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Hanson jailed, Hanson freed. What does it mean?

The court has quashed the charges and Pauline Hanson along with fellow One Nation founder David Etteridge have emerged in triumph. Pauline claims to be a changed woman with new found sympathy for prisoners. However, irrespective, for her fascist right backers she is a hero who has defeated a ruling class conspiracy to imprison two innocent people who they are promoting as victims. They have struck a chord with many ordinary Australians, from the middle classes and labour aristocracy. The One Nation bandwagon is on the road again.

One Nation remains as it was formed, a broad front for fascism. It has been the vehicle in which unsavoury far -fascist groupings such as League of Rights to gain an electoral foothold. It has been reasonably successful. At one stage it had twelve members of the Queensland state parliament. Mrs Hanson was herself a member for Ipswich. One Nation has had numerous senators. Now they are down to one senator. David Oldfield, member of the NSW Council still identifies with One Nation. But he was expelled and his NSW One Nation is organisationally autonomous. The problems have been twofold. There has been a fallout amongst fascists and Howard's hard line stance on refugees has captured the racist vote. But One Nation is not dead and has the potential to regain electoral support. It remains dangerous.

Pauline Hanson received a three year jail sentence for defrauding the electoral commission. To get money you have to establish that you have five hundred members. The people she registered were technically supporters. Basically, an attempt to rig One Nation fell flat on its face. Etteridge and Hanson wanted to keep control of the organisation. So they made it difficult to join fully. In this way they preserved the power of their privileged elite. There are many fascist factions. Hanson and Etteridge had good reason to fear that one of them might stage a raiding party, taking control of their political baby. Technically they were in breach of the law even though there was no doubt that One Nation had real support and that the money was destined for the political cause which they proclaimed.

One Nation has been on the down recently. Public opinion polls give it a mere one percent. Howard has basically stolen their thunder. Howard may not be as consistently racist as they are. But he has the runs on the board when it comes to action. Viciously and effectively he has used brute force to repel the refugees. If they haven't been repelled they have been put them into concentration camps in the desert. He also resists any identification with Asia. He also has proclaimed his willingness to make a pre-emptive strike against terrorism attacking any country he chooses. All this is music to the ears of the racist conservative right and has forced One Nation to take a back seat.

Jailing Hanson was not the way to fight fascism. Fascism cannot be fought by law and order. For a start, she has reentered the national political agenda as a hero.

The other problem is that legislation used against fascists is often used against the left. The system regards both left and right as "extremists" and is often quite happy to jail us equally. In practice the fascists are friends with the police.

So how do we beat fascism? Firstly, the chauvinism from which fascism breeds must be undermined and destroyed, totally. The workers movement must take a clear unequivocal stand against immigration controls. The refugees must be defended unconditionally. They must be defended not on humanitarian but class grounds. They must be defended on the grounds that workers should have the right to live in our country of choice. The workers movement must be internationalist. There must be consistent solidarity with the workers of Asia and the Pacific.

Farmers gravitate to fascism. They must be won over to the proletarian leadership by taking up principled demands such as repudiation of their debts to the banks. Small farmers take the workers movement seriously when it takes itself seriously. This means when it is seriously fighting for power. In no way must our revolutionary objective be liquidated. On the contrary, if it is farmers will gravitate to the fascists who seriously fight for their reactionary objectives.

But as well as this, fascists must be fought physically. - acquainted with the pavement. They must be smashed. This requires workers militia to be organised. Some small liberals argue that fascists have rights, that their free speech must be defended, But fascism has an historic mission -the destruction of the workers movement. On the way it attacks and murders Jew, gays. Black people Gypsies or whoever it chooses to scapegoat.

One Nation has received a shot in the arm. It re-mains a dangerous threat to class conscious workers. Sc *too are the fascist groups which hide under its umbrella.

Refugees. Howard changes the boundaries.

According to international law, if you arrive on the shores of any country, you are entitled to apply for political asylum in that country. John Howard's way of side-stepping this issue has been to redefine Australia, at least from the point of view of refugees. First Christmas and Cocos Islands were redefined as outside Australia's boundaries from the point of view of migration. Now Melville and Bathurst Islands are exempt. Cocos and Christmas Islands are classified as external territories, which is a polite way of saying colony. But Bathurst and Melville are only 80 kilometers from Darwin - well and truly part of Australia.

Once again, strong man Howard parades himself as saviour defending Australia against the tides of mass immigration. Howard hopes this will bring home his electoral bacon. Unfortunately he could be right. Once again Labor challenges on a humanitarian and legalistic basis. Once again it is exposed as weak. They defend the principle of Australia's boundaries but don't apparently want to defend these boundaries as effectively as the Liberals. The Liberals are also more skillful at making mainstream white Australians feel good about their privileged position. There's nothing like a bit of political privilege to make white middle class and labour aristocrats ignore the crisis or alternatively blame refugees and immigrants

For revolutionaries the question of refugees is a fundamental one. Yes we are concerned about their degrading and brutal treatment. they receive, imprisoned, sweltering in barbaric places like Baxter.

The refugees question remains an issue as long as there are barbaric detention centres and people are still prevented from entering the country. But more than just an issue it must become a class issue. Workers must be shown that if they succumb to the ruling class agenda on refugees, they succumb to the agenda which attacks the public sector wages, conditions and the union movement itself.

A link must be made between their interests as workers as a class the freeing of the refugees and the smashing of all immigration controls. but the problem is that organisations such as Refugee Action committee and Free the Refugees do not have such a perspective. Instead they mobilise politically correct students human rights organisations the Greens and environmental groups with a token presence from the unions. The working class hardly rate. When the organise marches through Villawood, the don't even poster Villawood and neighbouring Chester Hill. So the local working class community is not even invited, let alone explained the issues of the demo.

Venezuela: Chavez's independent capitalism

South America is a continent in turmoil. Most of the information we get is through the Internet or through the media. Both of these sources are limited. So the Democratic Socialist Party has done us a favour by bring to this country Bolivarian student leader Alvaro Guzman. Of course, he is a staunch supporter of Venezuelan President Chavez who is notorious in the eyes of imperialism for his defiance of the IMF. Chavez is well aware that his people are being hurt and should have the right to health education and housing which they would be deprived of if the imperialists have their economically rationalist ways.

Chavez believes that there can be a better way, the Bolivarian way. This means firstly democracy. Chavez believes in it. He wants a society where there is genuine democracy, even for the poor. He also believes in decent social welfare. He believes in self-determination for national minorities. "If this is not a revolution, I don't know what is!" said Guzman. No it isn't. Self determination for national minorities is a bourgeois democratic demand. not a socialist demand.

All of the above amounts to little more than bourgeois liberalism. Sure Chavez is backed by grass roots democratic organisation. He is also strongly backed by ordinary working people who perceive him as a real difference. He is also challenging but not threatening bourgeois interests He calls the process a revolution.

But the fact that he has support from the proletariat and poor peasants does not mean he is leading a proletarian revolution. Far from it. In no way does he believe in nationalising, let alone expropriating the bourgeoisie. Guzman did not mention the word socialism in his talk. He didn't even pose the need for it in the indefinite future. In the past bourgeois nationalist leaders have talked about "socialism Algerian style" (for example basically to cover their tracks. Many such as Cardenes in Mexico Gadaffi in Libya have promised and delivered significant nationalisations. Chavez is quite open about his defense of Venezuelan capitalism

Chavez is an undisguised bourgeois leader with a genuine popular base. But there is one organisation which claims to be revolutionary which is giving him credentials he doesn't deserve. The Democratic Socialist Party call him revolutionary. They throw a bit of smoke by claiming that there is a "revolutionary process". By this they hope that we will suspend judgment and lay off fundamental criticism of Chavez and his Bolivarian movement.

The DSP has not grown significantly by fighting for their programme in Australia. Where they have grown is by promoting revolutions from other countries. Now it is the responsibility of all revolutionary organisations to promote

other countries revolutions and national upsurges. The problem is that DSP promote not just the movement by opportunist and treacherous leaderships.

When the DSP were the Socialist Workers League, they bought the line about "revolutionary Cuba" from their then parent organisation the Socialist Workers Party of the USA. However, they went on to embrace the Castro bureaucracy wholeheartedly. When the Sandinistas were victorious in Nicaragua the SWP (as they became) embraced the Cuban bureaucrats wholeheartedly as did the SWP US. However, the SWP went further. They argued that if these currents associated with the Stalinist movement were revolutionary, then Trotskyists were wrong to organizationally separate themselves from the Stalinist movement. They were still critical of Stalinists in terms of bureaucracy. But they denied the fundamental class line between Trotskyism and Stalinism.

In practice this meant blocking with Stalinism. They rehashed Stalinist arguments about Trotsky "underestimating the peasantry" which was the rationalisation for Stalinists, and the DSP adapting to the peasantry. In Australia it has meant a joint agreement with the Communist Party of Australia (then called Socialist Party of Australia) and adaptations to the Greens and Democrats.

Things are quiet in Australia, so the DSP dangle the carrot of Chavez and his so called Bolivarian revolution. No doubt they will win some enthusiastic idealist but politically naive young recruits. They do the revolutionary movement a disservice both in Venezuela and in Australia.

Bolivia: an insurrection betrayed.

Readers of Red will be aware of the strong militant upsurge of workers in Argentina. This includes factory occupations and physical clashes with the state. The cause of this militancy has been the literal bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie and the Argentinean capitalist state. The workers movement has reacted to the threat of hunger and against the loss of basic services such as schools and hospitals. In Argentina over thirty million people can barely feed themselves.

In Bolivia there has been a mass upsurge also. In fact there general strikes, clashes with police and almost an insurrection. Unfortunately the action has been demobilised. The responsibility for this lies with leadership of the workers movement and their Stalinist and revisionist handmaidens (the fake Trotskyists). These traitors wanted an alternative president and they got one. There could have been a revolution given the level of insurrectionist activity. In Argentina the issue was dire and desperate poverty. In Bolivia the issue was a gas deal with the USA and the growing of coca by Bolivian peasants US imperialism is desperately trying to stop coca growing because it is the raw material for producing cocaine. But hundreds of thousands of Bolivian peasants survive on coca for their livelihood and they hate imperialist dictates. What would they live on when the coca is gone? There has been no alternative agrarian programme to establish their continued survival.

The main issue was gas. The Bolivian government made a deal with US imperialism to supply Bolivian gas via ports in Chile. The fact that the gas is going via Chile concerns some Bolivians who are still angry over the Chilean annexation of those ports in the late nineteenth century. They consider the gas going via Chile to be an insult. The deposed Bolivian president Sanchez de Lozada has claimed that he didn't put the case well on the issue of gas. But this is a very hard case to put. Condescending imperialist commentators claim the Bolivian militants, workers and peasant are killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Bolivians understandable mistrust the USA. They also are well aware that even if Bolivia gets a good deal, they the ordinary Bolivians will not get the benefits. Bolivia is not only the poorest country in South America. It is one with the greatest gulf between rich and poor. It is the rich who reap the benefit. Ordinary Bolivians consider the deal to be theft.

So there have been mass militant upsurges in Bolivia throughout this year. These include road blockades, a general strike and even physical confrontation with the state. On October eleven, armed troops opened fire against the unarmed community of El Alto. Fifty were killed. This is only one instance of ruthless state slaughter. Despite brutal state repression, to workers and peasants maintained their determination to fight for justice.

The strike mobilisations are now over. Lozada has resigned. But it is a case of meet the new boss, same as the old boss. President Carlos Mesa is from the same party as Lozada. He is a millionaire businessman. Apparently he will review the agreement in relation to gas. Any progressive gain workers achieve courtesy of Mesa will be at best temporary. As soon as he consolidates power he will dispense with these as he sees fit. A demoralised workers will be unable to resist. It might even be smashed. Working class people could pay for their failure to complete the revolution in blood. Leader of the MAS (Movement towards Socialism) Evo Morales has consciously supported Mesa "a candidate suitable to Washington" .So he wants to give him "breathing space". Well if he breathes, we die. It's the same old theory that if you are nice to the ruling class, then they will be nice to you. This exposes the workers movement as weak and ripe for the picking. It is a recipe for getting the workers movement smashed.

In Bolivia building a revolutionary party is literally a life or death question. Such a party must have a transitional programme for workers and peasants power - the dictatorship of the proletariat. Democratic demands, especially when they concern the peasantry are relevant to Bolivia. But the point is to show that these can be achieved only by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Subordinating ones revolutionary demands behind the banner of bourgeoisie, and/or bourgeois democratic demands mean selling out the revolution. Democratic demands are important. They are essential to winning over the middle classes to the proletarian vanguard. They can only be won if we show them that

we support the progressive demands which they raise. However it is a means to an end and not the end. Those who put democratic demands to the forefront, posing the need for revolution only in the indefinite future sell out the revolution.

The peasant question is a vital question for Bolivian revolution. For proletarian dictatorship to survive, they must be won to the vanguard in a principled. For a workers and small farmers government! For the repudiation of debt! Nationalise the land! These are key demands. The proletariat must not surrender leadership to the peasantry. That will either sellout the revolution, or alternatively create a state with gross bureaucratic distortions. The peasantry have the potential to be antagonistic to the proletariat.

In Australia we have a vested interest in supporting the Bolivian revolution. This includes giving it material aid. The more revolutions overseas are successful the easier it is to create revolution here, in Australia. The lessons of Bolivia positive and negative are indeed very useful.

Workers Control Conference: anarchist nostalgia for yesterday's stalinism

Recently in Sydney we witnessed the first Workers control Conference for over thirty years. Over Easter, 1973 the first Workers Control National conference was held at the Newcastle Workers Club. The Conference in Newcastle was very relevant to struggles which were going on at the time. At the Newcastle dockyards there was a workers control struggle concerning a thirty five hour week. The builders labourers were still active with green bans. Also there were many struggles then recently concluded from which important lessons were learned. These included Hansor Gloves, Evans Deakin shipyards in Brisbane, the Harco work-in at Campbelltown west of Sydney.

There also was much intense theoretical debate. Overwhelmingly there was support for workers control as opposed to workers participation as introduced by South Australia's Dunstan Labor Government. Can there be workers control under capitalism? What are the limitations of workers control? Should the struggle for workers control be linked to opposition to Whitlam's incomes policy? Should demands for workers control be linked to a transitional programme and how? Should the Workers control Movement be centralised or decentralised? These were the questions posed and discussed intensely. We were greeted by the about to be formed Papua Nuigini Socialist Workers Party whose leaders addressed the conference.

Those days are gone. The workers control movement barely lasted two years. There were continuing actions relating to workers control for the next five years. But the movement collapsed. There were significant and militant actions during that period. We can learn some important lessons for class struggle today. But we also must be fully aware of the failings of the movement which lead to its demise. We don't want to repeat the same mistakes again.

The 2003 style Workers control conference reflected the degeneration of the left. There were some speakers relevant to today's class struggle. But they tended to talk about unionism "reclaiming the union". Workers control not being on their immediate agenda. There was also debate on current politics such as Socialist Alliance.

It was in many ways an exercise in nostalgia. Lead speakers included Hall Greenland, Humphrey McQueen and Michael Matteson all of whom were seventies activists. Humphrey McQueen vacillated between Marxism and shop floor economism. Hall Greenland promoted the Pablo tendency. He is an unashamed supporter of Pablo's line in Algeria - integrating workers control and self management into the Algerian capitalist state. This is what his mentor did in Algeria. His reasoning is that workers need some pay back for supporting the colonial revolution. In colonies or elsewhere workers need to take control in their own right. The net result of what Pablo did was to smash workers control.

There was also some nostalgia for the seventies from Michael Matteson. He promoted the "revolutionary reforms" of Andre Gorz. The Gorz strategy amounts to liquidating the division between reforms and revolution by fighting for reforms "in a revolutionary way" meaning in a militant grass roots way. This theory of revolution actually hampered the political development of the European far left leaving it in the realm of left reformism thinking that they were fighting for revolution. They didn't lead to revolution

Another nostalgic speaker was Nick Harrigan, an anarchist. He was nostalgic for workers control under Allende's Chile. Yes there are some interesting things to learn from the Chileans. But the problem was that both the workers control and the Allende government were brutally smashed by a military coup. The speaker refused to confront this, let alone any political perspective which might have defeated the counter-revolution. "Revolutions get defeated" he declared fatalistically pointing to the Paris Commune, the Russian revolution and the Spanish revolution. The point is to analyse the objective and subjective reasons for defeat. That is what Marx and Engels did regarding Paris and Trotsky regarding the Russian revolution. Trotsky also analysed the defeat of the workers movement in Spain, Revolutionaries do not take a frivolous attitude to revolutions being smashed. Workers lives are lost!

Of course there was some nostalgia for Jack Munday BLF and the Green bans. Paul True gave an interesting account on how they rolled the right. The Harco work-in and the Wyong work-in were discussed. There was some discussion on the role of the old Aarons CPA. But the conference hardly came to grips with it. Michael Matteson proposed a workers control seminar on CPA and workers control. Such a seminar would indeed be valuable!

Workers control: is it revolutionary? This conference didn't discuss the issue. Things were certainly different in Newcastle 1973. There workers control came under fire from all angles. There was intense debate over whether there could be workers control under capitalism, workers control and nationalisation, workers control an self management. This sort of theoretical confrontation was totally lacking.

Communist Left issued a leaflet for the conference. We explained the objective circumstances why workers control emerged as an issue in the early and mid seventies. We pointed out that the movement was initiated by the stalinist Communist Party of Australia (Aarons). We pointed out that it was linked to a thoroughly revisionist theory known as "neocapitalism" which argued that capitalism no longer suffered from economic crises. We explained that whilst

workers control is a supportable tactic, there can be no consistent workers control under capitalism. Therefore the demands must be linked to a revolutionary programme to expropriate the bourgeoisie.

Work for the dole is legal slavery

Unemployed people in Australia have been forced to endure work for the dole for over a year now. It now blatantly clear that the work they are often forced to do is not cuddly community work but hard and heavy labour. They are paid ten dollars per week on top of their meagre dole payments.

For example, some clear brambles and blackberry bushes from bush land .Sometimes they have to clear several tonnes in a day. They receive inadequate safety gear. Some carry out labouring duties such as concreting, tiling and other forms of construction work. Some do gardening. some become teaching or nurses aids. All this is extremely oppressive from the point of view of unemployed people. They do hard work for peanuts. They have virtually no rights as they can be doxed into CentreLink by their work for the dole supervisor. They can complain to Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. but this is difficult to do in practice. Especially when most unemployed

Don'tn't even realise that they have the right to do this.

Work for the dole is also a serious attack on employed workers. From now on all many employers such as schools have to do is contact work for the dole provider H and H and there is no need to pay award wages, overtime, holiday pay etc, any more. Why employ when you can have slave labour? In is no surprise that a survey showed that it is more difficult for those on work for the dole to find a proper job.

Communist Left supports StandUp! campaign to smash work for the dole. The campaign involves educating and organising the unemployed and uniting with unions to smash work for the dole. This means black ban it and wipe it out of existence. For the sake of unemployed and unionists this must be done now! It is a matter of urgency!