

THE

COMMUNIST

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BOB HAWKE STILL SAVIOUR FOR THE RULING CLASS!

The Hawke victory took place with the world recession intensifying. Australia is of course interlocked within the world economy. Therefore any crisis internationally affects the Australian economy. Australia is tied economically in particular to the US but also to Japan. Internationally the U.S. is losing ground rapidly to Japan. This is shown by Japan underwriting US debt over the next five years. The US has also had many setbacks including the overthrow of its puppets the Shah of Iran who was replaced by the Ayatollah Khomeini, the Samoza regime which was replaced by the Sandanistas, President Marcos of the Philippines who was replaced by Cory Aquino and unrest in South Korea. In the Philippines, the US is re-establishing itself by economic and political concessions and reintegrating the Aquino regime within its orbit. Australia is the key to the US maintaining its hold over the South East Asian and Pacific region . This is shown by its loyal support for the US in Vietnam and recently in Fiji, although Hawke expressed some token tactical differences which were of no practical consequence. Vital US bases are in Australia which the Hawke government is committed to maintaining.

The world wide crisis is biting deeply into the Australian economy. Australia has a massive foreign debt and a massive budget deficit. The bourgeoisie have no solution to the economic crisis except to viciously attack the working class, the poor and even sections of the middle classes including small farmers. This is true which ever government is elected. The Bourgeois want to cut wages to the bone, smash trade union organisation, slash public spending in welfare and capital works programmes. They want to crush any working class resistance. The Hawke government is committed to this end. Already 3,000 public servants have just been dismissed with another 6,000 shortly to follow. According to Business Daily - the Market Welcomes Labor Return'. It goes on to say: "Australian financial markets yesterday (July 13) welcomed the historic return of the Labor government.

"Favorable reactions to the election by local and overseas investors lifted the share market to a record high, boosted the Australian dollar and continued the fall in interest rates but "Australia's burgeoning debt and uncompetitive inflation rate would limit further falls in the medium term. Business Daily is also impressed with the performance of Industrial Relations Minister, Mr Willis. Mr Hawke claims that the August budget will not be tough – we'll see. But he is advised against a soft budget by the Financial Review which urges Hawke to act decisively in order to gain credibility for austerity policies. Both Paul Keating and Senator Button warn that we are in for tough times.

A big loser from the call for an early election was Joh Bjelke Petersen. The Nationals made no headway in their bid to break the two party mould. Queensland is of course the most right wing state with vicious anti union legislation which must be fought nationally. The Nationals want to spread their struggle throughout Australia. The significance of the Joh campaign was not its chance of success but its effect on pushing the mainstream parties to the right.

Many who claim to be on the left pick on Joh and his nationals - the ugly face of capitalism - in order to cover for their total subservience. Joh Bjelke Petersen visited Newcastle on May 15 and was greeted with a hostile reception by unionists including the Waterside workers Federation for whom it was a "summonsed meeting - "no attendance at this meeting and branch rules will be applied". This sort of compulsion is hardly the way to win over the uncommitted unionists. The official Trades Hall Council leaflet claimed:

'whether you're Labor, Liberal or Calathumpian you have every reason to oppose Joh and his new right supporters". No - neither the bourgeoisie nor the Hawke government are fundamentally opposed to Joh. They are all fundamentally committed to slashing the public sector and smashing unions The Hawke government is about to bring in a savage Industrial Relations Bill. The Joh Nationals want to attack harder than either Labor or Liberal are

prepared to at the moment but make no mistake , as the budget deficit grows and the foreign debt expands the bankers and the bosses will demand policies similar or even harder to what the Joh nationals are advocating. And they will get them either from the existing parties or from a new party which will break the mould of Australian politics. Hawke has stated that he will resign willingly if required to by the ruling class. Therefore you cannot beat the right by propping up Hawke.

One party that gained from the election was the Australian Democrats. They gained by appealing to the left wing vote. Indeed it is not too difficult to appear left of Hawk now he is clearly to the right of Malcolm Fraser. The Democrats stand for no ID cards and more spending on welfare. No doubt very attractive to many left wing and even working class people disgusted with Hawke. But the Democrats make it clear what system they represent - capitalism. The Democrats can afford to talk left as they will never have to administer the system to which they proclaim their loyalty. They therefore can afford to have their cake and eat it too. The Democrats actually play an extremely dangerous role keeping those unhappy within the orbit of the capitalist framework. It is a symptom of the utter weakness and degeneration of the working class that they are allowed to get away with it.

Not only is the left allowing the Democrats to get away with it, sections are sucked into the Democrats campaign. Most notable is the Socialist Workers Party. It advocated a vote for the Democrats, where no alternative, i.e. protest candidates, were standing as: protesting against Labors anti worker policies while not opening the gate for Liberals or Nationals. For the SWP, policies come before class lines. Critical support for the Democrats is the logic of their protest orientation. No doubt the Democrats are in vogue with the environment movement with whom the SWP feels at home. For revolutionaries, breaking the working class from Labor means building a revolutionary alternative not giving left credentials to a bosses party which dons trendy clothing.

The Communist Left stands for a revolutionary alternative to the Labor Party We have given critical support to Labor in the past because it is only through experience of Labor in office that the working class can learn the treachery of the likes of Hawke. As Hawke was clearly going to be re-elected courtesy of the bosses there was simply no point in redirecting the working class back towards a party which pledged to ruthlessly attack not just their wages and conditions but also their organisations as well.

Within the Labor Party the left barely exists. It is either been hopelessly co-opted or thrown out. Gerry Hand who challenged Hawke for pre-selection in the seat of Wills claiming 'irreconcilable differences is now4

entering cabinet with Hawke's blessing. On the other hand Bill Hartly has been kicked out and has formed the Industrial Labor Party. George Petersen has been kicked out and is forming the Illawarra Labor Party and George Georges stood unsuccessfully as an independent with Stalinist support. The Industrial Labor Party claims to want to maintain the true traditions of the Australian Labor movement. These are treacherous and include the white Australia policy. It is precisely these traditions which have paved the way for grubs like Hawke. The Labor Party was born out of the trade union movement. Unionism, the bargaining for better conditions for the sale of workers' labour power, accepts exploitation and accepts the capitalist state. Hawke is using workers' loyalty to the capitalist state to destroy working class trade union struggle. To Hawke's attacks the ILP only counterposes trade union struggle. Politically it has learned nothing from its own demise.

The lesson revolutionaries draw is that to fight Hawke we need to counterpose a political alternative - a struggle which smashes the capitalist state and not accepts it.

The Socialist Labour Leagues calls for a struggle to "make the Lefts fight for a workers government". This is doing the working class a gross disservice. There is virtually no Left left and certainly none with any prospect of taking on Hawke. The programme of the Left of calling for a defence of Australian manufacturing through protectionism is reactionary. The SLL is actually redirecting workers attention back towards Labor through a nonexistent faction struggle. Another non-alternative which stood candidates was the Socialist Party of Australia whose 'minimum' programme called for the unemployed to live in poverty on 'one third of average male weekly earnings'. It also called for 'no export of jobs'. Apparently Australian workers can have jobs but Asians can't. This is the racist tradition which has shackled the working class.

The Communist Left called for a boycott of these elections because there was no party worthy of working class support. We did not do this for protest reasons as did Harry Van Moorst and his 'No Vote' campaign in Melbourne which argued that politicians might listen if we didn't vote. The point is not just to 'oppose Labor' but to build a revolutionary party. Elections are important to revolutionaries as tests of workers' political allegiance. Slogans such as "don't vote - organise" ignore the fact that the existing struggles of the working class are dominated by bourgeois politics. These politics cannot be ignored with calls for action but must be challenged. It is therefore important for revolutionaries to stand for parliament not because we think parliament changes anything but because the existing politics of the working class must be challenged. The Communist Left5

believes in standing candidates against the Labor party for this end and will do so as soon as practical.

Our programme stands for proletarian independence from capitalism and the capitalist state. The question of state power is the most vital question facing the working class. We are on the verge of the biggest crisis since the great depression. All attempts to resolve the crisis whether 'monetarist or Keynesian' are at the expense of the working class. The only alternative to barbarism is socialist revolution. Working class people do not support revolution at the moment. Their consciousness

remains within the framework of capitalism. They must be won over through a revolutionary programme. The Communist Left fights for such a programme.

Our programme does not merely win over the working class to supporting the dictatorship of the proletariat - it elevates the proletariat to the vanguard of history. This means taking up democratic demands such the Republic and winning over other oppressed and exploited people including small farmers. Small farmers are being driven off their farms by high interest rates. Marketing boards for rural products such as eggs are facilitating monopoly control and helping drive small farmers off the land. Small farmers can and must be won as allies to the working class by showing that their problems come not from workers wages but from multinational profit and bankers interest rates.

The next three years will see more workers thrown out of work and onto the dole queue and more thrown off the dole queue. The dole will fall further below the poverty line. Make no mistake, things are going to get much tougher. The only way out is to organise to overthrow the capitalist system. Socialism or barbarism. These are the choices being clearly put before us. This is especially true with the imperialists gearing up for war in the Middle East, Latin America and elsewhere. Join the Communist Left and fight for a future.

BUILD A REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY TO BURY THE LABOR PARTY AND CAPITALISM FOREVER!

Coup in Fiji

The government of Fiji, led by Dr Bavadra, consisting of an alliance of the National Federation Party and the Labour Party, lasted just over one month before it was hijacked by Colonel Rambuka. This government was a popular front. Once again imperialism teaches us that democracy is a luxury only to be enjoyed by the rich and powerful imperialist powers. Of course only the naive could think that Rambuka acted alone. Is it just a mere coincidence that Veron Walters, US general, visited just before – hardly! General Walters has a habit of visiting counties just before military coups.

Right from the start there was a campaign of dislocation aimed at the Bavadra government. This consisted of racist attacks against the Indian community. There were also strong protest from the US government against Bavadras ban of nuclear-powered shipping in Fijian waters. This was of course the same policy as New Zealand. The US disapproves of New Zealand's action. However it understands Lange's predicament - namely that he has to be seen to be doing something progressive in order to offset massive attacks on the working class he has been forced to carry out in loyalty obeying the dictates of the system. The US can tolerate Lange as long as other nations do not follow suit. The fact that nuclear-powered and -capable Navy vessels cannot go to New Zealand is only of minor inconvenience when they can be parked a few hundred miles north in Fiji. Rambuka is no naive islander unaware of the devious dirty tricks of the imperialists...he has served as a soldier in the Lebanon.

The election of the Bavadra government was a surprise within Fiji and overseas. Since formal independence the reins of power have been held by the Alliance Party led by Sir Kamisese Mara . The Alliance claims to rule on behalf of all Fijians. In reality it governs on behalf of imperialism. The Fijian chiefs have a long history of collaboration with imperialism.. Britain took over Fiji with their consent. When Fiji gained formal independence in 1970, it was given a constitution which resembled

Australia's with a Governor General and an upper house, the senate. The senators were elected from the Grand Council of Chiefs. Of course this political structure is deliberate - it keeps Fiji chained to imperialism. It prohibits minor reforms. The constitution is also biased in favour of Fijians. It guarantees them a fixed proportion of the land.

The just deposed NFP/Labor coalition government was racially dominated by Fijians of Indian descent. Of course this fact is used very strongly by the Alliance and Colonel Rambuka in whipping up hysteria. 7

However, decisive in the coalition victory was a frustration by young people and others, many of Fijian descent, who wanted change. The NFP/Labor coalition promised a better deal for the unemployed.

But it was clearly no threat to capital, sections of which welcomed its election. Its reforms were indeed extremely small.

In the colonies imperialism cannot tolerate the slightest reform or inconvenience to its rule.

The NFP is a party based on small Indian farmers, workers and small business people, small farmers being predominate. Small farmers do have a material position as they possess land. However politically they cannot be independent of the two decisive classes in society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The unity between the NFP and Labor Party was a unity based not on proletarian principle but on terms acceptable to sections of domestic capital and even some imperialists. The NFP/Labor bloc was a popular front which has been consistently shown in Spain and Chile to be a death trap for the working class.

The Labor Party was formed in 1985 out of the trade union movement. Its leaders, including Bavadra, remain very inexperienced. Its formation brought the treacherous traditions of social democracy" to the Fijian working class. From this tradition it has learned absolutely nothing. Its actions in its own defence have been minimal and limited to protest actions. In fact, the NFP have done more in mobilising its base, the Indian petty bourgeoisie than did the Labor party in mobilising its base in the trade union movement. It has proved its unworthiness to the Fijian working class. A revolutionary party in Fiji would mobilise the working class, not for another Bavadra style popular front fiasco, but for real workers and peasants power.

The imperialists and their Fijian lieutenants - the chiefs - have used race to divide the working class in Fiji. Last century, Indians from the state of Gujerat, were brought over to Fiji as labour for the Fijian sugar plantations.

Today, those of Indian descent make up 48% of the population. This is a larger proportion than the native Fijians. Those of Indian descent today have nothing in common with India. Due to their becoming working class many reactionary customs such as the caste system have broken down. 8

Many of Indian descent have become small business operators. Of course there is much hostility between working class Fijians and these small business operators many of whom are racist and refuse to employ native Fijians. The reactionary Chiefs of the Alliance party direct this hostility toward Indians, most of whom are ripped off also. The real winner is imperialism.

It not clear why the US imperialists used a military coup instead of provoking a constitutional crisis and allowing the Governor General to dismiss the government legally. However it is no surprise that the coup was legitimised by the Governor General. The purpose of the Governor General is to strangle democracy and legitimise imperialist control. There has been some verbal opposition to the coup from both Hawke and Lange. Indeed it is believed by some that a recent swing to the Lange government of about 7% is due to his so called principled stand on the Fijian situation. In reality this principle is maintaining imperialist power by the Governor General instead of by coup.

Both Hawke and Lange are forced to show, in order to remain in office their total submission to imperialist legality. Of course their opposition to the coup is only verbal . They will do everything in their power to subvert any meaningful working class action. Hawke made absolutely no response to a call by Dr Bavadra for a peace keeping force. By making issue of the fanciful Libyan threat Hawke is signalling that his heart lies with the US and his verbal opposition is only a pragmatic facade.

The Fijian working class, including the trade union movement, has called for trade union bans. The imperialists, through the press, have thrown dust in the eyes of working people by talking about food shortages. In reality it is the rich who suffer from these import bans as most Fijian working class and poor and small farmers get enough from locally grown produce. Of course this provides the ACTU with the excuse it needs to call off bans. The bureaucracy of course wants to sabotage working class action.

In Fiji the only force that can be consistently democratic is the working class. This is because the Republic can only be achieved through socialist revolution. A revolutionary party must be built in Fiji now. We in Australia must give the working class every possible assistance. This means direct action. A defeat for imperialism in Fiji would not just benefit the Fijian working class but be a major defeat for US imperialism internationally. 9

MARXISM AND THE GENERAL STRIKE

A reply to Workers Revolution.

Workers Revolution is a new bulletin printed in Melbourne. It is in solidarity with The League for a Revolutionary Party (US). To our knowledge there is only one supporter, Paul White, who understandably broke away from the Labor Party- loyal fake Trotskyist Socialist Fight. The LRP is of course much larger. However size is not important. What is important is whether Workers Revolution is what it claims to be - the continuity of the tradition of Trotskyism - we think not. Firstly, Workers Revolution differs with Trotsky on the class character of the Soviet State which it considers to be state capitalist. From this characterisation WR refuses to defend the Soviet Union from imperialism. We however want to take issue with its position on the general strike. For the fake far left, including the Socialist Labor League and in the past the Spartacist League, the demand for a general strike is a knee jerk panacea for every attack by the bosses and the government. Calling for a general strike sounds revolutionary but in reality is a substitute for fighting for a revolution.

Workers Revolution calls for a general strike to beat off attacks. "Labor governments, both state and federal, have been central to attacks on workers' wages, conditions and basic rights in recent years." "The capitalists answer to the crisis is to make us pay for it." "The ALP governments have used their 'traditional relationship with trade unions to help the bosses achieve successes.'" "It's time to

give the bosses a taste of our power.' "The moment is opportune." "The miners and other workers going into struggle must not remain isolated." "Another SEQUEB style defeat would be disastrous." "There is only one tactic capable of unifying the plethora of disparate and usually ineffective struggles into a powerful force." "It is a General Strike - an all out battle to win."

However for Workers Revolution, it is not merely a question of a general strike because the current circumstances warrant it. Workers Revolution then goes on to take a quote from Trotsky and lecture to us on the difference between propaganda and agitation. The writer concedes that in terms of agitation, other demands might be appropriate e.g. 'occupy the factories!'. But in terms of propaganda for Workers Revolution, the general strike is to be raised at all times. 10

It is indeed very important to study Trotsky's writings closely and especially to place them in context.

Trotsky in no way argued that a general strike be called for at all times in either agitation or propaganda. On the contrary, he argued against the Stalinists precisely on this point. In a polemic against the Stalinists, Trotsky concludes: At any rate, we learn that all countries from Britain to China - with France, Germany and Poland at the lead, are now ready for the slogan of a general strike. We are finally convinced that not a trace is left of the unhappy law of uneven development.

Workers Revolution is obviously on this question at one with the Stalinists. Trotsky then goes on: "We might manage to be reconciled to this if they would only tell us what political aims the slogan of the general strike is in every country." For Workers Revolution, the answer is to beat off bosses attacks. This is simply not good enough. Firstly, as Trotsky pointed out, workers do not go on strike (and certainly not general strikes) for nothing. However more important, it ignores the question of state power. As Trotsky points out, a general strike poses the question of power but does not resolve

it. Paralyzing the normal functions of the capitalist state, the general strike poses the question who is master of the house?. The question is decided only by force. Workers Revolution does not prepare the working class for force what so ever. As Trotsky points out: "A revolutionary strike that does not lead to an armed uprising leads finally to defeat of the proletariat. If workers are to listen to Workers Revolution it would be this type of defeat they would suffer. Trotsky considered the greatest error of dissident Trotskyist Vereken when criticizing the De Man Plan to be his confusion between a general strike and revolution. Workers Revolution does not mention the word revolution but it does use phrases such as "a taste of our own power. It is not clear whether WR means a revolution or an attempt at reforming capitalism on a grand scale or some other interpretation. Whatever the interpretation this frivolous approach to the class struggle amounts to betrayal on a large scale. The early Comintern made it clear that the working class cannot win victory over the bourgeoisie by the general strike alone — the tactic of folded arms. In other words by withdrawing labour power and , smashing the capitalist state.

The problem with Workers Revolution is that it does not understand what a political programme is, "Stagism is the mentality of petit bourgeoisie" it states. This is true in terms of a political programme. Revolutionaries always raise the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat in programmatic demands such as a workers and small farmers government. However in order to enact our programme we heed tactics. The demand for 11

a general strike is an important demand which must be raised when it is appropriate. When there is a strike movement accelerating which must be generalised then it is appropriate to raise the question of the general strike. But not in isolation from the rest of a political programme. Marxism stands not just for strike action, but for the working class confronting the capitalist state as the vanguard of history, winning over allies from the petit bourgeoisie to accept the leadership of the working class and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

As Trotsky made clear: A political strike as a single combat of the city proletariat with the police and the army, with the remaining population being hostile or even indifferent is doomed to failure”.

‘The aim of revolutionary policy should not be an isolated general strike as a special means to stop war but a revolutionary policy into which a general strike will enter as an inevitable ... part.’

There is no evidence of a revolutionary policy in Workers Revolution at all. A more apt title would be ‘Workers General Strike. The position of calling for a general strike is also shared by the so called Communist Left (Leninist). In a recent Melbourne produced leaflet, the CLL calls for a general strike for a workers government based on rank and file organisation. Several years ago, before his expulsion from the Communist Left, the writer called for a workers and small farmer’s government. Why the change? Anyhow, for revolutionaries, a workers government is a revolutionary government achieved by armed insurrection. Is the writer calling for a different type of workers government or is he confusing a general strike with a programme for insurrection? The CLL at least in calling for a general strike gives a political direction and calls for a break from the bureaucrats.

Trotsky considered errors on the question of the general strike to be impermissible. Therefore we suggest Workers Revolution study his writings and the traditions of Bolshevism properly and not join the revisionist chorus throwing dust in the eyes of the working class. We have thoroughly exposed Workers Revolution on what it considers and we agree is a key demand in the arsenal of Bolshevism. Bolsheviks do indeed have a responsibility to raise the demand for a general strike when it is appropriate for class struggle and in the context of raising a revolutionary program. Taken in isolation it can be a diversion from this task. It is certainly not applicable at all times either as propaganda or agitation. We challenge Workers Revolution to reply to our clear exposure of its abandonment of a revolutionary programme.

THE COMMUNIST

The Communist is the publication of the Communist Left, a small propaganda group fighting for a revolutionary class conscious working class. To become class conscious the working class needs a scientific understanding of its historic role - fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat. This understanding can only come through a revolutionary programme. The Communist Left is founded on such a programme. Whilst our resources have been minimal the CL has made some important interventions into working class struggle. We warned that Kerr would sack Whitlam and showed that only by adopting a revolutionary programme could Whitlam be defended.

We were also the only tendency which opposed the nationalism of all Stalinists and warned that the Sino-Vietnam Kampuchea war could blow up into a fratricidal blood bath. The rest of the left either supported Vietnamese or Chinese nationalism or denied any break from capitalism existed at all. The Communist Left fought for proletarian internationalism. Communist Left stands for building a

vanguard out of the most exploited sections of the working class. To this end we have been working in housing and unemployment to show that only an anti- capitalist programme can defend tenants from eviction and workers from the dole queue.

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