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#44 New South Wales: Law and order state elections

In this month's New South Wales State Election, both major parties, Liberal and Labor, were in market competition to determine who can introduce the most repressive law and order policy. Carr Labor has been in no way been slack on the issue. New South Wales is the most policed state in Australia with the highest proportion on people in prison than in any other state of Australia. Carr can boast legislation whereby a group of three friends can be classified as a "gang". Carr has enabled the cops to police youth truanting from school. Of course it is illegal to carry any weapons— even in self defence. He also boasts about how many police stations he has opened and how many extra police he has put on the beat. He is promising 1,000 more. He has also put security guards on trains.

All this is not good enough for Chicarovsky, the Liberals hard line leader who promises even more police. She has played up the issue of heroin. Last month there was a horrific picture of young people shooting up in Caroline Lane. This was used to point the finger at Labor for introducing needle exchanges. These are totally necessary in the fight to contain aids. Apparently Liberals would prefer drug users to get aids than to be seen openly using needles. The users won't give up. They will go underground and share needles. Many have got aids and died this way.

Neither Liberal nor Labor law and order efforts are good enough for One Nation. This reactionary fascist supported front wants to bring in the death penalty.

The law and order campaign is objectively racist. It is no accident that those areas which (according to authorities) warrant more policing are those with strong Koorie populations or those with strong Lebanese, Arab, Vietnamese and Greek communities. It is these communities who suffer the highest rate on unemployment. They are the most alienated from Anglo-Saxon dominated mainstream Australia. It is very understandable that they choose to hang around with their friends "in gangs And it is very understandable that they are angry. The capitalist system offers them nothing but prisons, poverty or slave labour.

Whereas the mainstream parties want the law and order campaign to be implicitly racist. One Nation want it to t explicitly so. Their programme calls for deportation of those who are not nationalised Australians. One Nation wants all nonBritish migrants (especially Asians) and Koories to

be thought of as criminals. They also want to return of the death sentence. Many think that One Nation may poll poorly due to internal divisions. However public opinion polls give its support as 5%. This could well give David Oldfield a Legislative Council seat if preferences go his way. One Nation still has influence and they must be fought.

This law and order campaign is fundamentally an attack on unemployed and the poor and most exploited. The system has given up talking about jobs for all. This includes the major parties. Labor's public works programme even as offered is piddling. Both Liberal and Labor have abandoned any idea of full employment (real jobs with real wages). There is no talk of a shorter working week without loss of pay. Carr makes no comment but in reality opposes the idea.

Chicarovski has recently announced a programme for young unemployed — make them do community work in a special uniform. This is going very close towards slave labour gangs.

Law and order is not the only issue. Another major issue is privatisation. Kerry Chicarovsky is offering people a fist full of dollars. She hopes to get the money by privatising electricity, currently it is ALP policy to keep electricity in state hands. Carr personally would love to privatise electricity. Privatised electricity would mean a poorer service (especially in country areas) and higher bills for ordinary people. Chicarovsky is trying to persuade people to forget about these attacks in return for short term gain. She might succeed in some areas. But there are electorates where many realise that the consequences are serious for ordinary people.

Howard is also accusing Carr of "sabotaging the industrial reform agenda" Unfortunately this isn't true. Carr has done nothing to defend the MUA (for example). The fact that Carr believes in unions at all is too much for Howard. Unionists fighting for wages, conditions or jobs can rely on Carr — only to sell out!

The law and order campaign by both parties is a serious attack on the poor, unemployed and lower income working class people. It is a racist attack on Migrants and Koories. It will mean consistent harassment, jailing and even deaths in custody. Black deaths in custody have been widely publicised. And rightly so! Communist Left honours victims (such as John Pat and Eddie Murray) We urge the workers movement to act in solidarity against state repression. Workers defence now!

It is not just black people who get bashed and killed in custody. Working class youth do also. Cops killed Tsakos! We remember Angello Tsakos, a teenager who stood up against state repression — even though it cost him his life! No doubt there are many Angellos in the western suburbs of Sydney. A workers campaign against state repression in defence of working class youth must be built now

The law and order campaign criminalises the proletariat. It is also a political weapon which keeps the labour aristocracy safe behind the banner of the capitalist state.

progressive noises on issues such as Timor. But often the bloc with the Liberals giving critical and conditional support for a GST. They often support the Liberals on industrial issues.

The Greens are more consistent in their support for progressive issues. They oppose privatisation and the GST, But they reject class principle. They are based on the "caring" petty bourgeoisie. They regularly give preferences to Australian Democrats. Aside from election pragmatics, they have an antitechnogical philosophy which fundamentally reactionary. It is capitalism and not technology

which is responsible for (eg) the pollution crisis. And it is only the working class which has the historic role of overthrowing capitalism. The Greens are not worthy of any support. Marxists believe in progress as in the interests of working people. We don't believe in going back to a backward society without technology or industry.

The Democratic Socialist Party (read bourgeois democracy) is standing candidates and so is the (fake) Communist Party of Australia. Both are standing on programmes to reform capitalism through parliament. The best they can offer is to nationalise the banks and BHP. The DSP have a record of giving preferences to Greer and Democrats. Neither CPA nor DSP is supportable.

Communist Left believes in a working class alternative Labor based on a programme to overthrow capitalism. There is a candidate standing on this principle vote for her or him. Critical support can be given even if we have differences in programme. Communist Left may in some circumstances give critical support to a mass working class rebellion against Labor even with an unsatisfactory programme. The dynamic of such a break can lead to revolutionary party with satisfactory intervention by communists.

The choice of alternative jailers is no choice for poor, unemployed and working people in this state or elsewhere.

We must build a party based on class principle!

We must put the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism the agenda of this country and throughout the world!

All this is too depressing for words. Workers must in no way be party to this reactionary campaign of law and order. This means that both major parties, Labor and Liberal must be consistently rejected. Whilst the Liberals are clearly our class enemy, there can be no vote for reactionary law and order Carr-Labor.

Unfortunately many left-wing inclined people who know that Labor is rotten will be looking to the Greens and the Democrats. This is a serious error. The Democrats are a boss's party with a trendy image. Often they make progressive noises on issues such as Timor. But often the bloc with the Liberals giving critical and conditional support for a GST. They often support the Liberals on industrial issues.

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East Timor: Self-determination on the agenda

It appears that everyone has had a change of heart. Even Indonesia and Australia are talking self-determination after years of proclaiming that Timor is part of Indonesia. Actually neither Indonesia nor Australia has any sense of principle. They just recognise reality. And this reality means that if the Indonesian Army is forced to fight in Aceh, West Papua, Kalimantan, Moluccas, East Timor and as well the people of Indonesia, then the whole of Indonesia could be destroyed. The security of Indonesia is their number one priority. No matter how ruthless and efficient. the Indonesian forces may be, if they are forced to fight five wars at once they are in danger of losing, The Australian ruling class have a lot to lose also.

In the United Nations only Australia has backed Indonesia to the hilt —refusing to oppose the invasion. The Whitlam government gave the green light to Indonesia to invade. Every government since, Labor or Liberal, has backed Indonesia. In no way is the Indonesian ruling class generous. Any self-determination granted is only given because Indonesia is forced to grant it. It has been achieved by the bloodshed of a least one hundred thousand East Timorese. On top of this are the many thousands imprisoned and tortured. There are also those who suffered or died indirectly from the war such as mothers in child birth due to lack of medicines. Many suffered from losing their crops etc. The East Timorese have proved to be heroic fighters. Their fight has been weakened by political weaknesses of their vanguard Fretilin who have supported Portuguese intervention. However the heroism of Timorese workers and peasants is to be commended. They would have had an easier time if international struggle in solidarity was more consistent. In Australia, the degeneration of working class solidarity was linked to the degeneration of the Aarons led Communist Party of Australia. When that party had influence on the waterfront then black bans were applied against Indonesia. That party degenerated. It supported the Prices and incomes Accord and then liquidated totally. of course with their crawling to the Labor Party black bans were no longer on the agenda

The prospects of East Timorese self-determination has put the spotlight on the record of the Whitlam government. After Whitlam was elected his first overseas trip was to Jakarta. Mr Whitlam arrogantly believed that small nations were unviable and there should only by larger ones such as

Indonesia — irrespective of the wishes of the people. For the sake of his vision of a strong viable Indonesia he was prepared to tolerate invasion. Whilst Mr Whitlam is not the only guilty prime minister — Mac Mahon, Fraser, Hawke and Keating also share responsibility — we hope his record is totally exposed.

It is possible that Indonesia is fudging. In no way can it be trusted. All forces within Indonesia would love to keep Timor including Megawati Sukarnoputri. It is only force which will guarantee independence, this must be workers force internationally. No faith in the imperialists!

Australian Troops in Bougainville

Bougainville has been Australia's hidden war. Whilst it is officially been internal law and order issue for PNG, in reality it was Australia enforcing imperialist interests. The mine which sparked the revolt was owned by Conzinc Riotinto Australia. Unfortunately it was so hidden that many even on the left didn't realise it was going on. Yet many thousands died from lack of medicines due to a blockade enforced by Australia. Australia supplied helicopter pilots and mortar bombs manufactured for the war effort in St Mary's Sydney. Well now there is supposed to be peace. But this "peace" according to agreement has to be policed. Both Bougainville and PNG forces are supposed to be disarmed. So this disarmament is to be policed by a supposedly neutral force initially, New Zealand offered to and carried out the policing. But New Zealand could not afford to carry on. So which country is continuing the operations — Australia!

It is of vital importance to the Australian labour movement to realise that, irrespective of legal rhetoric, Australian troops are in occupation of a foreign country to police imperialist interests. The fact that they are "unarmed" is a mere technicality. They would find arms very quickly if the Bougainville people decided to challenge PNG authority. All Australian intervention into PNG or Bougainville must be opposed — unconditionally.

The worldwide struggle for a shorter working week.

Australia is a bit of a backwater with regards to class struggle. In fact the working class led by a reactionary bureaucracy is going backwards. A clear example of this is on the waterfront. The MUA successfully defended their union. But unfortunately wharfies are now forced to do a twelve hour day. They must be on their job for four hours without a break (including going to the toilet). This seriously effects their lives. Many have suffered in their personal relations. Marriages have broken up. The bosses want expand the part time work force. These workers must be on call to come to work at any time. So it is bad luck if it is your child's birthday party. If you miss out more than twice then you are out of a job.

The rot started with the two tiered wage system. This meant that workers had to trade off to get wage rises. Usually what was traded off was working hours. Workers got a longer working week. The working week has lengthened ever since. Recently there was a conference in Melbourne. Jenny George assured the delegates and the bourgeois media that shortening the working week was merely a long term objective. The aim apparently is to hang onto the working hours we currently have.

Fortunately things are not as bad in other countries. In fact, there is a worldwide movement for a shorter working week. Workers in countries such as Korea, Japan, South Africa, Germany, France and

Italy are angry and on the offensive. We hope that workers learn from these struggles to fight the bosses here, in Australia.

In Korea there have been many militant struggles. They include struggles for wage rises, jobs and a shorter working week. Their struggles have been heroic as un South Korea unionism is illegal. Workers are resisting the IMF/World Bank dictates which mean massive job losses and austerity. Backing the IMF is government led by former dissident Kim Dae Jung who has the backing of US imperialism.

In Korea, unionists have realised that their opposition is multinational. But for them (unlike the Australian union bureaucracy) this is not a rationalisation for copping out. If the bosses are multinational then so must be unionists. This conclusion is an important step forward. However, more is required. Workers need international politics — Trotskyism. Unlike in Australia, the Sth. Korean union movement sees the importance of organising the unemployed.

As part of their internationalist orientation, they held a conference People Against IMF with delegates from Philippines, Mexico, Indonesia Bangladesh and France.

Delegates from South Korea will be attending a conference in Cologne Germany next June, focusing on the shorter working week. According to the organisers “Cologne will be the centre of the World”. Well it is an important conference where unionists from many countries and different continents will share their experiences. This conference is no accident. The shorter working week has well and truly been on the agenda throughout Europe.

In France, the Socialist Government of Mr Jospin has legislated for a 35 hour week. Well Mr Jospin and his socialists are playing the traditional role of social democratic panes — channelling the mass movement into a safe parliamentary backwater. Jospin knows the potential of workers and unemployed anger. He also knows that if he doesn't deliver something, the movement might get out of control. Perhaps it might get revolutionary leadership. Jospin is offering crumbs to keep workers loyal to the system. The bourgeoisie don't approve. How he will sell the 35 week to them remains to be seen. He could use the gain to get workers to sacrifice elsewhere. Jospin is torn between two classes. He refuses to improve unemployment benefits as this would offend the bourgeoisie. Unemployed in Marseilles and Grenoble are continuing their militant occupations of government offices. we think unity between employed and unemployed should be cemented by workers taking action in solidarity with unemployed in action

Italy has also legislated for a thirty five hour week to take effect in 2002.. This was forced on the government because it had to entice the Communist Refoundation Party to join the government and thence maintain stability. Basically it is a small bribe to sell out the independence of the working class. For this minor gain “Communists” will support the boss's budget and maintain stability. The popular front (which is what this is) is a serious trap for working people. In Chile it meant the smashing of a popular government by the army which established a military dictatorship. Workers paid for selling out to the bourgeoisie in blood. The so-called Communists will now be used to contain class struggle. The old Communist Party of Italy actually endorsed austerity. the new one doesn't appear to have learnt any fundamental lessons.

There has been a flow-on with unionists in Spain and Austria demanding their government act for 35. In Germany metal workers are going one better. They are demanding a thirty two hour week. Last year Danish workers struck for shorter work hours. They achieved extra days of holiday. On the whole, in Europe, it is the unionists who are taking the initiative. Social democrats and Stalinists are reluctantly trailing behind, desperately seeking to head off the movement into safe channels.

The South African trade union federation COSATU has decided to “pressure the ANC Government” for a 35 hour week. We don’t know how susceptible to pressure they will be. The only way we guarantee to get anything out of the ANC government is if we threaten to overthrow it. Some on the left have illusions in the ANC as some sort of revolutionary leadership. It is indeed a reflection on these so-called revolutionaries that they cannot grant such a basic demand as the thirty five hour week. They are even more backward than the French socialists! In reality the ANC are administrating South Africa on behalf of imperialists and not the black proletarians.

We need a continual shortening of the working week until everyone is employed. There should be no loss of pay. There should be no strings or conditions. There should be no productivity deals. It should not be absorbed in overtime. We need a sliding scale of wages. Wages must be continually increased with the cost of living. In addition, most workers deserve a lump sum increase to catch up lost ground. Communists do not reject partial gains. But we do warn that the struggle for these does not fundamentally solve the problem.

The 35 hour week won by Italy and France is totally unsatisfactory and will not solve the crisis of unemployment. The bosses will probably demand increased productivity to compensate. No doubt, as they did in Australia, the extra five hours will simply become overtime. The net gain for workers will be five hour extra overtime pay and not five hours rest and recreation.

As we have witnessed through own experience in Australia, even if we get the minimal 35hours (even with strings attached), there is no guarantee that we’ll keep it. The bourgeoisie will mobilise their forces to destroy what minimal gains we get under this system. To keep what we got we must go forward. That means revolution. A shorter working week is a massive gain for working people. It is good for our well being as individuals. We work to live not live to work. It means more time for family, friends, entertainment and one’s health. It also strengthens the working class politically.

Bosses use the unemployed and the threat of unemployment as a knife at the throat of workers. “Accept this or else” is what they demand when there is plenty unemployed. And workers do accept extremely low wages and dangerous conditions as the alternative is starvation. Most countries have no dole. In this way trade union awards are thrown on the scrap heap and capital gets the most out of labour — for the least possible pay.

Employed and unemployed must be united behind the banner of a sliding scale of hours and wages which means a continual shortening of the working week until everyone is employed. This is a demand to be fought for now. But the logic is revolutionary. The ruling class will resist. Therefore it can only be achieved by a leadership committed to the overthrow of capitalism, putting a revolutionary programme on the agenda now.

Reformism in Australia is so degenerate that it treats workers demands with contempt. However in France we are witnessing classic reformism —making concessions to workers to render the

movement safe for capital. French workers should break with the SP and build a revolutionary communist party.

Stalinism cannot fight consistently for the shorter working week because it has a two stage theory of revolution. First fight for immediate practical demands achievable under capitalism. Socialism can be fought for later on. In reality the struggle for socialism never comes. as the bosses will fight the shorter working week, tooth and nail, it is only a leadership which is prepared to fight the bosses, tooth and nail which can achieve the demand. Therefore those who delay the struggle against the system until some indefinite period cannot fight for a shorter working week.

Australia is way behind the rest of the world. In Sydney even the May Day Committee has to be persuaded to take up the call seriously. In Sydney, Wollongong and Melbourne Shorter Working Week Committees are being established, in Sydney, the Shorter Working Week Action Committee calls for a shorter working week worldwide and not just for a 35 hour week in Australia. These are small and without significant support either from the left or union movement. This lack of support is a reflection on the left and union movement. These committees can have an important role promoting the demand amongst workers. They are arenas for political struggle. Reformists, Stalinists and centrists can only fight for a shorter working week inconsistently, if at all.

point is to show workers that must have revolutionary consciousness to even win the immediate struggles. Why do workers on the whole go along with the bureaucrats? Basically they share the same politics — reformist and Stalinist.

Communist Workers Group Aotearoa/New Zealand and economism.

Communist Workers Group is the New Zealand section of a group known internationally as the Liaison committee of Militants for a Revolutionary Communist International (LCMRCI) who split from the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI). in many countries, including Australia sections of the LRCI are called Workers Power. In Aotearoa/New Zealand Workers Power was formed when the group formed in solidarity with the Communist Left Programme Communist Left New Zealand fused with the LRCI. During the fusion process, they renounced some CL positions. Others they considered not significant enough to prevent fusion. They did enter though with differences. In fact they considered the whole LRCI method to be impressionist and empiricist.

Communist Left Australia opposed our then New Zealand comrade's orientation to the LRCI. We categorised this tendency to be hopelessly economist. Workers Power has a consistent strategy. They call for the extension of strike action under rank and file control up to and including a general strike "which poses the question of power". Then they intervene with their programme to resolve the situation in a revolutionary way.

Basically the struggle for revolutionary consciousness is deferred to sometime In the future. But political questions affect working people now. The bosses are using the question of immigration today to keep whole workers safe, chauvinist and supporting the system. Workers Power has a line on immigration. They oppose immigration controls. But it is not immediately relevant to their organising the working class. Basically they want to organise the rank and file against the bureaucracy. Well the term rank and file is merely a description of all workers who do not have an official position. This term encompasses anarchists, reformists, racists, fascists, revolutionary

communists and every position in between. In no way are the working class revolutionary merely because they don't have an official position.

Of course being part of a bureaucracy means something. The bureaucrats are bribed. They do enjoy privileges from their position. They are out of touch with workers on the shop floor. They must be fought. We must support rank and file control of struggles. Yes indeed! But the

In Australia during the early seventies. There were many mutant struggles in many industries including metal, mining, motor car, building to name a few. Yet the chauvinist offensive (Buy Australian, support Aussie jobs etc.) in the late seventies and early eighties had overwhelming support of most workers and most militants — including those who would have supported rank and file control and general strikes. The main mistake of the left, virtually all of it, was to confuse militant trade unionism with revolutionary consciousness. There are some circumstances where workers who are less militant on the trade union level can be more responsive to a revolutionary programme than trade union militants. They realise that there is nothing to be gained under this system. So they are responsive to the need to overthrow. Often union militancy is linked to capitalist upturns. The militants concerned want to get their share of the increased profit. But getting a share of profit is not what revolutionary politics is about. Overthrowing the wages system is. What when they are shown that bosses are actually going broke? There is often a myth amongst militants that the crisis doesn't really exist and is an excuse for bosses to hide their real profits.

Basically it is clear that CWG agree with the LRCI strategy. They do add that we need to campaign for “a Labour-Alliance programme based on a class struggle plan of action.” or “prepared to fight”. CWG have a habit of using the expression “to fight” to cover up the political basis for fighting. Do they mean expropriate the bourgeoisie or merely support trade union struggle? No matter how much they give it a left cover, most will see it as the latter.

This is basically a call for a popular front government. The point of giving critical support to Labour (when warranted) is to break popular fronts. Alliance includes the petty bourgeois Greens and reactionary New Zealand Party. It is therefore a reactionary popular front. It is possibly worth demanding that those in New Labour break from such allies (though we don't think it's worth it). Otherwise workers should have nothing to do with Alliance.

When New Labour broke from Labour they made a healthy step forward. They were hampered by their poll tics — unity between workers and the national bourgeoisie. These politics meant selling out their degree of organisational independence. And hence NLP sold out to the Alliance where it is well and truly burned.

The CWG “lesson” of the NLP experience is basically “unite with the Labour Party”. They want workers to go back. Surely workers who left Labour in dissatisfaction should be offered something better not something worse, nor alternatively back to where they came from. In any case, merely raising a governmental slogan is not necessarily sufficient to make one's intervention political. The point of raising such a slogan is to counterpose a revolutionary alternative. No matter what workers learn from CWG governmental slogans (and we think that they are the wrong lessons) then it will have no meaning unless there is a revolutionary alternative (as opposed to rank and file) being built.

The point is that workers need a revolutionary alternative to be built within the unions now Political intervention cannot be deferred until after or during the potentially revolutionary general strike. As long as workers accept capitalist social relations, bourgeois politics, they will accept arguments that wages cause inflation. They will endorse the reactionary campaign against migrants. They will support “work for the dole” and oppose jobs for women. And this ideology will be used to undermine class struggle even on the trade union level. In Australia “supporting Aussie jobs” led to Accord which led to the Two tiered wages system and ultimately the demise of unions who proved they no longer defended the wages and conditions.

For revolutionaries organising on the shop floor is inter- linked with the struggle for political class consciousness and not a substitute for it. We must show workers that to fight on the day to day level we must have a revolutionary attitude —an opposition to the totality of bourgeois social relationships. That is what a revolutionary programme means. The bosses act internationally, well so must we. But the trade union struggle is nationally limited.

It is not good enough to have a revolutionary programme in one’s newspaper for discussion amongst the radical left and student movement. The programme must be fought for openly on the shop floor. Branches of the revolutionary party must be built there. Trade union Leaders must be challenged on a revolutionary basis — in terms of their politics as opposed to their ability to organise the rank and file etc.

We urge Communist Workers Group to restudy the CL critique of LRCI and make a total break. we urge you restudy the Gager-Logan dispute especially Gager’s critique of economism and his arguments. We urge you to restudy the Communist Left Programme. For the rebirth of Communist Left in Aotearoa/New Zealand! For a Fifth Communist International!

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

* For women’s and gay rights. Free abortion on demand... Socialise housework and child care.

*Opposition to all immigration controls

*Self-determination to the Black (Koorie Murrie, Nungah etc) people of Australia and Torres Strait Islanders

* Class unity with workers of Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere. No to tariffs and protection. Defend jobs everywhere! No to import controls!

* Total opposition to Australian intervention in PNG, Bougainville, Indonesia, Timor, the Pacific, in the Middle East and elsewhere. Workers action against Australia’s participation in the US imperialist war drive.

* A new revolutionary communist international

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