

66 February 2005

CONTENTS

Page 3 George Bush - The imperialist crusade continues

page 4 Waterloo Redfern Authority - Devastation for a community

page 5 Imperialism and the tsunami

page 6 Mamdouh Habib - Free at last!

page 6 French workers fight to defend 35 hours

page 7 Mahmoud Abbas - PLO leader on his knees to Israel

Labor goes back to Beazley

Latham's illness came at a very convenient time. It gave him a very good excuse to him to step down without the appearance of being forced out. In reality he was forced out. There were many head hunting Latham. The Murdoch press and the premiers of Western Australia and Queensland, Gallop and Beatie leading the charge. Richard Gallop feared that Latham would have been an electoral liability and could cost Labor state government. Beazley is from Western Australia.

Whereas a mere six months ago Latham was praised for his individual initiative, this year he has been damned as a loose cannon — unreliable and dangerous. Rupert Murdoch's The Australian which has been leading the charge with articles in virtually every January issue complaining about him, calling for Labor to reconsider his leadership, if not for his resignation.

The last straw was his illness which inappropriately occurred during the tsunami disaster. Where was Latham when Howard was on his PR high showing Australia as the "caring and generous neighbour"? Latham was sick and not to be seen. The Murdoch media was quick to expose his weakness, claiming in their editorial that the only cause Latham cared about was himself. So Latham and Labor capitulated to pressure, Latham fell on his sword leaving the three unapertising options of Rudd, Gillard and Beazley. Julia Gillard is supposedly on the left. She is also known as a supporter of Mark Latham. Gillard was a victim of being in the wrong faction. She was also an unknown quantity (Labor wants stability) and she is also a woman. Labor is still a very sexist party.

Beazley was the preferred option of the Right and Rudd gave up when he realised he didn't have a chance.

Beazley walked in unopposed.

Kim Beazley is a man with a history. He was part of the Hawke and Keating governments. He was Minister for Defence during the 1991 Gulf War which occurred after Iraq invaded Kuwait. When Latham was in America's bad books for announcing the withdrawal of Australian troops by Christmas should he be elected, he mended fences

with America by promoting Beazley as shadow Minister for Defence. America was assured that Latham Labor was in safe hands in regards to defence. He was and is a US imperialist through and through.

Kim Beazley was part of the Hawke and Keating Governments. He has learned from the experience of the Latham loss that the issue must be taken head on and not side stepped as Latham effectively did. So he proposes to be pro-active and promote the economic "virtues" of Hawke and Keating — the "reforms" which made Australia the country it is today and paved the way for Howard. These reforms involved cutting back the public sector and reducing the power of the union movement. Beazley is claiming that Labor was the vanguard of the Howard reactionary offensive and to a large degree he is right. A Beazley Labor government would be totally unpalatable to working people, unemployed the oppressed of this country.

The apparently hard line opponents of Labor are the Democratic Socialist Party. In Green Left Weekly Dick Nichols correctly considered Labor as totally unable to be reformed and urges those on the left not to patch up Labor but to bury it. These are sentiments we agree with wholeheartedly!

The problem with the DSP and the broad front it dominates, the Socialist Alliance, is that it opposes Laborism but not reformism. For revolutionaries, the Lesson of Labor is that it betrays not merely because of bad policies but because of the framework within which it operates — the capitalist parliamentary framework. The point is to transcend this with a revolutionary programme. The minimal programmes DSP offer certainly reject the attacks on the working class. But they don't fight the system which causes these attacks.

Kim Beazley has just announced a new differentiation between himself and Mark Latham. Beazley apparently finds Latham a bit too class polarising. He defends wealth and thinks that Labor should orient towards the new rich. Basically the difference is that Latham wants to encourage working class people to become rich and Beazley wants to orient to those who have already got there.

All of this should not be seen as an accident. The poverty and utter bankruptcy of Labor is a reflection of many political defeats beginning from the demise of Whitlam. Their next attempt to offer something coherent after Whitlam — the Prices and Incomes Accord not only attacked working people but failed to deliver the economic bacon. Labor has been forced to have the same agenda as the Liberals — economic rationalism — meanwhile offering a few sweeteners and hope that the Libs stumble. They haven't!

In short, for those who join Labor with the objective of social equality, for the foreseeable future, things are going to be very demoralising indeed.

We have to be a bit sorry for Latham. He got a raw deal. Eleven months is not long to establish a leadership before an election. His predecessor Simon Crean was the most unpopular ALP leader in ALP history. Latham may have seriously underestimated the power of the interest rate issue had over his beloved aspirational voter. But so did every other potential Labor leader. Labor did not have a leader who could have won the last election. A more conservative leader would not have had such enthusiastic support from the Greens. Latham picked up and held seats which Beazley would have lost. If one accepted Latham and his principles in the first place, he deserved a second chance. Those with even consistent reformist principles, let alone revolutionary ones would never have voted for him in the first place.

Communist Left rejects a Latham leadership outright! We do so because we have principled political differences with him. These involve a class line. Whereas Latham espouses the virtues of the “aspirational voter” climbing the “ladder of opportunity”, we stand by the proletariat, those with nothing to lose but their chains.

Orienting to the “aspirational voter” means supporting capitalism. It means selling the proletariat out.

One notable left wing individual who embraced Latham was Bob Gould. Bob acknowledged having initial reservations. However, according to Bob, Mark has well and truly proven his worth by his efforts as leader. Bob, the socialist, sidesteps Mark’s blatantly anti-socialist philosophy by pointing to four concrete issues – withdrawal of troops from Iraq, saving old growth forests in Tasmania and Latham having a supposedly principled position on industrial relations. Gould claims Latham as the most left wing Labor leader in twenty years. This doesn’t say much.

Once again “concrete political questions” are used to evade fundamental class criteria. The fact that Latham stands for the “aspirational voter” as opposed to the proletariat means he is unsupportable. Bob chides the DSP for being like Gerry Healy “considering themselves the only socialists”. But it is hard to remember the last time a prominent ALP figure proclaimed him or herself a socialist, even a parliamentary one, let alone argued the socialist cause. Bob is a true Labor man at heart. Yet at the same time he is trying to identify with Trotskyism and rationalise his very deep entrisism with our tradition.

George Bush, The imperialist crusade continues

The inauguration of George W Bush was a patriotic spectacle of imperialist razamataz. Bush and his Republican cronies project the United States as a great and glorious nation carrying out God’s will. Nevertheless irrespective of this, America’s efforts in both Afghanistan and Iraq can hardly be described as successful. Despite years of occupation America can describe neither state as secure. The Taliban control a significant proportion of rural Afghanistan.

In Iraq the imperialists have finally admitted that there were no weapons of mass destruction. Effectively they have been exposed as liars. But on the positive side there have been what's been described as a successful election. Sixty percent of those eligible participated. But this is only an election for the body with whom America consults with as "representatives of the Iraqi people". Iraqis were not voting for independence from America who remains in occupation without their consent. The bloody resistance continues. In fact it is gaining in strength. The invasion continues and no-one knows how long America and allies will stay there.

After two failures you would think that Bush and his Republican cronies would have learned that you cannot impose democracy by invasion with the bayonet. But, no, they haven't. They have only learned that a bit more consultation is required. In his inauguration, George W.

Bush read off a whole list of countries. He considers it America's duty to liberate on behalf of the Almighty. These countries include Libya, Burma, Zimbabwe, Cuba and most significantly, Iran.

Jack Straw, Blair's lieutenant, Britain's foreign secretary, has been busy flying the Atlantic. His mission is to dissuade America from invading Iran. He is forced to admit that Iran has weapons of mass destruction. He is also forced to admit that Iran is reticent and inconsistent in obeying United Nations resolutions. However he still believes that diplomacy is the way to go and all diplomatic avenues should be pursued before any military intervention.

Now there is some sympathy for Blair amongst Bush and his cronies. He did the hard yards trying to convert the United Nations to the cause invasion. But this only goes so far. As far as the Republican right is concerned Straw is a dangerous liberal. His idea that you could influence Bush by going along with him, at least part of the way, is dangerously wrong. Blair's attempt to be Bush's attorney has not changed this reactionary one iota.

The dissident Maoists who joined the imperialist camp in support of the invasion have attacked most on the left in this country as "apeasniks". Apparently "democratic" America clamping down on Saddam when he invaded Kuwait, nipped in the bud the Middle East's answer to Adolph Hitler. The dissident Maoists Albert Langer and Barry York suggest that invading Kuwait was the first step in an agenda of expansion throughout the Middle East. The dissident Maoists accuse the majority of the left, real and fake of ignoring this expansion. But no such agenda existed! Saddam's takeover was due to a local dispute. Imperialism developed the artificial statelet called Kuwait which has never been a proper nation, especially in the Leninist sense. The invasion of Kuwait was in fact a progressive act.

Things are, however, the other way around. It is America who has the agenda of aggression and expansion. Bush has now spelt this out, loud and clear.

Invading Iran would prove to be a total disaster. The Islamic regime has mobilised and armed most of the population. The rulers receive a religious allegiance and can call on the armed masses to fight America in the name of Allah. Basically, a US attempt to subdue Iran by force would be ten times more bloody than what the US is enduring in Iraq.

So will George W Bush carry out "God's mission", bringing democracy to his list of "rogue nations"? Of course it is convenient that "God's will" coincides with the extraction of billions of dollars in superprofits! America is an imperialist country which depends on war to maintain world hegemony. It's not whether another poor third world country will be scapegoated and conquered like Iraq, it is when. This is determined by the interests of capital and not by God. Irrespective, we, the class conscious proletariat, must prepare to fight a future invasion!

More preferable would be the revolutionary overthrow of the Bush regime and its replacement with a workers' and small farmers' government.

Bush still believes in democracy by invasion. But he has at least realised that he would be more successful with the co-operation of the European imperialists.

Condoleezza Rice, the new US Secretary of State, is touring Europe with the objective of patching up relations. She started with America's warmest ally — Britain.

She has assured the world that invasion of Iran is not on the immediate agenda. But she hasn't written off invasion.

Whilst it is comforting that military invasion is not on the agenda, other forms of intervention are. All imperialist intervention, peaceful and military must be opposed by the class conscious proletariat with direct working class action.

Redfern and Waterloo: Communities threatened with destruction.

Redfern and Waterloo are two working class suburbs immediately south of the City of Sydney. The Sydney Morning Herald has really done the residents of Redfern and Waterloo a massive favour. It has exposed the plans of the Carr Government plans for the area. These, to say the least, are devastating.

A "Chatswood style" shopping centre is planned for the area adjacent to Redfern Station. The two towers of Matavai and Turunga are to be demolished. Redfern School is to be sold off. Much of the open spaces is to be sold off also. There is to be a massive increase in private housing. According to plan the population density of the area is to double.

The man in charge of the Redfern Waterloo Authority, Frank Sartor, is a dictator. He even has the right to override heritage orders. He does not have to listen to the people. Currently though, he is peddling backwards claiming that no-one will be forced out and calling for residents participation. It is clear that he has been stung by the massive hostile response that the community has

given the proposals.

A reasonably satisfactory rally was held between the Matavai and Turunga flats, Waterloo. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the platform was dominated by politicians, bureaucrats and social workers. Those who spoke the loudest were the Greens and Democrats. There was little time for discussion or debate. From what there was though, it is clear that whilst the sentiments are overwhelmingly for some sort of resistance, a section of the Russian community, the largest ethnic minority on the estate, have illusions that they might be transferred to somewhere clean and green such as the Blue Mountains. As one speaker pointed out, if those from Redfern and Waterloo are given accommodation elsewhere, what about those who have been waiting up to eight years? Will there be extra construction to accommodate them? All public housing must be defended.

Some residents are not unhappy to see the towers go because of problems with cleaning, renovations, the odd tenant who peddles drugs disturbing the other tenants. Some of the concerns are understandable. But a wholesale destruction of public housing is not the answer. That is what the Authority is threatening.

One of the encouraging features of the rally was the heartfelt solidarity some tenants felt towards those Kooris resident of the Block who are also facing eviction. Several placards urged Defend the Block. It has been extremely important that all working class residents come to the defence of the Block which is being directly attacked by government and undermined by bureaucrats. Of course, the full carrying out of the Authority's plan will mean the death of the Block in terms of being a centre of low income Black housing. One grouping which did not facilitate appropriate solidarity was the Socialist Alliance. Their two identical banners said "Always was, always will be Aboriginal Land" This is only true in the spiritual sense, which is a sense we should not be encouraging. They like everyone have the right to their religion. Their religion, like all others, is the opiate of the masses. Anyhow what is the point of spiritual ownership when the block has been replaced by yuppie flats? We must argue that the only way which the Block can be defended for Black proletarians is through class struggle unity. Socialist Alliance said nothing about the defence of working class housing in Waterloo.

This redevelopment must be fought. It must be stopped. Even if, as claimed, every tenant who wants to gets rehoused within the area, this is still a massive disruption to their lives. Even if full privatisation is deferred to sometime in the future, more yuppies will move in so as to live close to town. Land values will rise, in fact, escalate. The redevelopment makes it much more easier for governments to sell off the lot. This is no doubt what is in mind for the future.

The extension of the city into Redfern and Waterloo has been on the cards for a long time. Just two years ago

there was a plan to sell off sections of the part of Redfern between Moorehead Street and Elizabeth Street. This only stopped when the government decided to look at the whole of Redfern and Waterloo as a totality. This threat gave us a foretaste of what the government intended.

The Authorities plans must be stopped. This requires class action. It means action by unionists and working class residents to physically stop it. But this needs to be prepared for. Firstly the community must be organised. There must be regular meetings for this purpose. Pickets of government departments and Frank Sartor's office must begin immediately. These will ensure that the issue is not forgotten if there is the appropriate publicity. The unions must be lobbied and mobilised, It is odds-on that for productivity, working conditions and safety will be undermined. It's odd-on that much of the redevelopment will be by scab labour. Unionists and working class, pensioner and low income residents have an interest in uniting to smash this redevelopment.

It has to be stressed that all this is proposed by a "Labor" Government. Workers and low income residents must settle their accounts with the treacherous party which is destroying their community. Redfern and Waterloo have been working class suburbs for generations. That's how they must stay! Smash the Carr-Sartor redevelopment.

The Tsunami, aid and imperialism

They say an ill wind does not do anyone any good. But for John Howard, the tragic tsunami which killed almost a quarter of a million people has been of significant political benefit. For a start, he caught opposition leader Mark Latham offside with a serious illness. Latham was advised to rest until Australia Day. He did. And this allowed Howard the full chance to bask in publicity with Labor appearing not to care. This has cost Latham his political career.

But Howard would not have been so effective had he not responded appropriately — in a way in sympathy with public opinion. Howard was a bit slow to react. But his billion dollar offer to Indonesia is seen as appropriate. Australia is one of the largest aid donors and certainly the most significant on a per capita basis. For a long time Howard has been on the nose with progressive public opinion. Racist campaigns such as lies about refugees dumping their children overboard have been very successful in winning over that electorally powerful section of the middle classes which backed Pauline Hanson. But there has been a political price. Howard paid some price losing support from small "l" liberals. But a bigger price has been paid in relation to Asia. Government after government has condemned his racism on refugees and for declaring Australia's right to make pre-emptive strikes in Asia to protect Australia from terrorists. There has been both a political and economic

price in terms of Australia's relationship with the region.

Thanks to the tsunami, Howard has been able to turn this around. By donating a billion dollars, Howard has been able to project Australia as the caring neighbour. Relations with Indonesia have never been closer. But from the Howard government's point of view this is money well spent. Howard knows that such disasters are a recipe for political destabilisation. A destabilised Indonesia is the last thing that neither he nor the US want. It could mean Australian troop involvement. It might stimulate some form of communist uprising. It might lead to intensified national conflicts. National minorities may seek to break free from the Javanese elite and proclaim independence. All of this would be a massive hindrance to imperialism.

Overwhelmingly, the damage done to Indonesia was done to the province in the north of Sumatra known as Aceh. Towns there have been almost totally flattened. Over one hundred and fifty thousand Achenese lost their life directly from the tsunami. More are probably losing their lives through hunger and disease which have followed. The aid workers are working tirelessly but there are many people that they simply don't reach. However, there is more damage done to the people of Aceh. The tsunami is assisting the re-occupation of significant areas by Indonesian troops. This helps them militarily in their fight against those fighting for Aceh independence. Australia claims to be neutral: "This is a dispute amongst Indonesians" but it co-operates with the Indonesian authorities fully.

So the Acenese will lose two ways. They lose from the devastating loss of property and loss of life. They lose by having a strengthened Indonesia strongly encamped within the province, more capable of dealing militarily with the Acenese liberation forces. Australia, of course, supports a strong Indonesia to facilitate imperialist superprofits.

Mamdouh Habib: Out of prison but still persecuted

We are pleased that after years of imprisonment, Mamdouh Habib is back in Australia, united with his family. Under American imperialist justice "against terrorists" the procedure is: detain for years under barbaric conditions first, find a charge later. In the case of Mamdouh, they couldn't find a charge so after a couple of years, they have decided to let him go.

Mamdouh has paid a massive price in terms of his health. He is suffering from mental illness. He is suffering from the torture he received from the screws. He will take years to recover.

He is not entirely free though. They had to arrange a special plane because the US decided he was not allowed to be within their airspace. He is a person of

interest as far as Australian security is concerned and will be continually monitored lest he be in contact with terrorists.

He is, however, lucky. As an Australian citizen, there was attention paid to him and America was forced to respond. If he was Afghani, he probably still be locked up for another two or three years. We must be concerned with all the Guantanamo detainees and not just Australian citizens.

Communist Left wants all Guantanamo detainees to be free. They were obtained during an illegal occupation of Afghanistan by the US imperialists. More innocent people have been killed by the imperialists than by the El Qaida 's September eleven attack on the USA. The Taliban did not carry out the September 11 raids on America, El Qaida did. The Taliban did offer to co-operate had they been offered proof concerning the guilt of Bin Laden. They weren't given the opportunity. America simply invaded.. Many imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay are simply guilty of defending their country. Some such as Habib are not even guilty of that.

The camp at Guantanamo truly exposes the barbarism of US imperialism. The workers movement must take action until all prisoners are released. And this terror camp is closed. US imperialism is the world's number one terrorist.

French workers fight to defend 35 hour week

The thirty five hour working week was a significant gain for the French working class. Whilst it was technically granted by a social democratic government, the thirty five hour week was never enough to reduce the rate of unemployment to zero. A further reduction, in fact a sliding scale of hours is needed to provide jobs for all at the bosses expense. As long as there is one person looking for work who can't find it then the working week is too long.

However, in this period of reaction even minor gains are difficult to achieve and difficult to maintain. It was odd on that the French conservatives would target this small gain claiming workers were pricing themselves out of a job and this is what is happening. Though the Tories are only talking about "more flexibility" and not abolition of the thirty five hour week, correctly French workers won't have a bar of it.

To their credit, the French working class are not taking this lying down. They are mobilised, 300,000 marched through the streets. They are angry. They intend to defend their minor gain, tooth and nail. All power to the workers!

Communist Left wants all of the Guantanamo detainees to be freed. They were obtained through the illegal occupation of Afghanistan by the US imperialists. More innocent people are being killed by the imperialists in their occupations than by El Qaida with their September 11 terror raids on America. The Taliban did not carry out the September eleven raid El Qaida did. The Taliban did offer to co-operate had they been provided with proof concerning Bin Laden. They weren't given the opportunity. America simply invaded. Many imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay are simply guilty of defending their country. Some such as Habib are not even guilty of that. The camp at Guantanamo truly exposes the barbarism of US imperialism. The workers movement must take

action until all prisoners are released and this terror camp is closed. US imperialism is the world's number one terrorist.

The situation in France is clearly much more advanced than that in Australia. Here in Australia the spirit of the Accord has had a poisonous effect and no one except the far Left talks about the shorter working week. Yet in Australia work some of the longest hours of any advanced OECD country. It is not unknown for some to work as long as an eighty hour week. Long hours have a destructive affect on family life. The ACTU bureaucracy know this and campaigned for a humanised version of a long working week called "Reasonable Hours". They lost the Arbitration case and the campaign appears to be over.

The situation is far more advanced in France. But the movement is still under the sway of reformism. In fact the opposition French Socialist Party is making a big play for workers support by using its record introducing the thirty five hour week. They are better than Australian reformists but they still contain struggle, tying workers protest to capitalism. They want protest that bumps them into parliament. The fear anything that goes beyond it. In France the decisive question is the need for a revolutionary communist party with a programme which includes the demand for a sliding scale of hour and wages. This means a continual reduction of the working week until every one is employed.

Mahmoud Abbas: PLO Leader on his knees to Israel

Just after his election as President of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas sent the troops to the border with Israel. He sent the troops not to fight the Israeli state but to defend it. This act of good faith towards Israel has led to peace talks. They are currently being arranged in Egypt.

Abbas's actions so far spell out very clearly what type of peace he'll accept — an imperialist peace which accepts and respects the state of Israel. Condoleezza Rice seems quite impressed with the new Palestinian administration's desire for peace. Of course she wants more.

She also wants Israel to make some hard decisions mainly concerning Jewish settlements. But basically she and the Bush Administration are Israel loyalists and are brokering their peace agreement accordingly. We expect a settlement to go 98% in favour of Israel, 2% Palestine with America pulling the strings.

Israel was established as an imperialist enclave formed by displacing the Palestinian people, forcing them into the desert, where they remain. The newly created ministate was only conceded by Israel after decades of military conflict by Palestinian proletarians. It is not a successful resolution to the conflict.

What the emergence of Abbas has shown is the total and utter betrayal of the Palestinian national struggle by the Palestinian bourgeoisie. These wretched bourgeois

traitors have not merely given up the armed struggle, they are pointing the guns at their own people. It is only the revolutionary proletarian struggle which will bring justice to the Palestinian people.

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 against terror".
 - A new revolutionary communist international

Communist Left

P.O. Box 119 Erskineville 2043 Australia

e-mail: xred39@hotmail.com

for more information about our publications visit

www.geocities.com/communistleft