

bulletin of the Communist Left

CONTENTS

Indonesia; Habibie takes over

4 Class struggle in South Korea

5 MUA Victory at a price 6

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One Nation: surges ahead in Queensland!

After much negotiating with dubious and reactionary ‘independents’, Peter Beattie has finally formed a Labor government in Queensland. This government is hardly inspiring anyone. Beattie can be described as a colourless version of Wayne Goss though more tied to the labour bureaucracy. He is hardly an inspiration to workers. And whilst he has had friendly talks with business, they would prefer the Nationals. He is, of course, fully committed to the boss’s pursuit of lower wages and public sector cut backs. Business would prefer the Nationals but in no way do they find Beattie-Labor a hindrance.

Attention however has not been on Labor winning (nor Nationals losing) but on the success of the fascist backed One Nation whose national figurehead is Pauline Hanson. One Nation was far more successful than anyone predicted. Picking up twenty five percent of the vote state-wide and eleven seats must be considered a staggering result from this fledgling party which is barely two years old. One Nation can be described as a fascist backed broad front around reactionary demands. Fascism has well and truly developed a mass movement behind it in Queensland. This movement is spreading across the country. Fascism everywhere has the historic role — the physical smashing of the working class.

One Nation support is not even throughout the state. The seats they won were predominately in South Central Queensland Gympie and Maryborough going west through the Bible belt. This was previously the National’s strongest area. Barambah, formerly the electorate held by Joh Bjelke-Petersen, was won by One Nation with a primary vote of over forty percent.

In Brisbane, One Nation did not poll so well. There they only polled between ten and fifteen percent. Brisbane is the centre of liberal and leftwing thought. It has the strongest immigrant communities in Queensland (especially Asian). Antagonism to One Nation was also strong — and it was the Liberals who suffered. The Liberals put One Nation ahead of Labor on the preference list. This decision was strongly rebuked by the liberal antiracist community. As a result they now hold only one safe Brisbane seat and two others by the skin of their teeth. Indooroopilly (previously Liberal heartland) was held by a bare two hundred votes.

In Greenslopes, the Liberal candidate of Chinese descent was harassed by picketers with disgusting slogans “immigrants spread disease” etc. The Chinese community voted strongly against the Liberals.

John Howard backed the state Liberal decision to put One Nation ahead of Labor. This will rebound strongly against the Liberals nationally.

Many Chinese still remember Howard's racist comments against Labor of several years ago. Howard accused Labor of betraying Australia's white Australian heritage. Many forgave dismissing his comments as a mere mistake. There will be no forgiveness this time as it is clear that Howard was decisive in promoting One Nation as a political force. Howard has certainly earned revulsion from all Chinese Australians — including those of conservative beliefs.

The Liberals decision has been denounced by their own leaders. Jeff Kennett and Malcolm Fraser went as far as urging a Labor government (when who would govern was unclear) rather than a Coalition Government backed by One Nation. This opposition is based on their ties to imperialist capital. They realise that Australian capitalism requires foreign investment and the likely source of that investment is Asian. And if fascists are pulling the strings this investment is going to be discouraged... The Liberals are split between those who support a turn to Asian investment and those who want to pander to One Nation. Either way, Liberal candidates are running scared. It is very likely that rural Coalition candidates will be under threat in the country — from One Nation. So these candidates will be demanding concessions. However if they pander to One Nation they lose out in the liberal multicultural cities. Sydney and Melbourne are more multicultural oriented than Brisbane. Voters in the major capital cities will punish the Liberals even harder. Many marginal seats are at stake. Many will be lost. The Liberals are a party with nowhere to go.

Pauline Hanson personally is hardly an intellectual. However there certainly is no denying the cleverness of the One Nation campaign. She appealed to different people for different reasons. In Gympie her main appeal was her stand on guns. Fascists are very strong opponents of gun control. Elsewhere she appealed to those opposed to economic rationalism. Many Central Queensland towns and cities have suffered losing hospitals, schools and railway services in multinational capitals bid to cut government spending to the bone.

Some One Nation candidates spoke out against 'the multinationals' for One Nation backers League of Rights multinationals is a code word for "international Jewish conspiracy" Many small businessmen see their interests threatened by multinationals. However it is interesting that she is using the language of communism and getting a positive response. There is certainly an audience for extreme solutions. For those with economic or political privilege and with a chauvinist bias voting One Nation makes sense. Labor initiated the economic rationalist offensive. Nationals followed suit. So who is there left?

Elsewhere, One Nation polled on a programme of pure unadulterated racism. They varied in their thrust from attacking mainly Australian Blacks or concentrating on migrants. People voted for Pauline's party or various reasons only a minority (albeit significant) are full blooded fascists. But every One Nation voter, irrespective of motives, assists the rise of fascism in this country...

Many consider Pauline a product of backward Queensland. Often Queenslanders are made to feel inferior or politically backward by "superior southerners" Well Queensland played a key role in the foundation of the Australian Labor Party and had the first and only Communist elected to parliament. Fred Patterson Communist member for Bowen, rural Queensland, was elected by miners and canecutters. But he also won over small farmers. Queensland has had a strong and proud left-wing

tradition. The current right wing surge in that state is not due to some mate backwardness of Queenslanders but due to the balance of class forces and the failings of the left.

From the mid sixties to the late eighties Joh Bjelke-Petersen ruled Queensland. Queensland is a state dominated by multinational capital (as opposed to comprador) and is the most rural state in Australia. Only forty percent live in the capital Brisbane. Joh Bjelke-Petersen maintained power by cementing alliance between farmers and multinational capital — notably US and Japanese. Joh promoted the rampant takeover by multinationals of the Queensland economy. He was viciously antiunion. He supported strong state repression against Black people (in Queensland Murries) and the Left (he outlawed street protests). But he was not economic rationalist. While other states were cutting back, Queensland kept open branch railway lines.

Borbidge has broken the alliance between farmers and multinational capital. But farmers do not see labour as its ally. Farmers only support the working class when it acts strongly and decisively in its own interest. Goss Labor was totally submissive to multinational capital. Goss began the rationalist offensive which Borbidge continued. All this plus the discrediting of communism (through the failure of Stalinism) throws small farmers (and the middle class) into the hands of fascism. That is what is happening in Queensland and will continue throughout Australia.

Neither the Greens nor Democrats picked up significant support. The Democrats only polled well in formerly strong Liberal areas. Many who voted Liberal previously used them mainly as a protest — to send a message against their party without voting Labor.

Hanson is the soft public front of fascism. But the hard fascists like the Klan; National Action (etc) will be nurtured under her umbrella. In reality the soft fascists and hard fascists cooperate hand in glove. Fascists and extreme racists have been emboldened by her victories. Regularly there are reports of harassment against those of Asian descent.

Queensland has the best objective conditions for the promotion of fascism. But other states have the potential for the spread of fascism also. Throughout Western NSW there is a strong redneck right who would be very happy to push Koories into humpies in the desert. Rural Australia has been hurting. Farmers now have a right wing alternative which offers a clear alternative and is prepared to fight. This fight is both against the major parties and against the exploited and oppressed whom they scapegoat. Expect One Nation to pick up seats in Western NSW, New England, the Hunter (but not metropolitan Newcastle) rural South Australia and Western Australia. Victoria is the only state where at the moment her support is less than ten percent...

Hanson's support amongst the working class (except in rural towns) is not strong. However, she and her One Nation colleagues are no doubt working on how to change that situation. Beattie Labor will throw many workers into One Nations hands through reactionary policies. Workers have nowhere to go. Its time there was a serious alternative — a revolutionary alternative

Hansonism is on the rise due to the left being unable to put forward an alternative agenda. The left is tainted by the Accord or alternatively middle class protest politics. There is plenty of racism in Queensland — and throughout Australia. Whether Hanson can expand her base into the working class remains to be seen. The best guarantee that she cannot succeed is by rooting out racism — root and branch. Any concession to chauvinism will only assist her rise to power.

In the short term, the rise of Hanson will greatly assist Labor win the next Federal Election. Howard is now mr33% and is held responsible for promoting Hanson. But he is not sufficiently Hansonite for the Hansonites. His concessions only wet their appetite. if he makes concessions he will anger the bankers and capitalists who want a 'responsible economy" They seek a turn to Asia not out of any altruistic desire for internationalism but because her policies costing potentially billions of dollars both from tourism and other investment. Howard is now peddling backwards. A Beazley Government is on the immediate agenda. Beazley doesn't have to fight One Nation. All he has to do is point the finger at Howard for creating the monster. It may seem poetic justice that Howard, who promoted One Nation is politically killed by it. But fascism is a serious potentially mortal threat.

One Nation has already forced concessions on privatisation. The government has already been forced to retreat in their bid to privatise Telstra. Irrespective of the views of One Nation, privatisation must be opposed outright. The public sector provides health, education and telephones as a service. Under capitalism this service is totally inadequate and bureaucratic. However the private sector the only concern is profit. If the private sector doesn't make money, it simply dumps the service. Privatisation of telephones will mean a massive increase in telephone costs in the countryside. It is extremely expensive to cover the vast expanse that is Australia and still make money. Farmers are understandably concerned. One Nation is championing their interest. Liberals and Nationals are understandably scared of losing rural electorates. The government got cold feet over selling Telstra.

A Beazley Government will face the same pressures as Howard. There is significant pressure from bankers, the IMF etc for "economic responsibility". But to obey these dictates means losing support to One Nation. There are two alternatives to the economic rationalist offensive, One is communism. Communism fights the attacks on the public sector through the socialisation of the means of production. Fascism rejects public sector cutbacks because it believes in a strong state established by the smashing of the organised working class.

Of course the One Nation bandwagon might slip up. The party is new. There is no doubt many hidden factions within it. One Nation has many reactionary ideas. But, as yet, it is a long way from their implementation. David Oldfield's megalomania may cause internal dissent and division leading to splits. There has already been one major breakaway. In no way are we suggesting that the road for fascism is trouble free. But anyone who banks on internal division destroying the party is a fool. Fascism must be fought now. It must be totally obliterated.

Malcolm Fraser has called for a government of national unity aimed at isolating One Nation. This is more honourable than the members of his party who collaborate with the fascists. But beware! Talk of "national unity" on any level is a death trap for the working class. It ties us to the class enemy and shows that the working class is bankrupt and powerless. A submissive working class tied to the system only reinforces fascism as a "radical" alternative. Likewise popular fronts which appeal to humanity, bourgeois legality and argue that all classes and parties must unite "against fascism" tie workers to the class enemy and it's system.

A Beazley Government will not stop the One Nation offensive. The only guaranteed way of stopping her is a programme for direct working class action. The working class will only be taken seriously if it fights for power. we need a revolutionary workers and small farmer's government based on soviet power. Fascism can only be fought if farmers are won over to the revolutionary proletarian banner,

Demands such as the nationalisation of the land and the liquidation of all debts are important in cementing a revolutionary alliance. Fascism can only be fought we are consistently internationalist. There are no concessions to racism the self-determination of Black people and Torres Strait Islanders must be consistently fought for. Smash all immigration controls! Down with English language privilege! Equal rights for all languages spoken in Australia I Workers defence to fight all fascist attacks I

Indonesia: Habibie takes over

The spectre of revolution has been haunting Indonesia. Demonstrators have fought troops in the streets. Factories have been occupied. However there has been one major problem — the gulf between the desire of the masses (including the working class) to fight the state and the politics of the various vanguards. The situation has certainly been insurrectionary. There have been street battles against armed forces. But no revolutionary leadership has come to the forefront.

The gain from this has been the accession to power of B J Habibie. Habibie has had a reputation for being Suharto's lackey and incompetent. He is a member of Suharto's comprador bourgeois Golkar Party. He disassociates from some of the excesses of Suharto. But his family also has a massive business empire. Some of Suharto's excesses may be challenged, but the Habibie family will maintain or even expand their privileged position. With a few cosmetic changes, one elite has replaced another

So does the accession of Habibie mean anything? Well so far there have been a few changes. Recently seven members of the Suharto family have been removed from parliament. Indonesian workers recently received their first wage rise this year. It is well and truly needed. Inflation has been estimated to be about 54 percent! MacDonalds hamburger chain is having a rough time there. Twenty franchises have recently closed down. Why? Because one Big Mac costs the equivalent of two days pay! Unionists are angry and are demanding substantially more. We wish them all the best. Success will be achieved only if they have a leadership prepared to fight.

Habibie is also promising a regime which will be more in tune to the requirements of the IMF. Recently he won a struggle in the Golkar Party to achieve his objectives. This means that any gains from struggle promise to be very temporary indeed!. The IMF have Indonesia on rations. The wage rises gained today will be taken away — in the name of economic responsibility.

Habibie promises to curb the excesses of bureaucracy. The bureaucracy built up by the Suharto family will not be dismantled. Nor will they lose their bourgeois privileges. The IMF will demand some curbing. And Indonesian society will be less inclined to cooperate unless the ruling elite show by example. Some of the more outrageous acts of privilege and power may be challenged.

But when the heat is off, the Suharto privileged elite (which still pulls many of the strings) will go back to its billion dollar roting ways.

Indonesia is currently at war. It is fighting the people of East Timor and it is fighting the people of East Papua (Irian Jaya). Both of these nationalities have been invaded and declared to be part of Indonesia. against the will of the people. Irian Jaya (previously colonised by the Dutch) was declared to be part of Indonesia in the sixties. In December 1975, the Indonesian army invaded and occupied an independent East Timor which had enjoyed a mere one month of independence. Since then an

estimated two hundred thousand have been killed by the occupation. Fretilin have been fighting heroically.

Australia is one of the few countries which recognise Indonesia's claim to East Timor. Gough Whitlam as prime minister endorsed Indonesia's plans ten months before the occupation. He did not think an independent nation of Timor was viable. Indonesia invaded with Australian assistance and the military occupation has received the support of every Australian government (Labor or Liberal) since.

Indonesia is currently under pressure from Portugal (Timor's previous imperialist master) for some settlement. One thousand Indonesian troops have been pulled out from the island. In Australia Alexander Downer is licking his lips for some sort of Bougainville type solution. What the Bougainville type solution means is — selling out national self determination with a degree of honour. Ali Alatas has offered some sort of autonomous region status for East Timor. Nothing short of the fight to self-determination is a just solution. There is talk about some sort of "referendum regarding East Timor's status". It is doubtful whether the East Timorese people will be offered independence.

It is possible that Habibie might get so bogged down maintaining stability elsewhere that he might be forced to concede the East Timorese self-determination. We hope so! This will be achieved only if the East Timorese are prepared to struggle. There must be no collaboration with Habibie. In Irian Jaya, the war goes on. Twenty were injured on the island of Bijak when Indonesian troops opened fire with rubber bullets. This war is expected to continue.

Communist Left supports the right of self-determination for East Papua and East Timor. We support military victory to the bourgeois nationalist FRETILIN and OPM. Supporting their national rights is important in Australia. It is even more important for the movement in Indonesia. In Indonesia, the pseudo-revolutionary F'HU talks about unity with all forces prepared to fight Suharto. Rightly, they consider that the accession of Habibie does not mean the overthrow of that regime. But their aspiring unity partners (such as Megawati) do not support Timorese freedom. Unity with Megawati is treacherous on many grounds. "Forgetting" about East Timor is treacherous and can no way be compromised.

In Indonesia today, there is mass rioting by unemployed people. It has been estimated that at least twenty four percent of Indonesian workers are unemployed. Employed workers do not earn a living wage. Unemployed face the prospect of starvation. Of course Habibie is more concerned with IMF respectability than giving the unemployed even a bare subsistence. Therefore the riots of the unemployed will continue. What is required is a revolutionary programme uniting employed and unemployed workers to overthrow capitalism in Indonesia. Talking about unity between bourgeois opponents of Habibie can only mean selling out the unemployed and even the employed working class as the opponents of Habibie all support the austerity of capitalism.

There is a Muslim opposition which has been racist — particularly against Chinese. Revolutionaries must have nothing to do with Islamic fundamentalism which is reactionary on social questions such as the position of women. Any attempt to scapegoat Chinese must be ruthlessly opposed

The main opposition to the regime (in terms of numerical support is the PDI led by Megawati Sukarnoputri. Megawati is the daughter of former President Sukarno. Sukarno was the bourgeois nationalist father of independent Indonesia. He was overthrown by President Suharto. Sukarno's antagonism to the working class was shown by his regimes murder of millions of Chinese and communists (PKI). The PKI was totally "in unity" with Sukarno who appeared to play a progressive bourgeois role in establishing independence. The PKI learned a lesson in blood. Liquidating behind the banner of Megawati could have the same consequences. Recently Megawati had discussions with the Bishop of Diii Carlos Ximenes Belo. their joint statement called for political economic and legal reform". Megawati is a supporter of the IMF. Her aim is to give Indonesian bourgeois dictatorship a more democratic appearance.

In Indonesia, it is only the proletariat who can be consistently democratic —by being consistently revolutionary. Communist leadership is a matter of urgency. The lessons of Suharto must be learnt. Small farmers must be won to the banner of proletarian dictatorship not pandered to in some worker/farmer bourgeois bloc. Forward to the Indonesian proletarian revolution!

An Indonesian proletarian revolution will have tremendous repercussions internationally. It would certainly be a massive boost to socialist movements throughout South East Asia and South Pacific — and in Australia.

Class struggle in South Korea

Over the past month there have been mass working class rallies and strikes throughout South Korea. Trade unionists are angry. Once they were offered permanent employment. Now they are threatened with being thrown on the scrapheap. South Korea, once proud of its capitalist success as an Asian tiger is going down the drain. South Korea is on rations to the IMF. The IMF is demanding "reform". This means mass unemployment and austerity. Workers are fighting for their survival. With no adequate social security system, workers are faced with not even having a bare subsistence. Dishing out the IMF medicine is the "democratic" government of Kim Dae Jung.

The working class of South Korea have shown that they are not going to take this lying down. On July fifteen there began a three day almost general strike against threatened layoffs. Attention was focussed on the Hyundai motor company where 2,678 workers are threatened. However not merely Hyundai was closed by strike action, also taking to the streets were metal workers and employees of government owned Korean Telecom. Workers in all industries understand that the Hyundai sackings are the beginning of a "restructuring campaign" which means sackings throughout the workforce. That is why they strike and rally in solidarity.

For the government as expressed by the Minister for Finance and Economy Lee Kyu Sung, these strikes are illegal and his government will "strongly punish those who organise strikes". This is because "strikes will only delay the countries restructuring efforts" Workers in South Korea have no interest in maintaining the government's restructuring efforts, at all. In fact they should bring down this government of austerity.

A revolutionary programme is required for victory. The leadership of the Korean workers movement is not revolutionary. But it is clear that they do not have the disease of Accord. They refuse to take responsibility for the crisis of capitalism and pay with the destruction of their living standards. In

Australia, we have every interest in encouraging their victory which would be a boost for class struggle internationally.

MUA: Victory at a price

For three months, workers picketed Patricks Stevedores throughout Australia. The MUA was here to stay was their message. They were backed by every class conscious worker who saw what the consequences of a defeat would mean — the effective destruction of the Award system. The waterfront was a decisive battle. A boss's victory would mean a green light for the total smashing of all unions. It would be very simple. All the bosses would have to do would be to lock unionists out.

There has been much restructuring of the economy — away from manufacturing towards resource industries and tourism. Of course wharfies are decisive in their restructuring schema. Shipping is required to export rural produce and minerals. Wharfies are responsible to do the labouring required to put produce and minerals aboard shipping. The lower wharfies are paid and the more basic conditions are whittled away, the more competitive Australian exports. Australian bosses have a direct interest in smashing wharfies trade union organisation. The mere existence of organisations for collective action constitutes a 'restrictive trade practice' and "monopoly on the waterfront".

Over the past thirteen years the bosses have had many union smashing successes. Neither the bosses nor the Liberal government expected the intransigence of the wharfies. Their pickets were honoured by transport workers and began to hurt. In court the MUA won decisive legal battles. Patricks certainly got more than they bargained for in terms of opposition. So too did the Howard government who banked on Patricks doing their dirty work. Both Labor and Liberal are committed to driving down workers wages and conditions. For Labor the strategy has been to get the consent of workers through their bureaucrats (though they have been prepared to physically smash unions who don't cooperate). For the Liberals outright union smashing is the method. The bosses were on the whole pleased with Labor's efforts over thirteen years. However, Labor could only go so far as they believe in the physical existence of unions (albeit tame cat ones). The bosses decided it was time for the Liberal approach. Their failure to fight successfully "restrictive work practices on the waterfront" (meaning unions) has seriously jeopardised bosses faith in Howard.

Well it appears that the unions have won. Patricks have agreed to a closed shop "union monopoly". They have reinstated union members. They have sacked the scabs. So far so good. But the problem is the price of victory. The MUA has also agreed to cooperate with increased waterfront efficiency. This means that six hundred wharfies will lose their jobs. it also means that the working week will be based on a forty hour week instead of a thirty five hour week.

There are also other aspects of "workplace reform" in the agreement. One person will be now operating a crane instead of three people who would previously operate the same crane. What if you have to go to the toilet? Also workers will have to work four hours at a time in their somewhat antiquated forklifts. These do not have sufficient leg room and workers will be forced to endure cramping.

So the workers have won the right to have their union. And those sacked merely for being union members have been reinstated. But the cost of victory has been considerable. Six hundred workers out the gate should be of serious concern. There is at the moment more than eight hundred

thousand unemployed. Workers should be demanding that more be employed instead of allowing workers to be thrown out the gate in the name of “efficiency”. Those who remain will have to work harder and endure harsher working conditions. They will have to do more overtime. The fewer workers on the waterfront, the weaker the union and the more vulnerable workers are to further attacks.

Wharfies wages used to be based on a thirty five hour week. This was a bit of a farce as wharfies were also forced to do heaps of overtime. There has been plenty of boss’s propaganda about wealthy wharfies earning seventy thousand dollars a year. But they only get it doing overtime — working a fifty hour week or even longer. And they are forced to work this overtime by bosses who refuse to employ more workers. There is talk of “inefficiency”. Part of the reason is the antiquated equipment which often hasn’t been renewed for decades.

A shorter working week with wage rises is an important demand for the waterfront. The shorter the working week, the more who can be employed. This strengthens the organisation of workers on the shop floor. The stronger the workforce, the more the balance of force is on the workers side. Workers can enforce other demands. Of course this demand is also important as it gives workers more leisure time.

The MUA are claiming victory as workers still have the right to their union. Patricks have to pay all of the legal costs and wages for the time unionists spent out the gate. But they are pleased about the extra millions of profit this reform will give them. They are claiming victory.

The losers from the dispute are the Howard government (who wanted waterfront unionism totally smashed) and unfortunately wharfies who will pay when their union cooperates with the demands of boss’s productivity. The reformist and stalinist leadership of the MUA tie workers to the bosses system and make them pay for the boss’s crisis of profitability.

For the government as expressed by Minister for Finance and Economy Lee Kyu Sung these strikes are illegal and his government will strongly punish those who organise strike. This is because strikes “will only delay the countries restructuring efforts’. Workers in South Korea have no interest in maintaining the governments restructuring efforts at all. In fact they should bring down this government of austerity.

A revolutionary programme is required for victory. And the leadership of the Korean workers is not revolutionary. But it is clear that they do not have the disease of Accord. They refuse to take responsibility for the crisis of capitalism and pay by the destruction of their living standards. In Australia we have every interest in encouraging their victory. Their victory would be a major boost to class struggle internationally.