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George W. Bush, a leaner, meaner US imperialism.

There was only one progressive aspect of the recent US presidential election - it exposed the fraud of US democracy. 200,000 more people voted for Al Gore but he lost. The electoral college system saw to that. Worse still many people didn't even get their votes counted.

The election was determined largely on what happened in Florida. In that state it was indeed a very close. And every vote was crucial. Yet some were not even counted. Neither of the major candidates were worth a crummet. But people should still have their right to a say. In Florida some voters in areas populated by black people, that basic right was depraved. It is no surprise that these voters mainly supported Al Gore. These elections also showed the power of the court system, both state and federal. Basically it was determined by the court whether these votes were counted. Al Gore lost the court decision and therefore the election.

As we said none of the major candidates in this election were worth a crummet. Americans had the choice of a duller, less colourful version of Clinton or a more folksy but dumber version of George Bush. Both are extreme right-wingers. Compared to these two dinosaurs, Ralph Nader of the Greens appeared progressive and perhaps had some progressive policies on minor issues. But he was not worthy of a vote.

Communists participate in the electoral process not because we believe in parliament (we don't) but to further the political development of the working class. A working class break from the Democrats may be supportable under some circumstances if it declares support for class principles. Many revisionist groupings (even Stalinists) may be given critical support. Certainly a centrist formation would. Basically our two principles are; the mobilisation of the working class and the exposure of the bourgeois state, counterposing a workers state. Did Ralph Nader fulfil these conditions? No he didn't! The International Socialist Organisation in the US campaigned for Nader because he identified with the 'anticapitalist movement' This means the protests outside conferences at Seattle, Melbourne, Prague Davos etc. You can oppose the manoeuvres of the IMF and the multinationals from many points of view. The Greens want a smaller more parochial less technological society. This aim isn't progressive. Picking out the bad apples of capitalism is in many cases counterposed to overthrowing the totality of capitalism. And this is certainly the case with the Greens. Anyhow they came across as basically a pressure group on the Democrats and not a clear alternative.

Gore and Bush represent fundamentally the same class. But they do have tactical differences as to how to maintain US imperialist rule internationally.

Clinton saw himself as a world statesman. solving the world's problems to establish what he projected as a just and peaceful world with America being the world's policeman. Of course he means a just arid peaceful world on America's terms. There was no concessions to regimes such as Qaddafi's in Libya or Saddam Hussein's in Iraq. His attempts to play peacemaker in Palestine/Israel reflect what he saw as his historic mission. He projected a more cang America. Behind this image lurked senous and savage attacks on the extremely minimal welfare system. Of course it meant austerity for victims of the vicious economic crisis such as single parents. But Clinton was pleased with the amount of taxpayers money saved.

George Bush has a different approach. His philosophy is America first. He will support US intervention when its interests are directly affected. He represents a more inward parochial America. more concerned with itself than a world vision.

Clinton was a lucky man. For eight years he administered during an economic boom. The boom is now over. Cutbacks are now in order. And Bush is the man to deliver. This will mean even more austerity to working people and the poor. He has also promised tax cuts. given the emphasis of his campaign, there is no doubt that he will definitely deliver. for

Republicans the rich get richer and the poor are left to starve.

Bush was elected partly on the basis of middle America puritan revulsion against Clinton's sexual exploits with Monica Lewinsky. Clinton has only admitted these after vehement denials. Republicans do not like promiscuous baby boomers in the White house, even conservative ones. Many other presidents have had affairs. It is what Clinton symbolised that mattered. Middle America looks forward to a presidency without moral scandal.

As far as revolutionary communists are concerned, we couldn't care less what relationships Clinton had or didn't have. In having an extramarital affair he may have been dishonest to Hillary. Well some wives don't care about affairs or even appreciate their husbands having them. All this is none of our business and should have no political consequence. The fact that it is of political consequence in the USA is a reflection of how backward and reactionary that country is. Clinton was hardly a progressive, but the election of Bush marks a turn towards social conservatism.

Anyhow, both within the USA and abroad, the ruling class imperialist offensive will continue. In America there will be more racist state oppression, more cutbacks to the public sector (especially weffare) more attacks on workers jobs wages and conditions.

In the USA worker must organise with oppressed and exploited to fight this offensive. This means breaking from the bourgeois parties, Republican, Democrat and Green. All imperialist exploits overseas must be vigorously opposed. The US embargo of the Cuban workers and peasants state must be opposed. Defend Cuba!

Overseas. woe betide anyone who treads on its toes or inconveniences America in any way Bush has one important ally in policing America's interests - the Howard government. Bush has praised Australia e~ats over Indonesia, sending troops to Timor According to Beazley, Labor will be no different. This means active opposition to this imperialism must be on the political agenda for the workers movement in this country Smash US bases ! There must be total opposition to US military or economic interventions everywhere.

John Howard is happy with Bush's victory. And Bush is very pleased at Australia's role in being local policeman for Indonesia. The warm relationship between Australia and US imperialism will continue under Howard. It will also continue under Labor.

Workers of Australia must not be party to the imperialist agenda. They must actively fight through direct action against any preparation for war. US bases on Australian soil must be smashed. Workers must show we have more in common with the oppressed and exploited of the world than the imperialists or their agents Liberal or Labor.

Bush and Blair bomb Iraq.

In Britain there was apprehension about a Bush victory. Blair is, after all a man who moulded his political style on Bill Clinton. Bush is a man who doesn't like baby boomers However there has been a real meeting of the minds - over bombing Iraq! According to The Times (London) Blair has been critical of Clinton over what targets the allies could bomb. He found Clinton a bit rive. Bush agrees with Blair.

So once again the US bombed Iraq ostensibly to protect its citizens from Saddam Hussein. And as a result innocent people died. The allies claimed that the bombs were "off course". Iraq should not have been bombed at all!

It is bizarre and perverse that US and allies are somehow justified in preventing Iraq from using its own airspace to protect Iraqis. Iraq is not the only country which persecutes national minorities (in this case the Kurds). Is it justified for the US to occupy the airspace of every country which persecutes minorities? If it carried out this policy consistently it would be occupying the airspace of most of the world's surface.

You cannot enforce just social relations by the threat of bombing. Imperialism created the unjust situation whereby the Kurds were deprived their self-determination. They will only be given self-determination by their military victory, or alternatively socialist revolution in Iraq.

In reality America only picks on those countries who are unfriendly and threaten their interests. There was no talk of "defending the Kurds" from the US when it was backing Iraq against Iran. Turkey persecutes the Kurds at least as much as Iraq but from the US you hear, not a murmur. In reality the US has two major principles - imperialist domination and oil. And woe betide any country or national liberation force which challenges the right to plunder.

Ten years ago, Iraq invaded that oil statelet called Kuwait. And there was a united imperialist response which devastated Iraq. Trade boycotts have been imposed by the UN ever since. The result has been mass poverty and hardship. Although it remains a capitalist state, Iraq represents a defiance to the imperialist agenda. The imperialists must smash it lest some other upstart country challenge the rip-off.

In the past two months busy Bush has not only bombed Iraq, he has also threatened Libya. The judgement of who was guilty over the bombing of a Pan Am jet over Lockerby, Scotland was handed down. And a Libyan agent was found guilty. It is therefore asserted that Colonel Qaddafi was responsible. And for the imperialists it would be justified if America struck back, once again killing innocent Libyans.

There is nothing like a war to cure a recession. Just before the bombing took place according to Professor Chosodovsky University of Ottawa the value of high tech shares on Wall St plummeted NASDAQ index stocks declined 5% to an all time low.

However things rapidly changed, He quotes a British financial analyst " Makers of the nations warfare technologies along with Wall St. analysts and industry consultants spent a week bragging about new opportunities and the likelihood of changes in Pentagon policy that would foster growth after 15 years of strained budgets. What's more defence and aerospace stocks ended on a high note , climbing amid a broad marked slump as 24 US and British warplanes struck Iraqi military targets using various long-range, precision guided weapons,, In the last hours of trading on the sixteenth defence stocks spiralled, and energy stocks boomed

While the Iraqi people suffer Wall Street prospers. Bush's promise to "revitalise the nation's defence" has led to a rise in vale for Lockheed Martin makers of the F22.

All this is too barbaric for words. imperialism demands the destruction of ordinary people It is time we did away with this barbaric system. This v be helped by working people organising to fight the imperialist war drive against IrAq and elsewhere.

Both Howard and Beazley are willing accomplices of imperialism. A fullscale war will no doubt see Australian participation. We must ensure that there is organises working class opposition.

Shangrila Hotel Jakarta. Workers locked out fighting for union rights

The Shangrila hotel Jakarta is probably paradise if can afford to stay there. This five star hotel costs you \$138 to stay there for a night. However working there is very different indeed. Workers are paid \$66 per month. This is below the pitifully low legally permitted minimum wage. There is no pension fund. Workers there have been locked out since December.after the the illegal suspension of a union leader. The bosses have given notice to 400 workers "permanently suspended until they renounce their right to be union members. Under Indonesian law you do have the right to be a union member.

Since the sackings there have been pickets outside. The picketers have had a policy of being peaceful and legal. Their desire for peaceful protest has not been shared by tie bosses and the Indonesian state. They have been greeted by vicious attacks. On December 25 they were attacked by 500 Indonesian police Mr Mahammed Zulrahman , treasurer of the union at the hotel, was peacefully picketing. He was grabbed away from his colleagues and assaulted by a goon squad . He receive severe bruises, cuts to the lips and missing teeth. One of the goon squad was caught. He was a Mr Ehanousa who had been seen acting for Mr Lyman founder of the Lyman group. The police questioned Mr Ehanousa but no charges were laid,

Though the tenacity of the strikers is to be commended (despite illusions in legally) this struggle is not particularly significant. What is significant is the international solidarity. In Hong Kong workers picketed Hong Kong Shangrila Shangrila is a vast multinational network of Hotel whose headquarters is Hong kong. Mr Kuoc owns a significant proportion of its investment. He is a billionafire, amongst the world's richest. He is known to be an overseas Chinese in favour with the Beijing bureaucracy. The Canadian Union CAW has issued a strong protest. In Australia unions are committed to direct action THE owners are building development at Docklands in Melbourne. And in Victoria the VTHC and the Btu. Trades Group are placing black bans. This is hors should be all the time. As Sharan Burrow ACTU President at a Sydney picket that bosses internationalism should be met with union internationalism. This is good sounding stuff. But it marks a break from the reactionary national chauvinist traditions which have dominated unionism in this country

Australian workers have carried out acts of internationalism - some of them exemplorary. But the overall framework has been national chauvinist Whilst many unions do not do so from a consistent international framework, we support their solidarity. Internationalism must be the consistent policy of the Australian labour movement. The way to stop bosses playing us off against Asian workers is to unite with Asian workers.

South Korea:Sackings at Daewoo.Workers fight back.

Daewoo car manufacturing South Korea is going broke. The only way the Korean Government considers it has a chance for survival is if it is sold. General Motors appears to be the only taker but GM demands restructuring Daewoo appears happy to comply. As a result 5,000 workers are to be laid off.

The workers are fighting back. They have gone on strike and established militant picket lines. The state is fighting also. They have attacked the picket with fork-lift trucks. The workers have fought with flares.

"Restructuring" is of course a euphemism for making workers suffer for the crisis of capitalist profitability. The workers there are in no way responsible for the crisis which has caused the collapse of Daewoo. Yet they are being deprived of their livelihood. The only way they can guarantee a basic existence is if they fight for it. This they are prepared to do. The workers are to be commended for militancy. This is indeed refreshing compared to BHP workers who politely worked off the job when the plant closed copping it sweet. The workers of Korea may not be revolutionaries but at least they have not succumbed to the spirit of Accord as in Australia. But mere militancy is not enough.

Daewoo workers need support and solidarity from other car workers in South Korea. This solidarity must be based on committees organised on the shop floor. Solidarity should be extended up until the organisation of a general strike. The general strike must be linked to a revolutionary programme to smash the South Korean state. This requires the building of a communist party. The workers also require international solidarity. Daewoo must be black banned internationally. The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union has made a statement in solidarity. We hope this is converted into action.

Hardliner Sharon wins in Israel

Sharon is a hardline Zionist hawk. He is notorious for mass murder in southern Lebanon. Sharon in the Israeli election comes at no surprise. His predecessor Barak was elected on a programme of 'peace' but delivered war. Barak supports peace but in no way would he allow the Israeli state to be threatened. He was exposed as an inefficient defender of Israel who pleased no one. From a Palestinian point of view, irrespective of who is in office, it is still Israeli guns which are killing them. From an Israeli point of view he is defending the Israeli state inefficiently and allowing the Palestinians to get away with too much. Israelis in the settlements are angry and want action against Palestinian attacks.

So Israel elects the consistent Zionist militarist Sharon. He is certainly the type of leader Israel needs. Israel is a racist state created by imperialism at the expense of the Palestinian people. Since birth it has been at consistent war with the Palestinians or some other Arab nationality. It is a nation which only survived by being under the gun. It has a massive imperialist sponsored military machine aimed at the Palestinians. This machine cannot be reformed or liberalised, it must be smashed! Barak tried to defend it by inefficient means. Israelis understand the realities of their racist state. He lost. For the Palestinian people all talk of compromise is off the agenda. Sharon has established a government of national unity including opposition Labour leaders such as Perez. The Labour Party in Israel is split and isolated. Many members oppose a government of national unity. All support the state of Israel.

Palestinian people will be forced to intensify their military struggle. Whilst we must have no faith in their political leadership, the Palestinians deserve our fullest military support.

Howard Government vicious attack against unemployed New Zealanders

The Howard government is facing severe economic crisis. The dollar is at its lowest (as compared to the US dollar) for at least a decade. He is under serious pressure from the countryside to reduce the tax on petrol. So to please everyone he must save money. And he has found a way to save a cool billion dollars - deprive New Zealand citizens of their right to the dole. This vicious and oppressive measure is not going to meet much opposition. Most people think the dole should only be for Australians. This includes not just the Coalition supporters but Labor, the Democrats and of course, One Nation.

There is a chauvinist myth. New Zealanders are supposed to be flying across the Tasman, flocking to Bondi and living the wild life of surfing, discos and parties living off Australian social security. Well it's very difficult to live on social security let alone enjoy yourself. And there are oppressive conditions for everyone who applies such as dole diaries, work tests and courses you are forced to do "mutual obligation." But anyhow it's not true. Most New Zealanders are in Australia to look for work. And New Zealanders are no more unemployed proportionally than any other national grouping. In fact compared to many they are less so.

Some will no doubt suggest that Australians are "subsidising New Zealanders". Well when New Zealanders work here they pay taxes. Thanks to the Howard Government they will pay taxes when they are working yet not receive the dole when they lose their jobs. They are therefore subsidising Australians as their tax subsidises the dole of other people.

The reality is this. During the long boom of the fifties and sixties, New Zealanders were welcome here. They were wanted for their labour. You didn't even need a passport to cross the Tasman. Then the economic crisis hit, unemployment became a fact of Australian life and things tightened up. When there are profits to be made the bosses say welcome. And when there is a crisis they say "migrants go home". A campaign of chauvinism develops. And governments impose oppressive restrictions on people staying here.

This restriction on the dole while not directly a restriction on people coming here is aimed to be a deterrent to stop people from coming here. Basically if you can't guarantee yourself a job here you risk having no income at all in a strange country.

There is much talk about "globalisation" "a world economy" etc. But these concepts apply to the capitalist class and money. It does not apply to people. In fact the restrictions on people movement and immigration have intensified.

It is of no surprise that Howard has the full cooperation of New Zealand's "Labour" prime minister Helen Clarke. Her role in assisting the Australian tones is treacherous but to be expected.

Of course for people from other countries things are worse. Refugees are dumped in prison camps in central Australia. New Zealanders even after Howard's "reforms" still have more right to work in Australia than other nationalities. But this doesn't justify these unfair attacks.

Communists Left opposes any privileges to New Zealanders. It should be a right of all workers irrespective of whatever country they come from to live in whatever country they please and receive a decent livelihood.

Communist Left says smash all immigration controls and full citizenship rights for all migrants.