

Bulletin of the
Communist Left
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THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN PATRICKS AND THE WHARFIES BACKED

BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS A VITAL STRUGGLE FOR ALL TRADE UNIONISTS. A VICTORY TO

PATRICKS WILL GIVE THE GREEN LIGHT TO BOSSES AND GOVERNMENTS FOR A UNION SMASHING
OFFENSIVE THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA!

On April seven two thousand employees of Patrick Stevedoring, members of the Maritime Union of Australia went to work. They were greeted with armed guards and locked gates. They were sacked for being union members. In their place were scabs recruited to be employed instead of union labour. Although they were sacked the unionists have been refused the dole "as they are party to an industrial dispute

Since then there have been pickets throughout Australia on the waterfront and solidarity from overseas. In United States Australian goods have been black banned. At the time of writing it appears that the Maritime Union of Australia has won all the battles. A gung-ho, cocky and arrogant company backed by a reactionary government with a similar mentality thought that the MUA would be a pushover. They were wrong! Their confidence was however, understandable. Over the past twenty years reactionaries, including Labor governments, have won many victories by force over unions. Reactionary farmers defeated the meatworkers at Muginberri and Hawke Labor used troops to break the airport strike

The wharfies however have shown their capacity to fight. The picket lines held and were at least effective in preventing goods from being transported out the gate. In Victoria, picketers successfully deterred a train driver who refused to cross. All this has cost the bosses millions in export earnings. The strikes have certainly hurt. Billions of dollars in export income are being held up. One car manufacturer has laid off because components have not arrived. They have not been allowed to cross the picket line. This intransigence has wrong footed the bosses and their government backers. Court orders have failed to remove the picketers who have grown in confidence. Whilst there have been some strong confrontations, for example in Fremantle, the union is proud of its close

relationship with the police force especially in New South Wales. Of course the police also protect scabs. But it has been union policy only to stop goods going out and not to prevent scabs from coming in.

The union bureaucrats' strategy has been maintain the pickets; support some solidarity action but not too blatantly lest they be seen to be acting contrary to the Workplace Relations Act and to win over the general public by appealing to fair play and bourgeois legality. "We are acting lawfully, Patricks and the Government are not" is their message

Any legal victory is only temporary. The balance of forces is on the boss's side. If Chifley could use troops against the miners in the forties — then so can Howard today! The only way we can win is if we prepare for an offensive struggle — for working class power!

At the moment things appear to be going the union's way. Court orders have favoured the union. And the company appears to be losing their appeals in higher courts as well. However they have successfully applied for a stay with regard to re-employing the workers. So long as workers remain out the gate the struggle has not been won. There are still plenty of legal avenues for Patricks to pursue. And all it takes is one judge to vindicate the sackings to effectively legalise them even if they other decisions are against the sackings. Neither Patricks nor the Howard government bargained for such a difficult struggle. However if they win they stand to gain billions of dollars at the expense of working people.

In alliance with the bosses are farmers. The National Farmers Federation held a rally in Sydney to show their anger. The NFF includes large capitalist farmers for whom we have no sympathy. But it also includes small farmers who are victims of the crisis. It is important for revolutionaries in our struggle to defend the unions that small farmers are won to our side by showing that it is bosses profitability not workers which is responsible for their suffering

It will be open slather for the bosses to remove restrictive work practices such as more pay working overtime, penalty rates and holiday pay. For Reith having your weekend free constitutes a rort. The bosses want competition all right. They want worker to compete with worker. They will employ those who accept the lowest pay and the worst conditions. Workers sign individual contracts with a gun to their head. Sign here, accept our terms or it's out the gate. And with ten percent unemployed there are plenty out there who prefer low pay to the dole. The attacks on unions are a serious consequence of the failure to fight unemployment.

It is no accident that the crucial struggle to defend unionism concerns the waterfront. Under the impact of the economic crisis there has been a restructuring of the economy — away from manufacturing towards resource industries (such as mining) and tourism. The wharves are crucial to Australia's export of raw materials. And to be competitive the bosses require maximum productivity and minimum wages and conditions. Of course they omit that one major reason that the waterfront remains uncompetitive is that much of the equipment used is obsolete. The bosses have no intention in investing in modern cranes and computer equipment. What they do intend is that workers should work harder for less. They also want their collective organisation which defends wages and conditions abolished.

The MUA is significant for the working class not merely because of its strategic location but because of its militancy and internationalist tradition. The MUA have given exemplary solidarity with many struggles trade union and political throughout the world. They actively assisted the independence movement in Indonesia. They black banned shipping and goods which assisted the imperialist war effort against Vietnam. They assisted the people of East Timor and Bougainville. They have acted in solidarity with unionists in Fiji. Recently they sponsored a ship full of medicines clothing and other goods desperately needed by the people of Bougainville suffering from an Australian enforced blockade. These are just a few examples.

Whilst they have acted in solidarity with workers internationally, politically they are not consistently internationalist. They support a nationalist struggle in Australia and 'act in solidarity' with nationalist struggles overseas. One of the placards at Port Botany reads MUA Maintaining Unity with Australia. Supporting national interest is fatal for class struggle. However, even their inconsistent internationalism is strongly opposed by the Australian capitalist class. They want to stamp out any internationalist tradition within the working class whatsoever. Trotskyists want to take internationalism even further so there is a united working class fighting capitalism internationally. The MUA do deserve some credit for getting international support for this struggle. Workers in Japan, Philippines the USA ,Britain and New Zealand are very well aware of what the MUA has done — and have come to the party actively supporting the MUA. This solidarity is an important weapon in the struggle against Patricks who have to contend with black bans — internationally.

The MUA has been accused of being “unproductive”. Part of their argument is based on lies. Wharfies only get \$70,000 per year by working massive overtime. \$35,000 is the base wage for a thirty five hour week. However we the working class have no interest whatsoever in tailoring our production rate nor wages and conditions to productivity. “Productivity” is the term bosses use to determine how hard workers should work for their profits. As the rate of profit falls, a higher productivity is required. Therefore workers are forced to work harder for less. In no way are workers responsible for the crisis of capitalism . Yet through “increased productivity” we are forced to pay. Unfortunately the leaders of the MUA buy into bosses arguments.

MUA leader Coombes (on radio 2GB) prides himself and his union on their commitment to productivity. He tells the public that think to his leadership productivity has increased and workers laid off. According to an MUA leaflet Waterfront Crisis. Watershed for Australian Democracy. (Authorised Vic Slater)

“In 1991 ,there were 5,800 stevedoring workers in five major container ports. In that year they shifted 1,273,836 20-foot containers or 219.6 per worker’.

“In 1997, there were 2,700 stevedoring workers in the five major container ports or 762.9 containers per worker”“This is an improvement of 247%

Here the union is gloating about how much it has cooperated — making working people pay for the crisis of capitalism. It is a massive crime that three thousand jobs have been allowed to go down the drain when there are over one million out of work. Yet workers have a leadership which is proud that so many workers have lost their jobs! They are also proud that the remainder of the workforce have had to work harder.

It has been argued that wharfies are rich earning \$70,000 per year, This is part of the bosses slander campaign. How they earn \$70,000 is by doing overtime. The bosses instead of employing more workers have preferred sacking workers and forcing overtime onto the remainder. Losing your Saturdays and Sundays is no fun even if you are highly paid. This situation is a reflection on the leadership. A shorter working week is an urgent demand to force the bosses to employ more workers. This should not be eaten up by overtime.

Communist Left supports workers control of the production line. The rate of production should be determined by what is in our interest and not by what is profitable for capitalism. Productivity and “workplace efficiency” are bosses euphemisms for increasing the exploitation of workers to force them to pay for the crisis of capitalism. They want workers to work harder for less to place the burden of the crisis onto the backs of working people. Workers actually do the work so we should determine what a satisfactory work rate is. Not them!! Mr. Corrigan of Patricks has just made a couple of million dollars in investment thanks to his sacking wharfies. He did not earn this extra profit.. If you play their game by arguing for wages and work rates in terms of what is profitable, you end up joining the bosses in making working people pay. The MUA has admitted that some wharfies will have to be sacked. This is treachery. But it is treachery caused by their loyalty to capitalist laws of profitability.

The bureaucrats have consciously rejected any struggle to smash the Workplace Relations Act. Such a struggle, they argue would divert from the immediate struggle which would be lost . This sort of attitude is suicide. If the Act were smashed it would be a gain for all workers. Bureaucrats have refused to lobby for effective solidarity because of this Act which means secondary boycotts are illegal. Smashing the Act would help winning support and overcoming the wharfies relative isolation as other workers would realise that the wharfies are fighting for all.

At a Socialist Alternative organised fund-raiser an MUA spokesman made clear his union’s objectives. He urged all to campaign for a “more union friendly government”. He meant the Labor Party. His guarded language was deliberate. He knew that there were many in the audience who understandable and correctly hated Labor for its betrayals and union smashing. This showed the total bankruptcy of the MUA bureaucracy. . It is still a long time before the next election. Meanwhile the union could be smashed. There is also no guarantee that Labor would win the next election. Labor is required by the ruling class if it is required to head off class struggle. Labor is certainly less likely to be elected if the unions play dead. However there is no guarantee that Labor would actually repeal the Act if elected. Whitlam did not repeal the Penal Clauses and Hawke did not repeal Fraser’s antiunion legislation.

Mr. Beazley has been a supporter of the pickets. He claims to be and is a supporter of ‘waterfront reform”. What he means is that he would prefer the smashing of wharfies hard won gains by consensus as opposed to confrontation. This is not to say that Labor is incapable of using troops or brute force. In did just that against striking pilots. They also used brute force against the BLF. However Labor’s preferred method is consensus, Labor wants workers to part with their hard fought for wages and conditions by agreement.

Hawke and Keating went as far as possible in forcing down wages and attacking conditions — whilst still maintaining the existence of unions. For the Liberals and the bosses, the very existence of unions defending any rights at all is a barrier to resolve the economic crisis at the boss’s expense.

Under Hawke and Keating, the Accord was supposed to be a strategic gain in decision making. Unions now had “real power “to intervene in government and the economy”. What the Accord actually did was to make unions redundant. In theory unions gave up wages and conditions for the sake of “social gains” (meaning very minor reforms which most reformist governments would grant anyway). In reality these “gains” didn’t eventuate and unions appeared redundant as they had sold out their basic function of improving wages and conditions. The Hawke Government was party to massive sackings Under Hawke with union “agreement” there was a massive redistribution of wealth — from poor to rich.

Howard was elected on a programme of union smashing. He therefore has a vested interest in victory. In fact if he is unable to achieve victory, his government will fall. Since the beginning of the dispute Howard’s popularity has fallen by six percent This support has gone to Labor. It is possible that Patricks and therefore Howard might lose. But this loss would only be temporary. There is plenty in the ruling class ‘arsenal to deal with rogue unions. Howard may a bit offside by MUA intransigence. But the MUA is totally unprepared for an offensive by capitalist state power.

Howard thought he could win easily. He thought that by getting court orders the picket lines would go away. They haven’t. But ruling class inefficiency is a matter of good luck (from the point of view of the MUA rather than good management. Next time the ruling class will get their act together. Their legislation will be tighter and they will have their state forces better prepared. As long as the MUA remains isolated or with limited support, then the road to defeat is certain. As long as the MUA leadership has faith in the law then the road to defeat will be certain also.

The decisive question is leadership. As long as the struggle remains a limited trade union struggle tied to bourgeois legality then defeat is certain. But if it can be linked to a revolutionary programme to challenge the whole of the capitalist system then victory is not merely possible, Communist leadership must be built within the MUA as a matter of urgency.

Most of the far left in Australia are tailing behind the MUA leadership. This includes the Communist Party, Democratic Socialist Party, and Socialist Alternative. International Socialist Organisation at least attack faith in the courts and instead urges reliance on picketing. They offer though no way forward to fight the system.

One left organisation, The Socialist Equality Party was forced off the Port Botany picket. Communist Left opposes bureaucratic exclusions totally. Only bureaucrats have anything to fear from left criticisms. However, this organisation has been exposed by the dispute. For the SEP trade unions today are part of the capitalist state which cannot be captured by revolutionaries. Workers are very well aware of the consequences of deunionisation and how the union is a barrier to the bosses continued pursuit of profitability. The SEP does have some basis for their views. The leadership of the union movement has been thoroughly and utterly treacherous. The MUA (for example) is cooperating in the boss’s offensive. But the way forward is for communists to fight for leadership. Of course in doing so we will transcend trade unionism. But effectively the SEP position leads them to abstain when the working class is under attack. Trade unions have their limitations. They only fight for a section of the working class for limited and partial demands. But they still play some role in at least maintaining and sometimes improving the wages and conditions of the working class. A defeat for the MUA, even under its existing leadership, will have serious consequences for the whole of the working class, It will pave the way for all working class organisation to be smashed

It is very important that the rank and file take over their struggle. An urgent task is the formation of wharf committees democratically controlled. All official should be accountable to rank and file control and right of recall.

It is extremely urgent that solidarity be developed— irrespective of whether or not it is against the Workplace Relations Act. The wharfies fight has received massive support from rank and file workers — in virtually every industry. Support must be developed into action. At Port Botany there are many placards expressing solidarity. They come from mineworkers, teachers, migrant organisation, public servants and others. There are also banners from political organisations. But rarely has there been a mass presence from other unions. The pickets must be strengthened, The struggle must spread.

Many unionists and unions want to support the MUA and are waiting to be called into action. But no call is forthcoming. The legalism of the MUA, respecting the Workplace Relations Act has seriously weakened the struggle. We suggest that unions don't wait but take action now! The bosses attempt to get a blanket order against all picketers failed. And the MUA cannot be held responsible for other taking action off their own steam. Pickets should continue as long as workers are out the gate.

FOR WHARF COMMITTEES TO RUN THE STRUGGLE! Tactics such as attitude to the police and dealing with scabs must not be imposed from above but voted on by the rank and file who must have direct input into the running of the strike. Of course there must be unity in action. But the unity must be determined by decisions that are democratic. Committees of action should be organised throughout the working class to organise action.

NOT ONE WORKER OUT THE GATE! NO DEALS WITH THE BOSS ON PRODUCTIVITY OR WORKPLACE REFORM FOR WORKERS CONTROL OF PRODUCTION! The leadership's offers to cooperate in making the waterfront competitive should be condemned by every worker. We must not sacrifice for their crisis. Workers do the work. Therefore we should dictate the work rate on our terms

SMASH THE WORKPLACE RELATIONS ACT!

This Act makes solidarity illegal. This strike cannot be won without solidarity. By taking up the issue of the Act, wharfies show that they are fighting for the whole of the class and not just themselves.

NO FAITH IN THE CAPITALIST LEGAL FRAMEWORK The bureaucrat's faith in the law and in parliamentarism has seriously hampered the struggle and the organising of solidarity. This faith stems from their politics — reformism and Stalinism. They pin their hopes on the election of Labor. They offer to cooperate in making workers pay for the crisis of the system. This is criminal!

EXTEND THE STRUGGLE! PREPARE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE! It's time Howard learned to feel the power of our class. Communist Left supports a national stoppage as long as it is the prelude for further action.

ORGANISE TO FIGHT THE STATE! Make no mistake! Howard is preparing the capitalist state to fight the wharfies. In some areas wharfies have had cooperation from rank and file coppers. Don't count on this lasting! Even if it were there are plenty of other weapons at Howard's disposal. He could bring in the army! A general strike poses the question of power. This must be resolved by force. We must be prepared for revolutionary force. However Howard will also use the state to fight localised pickets! Proclamations of legality will not stop Howard. They will only expose our weakness.

EXPROPRIATE PATRICKS AND MARITIME BOSSES. SMASH THEM BEFORE SMASH US! Expropriation differs from nationalisation in that it is based on the direct action of workers instead of the bourgeois state.

FOR A SHORTER WORKING WEEK WITH WAGE RISES UNTIL ALL WHARFIES ARE EMPLOYED.

The situation where wharfies are forced to do so much overtime is criminal! If the bosses refuse to employ they should be taken over!

FOR CONSISTENT INTERNATIONALISM! UNITED ACTION FOR SEAMEN AND WHARFIES INTERNATIONALLY. Some of the actions of seamen and wharfies have been exemplary. This includes international solidarity with this struggle. However the theory of socialism in one country permeates their leadership Internationalism is often seen as solidarity with each other's national struggle. In this struggle one of the leaderships slogans MUA Maintaining unity with Australia. Workers have no interest in uniting with Australia. Communist internationalism means a united working class struggle against the bosses internationally. It does not merely mean backing each other's national struggle. It means transcending it.

FOR COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP OF THE MUA.

Wharfies require a leadership which will organise to confront the Howard Government and the capitalist state

— because Howard and the bosses are preparing to confront us! Even if workers were to win the immediate battle Howard and Reith will fight until unionism is smashed on the waterfront and elsewhere. Communist leadership means no surrendering of workers interests to the bosses drive for profitability. We must not take responsibility for their crisis. If we do, we pay!

BRING DOWN THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT! FOR A WORKERS AND SMALL FARMERS GOVERNMENT!

Workers and exploited must govern and abolish the profit system. We do not need another parliamentary government but political power in our hands!

COMMUNIST LEFT IS COMMITTED TO BUILDING A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY TO BREAK WORKERS

FROM THE LEGAL CAPITALIST STRAIGHTJACKET, CHALLENGE THE LABOR PARTY

AND UNITE WORKERS AND OPPRESSED AROUND A PROGRAMME FOR POWER!

Pauline Hanson surging ahead in Queensland

Pauline Hanson hasn't been in the news much recently., Nationally public opinion polls record her support as dropping (at least in terms of electoral support). She hasn't recently come up with anything newsworthy or controversial as of late. So many seem to think that her star is waning. It may surprise many (including on the left) that in the forthcoming Queensland State Election her for right wing One Nation party could pick up at least three (possibly seven) seats if independent separate surveys by the Courier Mail and the Labor Party are accurate.

Labor expects to lose the seat of Hervey Bay. According to their poll One Nation has at least thirty three percent support there. This is convincingly a ahead of both Labor and the Nationals. Their

research also predicts that the Nationals could lose up to six seats (including Barambah and Gympie) and the Liberals one. These are all three cornered contests. Preferences could go anywhere. And there could be a swing back before the actual polling day. But one conclusion can be clearly drawn. The fascistic One Nation has at least the potential for mass support in Queensland.

Queensland is currently ruled by the National Party. The Liberals are very much the junior coalition partner in the coalition. With the exception of a few years in the early nineties, Nationals have ruled Queensland since the fifties. Queensland is dominated by international finance capital. Its economy is oriented towards the export of rural and mining produce. The Nationals cemented a very strong alliance between multinational capital and small farmers. This alliance meant that Queensland has been the hotbed of reaction. Queensland has been the vanguard in the boss's union bashing offensive. Queensland has been extremely racist and been the vanguard of the attacks on democratic rights — especially against the left.

Joh Bjelke-Petersen who led the Nationals was very efficient when it came to attacking unionists, the left and Blacks. But he was not particularly economic rationalist. It took a massive corruption scandal to get Labor in office. Labor led by Goss was elected in December 1989. It was Goss who led the economic rationalist offensive. This offensive has been continued by Borbidge Nationals. It has put off-side many small farmers who suffered severely from attacks on health education and transport for country areas

The issue of racism has split the Nationals. When Hanson put it squarely on the national agenda she was opposed by Borbidge who realised that Queensland's economic future lay with Asia. Small farmers are both extremely racist and have been hit hard by the economic rationalist offensive. In the Queensland countryside and in small country towns there has been the closing of schools, hospitals and railway services. Farmers have been skilfully co-opted by One Nation who support their racism and can claim the mantle of opposition to economic rationalism. Labor started the offensive. The left is nowhere to be seen.

It would not be surprising if her efforts didn't bear fruit these elections. We think that the polls could well be right and One Nation could pick up a swag of seats in rural Queensland. There is no indication of a swing in the city.

All this has, of course, pretty dire consequences. The Nationals will be under more pressure to adopt Hansonite policies. This means; more police repression especially against Black people and young people. It will mean vicious antiunion laws. It will promote racism both within and outside parliament. More dangerous than their reactionary role in parliament will be the fascist's capacity to build a movement outside it. We must stop the movement now — in Queensland. All right wing repression of any sort must be opposed with workers action. interstate solidarity is urgent! We must fight to free the victims of extreme right and/or state repression. But don't think that her offensive is merely confined to Queensland or other redneck areas. Through success in Queensland, One Nation can show their seriousness to right wingers throughout Australia. The worst mistake the left can make is to assume that One Nations support will remain confined to Queensland. There is a possibility of fascism spreading throughout Australia — if we let it.

Pol Pot a malignant product of stalinism

Pol Pot is dead. He will be missed by few. He will be remembered as one of the most murderous tyrants of the twentieth century. We too will remember him as a tyrant. But unlike those whose analysis is mere demonology, we see the roots of his murderous behaviours as coming from a political tendency— stalinism. Pol Pot took stalinism to its most murderous logical conclusion.

Pol Pot was leader of the Kampuchean Communist Party. Of course this party adhered to the Stalinist dictum of socialism in one country. Of course the Vietnamese also adhered to “socialism in one country”. Much of Pol Pots ruthlessness concerned rivalry between Vietnamese and Kampuchean Stalinists. They both put “national interest” before the revolutions of their immediate Indochinese neighbours.

Vietnam is guilty of accentuating Kampuchean nationalism. Pol Pot and cronies were not even invited to the Geneva Conference where both US and Vietnam agreed that Prince Sihanouk should be head of state — for Kampuchea (then Cambodia). Sihanouk proceeded to kill and jail tens of thousands of Kampuchean Stalinists.

The US installed Lon Nol as leader of Cambodia in a military coup. This united Pol Pot and Sihanouk in a united opposition. This united popular front FUNK united virtually the whole of the Kampuchean population from the king to the lowest pauper FUNK was committed to liberate Kampuchea from the imperialist puppets and establish a capitalist nationalist Kampuchea. FUNK was also committed to reclaim territory which thanks to boundaries drawn up by the French was part of Vietnam but claimed by Kampuchea. This included the uninhabited Phuc Quo Island.

The Paris Agreement permitted the US to bomb Cambodia. This it did. And of course this stimulated the national liberation struggle and discredited Lon Nol. Within FUNK the Stalinists were gaining authority.

In 1975 both the national liberation movements of Vietnam and Kampuchea were victorious. Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge became the dominant force within the Khmer rouge. Pol Pot certainly went beyond the programme of FUNK although he had no mandate for his expropriations. He even went as far as abolishing money. The Kampucheans pursued their efforts to win back the border areas. No negotiations were held. Pol Pot murdered those Stalinists fractionally aligned to Vietnam.

The victims in the killing fields include, the counterrevolutionaries who Pol Pot overthrew. It includes bourgeois forces (previous allies) that he disapproved of, those who were pro-Vietnam. It includes those who died of hunger due to shortage of food. These shortages were accentuated by bureaucracy. It also includes the working class — victims of Pol Pot's anti-proletarian strategy.

Pol Pot like all Maoists base their “people's war” strategy not on mobilising the working class to take power but on the peasantry. They perpetuate the privileges peasants have (as they own land) and their hostility towards the proletariat. In Kampuchea. Pol Pot did not believe in cities so he depopulated. This meant the blood of working people to a greater and more grotesque extent than ever before by Stalinists. Of course, in Vietnam, China and elsewhere there were strong and savage anti-proletarian acts due to Stalinists promoting peasant privilege. Pol Pot merely drew out the logic and virtually exterminated the whole of the Kampuchean proletariat.

We hope that the lesson drawn is not just that Pol Pot is a genocidal butcher, but that this is a potential logical consequence of stalinism under certain extreme objective conditions. The attempts

to demonise P01 Pot personally are often attempts to let stalinism off the hook by scapegoating someone who was certainly a guilty participant. Irrespective of his personal bloody ambitions P01 Pot would not have been allowed to get away with this mass murder of millions had it not been for the Stalinist degeneration of the Kampuchean revolution.

General Strike in Bolivia.

Communist Left is reproducing the following information because it is extremely important that workers understand the situation in Bolivia. Firstly, our solidarity could be decisive in saving the lives of political prisoners or even in assisting the working class to win the struggle. But also because an understanding of the World assists our struggle here in Australia. The ruling class consistently tell us (or try to) that the revolution is over and that we live in a new post class society where we are all individuals. Class struggle is supposed to be dead. Bolivia proves very much the contrary. And a victory there could spark revolutionary struggles throughout Latin America and hopefully throughout the World. There is no mention of programme in the article . Communist Left believes that such a programme and leadership is decisive for victory. Whilst we salute the heroism of the fighters, we do not necessarily endorse their politics. The following is a reprint of a leaflet by the Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee (London).

SUPPORT THE BOLIVIAN GENERAL STRIKE!

Since April 1st the Bolivian Trade Union Congress (COB) has declared a national and indefinite general strike. Bolivia is ruled by the new government presided by Ex-General Hugo Banzer. He was the man that made the coup that smashed the People's Assembly in 1971 and established a seven-year bloodiest dictatorship, a model which was immediately copied by Pinochet and the Uruguayan and Argentinean juntas.

The Bolivian workers and peasants are fighting for better wages. Currently a Bolivian worker or teacher is only earning £30 (\$50) not per day or per week 0 but per month! With that amount of money it is impossible for a family to pay for half a week for the most elementary subsistence goods. However, the majority of the Bolivians are unwaged! There is no social security or welfare state. The government is privatising the few sectors (like education, health or petrol stations) which are in public hands.

Bolivia is South America's poorest and less literate country. Nevertheless, the government is heavily attacking the teachers and cutting the education budget. Currently there are more than 100 trade union prisoners. There is no information about where they are located for around half of them. Just like during the dictatorships. More than one hundred peasants and workers were injured with bullets or other military weapons. Twelve civilians (including one child) have been killed.

The Chapare, located in Cochabamba (Bolivia's granary and heart), is under military rule and curfew. Every hour military planes fly over the rural communities with the aim to terrorize them. The government is proud to declare that at least 90% of the country's roads are under direct police or army control. The government didn't respect the parliamentary immunity. They have arrested a United left MP and are threatening to put in jail Evo Morales, a peasant MP who is leading the Chapare union and struggle.

Banzer is threatening to suspend the constitution's guarantees and to impose a state of emergency. This would be the fifth one declared since the introduction of the neo-liberal model in 1985.

In the past Banzer persecuted the unions under the accusations that they were "reds". Today he is making a more fashionable accusation: that they are drug-dealers. That is because the peasants are against the violent eradication of the coca leaf. This crop had been cultivated for many centuries, is used for religious reasons and has very good medical and nutritional qualities. Like the potatoes can be used to produce vodka, several kilos of coca could be mix with modern chemicals to produce few grams of cocaine. However, it is imperialism and the big businesses that produces and distributes cocaine, not the impoverished and persecuted peasants.

In fact, it has been completely proved that all the parties that are in the government and the military are totally involved with drug Mafiosi. The USA for his links with a well-known Bolivian Drug Tsar accuses Paz Lamora, 13ollvian former president (193) and the most important Banzer's partner.

We are calling all democrats and trade unionists:

- * To support the Bolivian general strike.

- * To demand the immediate freedom of all the trade union

prisoners and the case of any persecution against Left MPs and other trade unionists.

- * To demand the withdrawal of the military from the roads and the cities; and of the US troops (DEA) from Bolivia.

- * To demand the immediate freedom of all the trade union

prisoners and the case of any persecution against Left MP5 and other trade unionists.

- * To demand the withdrawal of the military

from the roads and the cities; and of the US troops (DEA) from Bolivia.

- * To pronounce against the curfew in Chapare and the possible state of emergency in Bolivia.

- * To write letters in solidarity with the COB and in protest against the government.

- * To give financial support to the pro-strike funds.

- * To put forwards resolutions in their assemblies and unions asking for solidarity with the COB.

- * To participate in pickets and events in support of the Bolivian strikes.

Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee BCM 3213 London WC1N 3XX

Peace in Bougainville a sell-out to imperialism!

At the end of April, The BRA along with the PNG Government and the foreign ministers of Australia ratified an agreement which means peace for Bougainville. Under the agreement, the BRA disarm So do the other protagonists. Australian troops patrol Bougainville 'unarmed' to supervise the peace.

There is one strong voice of dissent. It comes from Francis Ona who has been a leading BRA leader. We join Ona in denouncing this Agreement. Bougainville is still part of PNG and patrolled by Australian troops. It will only be a matter of time before they can manoeuvre and allow CRA to mine again. PNG and Australia are “disarmed” but only in relation to Bougainville. We have heard claims that Australian troops patrolling there are in fact armed. But even if they are as in agreement, “unarmed” they have access to arms. It is now illegal under international law for Bougainville people to have, procure or make armaments in any form. And this is being enforced by Australia. Ona has every right to be angry about this situation. He is isolated and his supporters few. But we fully endorse his right to take up arms against Australian occupation troops. In Australia irrespective of ‘agreements” We must totally oppose Australian participation in any capacity what so ever. Communist Left urges industrial action against Australian intervention — including “peaceful’ intervention.

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