were all** measures popular in Australia before his election - **including** sections of the ruling class. Whitlam always **stood for** opposing significant wage rises. He argued that **workers** should be satisfied with his minor reforms.

In no way should we be nostalgic for this centre-right minimal reformer. Whitlam is only remembered as a leftist because of the militant upsurge that followed his dismissal and also because of the subsequent collapse of the left into right-wing positions that make him appear radical. We must however break through the nostalgia and remember how little real change Whitlam had to offer.

## New Zealand elections: a crisis of leadership

THE NATIONALS, led by Bolger, have been re-elected in New Zealand - narrowly. There was a massive swing against them. They now have an over all majority of one. Labour has forty five seats. And the multiparty Alliance and New Zealand First two seats each. Bolger's Nationals have pursued a harsh monetarist agenda. Finance minister Ruth Richardson has been responsible for ensuring this direction. She has been removed from this position, a casualty of National's electoral setback. Bolger knows that continuation of Richardson's ruthless and consistent monetarism will be certain for the Nationals next time. He knows that it would only take one slip up for the government to be defeated in parliament.

New Zealander's hostility to these policies is understandable. The country is a land of soup kitchens. Many families depend on food parcels. Many have teeth removed because they can't afford to have them filled. The New Zealand once decent social welfare system has been slashed to ribbons. Over 300,000 are on the dole. In some towns virtually everyone is, bar shopkeepers and a few service people as the local industry has collapsed. Under the Employment Contracts Act, wages have been forced down to a level almost as low as the dole. To get a job, workers have to offer to work for the lowest possible wages with the worst conditions. With massive unemployment, it is the bosses who hold the upper hand. They can enforce the lowest possible contract.

The election showed that people hated Nationals and their agenda. But the results were no comfort to Labour. People rejected them too. This was understandable New Zealanders are very well aware that it was Labour that began this monetarist direction. It is no exaggeration to say that the policies pursued by Labour, inspired by the then Finance Minister Roger Douglas, ("Rogernomics"), were even to the right of Thatcher and Reagan, on economics. Douglas recently stated that he thinks his policies have been "betrayed" meaning that Ruth Richardson has not been economically rationalist enough. Roger Douglas is out of Parliament but his successor David Caygill is Labour's new deputy leader. Caygill as Finance Minister continued the policies began by Douglas. Labour has a new leader Ms. Helen Clark, relatively on the left. Both she and former Prime Minister Lange talk about a humanising of Labour's approach. This does not amount to a change of direction.

To the left of Labour, at least in terms of policy, is the popular front Alliance. The Alliance was initiated by the left breakaway from Labour called New Labour. Traditionally Labour has represented an alliance between workers, especially the more privileged labour aristocracy, with the capitalist state. New Zealand remains a colony although with a small imperialist domain in the Pacific. In the imperialist epoch the bourgeoisie can play no progressive role. In New Zealand the bourgeoisie fully support imperialist domination. They are a comprador bourgeoisie. It has been the Labour Party which has taken up the banner of the national bourgeoisie and the bourgeois democratic revolution. Although it does not include the bourgeoisie physically, it does represent the interests of national capital in embryo. With its turn to the right, Labour has become a total agent of imperialist control of New Zealand. The banner of the national bourgeoisie has been taken up by their breakaway the New Labour Party. In forming the Alliance, New Labour• surrenders its class position even more. The Alliance is a minimalist bloc where New Labour and the Greens, the Maori nationalist Manu Matuhoki, the New Zealand Party (formerly known as Social Credit) agree to common demands. Their programme does defend unionism and opposes the National's Employment Contracts Act. They also oppose the monetarist agenda. An Alliance Government would try to go back to yesterday's capitalism. The Alliance makes it clear that they welcome bourgeois forces who want to do this. This is a trap for the working class. The economic policy of the Alliance is reactionary protectionism. The reactionary nature of their programme is shown most clearly by their support for an incomes policy. This means that when inflation ravages workers' pay packets, the Alliance will tie the bureaucrats so as to only accept pay rises that the Alliance considers that the system can afford. Both the bourgeoisie and working people realise that the Alliance's limited set of demands do not constitute an answer to the massive crisis of New Zealand capitalism. They only offer "pilot schemes" for a shorter working week. Even Keating's republic is outside their framework. If they were elected they would find any realistic response to a crisis outside their limited agreement. It would only take the slightest crisis for this treacherous Alliance to collapse. In short, the Alliance is a serious trap for the working class and deserves no support.

Even worse than the alliance is New Zealand First led by former National golden boy Winston Peters. He was a protégé of former National P.M. Piggy Muldoon. He wants to go back to yesterday's National Party. New Zealand First supports the Employment Contracts Act. It is anti-working class like the Nationals. They may appeal to some nostalgia for the past. The bourgeoisie knows that New Zealand capitalism has changed and there is no room for yesterday's policies. No doubt New Zealand First will provide Nationals with the service of diverting dissenting voters from Labour or the Alliance.

In New Zealand there is a political vacuum. Neither the ruling class nor the working class has a clear political way forward. The election showed that there was massive dissent against the monetarist agenda. But no other serious alternative was posed. So unless there is another serious crisis the Nationals will blunder on with a watered-down monetarist agenda with some concessions to maintain a stable government

During the campaign, the ruling class appeared more concerned with the referendum held concurrent with the election. Full page and half page ads appeared in the major New Zealand papers in defense of the existing first past the post system. All this was spent to no avail. New Zealanders voted for a new system which allows political parties an allocation of seats proportional to their overall proportion of the vote. Communist Tendency supports the change of system. This system means that a party that gets an overall 15% of the vote gets seats even though that support may be evenly dispersed throughout the country. It would change the situation in Queensland where the National Party get many seats with 25% of the vote yet the Australian Democrats get no seats with 15%. The change will mean a politicisation of elections as votes will be more in terms of parties not personalities.

The only real solutions to the New Zealand crisis are revolutionary. The New Zealand working class must take power. This requires the building of a revolutionary party. The main ostensibly revolutionary organisations are Stalinist. These parties have different versions of the two stage theory of revolution. First we fight for reforms, then sometime later, socialism. This is the Stalinist message which in the name of communism ties workers to the capitalist system. The revisionist Communist League who stood candidates also have a two stage approach. Theirs is a watered down version of the Transitional Programme devoid of any revolutionary content. Their candidates deserved no support. Communist League New Zealand is in solidarity with the Australian group of the same name and the Socialist Workers Party of the United States.

To their left are the centrist tendencies Workers Power Aertearoa New Zealand and Permanent Revolutionary Group (NZ section of the Bolshevik Tendency). Both are economist. Both called for a General strike to smash the Employment Contracts Bill without preparing the working class for force. WPANZ call for an "immediate" general strike therefore taking responsibility for one called immediately by the bureaucrats. PRG call for a "defensive" general strike. Both WPANZ and PRG have shown their inability to put forward a revolutionary programme. A new revolutionary organisation must be built committed to Communist Left Programme which WPANZ once formally adhered to but didn't understand. With the crisis intensifying it is urgent such

a party be built now!

## **Palestine mini-state: no solution**

It's BEEN HAILED As a major breakthrough. The Palestinian people are to be allowed a small state let, including the Gaza strip and the West bank of the Jordan River. Zionist extremists are fighting tooth and nail against even these small concessions. It amounts to a minor gain. Palestine can call itself a nation and its new presence counters the Zionist lie that the Palestinians "never existed". However Israel remains. It remains as a prop for imperialism. It remains committed to the exploitation of Palestinian labour. Palestinians represent the most oppressed section of the working class in Israel. This hasn't changed with the formation of the mini-state.

Communist Tendency has consistently supported military victory to the Palestinians fighting Israel. We have also supported Palestinian self-determination - the right to establish their nation. We rejected slander from Zionists and groups such as the Spartacist League and (in Britain) Socialist Organiser that their victory would be "genocidal". But we have always sought principled class unity for a united socialist states of the Middle East. To fight for a class conscious working class, we cannot be indifferent to the national struggle. The Israeli working class identify with a racist, imperialist-sponsored state. The Palestinians have been shoved into the desert, only allowed into Israel to be exploited. Their nationalism has been a distorted response to being oppressed. In no way must we equate the two. Had the Israeli working class stood up and fought for Palestinian rights than Palestinian nationalism would have been broken down. It is in that way that class unity - real class unity would have been forged between Israeli and Palestinian workers.

There is nothing new about the proposal for a ministate. It has been supported by PLO leader Yasser Arafat since the mid seventies. Its formation does not resolve satisfactorily the national question for the Palestinians. Its formation will only do one progressive thing - expose the fake nationalist leaders who advocate the state as a satisfactory solution for the Palestinian people.