

# CONTENTS

**3...The trial of Saddam Hussein**

**3.... Unemployment. Latham capitulates.**

**4... Free Trade Agreement: a crisis for the Labor Party**

5....Socialist Alliance. a reformist manifesto

## **Iraq, The "independence" that isn't**

July 1 Was supposed to be independence day for Iraq. But the imperialists got cunning and handed over a couple a couple of days before to avoid a resistance offensive. The ploy succeeded and for a couple of days there was a bit of hope and euphoria that this could be the dawn of a new era. It only took a couple of days for everyone to realise that this was not the case. The war is going on as before with every day bringing in news of suicide bombers or imperialist bombing raids. No end is in sight.

Over a quarter a million US troops remain in Iraq and there is no immediate or even short term plans to bring them home. The US also has a stranglehold over the new Iraqi economy. No doubt the imperialist oil companies have their eyes on Iraq's massive oil reserves. They will use these for their own superprofits and to weaken Saudi Arabia power over the oil economy. There will be no way that America will allow the Arabs to unite and force up the price of oil. The new president of Iraq, Mr Allawi, is a US appointee. Not even America pretends that Iraq ,is currently democratic. But they do promise that democracy is on the agenda. Mr Allawi is a grotesque reactionary with blood on his hands. He was an agent for Saddams secret police. Later he defected and became a CIA agent. He is just the hard man America needs. In Australia, Fairfax owned newspapers, the Age and Sydney Morning Herald printed extensive articles reporting eye witness claims of recent incidents where Allawi himself killed prisoners from the Iraqi resistance, personally, point blank. Allawi has personally authorised an incident where soldiers from the newly formed Iraqi armed forces without provocation fired on unarmed protesters who were chanting pro Saddam political slogans. Hardly a good advertisement for Iraqi "democracy".

Allawi seems to be more gung-ho in his pursuit of the resistance than his American mentors. This could become an embarrassment to the imperialists. They know that in many circumstance pushing the military accerator button too hard could well galvanise the resistance, and destabilise Iraq. But what if that is what Allawi is demanding? They have the unpalatable choice of either obeying his dictates and getting bogged down deeper with the loss of more American and Iraqi lives, or alternatively defying the Iraqis who they have appointed as Iraq's leadership and being seen as masters of Iraq not servants of a new Iraq. Before the invasion, sections of the US ruling elite seriously believed that they could waltz into Iraq and be hailed as democratic saviours. In fact they believed that there would be a domino effect

## **The Trial of Saddam Hussein.**

The Allawi government has had little to cheer about. But one feather in its cap has been the appearance of Saddam Hussein in court humiliated and charged with war crimes. Most Iraqis including those in the resistance, hate Saddam and with good reason. He was indeed a brutal tyrant who jailed, tortured and murdered millions of Iraqis. Workers and peasants have every right and indeed every duty try Saddam for crimes - against working people, unionists, communists and national and religious minorities within Iraq.

Communists oppose the invasion not because we love Saddam (which we don't) but because the invasion is part of an imperialist agenda for plundering and exploiting not just Iraq but the whole Arab and Middle East. Imperialism maintained Saddam in power when he suited their interests. His main "crime" as far as imperialism is concerned was that he invaded Kuwait a feudal sheikdom maintained for multinational oil profit.

Of course, after decades of selling them out the imperialists are feigning concern for the Kurds.

The purpose of the Saddam show trial is to legitimise an invasion and an imposed government. This objective we oppose Saddam's real crime is against the working class. On this the imperialists say nothing. Why? because they were complicit. They also want an Allawi regime with a vigilant anti-working class perspective.

Saddam also murdered many thousands of communists. The imperialists were very well aware of this. Yet they say nothing because they supported this repression.

We are opposed to this show trial because it legitimises an invasion and a puppet government. We are for a different trial with different accusers and different charges. For the crime of repression and murder of unionists and national minorities, Saddam is as guilty as hell.

## **Unemployment. Latham capitulates**

When Mark Latham talks about reducing unemployment by five percent, he means five percent of those unemployed

not five percent of the workforce. Basically, under Latham, there will still be approaching five hundred thousand unemployed and that's even without a further worsening of the economy. There is no talk about a raise in the dole payments.

Mark Latham is a concrete man with poignant concrete proposals. Within the community, there is a lot of cynicism about broad philosophical agendas, both of the right and the left. Concrete constructive Mark knows how to play to this audience. This applies to unemployment as well as to general issues.

So concretely, what does Latham have to offer? Firstly, he promises a youth package. "Learn or earn" is his ultimatum to young people. It is basically, bad luck if you can't get a job and hate school. Latham will force you to go back, to some variant of school. The Liberals claim that this resembles their philosophy of work for the dole. Well not quite. Latham has genuine, if misguided concern about improving the prospects of young unemployed. He seriously believes that his measures will improve their job prospects.

There is no training component what so ever in work for the dole. Under work for the dole unemployed work for the community for nothing, not even work recognised by an employer. But, in reality the net effect of Latham's "training" is not much different. Much of the so-called training is getting the trainee to do shit work. Trainee electricians change light bulbs. The training is training for the bosses benefit anyway.

Latham is simply recycling the old Newstart philosophy of forced training for unemployed. He is simply targeting the young. But he hasn't confronted why the old Newstart training system failed.

We have been informed, from a public servant contact that under Newstart the training schemes only had a shelf life of six months! Very few of the newly trained unemployed got a job within that time. The schemes were also very expensive. They were hardly a cost effective way of creating jobs. Hawke and Keating refused to confront the reality that lack of work was the main problem and not lack of training. They were merely creating more trained unemployed! As well as younger unemployed Latham is taking up the issue of older unemployed. Yes there is a problem. Some employers think unemployed are over the hill at age forty and won't employ even those with excellent qualifications. Even Peter Costello is concerned. This is a boss problem. not an unemployed problem. Will Latham challenge the prerogative of the bosses? No he won't!

The minor measure Latham proposes might help a little bit. But fundamentally the issue of older unemployment, let alone unemployment is not fundamentally tackled:

In short, a Latham government is accepting a rate of unemployment which is totally unacceptable. No unemployment should be acceptable. Latham offers token gimmicks. He has no real answers. Yet he supports attacks on the unemployed such as breaching. He rejects the idea of a shorter working week without loss of pay. And if workers took action to defend their jobs, Latham would actively oppose them!

## **Free Trade Agreement: a crisis for Latham Labor**

For revolutionary communists, the Free Trade Agreement must be opposed unconditionally. It must be opposed for one main reason - it means a bloc with US imperialism. These economic ties are linked to military ones and will be used to tie Australia to the current war effort and to drag Australia into future wars on the side of the US imperialists. Under this Agreement Australia must prefer the US to other imperialist powers and the third world as a trading partner.

The Liberals have promoted this Agreement to get some benefit for sections of the Australian bourgeoisie and rural community. There are winners but there are also losers. The sugar industry faces serious difficulties. Labor could pick up in Queensland. If One Nation were stronger, they certainly would. But it is Labor which faces more problems - wholesale division within the ranks.

There is widespread opposition to this agreement within the community. Many are concerned about the threat to Australian culture and the jobs of Australian actors. Some are concerned that foods contains genetically modified products will no longer have to label their foods. Workers in manufacturing fear for their jobs. There is also concern about cheap pharmaceutical products generic products which may no longer be available. On the surface it may seem that the clear electorally appropriate choice would be to oppose this Agreement. But Latham is a man loyal to the system who must obey its dictates.

Mark Latham is a man under a lot of pressure. And it is not just over Iraq. The Australian ruling class demands the Free Trade Agreement. But Labor's base, the trade union bureaucracy and labour aristocracy stand vehemently opposed. For Doug Cameron of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, protectionism is an article of faith. He has banked his whole trade union strategy of pressuring Labor into being the vanguard of Australian nation building. He is prepared to sacrifice working class struggle for this dishonourable political end. Cameron has a lot at stake.

Basically, he needs Labor to carry out his political agenda. The Free Trade Agreement is a repudiation of it. So Cameron is distancing himself from Labor. Cameron acknowledges those Laborites who he considers to be principled (Albanese and Plybersek. But what they advocate is a tactical voting strategy which favours Greens and independents.

The Greens, of course are set to cash in. They are consistently anti FTA on both economic nationalist and ecological grounds. This could ensure that they keep their Wollongong centred seat of Cunningham where the big unions will campaign strongly against the FTA.

Mark Latham has dealt with this issue in his usual pragmatic manner. After initially opposing the Agreement he has now pledged Labor support so long as the Agreement is amended in two key areas. One of these involves

pharmaceuticals. Here Latham takes the appearance of responsibility on two fronts. On one hand he appears responsible to the concerns of most Australians as well as being responsible to the interests of capital. The Liberals claim there is no real threat coming from the Agreement. So why hold back on Labor's amendments which appear to be a safety net. Howard has now indicated his preparedness to negotiate so it is one minor tactical victory for Mark Latham. Of course, it is one major defeat for the opponents of the FTA.

There are some who will buy Latham's amended humane FTA. But the hard core opponents including unionists, ecologists, some farmers, some capitalists, the Australian performing arts industry know very well what it means. And they don't intend to lie down. So Labor faces some hard lobbying and the loss of support - perhaps to the Greens. Labor will have to confront many heated rallies in the months ahead.. This could seriously hamper Labor and perhaps prevent it from winning power. This depends on where the swings occur. Latham's position is hardly an encouragement to many potential supporters.

What has been exposed already is Latham's pragmatic expediency when it comes to principles. It also has exposed his total subservience to the ruling class .A Latham government will be a bosses government. Meanwhile bureaucrats like Cameron are faced with the problem of how they are going to get their capitalist government committed to nation building. It certainly won't come from Latham.

We must reject both of the above. There is only one programme for the working class - international class solidarity around a revolutionary programme. No to tariffs and protection! International class solidarity to fight redundancies, everywhere! Build a revolutionary communist party! Fight for communist leadership within the unions!

## **Socialist Alliance: a reformist Manifesto**

This is indeed a slick publication which matches mainstream left and union publications for flash and glossy presentation. Another Australia is Possible it says. Well yes it is but the result of this programme is not a new social system, but a more humane variant of the one we've got at the moment - reformed humanised capitalism.

It is fully acknowledged that the Alliance stands firmly with working people and the poor. They want politicians who are campaigners and fighters rather than bludgers and hacks They want the bosses to pay. Many of the demands and issues they raise are progressive .They also believe in action outside parliament. But basically this programme does not transcend the system.

Let us take some examples

Poverty: a disease that can be cured There is an alternative

"Socialist Alliance says that we can wipe out poverty in Australia through a four pronged attack offensive that contains job creation, a decent minimum wage and fair welfare and tax systems"

They do mention shorter working week without loss of pay. For this they deserve credit as it is an important demand. They also want to replace work for the dole with voluntary properly waged non-profit job creation. They also want child care so women can work.

What they don't say is that capitalism will resist this tooth and nail. And any government which dares to implement such policy would be dealt with as effectively as Whitlam or alternatively, drowned in blood as what happened to Allende in Chile. There is a massive crisis in capitalist profitability. Unemployment is its consequence. So is inflation. So is privatisation. So are the attacks on unions. Therefore we should overthrow it.

This latter conclusion is posed at the end of the publication, indefinitely, for the far distant future ."In the end socialism is the only possible solution". Incidentally their formulation "Democratic ownership of society's wealth" liquidates the fundamental line of difference between reform and revolution .The net result is reformism Also denied is the fact that in a post revolutionary situation, the issue is not democratic control but proletarian control - the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no link between revolutionary demands and the problems and issues workers are facing now. The reformist nature of this manifesto is shown up most blatantly in the section Who will pay for it all?. There is no denying their creativity for ideas in extracting wealth from the rich and redistributing to the poor "Increase the company tax rate" "Eliminate the tax loopholes favouring the rich" "Halve the spending on defence" "Drop the diesel fuel rebate"

The resources it claims really exist to construct a socially just economically sustainable and truly democratic society in Australia"

. The economic pressures on capitalist governments to cut back, balance their budget etc are real. Yes there are some individuals pushing privatisation for selfish reasons But on the whole governments do privatise not for individual interest but for the interest of the system as a whole. There are serious economic punishments for those who disobey. The programme for housing crisis is a massive expansion of public housing construction. But this will not stop the crisis. It is the dynamics of capital which divert investment from manufacturing into land and the result is high rents!. Under a Socialist Alliance government, it appears, investors will still invest, rents will still increase (no programme for rent control) but those forced out will be rehoused with increased public housing. So working class communities are still destroyed even though everyone still gets housing! The SA also believe in private housing with their promised "publically owned housing finance corporation to private genuinely low interest rates"

The Socialist Alliance are unlikely to win a seat let alone win office. So what is the consequence of all this? Workers today, voting Labor or otherwise, either tolerate or even actively support capital's right to rule. They may hate the

boss, there is also hatred for some policies, but on the whole capitalist social relations remain unopposed. This is disarming in the face of the bourgeois ideological offensive. If you support capitalist relationships you cannot fight pernicious ideology such as wage rises cause inflation, or unemployment, or that the bourgeois state has the right to police working class movement internationally and must restrict out movement for the sake of the economy. The logic of the latter is racism.

The whole history of the growth of right wing ideology over the past twenty years shows that those who accept the capitalist premises but don't like the effects, lose out.

For revolutionaries, the point of a programme is to win workers and others to the expropriation of the ruling class the smashing of the capitalist state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Secondary demands are important as they show the relevance of this programme to day to day issues that concern working people. But the point is to draw a link showing how these issues can be resolved by revolutionary means. This programme doesn't do this.

It is also important for revolutionaries to expose parliament. The parliamentary road to socialism leads to disaster. The only time revolutionaries should enter parliament to form a government is when there is a pro-soviet opposition based on independent working class power, prepared to smash the state.

In a sense this programme actually reinforces the system by claiming that with different priorities things could be fundamentally better. The old reformism, social democracy, is so putrid that even defending today's conditions is radical by their standards. They have been well and truly part of the capitalist imperialist offensive on all levels, economic social and military. Tony Blair in Britain is comrade in arms with George W Bush in his Iraq exploits. In New Zealand Finance minister under Labour Roger Douglass was vanguard of an economic rationalist offensive more savage than that of Australia's Liberals. Australia has many examples of ALP reaction. In New South Wales Carr's law and order offensive matches most Liberal efforts.

Compared to this Socialist Alliance seems enlightened. But reformism it is! Following the logic of this programme will lead to the same reconciliation with the system as does following Labor. This is not the programme that working people need.

Communist Left stands for

is employed  
nationalisation)

The shortening of the working week without loss of pay until everyone

Revolutionary expropriation of the means of production (as opposed to bourgeois

Socialisation of housework and childcare.

Support for Women's and Gay rights

Self determination for Kooris, Murris all indigenous groupings and

Torres Strait Islanders

Opposition to any Australian participation in the imperialist war drive including intervention in Iraq, Afghanistan or the war against terror

Opposition to Australian intervention in Asia or the Pacific including Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, the Solomon Islands or Timor

Smash all immigration controls! Free the refugees! A new

revolutionary communist international

A revolutionary workers and small farmers government based on working class organisations not on parliament.

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