

new anti-terror laws: a knife at our throats

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John Howard recently introduced anti-terror laws have been described as "draconian". He considers them necessary to meet the twenty-first century challenge of terrorism, arguing it is being hamstrung by twentieth century legislation. He wants to give the cops and ASIO the right to restrict the liberty of anyone suspected of terrorism or being associated with terrorists.

He claims these laws are not targeted at the Muslim community, that they will protect its decent members who are also victims of terrorism. He has emphatically denied any suggestion that these laws are aimed at left-wing opponents of the war in Iraq. He argues that those who merely denounce the war as wrong, is a criminal act or protest will not be touched. But those who preach violence will.

So much for what he says. What these laws will mean in reality has been shown quite graphically by the arrest and deportation of US citizen Scott Parkin, who actively demonstrates for peace and protests against multinationals. He attended the mass rally in Sydney against that conference of imperialists.

Parkin claims to be a peace person influenced by the likes of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. He recently addressed a meeting on non-violent demo tactics. ASIO claims he advocates violent tactics in radical demonstrations.

Fundamentally, whether Parkin was really a threatening radical is not significant to us. No one is suggesting that he is anything like El Quaida. Yet he was arrested and interrogated without even his lawyers being informed about his charges. He was sent back to America and owes the Australian Government his own and his "protectors" airfare. He may not re-enter the country for another five years. When challenged about this, the government has stonewalled, claiming disclosure would jeopardize security to avoid being challenged on denial of democratic rights. Kim Beazley was briefed by ASIO about Parkin and not surprisingly said nothing. He supports the thrust of Howard's reactionary offensive. Some of his suggestions such as targeting whole suburbs (where terrorist may reside) are even more reactionary than Howard's proposals. Labor hardly constitutes an opposition on this issue, especially at the Federal level. Parkin's treatment graphically illustrates what is offered for the left under the new regime of "anti-terrorism".

The Muslim community is seriously concerned about what this legislation will mean. Their concerns are fully justified. As they point out there are plenty of abuses of their rights by police and security in the name of "fighting terrorism". This new legislation will intensify and legitimise these attacks.

Irrespective of whether John Howard means what he says about Muslims being defended from terror and not victimised, the fact remains that the police force is racist, prejudiced against those of Arab descent and will be given a free hand to continue persecution. Arabs and Muslims living here have every right to be afraid. This legislation will also reinforce racism and prejudice against Arabs and Islamic people in Australia.

There is also the issue of definition. The government has created a list of organisations which are clearly off limits. They include El Quaida, Jamah Islamah, Abu Sayyaf Group, the Armed Islamic Group and so on. But things are

not always so clear cut. You may find that you are investigated as a potential threat to Australia, merely by donating money to a project in Afghanistan or by having a fundamentalist friend. ASIO and other political police have the right to search, investigate, arrest and interrogate. You might be jailed for fourteen days without the right to consult a lawyer.

Communist Left defends rights for terrorists, even real terrorists. There is no justification for anyone being jailed without charges or without having the right to consult a lawyer. We do this despite being opponents of terrorism as a strategy to fight imperialism. The real terrorists are the imperialists. Far more have been killed thanks to their interventions in Iraq than the terror raids on New York, Madrid, London and Bali combined.

Make no mistake; the main victims of this reactionary legislation will not be the terrorists but ordinary Arab residents of Australia, the left and the workers' movement.

Technically, there are plenty of laws in the government's arsenal to cover all aspects of terrorism. Charges such as "incitement to murder...conspiracy to murder...accessory to murder...accessory to the fact of murder...possession of illegal weapons" etc cover most situations involving real terrorism. Howard is reforming to pursue reactionary political ends not because it is necessary.

For this reason we urge a workers' movement to take action to smash this new reactionary legislation. It is truly a knife at the throat of all of us.

New Orleans: Bush's racism exposed.

The 2001 terror raid and Hurricane Katrina's assault on the city of New Orleans, parts of Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida, were major disasters which affected ordinary innocent US citizens. Yet the response from the authorities was in stark contrast. After El Quaida committed their terror raid, the response of the authorities was immediate, determined and decisive. In relation to New Orleans the response was anything but that. Yet what happened in New Orleans was well and truly within the realms of expectation.

Before Hurricane Katrina, every resident was asked to leave New Orleans. This was easier said than done. What if you don't have a car or can't afford the train or coach fare? Basically you were stuck. So many thousands were stuck in the main sporting arena in disgusting unhygienic conditions without adequate food or water. There they remained until authorities were in a position to act one week after Katrina had passed. One week after the hurricane passed Bush finally visited New Orleans and promised to rebuild the city. He hardly sounded passionate or convincing.

There are reasons for the differences in George Bush's different reactions. They stem from both the interests of US capital and the class character of the victims. In New York most of the victims were Bush's people. They included business, upper middle class, and respectable workers. These are Bush people. In contrast, the victims in New Orleans are black and at the bottom of the economic ladder. Bush in no way identifies with them and nor does he see much chance of winning them to the Republicans. For him they simply don't matter.

The other key difference is that Bush could use the New York disaster to rationalize US imperialist interests in the Middle East. From the terror bombing he rallied Americans around the flag, galvanizing support for both invading both Afghanistan and Iraq, even though the regime of either state was responsible. He also received a massive surge in popularity.

Today, George Bush is struggling to regain initiative. The US is bogged down in Iraq. No one really knows when the war will be over. Thousands of troops have lost their lives. The new Iraqi government is hardly seen as the real leadership of the Iraqi people. American people see clearly that they were dragged into war under false pretences. The war has strengthened El Quaida not weakened it.

They were also staggered to see pictures of America not dissimilar to imperialist dominated countries known as the third world. They are fully aware that the main reason for neglect was priorities which amount to racism. For Bush and cronies Black and unemployed people don't really matter. This message was received by middle America, loud and clear. Unfortunately, the only party which will benefit politically significantly from this are the Democrats. The American working class urgently need its own political party.

Mark Latham spills the beans.

Illness forced Mark Latham to retire from the Labor leadership and from politics completely. Now he's a house husband staying at home looking after his sons. Through publishing his diaries he is raking in the cash. There are some extremely controversial exposures coming from Latham's pen: he attacks the American alliance and the culture within the Labor Party.

Outing his opposition to the US Alliance caused quite a stir. The Australian exposed it in banner headlines. No-one knew anything of Latham's opposition until now. Phillip Rudd, Labor's shadow foreign minister, assured the ABC that he had lengthy detailed and private discussion on the Alliance where Latham gave him no indication that there was disagreement on any aspect. Rudd is a wholehearted supporter of America. He points out that resolutions endorsed by Latham strengthened Labor's support and not weakened it. When leader of the opposition, Latham towed the line and backed America.

The other key aspect of the diaries is Latham's attack on Labor's culture of uncaring. Concretely Latham accuses Beazley personally of making allegations that he was guilty of sexual harassment. He also accuses some Labor politicians of failure to support a colleague who took his own life. For those who know Labor, who remember the bashing of left MP Peter Baldwin, none of this is a major surprise. What has concerned the media is not whether or not the allegations are true or otherwise but the fact that Latham raised them at all.

All the hue and cry has been about Latham being a rogue elephant. They have tried to manoeuvre Labor leaders into admitting that Labor made a mistake offering Latham to the Australian public. They want a Labor Party totally subservient to the system. They prefer an uncaring regime to one which might rock the boat, even in a small way.

New Zealand elections: rationalist Clark Labour defeats the chauvinist Brash offensive.

In the recent New Zealand elections, Labour led by femocrat, politically correct, economic rationalist Helen Clark defeated the more chauvinist economic rationalist Don Brash. Brash, formerly New Zealand's Central Bank. It was indeed a narrow victory. Clark depends on making deals with a whole string of dubious independents who are either centre right or popularist soft left.

Brash, the banker, played a key role in New Zealand's economic rationalist "Rogernomics" economic offensive. Then he set his sights on parliament. Nationals got thrashed last elections and Brash was considered kind of a stop-gap leader. He appeared to be politically unattractive but good enough to fill the gap until they found their real leader. Well Brash rose to the task and well and truly challenged Clark Labour.

Brash started off as a Peter Costello. But he well and truly learned how to become a John Howard. He discovered chauvinism. What he learned was that thousands of middle New Zealanders were sick and tired of what has been perceived as "Maori privilege". In reality Maoris are at the bottom of NZ society. Clark can boast years of NZ prosperity, especially for the rich and upper middle classes. So why did these people desert her? Because now they have a sniff of power, they want more. Whilst Labour has brought home the bacon for them, it has never been their party of love. Brash has given them every reason to go back to their traditional political home, which is National.

Clark has served the ruling class well. But on some issues they are not quite satisfied. Some hanker for a Free Trade Agreement similar to one signed by Australia. Australia's agreement is overwhelmingly favours America. But some NZ industries will benefit as will some capitalists. To get the Agreement NZ must relinquish any desire to be nuclear free and must participate fully in the ANZUS Alliance. This includes being part of the Coalition in Iraq. All of this is what Don Brash promises as well as chauvinist reform attacking the rights of Maoris.

Clark is criticized by the hard right for slowing down the pace of industrial reform. They claim that under Labour this is going backwards. Clark Labour has repealed the Employment Contracts Act. Basically, what she has done is used the union bureaucracy to discipline the working class, to make working people accept major cut backs. This may not be satisfactory from the point of view of the rationalist right. But it is not satisfactory from the point of view of us either. We need unions with leaderships committed to class struggle. We need communist leadership.

Clark is back in office courtesy of minor parties. The Greens and Maori Party prefer Clark. For a start they detest Brash's attacks on the Maori rights, so supporting her is virtually guaranteed. New Zealand First and United Futures have stated they will not oppose Clark on budget and fundamental issues. Jim Anderton, a former Labour man who split to the left within the framework of reformism, promises his support. Anderton held his Christchurch seat won in the name of Jim Anderton Progressive Coalition. The Alliance Party he founded has negligible electoral support. It is an object lesson in the failure of rotten bloc politics.

But basically the minor parties lost ground. Winston Peters lost his seat of Tauranga. He was thrashed by the National Party. But New Zealand is still significant in terms of percentage of the national vote. It therefore wins a number of seats due to their system known as MMP. Brash has the support of the extreme economic rationalist party known as ACT NZ which was formed by former finance minister Roger Douglass. ACT lost support also but won the seat of Epsom. Clark won the battle for the minor parties

Clark is back but her government can only be described as Labour in name only. She is thoroughly hamstrung by bourgeois interests. Labour is so right wing these days that some compromises will actually drag her to the left. But in no way will her government represent a form of proletarian independence, even within the framework of parliament. Some unions backed her but basically, Clark won support not by promising to represent workers interests but by sowing the fear that National would be worse. Labour has a record of vicious attacks on working people. Clark Labour will continue this agenda. She gave us absolutely no reason to advocate any form of support for her party. The reactionary agenda will continue.

Unemployment and the fight against Howard's industrial reform.

John Howard has conceded that he lost the initial PR battle concerning industrial relations reform. The union ads have created understandable concern. Howard has been forced to promise that meal breaks cannot be negotiated away. For the hard right, Howard has gone too far. They want the whole concept of a minimum wage to be off the agenda. But the hard pragmatist Howard realises that if it means marginalising unions, some concessions are well and truly worth it. They can easily be taken away when the smoke dies down. The first task is to show that abolishing union rights is compatible with an Australian sense of fair play. Of course, he points to the fact that there are too many governments to deal with.

The unions are planning their action for November eleven. We hope this will not be a one-off protest start but the start of a campaign to bring down the Howard Government. We must oppose not just legislation but the whole of his agenda. But who will bring down this government. A Beazley government hasn't even promised to repeal this legislation, let alone anything else. Work for the dole will stay as will VSU. The only party which can successfully organise industrial action to bring down Howard is a revolutionary communist party. Communist Left is committed to such a party. The aim of this action will not be another Labor parliamentary government but a revolutionary workers and small farmers government.

The unions talk of a "political strategy" and a "community campaign". What they mean is crawling to the likes of Australian Democrats and Family First. This merely exposes their utter weakness. Other sectors must be won over, A community campaign which won over the working class, pensioners and low income earners would be well and truly worth it. The community is under attack and needs union backing so the should defend the unions. Of course many activists realise that the attacks concern more than just unions. The issue of VSU for students has been raised. So has the issue of refugees which is extremely important. But what about the unemployed?

The issue of the unemployed is not merely an issue of another grouping under attack needing solidarity. It is part and parcel of the struggle to defend the union movement itself,

Howard justifies his position pointing to the power of negotiation. It is difficult for an individual worker to negotiate. It is impossible for an unemployed person. If you are on JobSearch or NewStart, you have to accept job offers. If you don't then you are breached. The choice then is either a job which undermines workers hard fought rights or losing income and having to face the choice of not paying bills or not eating. Most unemployed will take the job under this pressure.

Also the threat of unemployment is used as a knife at the throat of the existing work force. "Accept this or there are plenty out there who will!" is their ultimatum. So wages and working conditions are cut to the bone. The fight to defend working conditions means a fight against unemployment.

A key demand in the struggle against unemployment is a shorter working week without loss of pay. As long as there is one person who wants work but hasn't got it then the working week is too long. The working week should be continually reduced until everyone is employed. The working week should be reduced without loss of pay. In fact workers should receive wage increases linked to inflation. This should be under the control of workers committees.

Work for the dole is also a serious attack on the union movement. Thanks to work for the dole, councils, churches, hospitals and community centres get free labour courtesy of the unemployed being forced to do it. Work for the dole involves gardening, concreting, scrub clearing, light construction, nurses and teaches aid work. All of the above should be done by unionised workers paid for at full award rates. Unless this slavery is stopped more employers will have their eye on more tasks being carried out by forced labour instead of employing workers. The struggle to defend unionised labour means a fight to smash work for the dole. Work for the dole jobs must be turned into real jobs where labourers who choose to work there are paid a proper wage. We need real jobs for real wages. For all!

The unemployed need support. In fact unemployment should be abolished. But unemployed solidarity is also vital if consistent unionism is to remain. Communist Left has initiated solidarity between unemployed and workers struggles in the unemployed social security activist group known as StandUp! How about some solidarity to fight the attacks on the unemployed.

DSP: from revisionist Trotskyism to Castroite Stalinism - an overview.

part 2 continued from RED#68

The original article was contributed by Communist Left to the New Zealand Trotskyist publication **Class Struggle** by the Communist Workers Group. Given that Green Left Weekly has influence in New Zealand, we thought it important that activists in that country get a picture of their sordid degeneration. Whilst more should be written, we think this is a valuable article for Australian activists also.

We stress that this is an overview and not a complete history. The DSP established their political direction as a variant of Pabloism which identified with Trotskyism. In the previous issue we looked at the DSP from the beginning, from its roots in the Australian movement against the Vietnam War and conscription. The DSP began as a grouping thoroughly Labor Party loyal with a strong opposition to Stalinism. It was committed to the popular front against the Vietnam War called Moratorium and defended the class collaborationist nature of that movement. In fact their predecessors used the Moratorium as a template, as an example of how revolutionaries should intervene on all issues. Part 1 concluded with their overt and conscious break from Trotskyism. We concluded when those who identified with Trotskyism or the Fourth International broke away. In Part 2 we deal with their effort to manoeuvre amongst the Green and Stalinist movement.

Part Two

Bloc with Stalinist Socialist Party of Australia

Internationally the SWP was pursuing alliances with left Stalinists. In Australia, they looked for an alliance with the pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia (now called Communist Party of Australia). There was no way that the SPA would abandon support for Stalin, nor the ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union or Poland (the SWP supported Solidarnosc), but there was some basis for unity.

The organisation called CPA at the time was heading to the right rapidly. And many SPA trade union officials were joining in. The logic of CPA strategy was to make an alliance with the Hawke government called the Prices and Incomes Accord. Under the Accord workers sacrificed wages and conditions in exchange for minor reforms which workers would normally expect from a Labor government anyway. The Accord divided the Australian left but the only official to have opposed it openly was Jenny Haines, a supporter of Bob Gould. But it was SPA policy to oppose the Accord.

The SPA stood by its principles and expelled the overwhelming majority of its trade union base, including prominent party leaders. They lost not only one third of their membership, but the significant membership in terms of trade union influence. Making an alliance with the SWP gave them a bit more clout and assisted their influence amongst young people. The SWP gained some contact with unionists. Their joint efforts meant more effective election campaigns.

Their main campaign was the Social Rights Manifesto. The title speaks for itself. Rights is a bourgeois concept and their Manifesto was for rights under capitalism. What this showed was that in terms of the Australian situation, the SWP and SPA had approximately the same minimum programme. The SWP called their demands 'transitional' and argued that the process was continuing. SPA called the Manifesto the first stage of their two stage revolution.

The SWP and SPA were also allies in the peace movement. Both opposed the right stalinist and liberal

bourgeois view that 'both superpowers' were responsible for the arms race. SWP and SPA put the blame on imperialism and were clearly better in their variant of the popular front. Eventually there was a division of labour with the right Stalinists organising Palm Sunday, and SWP/SPA running the Hiroshima Day protests. Of these two the right popular front was the more popular.

All this stalinist maneuvering was too much for the SWP-US who formed a faction in Australia which were then expelled (forming another Communist League). This faction included former leaders Nita Keig, Deb Schnookal and Dave Deutschmann. In the US the Australian SWP had the support of former SWP-US presidential candidate Pedro Camejo. In the USA, John Percy and Pedro Camejo supported the presidential campaign of US Democrat Jesse Jackson and the protest campaign to freeze nuclear weapons.

The SWP-US and its supporters also objected to the Australian SWP's support for cold war right wingers at Polish solidarity rallies and its support for a Croatian nationalist organisation known as the Croatian Movement for Statehood (HDP).

Was HDP a former fascist Croatian organisation moving to the left or an adaptation by the fascists to co-opt the left? Either way it was unsupportable. The HDP, even with its left face, recognised the fascist government of Pavlevic whose dictatorship was backed by Mussolini during the Second World War. This fact alone made it thoroughly unprincipled, in fact treacherous, for revolutionaries to give it any positive recognition irrespective of its left rhetoric, genuine or otherwise.

The Hawke Government went to the right and started attacking unions. In response there was a national rank and file movement called Fightback which the SWP was active in. Fightback split into two wings. Some known as Canberra Fightback, wanted it to remain a rank-and-file caucus. The SWP and SPA alliance, joined by the Maoist CPA(ML) wanted to turn it into a new communist party.

The Maoist-led Builders Labourers Federation was under attack by the Hawke Government at the Federal level, and by the Cain Labor government in Victoria which authorised an armed police raid on its offices. Legislation aimed at the BLF was a serious threat to organised militant unionism in Victoria. So the Maoists were now hard left when it came to opposing Labor. The pro-Accord Stalinists stabbed the BLF in the back, refusing to defend it from a capitalist state attack, in fact often endorsing the attack!

Understandably there was strong hostility amongst militants towards Labor. The SWP opposition to Labor also intensified. In 1987 they even endorsed the bourgeois Australian Democrats. They argued that whilst the Democrats were a bourgeois party, they supported progressive movements and were to the left of Labor on social services and welfare issues, and could be given critical support. At the same time the Greens were growing rapidly. So the name of the SWP paper Direct Action was changed to Green Left Weekly.

The Gorbachev liberal bureaucratic leadership of the Soviet Union led to another turn by the SWP — towards the Gorbachev leadership. As the Soviet Union degenerated rapidly, the SWP made all sorts of alliances with liberalised Stalinists. Devoid of any Marxist analysis they took their democratic credentials at face value oblivious at any threat of counter-revolution. They have close ties with East Germany's former ruling party, the PDS. In the spirit of democratic socialism, they changed their name to Democratic Socialist Party.

Meanwhile the SPA was going in the opposite direction. They wanted to hang onto as much of the Breshnevite past as possible. So there was a strain on the alliance. The SPA was then oriented to the Chinese leadership. The bloodshed of Tienamin Square, supported by SPA but opposed by DSP, was the straw that broke the camel's back. The alliance was over.

The DSP then oriented to the fast degenerating Communist Party of Australia who were aiming to develop a new party in what was called the 'New Left Party Process'. The CPA were reassessing the Accord but hadn't broken from it. But the CPA did not reciprocate the DSP's advances, and chose to degenerate in alliance with old pro-Accord ex-SPA bureaucrats. The DSP has tried to fill the vacuum left by the CPA degeneration.

Socialist Alliance

The most recent party building maneuver has been the Socialist Alliance formed similar to the one in Britain. The Socialist Workers Party ('state capitalist' and unrelated to the SWP-US and DSP traditions) was a key initiating force in Britain. Their Australian supporters, the International Socialist Organisation were joint founders of the Australian version along with the DSP. What started off as a joint electoral bloc around minimal demands with equal participation by the various groupings has become virtually a DSP front. The DSP has now become renamed as Democratic Socialist Perspectives and has no public presence apart from the Socialist Alliance, though its youth group Resistance still has an open presence. The Alliance is now virtually a non-revolutionary party dominated by the DSP. Alliance candidates effectively stand on the DSP programme.

During the eighties, the pin-up boys for the DSP were the Sandinistas. They 'reassessed' Trotskyism and abandoned it on the basis of the Sandinistas' 'success'. Had they any integrity they would have re-assessed their position in the light of the Sandinista's failure. This they haven't done. Today they have replaced cheerleading the Sandinistas with cheerleading Chavez in Venezuela. They hail him virtually uncritically.

Another piece of DSP treachery has been its support for Australian troops in East Timor, sent there ostensibly for defending Timorese independence. It may be understandable that some bourgeois nationalists may take imperialist rhetoric at face value. Those who have some understanding of Lenin should know better. Australia has now imposed a deal which steals oil that belongs to the Timorese.

Conclusions

This is only an overview of the whole SWP/DSP history of liquidation and treachery. Essentially what started off as an attempt to establish Trotskyism on the basis of student radicalism against the Vietnam War, degenerated into a pro-Stalinist grouping, organisationally opportunist, and whose only principle appears to be cheerleading Stalinists and building a party distinct from Labor (but not reformism). They are good at tapping into youth and student radicalism. Whilst on some issues, they find Trotsky's analysis appropriate, when it comes to drawing fundamental class lines they clearly stand with Stalin, especially in imperialist dominated countries euphemistically called the 'third world'.

Many DSP members are good activists in their unions. The DSP presents itself as a strong and confident organisation. But it is the Stalinist principles which are decisive. For the sake of the revolution, these must be thoroughly broken from. The only revolutionary banner is the red banner of proletarian internationalism. The revolutionary tradition is that of Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International. On the basis of this tradition a new revolutionary international must be built.

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
 - women's and gay rights, free abortion on demand, socialisation of housework & child care.
 - opposition to all immigration controls
 - self-determination for all indigenous peoples of Australasia
 - class unity with workers of Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere.
- NO tariffs and protection! Defend jobs everywhere!**
- NO import controls!**
- total opposition to Australian intervention in PNG, Bougainville, Indonesia, Timor, the Pacific, in the Middle East and else where.
 - workers' action against Australia's participation in the US imperialist "war against terror".
 - a new revolutionary communist international

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