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Contents

2 Land expropriations in Zimbabwe.

3 Building trade unions shorter working week

treachery. in Victoria and NSW.

5 George Petersen 1921 — 2000

6 Mandatory sentencing. Blatant racism versus

political correctness..

7 Columbia: stop the killing of trade unionists

8 Mitsubishi threaten mass sackings

Seattle and Washington. Rage against the machine!

The events in Seattle not only made spectacular television viewing. They showed that there was militant opposition to the agenda of the International Monetary Fund and the role of international finance capital — especially in the third world. It also allowed the record of International imperialist agencies to be put under a degree of public scrutiny. After all even bourgeois news agencies were interested in why the protesters were there.

Seattle saw violent conflict. The organisers in Washington wanted their protest to be nonviolent. This was challenged by the more militant anarchists. According to a speaker (at Melbourne May Stock Exchange protest) present in Seattle, nonviolent protesters have shouted “shame “when militant protesters wanted violent conflict. Anyhow, there was some and conference organisers certainly faced disruption. Revolutionaries reject nonviolence. Our criticism with the direct action supporters is that they don’t have enough force — to fight the system properly. To think that a relatively small amount of punks can take on a highly armed and trained police and army without being defeated and smashed possibly brutally is folly.

In Seattle the organised labour movement was indeed present. The mass march of 20,000 bypassed the centre of Seattle by several blocks. The AFL/CIO is indeed “anti World Trade Organisation” Because they are protectionist proAmerica. Protectionist national chauvinism is not the alternative to multinational capital we want. On the contrary, it is a reactionary alternative. Whilst the trade union bureaucracy is clear about their reactionary nationalism, many of the demonstrators vacillated between opposing multinational capital on a nationalist basis or alternatively a proletarian internationalist perspective. Amongst the demonstrators there were genuine sentiments for class struggle unity with workers of the Third World colonised countries. It is because of the reactionary politics of the AFL/CIO that these sentiments exist outside the working class amongst lumpen and petty bourgeois anarchist activist activists.

These activists see the conservatism and chauvinism of workers led by the labour bureaucracy They see injustice and want action now!. Even in Australia with its stronger traditions it has been a long time

since the trade union bureaucracy took a stand for proletarian internationalism. Well they did to a degree on Timor. But only when support for Timor became compatible with bourgeois public opinion.

Basically when the imperialists rip off the Third World colonial countries, unions either don't take a stand or, worse still, are party to the rip-off. In Australia through their chauvinist campaigns to "keep industry in Australia" unions have counterposed the jobs of Australians to the jobs of workers in Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere. In this way they have played the bosses game. and as a consequence they have sacrificed wages jobs working hours and conditions "for the good of Australia". In their bulletin "The Metalworker" AMWU leaders boast about how they have stood up for Australian bosses.

Unionism like this plays into the hands of international finance capital as it seeks to divide workers along national lines and fatten the labour aristocracy at the expense of workers elsewhere. There is nothing anti-imperialist about AMWU nationalism.

Meanwhile the anarchist left will keep up the action and continue to disregard the working class. They will continue to tackle the high profile symbols of imperialism — but not organise to fight imperialism itself. They will target the IMF, the World Bank and MacDonalds.

On May First in London their target was MacDonalds. This notorious company successfully sued the green/anarchist group London Greenpeace. Of course it is pretty disgusting that a mighty financial conglomerate should sue poor activists whose only outlet for their views is a humble leaflet. The problem with their leaflet which said some correct and nasty things about that odious company is that it drew no link between the behaviour of that company as the logic of system itself. It would be easy to conclude from that leaflet that the malignant practices of MacDonalds were merely a blot on a reasonably decent system which could be altered by abolishing the big bad MacDonalds and/or other bad capitalists. Targeting a particular capitalist is valid if the link is made between their practices as the logical of the system.

MacDonalds is also a popular target because its products are made of meat. Communist Left fully supports people eating meat and the testing of animals. Animal Liberation is not a progressive cause but is reactionary. It is against the whole progress of human social development.

The feral anarchist anti IMF movement is now international. In London, Sydney and Melbourne, they all marched on the real May Day, May 1. In Sydney they were greeted with state repression. No doubt the forces of repression wanted to get in early before something big develops.

In Sydney they have formed a front called CACTUS. Thanks to Lee Rhiannon Green member of the NSW Legislative Council, they have formed an alliance with the building union CMFEU. Recognising the union movement is a big step forward for some anarchists especially of the punk and feral variety. However proletarian internationalism means that working people lead and not follow. The CMFEU is tailing the anarcho- punk green movement, claiming internationalist credentials not on the basis of their own actions but those of the feral green anarchists.

The trade union movement will show that it is an internationalist force when it acts — in solidarity with workers of colonial countries. When workers in Bolivia, Columbia, the Philippines, Southern Africa, the Pacific and elsewhere are striking for decent wages, job permanency for union rights against repression (etc) they must be backed up by action — from unionists in Australia and

imperialist countries. It is in this way that we can stop the bosses playing us off along national lines. Creating such union movement means challenging the chauvinist politics which dominate the current labour movement. This is a slow process and too slow for our action oriented anarchists with their high profile media stunts.

The point is not to protest, angrily, peacefully or otherwise. The point is to fight the system of exploitation and imperialist domination of the colonialisised “third world” countries. The only force which has both the interest and capacity to smash this reactionary system of rip-off is the working class. Revolutionary communists must build such a movement based on working class people — now!

Land expropriations in Zimbabwe.

It has been twenty years since ZANU (PF) led by Robert Mugabe was victorious over the racist white Smith regime in Zimbabwe (then called Rhodesia). Mugabe’s ZANU was well and truly part of the Stalinist movement with a “two stage” theory meaning nationalist demands now and socialism later. Mugabe based himself on the peasantry keeping with stalinist strategy

After decades of struggle, ZANU PF was ultimately victorious. In other countries, victory for stalinist formations meant the expropriation of the bourgeoisie but not so in Zimbabwe. Mugabe became president. But he made his peace with the white settlers He permitted them to maintain control of their property and super-exploit Black farm labour.

These farmers were the bastion of the racist Smith regime They had expropriated land from small black farmers. They paid their farm labourers a pittance whilst they made millions. For twenty years Mugabe has tolerated this super-exploitation. The only condition has been that they pose no threat to the power of ZANU(PF). Until recently, they have obliged.

Mugabe made his peace with imperialism because it kept him in power. Now things have changed. The imperialists consider him “economically Irresponsible” and want him out. A new reform movement has developed with strong popular support aimed at challenging his power and authority. To defend his power, Mugabe has gone back to revolution — at least to a limited degree.

After twenty years, Mugabe has “discovered” that these whole farmers are “enemies to the nation” etc and has supported their expropriation. There are plenty of landless Zimbabwean peasants, many of whom were veterans of the war of liberation. Giving them land both satisfies their material needs and rekindles a degree of revolutionary spirit (at least amongst some sections of the population. And of course it also stifles opposition which he is trying to desperately to ruthlessly repress. The opposition need money and white farmers are an obvious source. Mugabe has tried to create a racial division. At one opposition rally, troops concentrated their brutality on the white participants. even though they were a minority and not the leadership.

The expropriations of land have been a cynical ploy by Mugabe. However we can have no sympathy to a privileged racist farmer elite who make millions whilst Zimbabweans are impoverished. Mugabe’s crime is not that he is expropriating them but the fact that he has maintained their privileged existence and is only now acting to maintain personal power. These blood suckers and parasites should have been expropriated twenty years ago.

The sympathy shown to these people internationally shows the strength of racist ideology and the worship of wealth. These people who have made many millions over generations while African workers barely survive deserve no sympathy or support what so ever,

The Howard Government in Australia has once again shown its racist colours. It offered asylum for white farm owners but not to black farm labourers who were also victims of the land expropriations. Howard considers those white reactionary grubs his kith and kin. He would welcome them as migrants to Australia He doesn't welcome farm labourers who are both black and poor.

The landless farmers are certainly wrong in making enemies of the poor farm labourer. And this reflects their floored politics. But this does not make land occupations wrong.

Robert Mugabe is supporting land occupations as a cynical manipulation to maintain power. He cannot be entrusted to continue or maintain the occupations. He is extremely likely to make a deal and give back the land — if it means hanging on to power. Our criticism of Mugabe is not that he supports the expropriation of landholders but he does so inconsistently and cynically. Proletarians in Zimbabwe should have no faith in Mugabe or in an opposition who condemns him for acting “illegally”. The law in Zimbabwe is there to protect the interests of a small white elite who, thanks to Mugabe have remained to super exploit black labour even after the overthrow of Ian Smith.

Mr Blair is now preparing sanctions in defence of these white farmers shows once again the reactionary character of the “Labour” Government.

CMFEU Building union treachery over the shorter working week in Victoria and NSW

The movement for a shorter working week is a worldwide movement. France has a mandatory shorter working week starting the beginning. In Italy the shorter working week will start next year. This year there were significant struggles for a shorter working week from CFMEU building workers in Victoria. These were militant. Indeed and building workers were locked out on various building sites. Now everything is resolved and building workers are back to work.

Workers have gained their shorter working week — technically. But basically this will be absorbed by overtime and increased productivity. Essentially, the base for workers pay will be a thirty five hour week. This is a symbolic gain. And there is effectively a wage rise due to the fact that five more hours will be declared as overtime. And this minor gain is of some symbolic value. Elsewhere working hours have dramatically increased. But basically the shorter working week has not been won.

We must be critical of CFMEU leaders for making this compromise deal. But is certainly better than their union comrades in New South Wales. They are not even fighting for minor gains. As soon as the win was announced the Newcastle Branch of the same union publically announced that there would be no campaign in Newcastle “because the industry couldn't afford it.” A touching concern for bosses profits from these labour lieutenants of capital. For bosses profits they are prepared to sacrifice the jobs of many thousands who could be employed in the building industry. Many employed will also suffer from the longer hours work. We don't believe the incapacity of their bosses to pay given that there is a boom in the building industry there. But, irrespective the shorter working week should be fought for —unconditionally

In Sydney there is no question of boss's ability to pay. They are raking in millions through an Olympic Games linked building boom. Now in Victoria there were all sorts of threats about companies going interstate instead of building in Victoria. This simply does not apply to Sydney as you can't move an Olympics. Many building projects have to be completed here for the Games, to accommodate the Olympic visitors and to make Sydney a respectable city for show internationally. Governments are desperate that all this must be completed on time. Basically building unions could have the government by the balls. Now is the time to be pushing for significant gains, including for a shorter working week. But what is

When workers were being locked out in Victoria, the Shorter Working Week Committee proposed a picket outside MBA offices. This was, however opposed by the union because (according to Paul True organiser) sections of the union leadership didn't want to disrupt things for the Olympics. Shame!

The solidarity proposed was a picket in defence of workers locked out. A picket of this sort should be automatic — as a basic act of solidarity. But it was too much for the CFMEU. Perhaps they were scared that workers would realise that there were unionists elsewhere who actually believed in fighting for something. These reactionary leaders must be removed —now. They must be replaced by communists committed to consistent class struggle.

A shorter working week is as important in the building industry as elsewhere. With a shorter working week workers get more leisure and the bosses are forced to employ more workers. This means stronger workforce which can fight the bosses more effectively. The working week should be consistently reduced until everyone is employed. The existing rate of pay should remain and should rise with the cost of living.

For a sliding scale of hours and wages

George Petersen 1921 2000.

George Petersen (as is well known in New South Wales) was the long serving MLA for Illawarra from 1968 to 1989. He was no "bump me into parliament " politician. George used his position to take up causes in defence of the exploited and oppressed. He did this diligently. He took up these causes on the basis of principle without concern for his status within the ALP. For him working people came first. NSW ALP has been notoriously corrupt and the Left at best wishy-washy. This makes Petersen's record all the more commendable.

Issues he took up include workers compensation, prison reform, ant conscription, abortion rights, and homosexual rights. Aboriginal land rights, the Palestinians and The Ananda Marga Three (Anderson Allister and Dunn). He was also involved in campaigns (such as decent sewerage) which effect the day to day lives of the people of Illawarra.

In the Case of the Ananda Marga, he did not base his stand on prejudice of the reactionary character of that organisation in Australia or internationally. George Petersen examined the trial transcript meticulously and drew the conclusion that it was a frame-up. It is indeed important to expose such frame-ups even when they involve people as dubious as the Ananda Marga. The cops, if they can get away with it, will use similar methods against the left, progressive and workers movement.

George Petersen should also be given credit for taking stands of principle on political issues. When Khrushchev's secret speech was exposed, he saw the bankruptcy of Stalinism and supported the Trotskyist movement. On the South Coast he was part of a small Healyite grouping. When it was clear that Healy swept under the carpet his support for Mesaly Hadj in Algeria (exposed as pro-imperialist) he drew the conclusion the Healyism was rotten. When it came to choose between membership of the Labor Party or selling out on workers compensation, Petersen refused to sell out this basic right of the working class and was automatically expelled from the Labor Party.

There can be no disputing the fact that George Petersen put in decades of service to the working class in this country. And many thousands of workers have benefited from the stands that he has taken. However we have to be critical of his overall record.

After his expulsion from the Labor Party he was part of the unserious Illawarra Workers Party. This did not constitute a consistent break from reformism as most of his bureaucratic allies were hankering to get back to the ALP. He then joined dissident Cliffite Socialist Action and supporters of Moreno Socialist Alternative (no connection with the current grouping of the same name). Basically he joined small sectlets devoid of mass support Yet he was a highly respected leader of working people in the Illawarra.

Basically, despite being principled on single issues, he did not even pose let alone build an alternative to reformist ideology either within or without of the Labor Party. He wrote one of the first letters to the Healyite Labour Press (which became Workers News) congratulating them. But he also claimed that class struggle played second fiddle to attacks on the likes of Doris Jobling (Teachers Federation) and Jack Munday (NSW BLF) Here Labour Press was 100% correct. Jobling and Munday certainly did good thing but the point is their ideology —stalinist. And that ideology played and continues to ply a counter-revolutionary role in the workers movement. Less than two years later Munday's mate Joe Owens was giving preferences to the liberal bourgeois Australia Party (which became the Australian Democrats). "Good things" done by CPA Stalinists in the BLF gave them credence to promote this bourgeois formation to sections of the working class.

Petersen's chummy relationship with sections of the left the union bureaucracy was also shown when he defended the bureaucrat led misnamed "rank and file" against the SWP controlled MAC. MAC can indeed be attacked for sectarian tactics. And their programme was totally inadequate. But on issues such as protectionism they were preferable to the official ticket. They too did not break from reformism however if there is a choice between them and the Officials they were quantitative I preferable. Petersen was defending the bureaucracy.

Petersen left an invaluable record through his memoirs George Petersen Remembers. This should be studied also serious militants, certainly in NSW. In document succinctly many struggles not recorded anywhere else. is an invaluable tool for understanding the workings of reformism and stalinism. It also documents many important struggles.

George Petersen served working people diligently and courageously. He earned the respect of working people that area. But because of key political weaknesses — inability to break consistently from left reformism —he failed to construct any alternative to the reformist politics which dominate the Australian working class

Mandatory sentencing and the stolen generation Political Correctness versus blatant racism

Pauline Hanson's One Nation is in deep trouble. In Queensland it has to return over half a million dollars "illegally obtained" as defined by the Electoral Act. It has been deemed that Hanson is personally liable, She now faces bankruptcy. John Howard is very happy with the situation. Now that One Nation have sown the seeds of racism, he can reap the harvest. Racism in the Liberal Party is so blatant that Malcolm Fraser was howled and jeered as a "communist" when receiving his life membership of the Liberal Party. Fraser's "crimes" are opposing apartheid in South Africa and acknowledging the stolen generation of Black people as stolen.

This year the United Nations declared Australia to be racist. And this helped Howard gain some credibility. Downer attacked the United Nations as for being "politically motivated". Well usually UN claims of breaches against human rights are politically motivated. Those politics are those of US imperialism. The UN says nothing against America's warm ally Turkey but ruthlessly condemn America's enemy Saddam Hussain. Both persecute the Kurds. But the real point should be: is the UN telling the truth? Indeed it is.

Howard has enhanced his racist credentials by denying that there ever as a stolen generation. This is little better than denying the mass extermination of Jews under Hitler. Black people were out understandably outraged as was liberal public opinion. This even divided the ranks of Liberals. Howard was forced to back track.

The other major issue has been mandatory sentencing in both the Northern Territory, and Western Australia. This once again shows the reactionary nature of the state structure. It is basically rigged so the more liberal, working class based eastern states can't interfere in the red-necked rural states such as Queensland and Western Australia. Mandatory sentencing, in reality mandatory gaoling, is a racist attack on Black people, and especially to young Black kids. These kids, for the crime of stealing biscuits and cordial must, by law, spend two years in prison. For many it will be a death sentence. For a trivial offense, a young life can be totally wrecked.

Howard has no power over the WA State government but he could stop the Northern Territory government as Northern Territory is a territory and not a state. This he avoided doing. Eventually a compromise was worked out so both Howard and NT Government would maintain face. The age of youth was extended to eighteen years. But basically, mandatory sentencing remained.

The response to this has been a broad popular front. The Greens and Democrats have mobilised in alliance with Legal organisations, Justice Action and the radical left (notably DSP). The point of these demonstrations has been promote as the alternative to mandatory sentencing — conventional bourgeois legality! These respectable reformists want the conventional racist system. A whole "justice" system is a racist attack on Black people. It is there to maintain bourgeois property control (of the means of production) and to repress the exploited. The whole "justice" system must be opposed outright. In their opposition to mandatory sentencing, the popular front wants to legitimise the power of judges. Judges are a rich privileged elite who are part of the machinery which exploits poor people. They are almost if not as much as antagonistic to Black people as the racist Northern Territory Government.

In any case, a perspective of bourgeois respectability will not work. The racists will not listen to the polite noises of respectable forces. It will only listen to force. A strong and militant working class with an unequivocal opposition to all forms of racism will break down the racism of small farmers and privileged workers (labour aristocrats.)

Political correct people effective want to whitewash the system. They oppose the most blatant racist aspects of capitalist society and racist rhetoric. But they don't attack its material foundations. They support the Australian state

There is no doubt that Howard will continue his racist offensive. After all Labor is hardly in a position to challenge given that it supports the racist Australian state on one hand and supported a turn to Asia and a degree of political correctness. One Nation may have fallen by the wayside but no doubt other extreme right organisations are waiting in the wings.

We must be consistently antiracist by being consistently revolutionary.

Columbia: Stop the killings of trade unionists

(reprinted from Class Struggle publication of Communist Workers Group (New Zealand)

On 8 April four members of the electricity workers union Sintraelec were attacked in the municipio de Trinidad Communist Left has no faith in the (depto. de Casanare) as they returned from a job United Nations or its Union affiliate repairing electrical installation. Two of them Caesar Wilson Cortes and Romulo Gamboa were murdered. The two other unionists, Jorge Hely Perez and Julio Vincente were seriously attacked. The attack occurred Colombian unionists become an issue less than one week after the murder of other two for workers internationally — including unionists Margarita Pullgarin and Julio Cesar Betancourt. These have been the latest in a history of violence inflicted on trade unionists in Columbia

Over the past fifteen years, nearly 3,000 trade unionists have been assassinated by the Colombian Government, paramilitary groups and rebel forces. The Colombian Government refuses to implement the conclusions and recommendations of ILO Committee on Freedom of Association to bring its legislation into line. With Conventions 87 and 98 of Freedom of association and collective bargaining.

More than a decade ago, the Colombian national trade union centres complained to the ILO about the continual violations of trade union and human rights . In 1998 the ILO annual conference unanimously approved a request to ask the governing body to set up a Commission of inquiry which would investigate the situation in Columbia and make recommendations.

Get motions of solidarity passed in you trade unions now!

Communist Left has no faith in the United Nations nor its labour affiliate, International Labour Organisation. However it is vital that the issue of Columbian unionists become an issue for workers internationally – including in Australia. If workers solidarity is international then bosses cannot play us off along national lines. Of course we support as much force as necessary so unionists can agitate freely. The stronger the action, the more lives can be saved.

Black ban goods and services to and from Columbia – now!

Mitsubishi threatens mass Sackings. Organise, occupy, Throw the bosses out!

In its bid for “rationalisation” efficiency” etc Mitsubishi has announced the sacking of 500 workers with more to come. The collapse of the car industry in this country has been a long drawn out saga. The Australian car industry developed after the Second World War in a state of inefficiency. It was undercapitalised, poorly equipped and suffered from a small local market. As a result it has been unable to withstand the economic crisis and its resultant restructuring. And so many thousands of workers have lost their jobs.

This process is continuing. Mitsubishi Japan has indicated that if the Australian operations don't come up to scratch they will close them down outright! It is this that workers must be prepared for. The union, of course offers nothing but to accept the company's plans and therefore mass redundancy.

We say; organise, occupy and throw the bosses out. Every job must be defended, Redundancies must be resisted by every means possible. This require direct workers organisation. Shop committees must be built now for workers to discuss and determine tactics. They are require if workers are to act in a united and determined way. The construction of a revolutionary party is an urgent requirement if there is to be consistent resistance and victory. You cannot build socialism in one factory. Action must be spread to all workers who deal with the car industry especially Mitsubishi. Tariffs and protection will not save jobs. It is protection which has maintained manufacturing in a state of inefficiency. We must reject Australian measures which divide us from our class comrades in Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere. An international ruling class must be opposed by international working class action.

Direct action to defend jobs now! Build Factory committees. Shorten working week without loss of pay! International unity and solidarity to defend jobs internationally, Now!

Communist Left stands for

*Building a revolutionary alternative to Labor *political power to poor and exploited

through a revolutionary workers and small farmers government

*Revolutionary expropriation of capitalist industry (as opposed to bourgeois nationalisation)*A Sliding Scale of hours and wages*Occupations against sackings*

organise the unemployed For rent control* A programme of useful public works

* For women's and gay rights. Free abortion on demand.. Socialise housework and child care. *Opposition to all immigration controls

*Self-determination to the Black (Koorie Murrie, Nungah etc) people of Australia and Torres Strait Islanders

* Class unity with workers of Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere. No to tariffs and protection. Defend jobs everywhere! No to import controls!

* Total opposition to Australian intervention in PNG, Bougainville, Indonesia, Timor, the Pacific, in the Middle East and elsewhere. Workers action against Australia's participation in the US imperialist war drive (including under the banner of the United Nations).

* A new revolutionary communist international

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