

HAWKE WINS THE MIDDLE CLASS ELECTIONS

The recent federal elections were dominated by middle class issues with both parties striving to win over different sections of the middle class. The Liberals targeted the mortgage belt and Labor targeted the greenies. There was bipartisan agreement on attacking the working class. This is how the ruling class want it. With Labor more than earning its spurs on the question of union smashing, this needn't be an issue for debate. In fact debating this issue could create a left backlash. For the moment, it is far safer that union smashing not be talked about. There was some debate about unemployment benefits. The Liberal Party pointed out correctly- the ALP stole their policy. ALP policy is to replace unemployment benefits with a Jobsearch allowance. This will last twelve months After that unemployed will go on to a Newstart allowance with greater obligation for the unemployed to accept any job offered. Social Security minister Brian Howe stresses that going onto the new benefit will not be automatic. Labor also promises to cut the dole to couples under 21 by 25% and cut the dole for unemployed between 18 and 21 years old \$100 to \$69.20 per week. They also promised to crack down on so-called "dole cheats" They estimate that they will save \$153 million. The Liberals promised to abolish the dole after nine months and those who can establish that getting work is impossible can go onto Special Benefits. The catch is on what criteria will an unemployed person be able to prove their case and therefore their worthiness for subsistence. Both Liberal and Labor argue that to maintain capitalist stability at least 6% needed to be unemployed Yet they are prepared to deprive thousands of even a bare subsistence The attacks against the unemployed are massive. Yet there is barely a murmur of opposition from either the Left or from the trade union bureaucracy. The New Left Party only mentions the attacks by the Liberals and then only in the fine print within its election leaflet.

However the real contest was for the middle classes. One symptom of the crisis has been high interest rates These have hit aspiring home owners who come mainly from the middle classes and the labour aristocracy. These were targeted by the Liberal Party. Mr Peacock could not say when interest rates would go down. He just said that Liberal Party better management would create the conditions for their reduction. Normally this would not have been good enough to affect a swing. Unfavourable economic statements for Australia during the campaign won the middle classes over to the Liberals. However, only in Victoria was this translated into seats. There Mr Peacock has personal popularity and the Labor Party premier John Cain is unpopular.

The right wing direction of the Hawke government has given the Liberal Party strategic problems. The dilemma is; whether to go further to the right or to try to win support from those suffering from Labor's policies, if it chooses the former it faces a degree of isolation for a while. However when the crisis deepens, it will have more credibility for harder austerity policies that will be demanded by the ruling class. However this will cost it seats in the meantime. If it chooses to purport to care and win support from those suffering, it faces the problem of what policies it would implement differently. Of course it cannot afford to offend the bosses who back it. Peacock tried to do the latter. Howard led the Liberals to the right to the right to head off the Bjelke- Petersen bid for power. Whilst he successfully stopped Petersen, a dry Liberal Party only helped Hawke who was attacking the unions without social disruption. The Peacock bid to create a caring Liberal Party was not really convincing.

Labor countered the liberals efforts by appealing to or rather containing, the green vote. The radical middle classes have been concerned with capitalisms degradation of the environment. The ALP

strategy was not so much to persuade these people that Labor had the answers, but to try to show these people that there was enough difference between themselves and the Liberals to hold their preferences. For this they could rely on key green leaders such as Jo Valentine and Peter Garret to carry over the message. Some ALP leaders such as Paul Keating consider the green movement a liability obstructing rightwing policies. He considers the movement "a monster created by Grahame Richardson". However, the former lefts such as Bob Hogg know better. They know that without appealing to idealism, Labor would lose its base. Labor's trump card for maintaining left credentials was to announce the purchase of US military bases on Australian soil. The US will permit this because of the lull in the cold war, and the fact that they can rely on Hawke Labor anyway.

The green movement has been the banner for idealistic middle classes alienated by Labor's rightward direction on issues such as uranium mining. Labor won support from the anti uranium moratorium campaign. They dumped any commitment to stop uranium when they won office. The radical middle classes responded with anger. The greens are a diverse movement. They include those whose solution is buying from "ideologically sound" capitalists. Others want minimal reforms. Others claim a deep ecological analysis and critique of society. This latter section is reactionary. It opposes technology. It wants to go back to a subsistence primitive society. Technology has been a liberator and freed from the control of capital it will be a liberator again.

However, on the whole, the green movement is minimal reformist. Their dislike for the system is relegated to the background, proclaimed as an ideal. Meanwhile they fight for "practical changes". The class character of this movement is shown by the fact that their bloc called Green Alliance gave their immediate preferences to the Australian Democrats. According to them, this is the party with the "proven record on the environment" The Democrats are a left break from the Liberal Party. It includes capitalists. Its policies include reactionary attacks on the trade unions. They cash in on Labor's rightward movement keeping dissidents safely within the capitalist framework. It is a reflection on the left that they are allowed to get away with it.

On the left within the green movement are the Democratic Socialist Party formerly known as the Socialist Workers Party. Their newspaper called Direct Action strongly attacked the Democrats. However they were prepared to share the Green Alliance ticket. In New South Wales and Victoria the position on the Green Alliance ticket was filled by a DSP member. The Green Alliance gave preferences to the Democrats. The green movement is just one of many that the DSP identify with that welcome the bourgeois into their ranks and with no objections from the DSP. The DSP is a petty-bourgeois radical organisation. It is not working class neither in composition nor program. DSP candidates are therefore not worthy of any support.

As well as successfully winning over green and Democrat preferences Labor won due to hostility to the Greiner government in New South Wales and to the deposed National Party government in Queensland. Both in Queensland and New South Wales the Nationals has been exposed as corrupt. Multinational capital find them a liability. The mainstream parties can now be trusted so the dinosaurs can be dumped. The Labor Party won seats from the nationals to compensate for their losses in Victoria.

And so Labor has been re-elected promising more of the same. however Peter Waishe has served notice that an extreme right turn could be on the agenda. Peter Waishe supports the economics of Roger Douglas in New Zealand. He supports a broad consumption tax as they have in New

Zealand .He also supports deregulation. What this means in practice can be clearly illustrated by taking one example-Telecom maintenance workers. These workers are paid according to how many telephones they maintain. They are not paid a guaranteed wage. Of course, it is too bad if there simply isn't many telephones in your area to be repaired one week. For Roger Douglas giving Telecom maintenance workers a guaranteed wage would be to give them "a privilege at the expense of society" Of course they don't object to bosses making millions. Peter Waishe wants to apply what's known as "Rogernomics" to Australia. The emergence of Douglas and Walshe shows that the extreme right threat can come not only through the Liberals or the Nationals but also through the Labor Party. You can't defeat the extreme right by propping Labor

The fact that middle class issues held centre stage was a reflection of the political weakness of the left. So it is important to look at what the left had to offer. On the whole, with some criticism, they fell in behind Labor.

The Communist Party is now dormant. Emerging from its ashes is the New Left Party. The NLP includes other stalinists, trade union bureaucrats and middle class radicals (including ecologists) The NLP plays a role of linking greens to the trade union bureaucracy. The NLP didn't stand candidates. Its' rationale for this is that it is still in formation. It did campaign for the Labor Party. Under the Liberals you are all alone" headed an NLP poster. What it didn't say is that under Labor you are all alone also. In previous years, the CPA were gung ho in their support for Hawke. They proclaimed the Accord as a strategic gain for the working class However in 1990 ,it is difficult to pretend that labor is doing anything but attacking workers living standards. whereas the Labor Party ignored the working class the NLP saw it as its job to win back alienated working class voters."But there are real differences" says the NLP. What it doesn't say is that when the ruling class crack the whip, Labor obeys. It is the system that rules and Labor supports the system. The New Left Party want a parliamentary government but one which carries out different policies. Their leaflet demands "The government should tighten up on overseas borrowing and overseas investment" The problem with these reactionary utopian alternative proposals to demand the capitalist system to administer itself better is they blind people as to the nature of the system and the need to overthrow it. The NLP give the impression that the support they are giving to Hawke is critical "because the only alternative is a Peacock one". The reality is that members and supporters of the NLP have the main agents of Hawke's austerity programmes within the working class.

One organisation whose critical support was more genuine was the International Socialist Organisation(previously International Socialists) The ISO in their critical support sounded orthodox" "We are not doing this(voting Labor)on the grounds that Labor will be more sympathetic to workers and the poor "For us voting Labor is not a tactic for promoting reformism but for discrediting it" .Yes under some circumstances critical support for Labor is appropriate as a tactic. But the reality is this. Over the past seven years thousands of workers have learnt that they have a choice: class struggle or the discipline of the Labor Party. For example Bill Hartley stood up against Cain's terror raid against the BLF For this he got expelled from the ALP. He drew the conclusion that to fight for the Working class you must break from the discipline of Labor. His party, the industrial Labour Party does not fight the ALP adequately. But the conclusion that must be drawn is not-go back to Labor but build a real alternative. This is not the only example of militant unionists withdrawing their allegiance. George Petersen formed the Illawarra Workers Party against Labor's sell-out of workers compensation. The SEQEB workers formed the Union Solidarity Party when it was Labor was selling

out their struggle. Recently tramway workers in Victoria stood a candidate in the Thomastown bi-election. In giving critical support when workers are learning which side of the class line Labor stands is to direct the working class the wrong way.

Also giving critical support was the Socialist Labour League. The S.L.L. also stood candidates which stood for a workers government. However they had a strategic orientation to the Labor Party, as follows "Drive the Hawke -Keating right wing from the ALP. No matter how much they say that this "exposes the Lefts" etc they are still creating an artificial division and legitimising the "Left" Why shouldn't the "left" be expelled also? In the ALP, both Left and Right are reactionary. The Left support protectionism, the Right give the multinationals open slather. To argue that one lot should be expelled and not the other legitimates the other. It also redirects working class people back towards the ALP.

These elections, Communist Tendency opposed any critical support for Labor. We do this urging working class people to join us in building a political alternative which will stand for unconditional class struggle. Other left organisations have withdrawn support also. These include the Spartacist league, Workers' Revolution and Committee For a Workers League. The Spartacists withdraw support because Labor's role in the imperialist war drive and Workers Revolution from the syndicalism basis of counterposing a general strike.

the Communist Tendency takes politics seriously. We do this not because we think that the system can be changed through parliament. On the contrary; it cannot! However how people vote is a reflection of their consciousness-of their political consciousness. When workers learned the need for unity they built unions. But they realised that unions were insufficient to fight the boss's antiunion legislation. To fight this they developed the Labor Party which in Australia was formed in alliance with other class forces. Trade unions ignore the question of state power. The ALP was formed accepting the existing state power of the ruling class. In imperialist countries, Labour Parties endorsed their country's imperialist plunder. Australia is both a colony and a mini-imperialist power. In exchange for domination by, initially Britain, and now joined by U.S.A. and Japan, Australia joins the plunder of the Pacific and South East Asia. The ALP in its formation was encapsulated by three main demands-for nationalisation(parliamentary socialism)for white Australia (racism) and for a republic (against imperialist domination). Today any support for socialism or anti-imperialism has been abandoned. But Labor still has a reactionary immigration policy

The lesson of Labor is that you can only govern within the system if you sell out the working class. Labor has not only sold out the struggle for socialism, it has abandoned the struggle for minimal reform, and improved wages and conditions. It is even selling out legal unionism. Of course the composition of its membership is changing also. The working class are being excluded. Even the deep enterist paper which claims to identify with Trotsky called Militant acknowledges that Labor has no workers and no youth. This does not stop Militant from being loyal to the Labor Party. Labor is kicking working class people in the teeth and the most class conscious are deserting The lesson that must be learned is that Labor betrayed because of its relationship to the capitalist state. The answer does not lie with "a return to Labor principles "This is the wrong lesson. Labor betrayed precisely because of these principles.

The wrong lesson is to counterpose consistent unionism. This ignores the question of state power. The ruling class fight on all levels. It uses the ideology of sexism to divide workers along sex lines. This

allows women to be used as cheap labour as well as to be chained to housework. It uses racism to divide workers along national lines. Workers who support immigration controls support state attacks on blacks and migrants. Workers who support the ideology of the ruling class end up endorsing the attacks on our living standards. It is the task of class conscious proletarians-of communists, to show working class people that they have an interest in breaking from bourgeois ideology, and prepare to smash the capitalist state. The “consistent unionists” either of the Anarchist or otherwise adapt to chauvinism Many Anarchosyndicalists loudly proclaim their desire to ‘smash the state” but this desire has no consequence when they attempt to organise the working class. Although sometimes they participate in isolated skirmishes that cannot defeat the might of capitalist military.

These elections showed a real lack of bourgeois leadership with neither party having any clear direction. The Labor government is now just a holding operation marking time until the Liberals are ready Labor knows the economy is getting worse. For the ruling class the mere physical existence of the union movement is a barrier to their plans to drive wages down even further. The O.E.C.D. has just issued an economic statement recommending the opposition’s policies. They want deregulation and a broad consumption tax. Like the tide the capitalist system has its ups and downs. And it is possible that Labor could find a favourable wave in three years time. .l3ut the general flow is towards depression. As long as the system lasts austerity policies have to come sometime. The Labor Party has done a good job for the bosses. It has been responsible for the greatest transfer of wealth from poor to rich in Australia’s post war history it has carried out major attacks on public spending and on the unions. When Andrew Peacock attacked the government for being “dinosaurs” for not supporting enough privatisation, Rupert Murdoch’s Courier- Mail rushed to Hawke's defence. After all, as they point out, Hawke had done more in this direction than any previous Liberal government.

The election of John Hewson as leader of the opposition shows that party’s direction. Hewson is a respectable dry in vogue with the ruling class. They found John Howard too crude, without the ruling class touch. They found Andrew Peacock too shallow and inconsistent. For them Hewson combines the strengths of both of them. Hewson is preparing for power. The Hawke government will pave the way for him. There are no “alternative policies” to administer the system that will save us from the ruling class offensive. Unless we develop a revolutionary alternative the future for millions in this country and elsewhere will be austerity.

BUILD A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY TO CHALLENGE THE LABOR PARTY!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS AND SMALL FARMERS GOVERNMENT!

IMPERIALISM WINS THE NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS

The recent Nicaraguan elections were won by the coalition U.N.O. led by Violetta Chamorra. The coalition is committed to peacefully winding back the gains of the Nicaraguan revolution. The coalition includes overt right-wingers. It also includes the so-called Communist Party. it is no secret that they were bankrolled from Washington

The results came as a surprise to everyone. Not only did the Sandinistas expect themselves to win but U.N.O. expected the Sandinistas to win also. So did George Bush. Of course the imperialists are ecstatic. In Australia a whole section of the left is very despondent. For the Democratic Socialist Party and others, the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua provided them with an ideal, with a model

of a revolution that they could identify with. The Sandinista revolution provided an example of popular organisation and mass participation. It was not blatantly tainted with bureaucratisation as is the Russian, Chinese and Yugoslav revolutions. Many middle class left wingers prefer cheering for a revolution elsewhere, to fighting for a revolution here.

The Nicaraguan revolution challenged the U.S. in its Caribbean heartland. The U.S.A. considers that it has a divine right to control and exploit the Caribbean. There was no way that the U.S. would leave Nicaragua alone. Ever since July 1979, when the Sandinistas took power, they were plagued by war with the US. backed Contras. The Contras have been brutal and the war has taken its toll on the economy. For many, including those sympathetic to the revolution and otherwise, the Sandinistas lost merely through war weariness. Yes this was a factor But the fact that the Sandinistas handed over power so easily exposes serious weaknesses in the Sandinista strategy to defy imperialism. Nicaragua never could have been described as a socialist country. No more than one third of the economy was ever nationalised The Sandinistas believed in a mixed economy. They believed they could co-operate with the bourgeoisie. They did not see their counter-revolutionary potential. They argued and believed that, short of military defeat, their revolution could never be undermined. Lenin on the contrary believed that there were counter-revolutionary tendencies in the U.S.S.R. in the form of the peasantry and the bureaucracy which had to be dealt with. In no way was he under the illusion that the Russian revolution would never be defeated. He was aware of the potential for counterrevolution, even though in Russia they had dealt with the bosses far more decisively than in Nicaragua. Neither economically nor politically did the Sandinistas have a perspective of nullifying the bourgeoisie. When Ronald Reagan used such colourful expressions to attack Nicaragua as “a hell of totalitarianism, the Sandinistas bent over backwards to establish their democratic credentials. Leading Sandinista Thomas Borge expressed how the poor vote for the capitalists was an embarrassment to the revolution. A revolution has not only a right but an obligation to disenfranchise those with a material interest in counterrevolution if working class power is to be defended.

For the Democratic Socialist party the apparent success of the Sandinista revolution led to a re-examination of their theory. On the basis of the Sandinista’s success they rejected the Trotskyist concepts of permanent revolution and the need for a revolutionary international as sectarian obstacles to the revolutionary process. They also decided to agree with Stalinist criticisms that trotskysts are “sectarian to the peasantry’ Its time for the D.S.P. to reassess back. It is the failure of the Sandinistas to apply these

Marxist principles that have helped the handing of Nicaragua back to the U.S. by peaceful means. The example of Nicaragua confirms Trotsky’s Marxist analysis that only by fighting for proletarian power can imperialism be successfully defeated.

Chamorro has some serious problems with the Contras who refuse to disarm. It is possible that the Sandinistas might have a new lease of life if she is unable to deal with them properly. The Contras are bandits and are unlikely to disarm lightly. Such a victory would be a by-product of U.S. underestimating the counter-revolutionary strength of the local bourgeoisie. It does not mitigate the fact that it is due to the failures of the Sandinistas the bourgeoisie are now in a position of power which could have been avoided-had the working class been organised to expropriate the capitalists.

POLICE RAID ON REDFERN

February 8 at about 4 in the morning, Black residents were woken up by 100 armed cops of the Special Weapons Operations Squad. The raid had been planned. Houses had been targeted. Doors were bashed in and Black people, including children, woke up to guns pointing to their heads. One resident, suffering from a kidney complaint, was physically attacked. This could have killed him. Only minor charges were laid against the victims of the terror raid.

Since the raid the cops have been spreading lies about "crime". Apparently there are "decent People" who "live in fear" of the "criminal element". Well in other areas there is a higher crime rate but such a raid would be unlikely to happen anywhere else at least in inner Sydney, The reason is that' this raid was whetted by racism. It is another bloody chapter in the conquest of the Black people that still continues. The working class movement must stand up in defence of the Black people.

If we don't fight the state when it attacks Black people, we can't fight the state when it attacks us This thoroughly unjustified attack is only the tip of the iceberg. The Black community in Redfern and elsewhere live in fear of walking the streets lest they get shoved in a paddy wagon. Police harassment is part of day to day life in Redfern. Redfern has a cop problem not a crime problem. Most of the crime comes from kids who have nothing. There is certainly less heroin there than many other neighbourhoods. Since the raid there have been at least two other brutal attacks, although on a smaller scale. Inspector Peate has acknowledged that another raid could occur again,

The Redfern Community, both Black and White mobilised in anger. At the community meetings the Communist Tendency raised the need for workers defence, As long as the black people in Redfern and elsewhere remain isolated, the more vulnerable they are to police attack. Workers defence must become policy of the labour movement, The response from the local Labour Party has been to stonewall any class response. This is done in the name of "supporting the community' Of course the Black people have no real community if the cops are allowed to attack at will and the Black community do not have the forces alone to do it. The ALP claim to "care about the community" but when it comes to fighting for the community when it's under attack, what is their "caring' worth? They want these attacks to remain unopposed while they campaign for speed humps and zebra crossings. It is urgent that working class organisations commit themselves to an active defence of the Eveleigh St community now, Contact the settlement 19 Edward St. Chippendale to offer your organisations support.

FIGHTING RACIST ATTACKS MUST BECOME POLICY OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

COMMUNIST TENDENCY

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