

#79 June 2008

## CONTENTS

Barak Obama Black candidate for US

President.

Privatisation of NSW electricity: lemma and Costa versus ALP rank and file.

Split in Democratic Socialist Perspectives: the return of Direct Action.

## **China, the Olympics and Tibet self-determination.**

Revolutionaries support China holding the Olympic Games China is a country which has broken from capitalism. The Chinese revolution of 1949 was a massive gain for the working class, small farmers and the oppressed, internationally. Like the Russian revolution it showed the proletariat and the oppressed masses that there is an alternative to imperialist barbaric capitalism. This is true despite massive distortions. These came about because the Maoists, basing themselves on Stalin, based themselves not on the proletariat as the only revolutionary class but on the peasantry. The result has been gross deformation. In no way do we support Special Economic Zones. In no way do we support the invasion of Tibet.

Tibet has clearly gained from China's takeover. But the problem is that missionaries with bayonets are resented. Even for a poor and underdeveloped nation which Tibet is, unity with a state such as China must be voluntary. The fusion was forced and this has led to the rise of reactionaries such as the Dalai Lama.

China should have held a referendum over Tibet. We want unity between Tibet and China. But this has to be by mutual consent.

The Olympics were intended to be China's showpiece to the world. But the Tibetan separatists effectively hijacked the Olympic flame tour, forcing the flame to be highly guarded and restricting its route. The Tibetans are entitled to feel victorious.

Of course, the reason for this victory is the support of liberal bourgeois public opinion, the Dalai Lama is fashionable. But also the demonstrations had the de facto support of the protests by imperialist governments, such as Australia. The flame had to be defended but demonstrators were dealt with much less ruthlessly than left wing ones against the World Economic Forum. The demonstrators were not branded as terrorists.

Of course, the imperialists want to embarrass China. They prattle about human rights. But these are no worse than countries which they are aligned to. In no way would the object to Turkey holding the Olympics on the grounds that Turkey oppresses the Kurdish minority. This minority in Turkey is considerably larger in population than the Tibetan minority in the PRC. Throughout the world there are many national groupings deprived of their rights. The imperialists only make an issue of this when it is in their interests. That is when it is part of their agenda of world economic domination.

Revolutionary communists, Trotskyists are critical of China and its reactionary bureaucracy. We call for political revolution to overthrow it. We support workers in China who fight oppressive conditions imposed by special economic policies. But we must always remember that the imperialists are a thousand times more reactionary than the bureaucrats

We must not play the imperialist's tune.

## **Barak Obama. Black Democrat candidate for US Presidency.**

The nomination of Barak Obama as the Democratic candidate for president is historic. For the first time a Black man is a candidate of a major political party. Obama is not a traditional Black candidate

in that unlike Jesse Jackson he has no roots in the Black civil rights movement. Nevertheless, two decades ago, his nomination would have been unthinkable.

By today's standards Obama seems left wing, that is, to the superficial observer. He talks about change and when he talks about representing all Americans he does make promises which assist the poor. Generally popularist candidates do not. But there is no threat to capital posed. Obama still represents the rich but not as exclusively as Republican candidate John Mac Cain.

The reason why Obama stands a real chance lies in the decline of US imperialism and the arrogance of the Republicans. The US economy is suffering from the sub prime mortgage crisis and other problems such as the high price of oil.

Being Black he has advantage in gaining more sympathy from third world countries. He is also on record as opposing the war in Iraq from the beginning. This is a plus for him in promoting US interests world wide. He is though a supporter of US imperialism. He wants to deal strongly with Iran for developing nuclear technology. He also opposes closer relations with Castro. Supporting the imperialist blockade.

The US is stuck in an extremely unpopular ongoing war in Iraq which has no end in sight and costs money. Obama has a consistent record of opposition to this war. Americans are angry at the slow pace of recovery for the City of New Orleans and Louisiana state which still hasn't recovered from Hurricane Katrina. All this angers Americans.

The ruling class fear gross disillusionment especially amongst the poor and Black Americans. Obama is their insurance policy. He offers hope and "change". His words are clever and they ring a chord. Many who haven't voted for years or even before will vote for Obama. Of course Obama's "change" is minimal even if we accept his rhetoric. The change needed is the overthrow of capitalism. Obama supports the system.

Revolutionaries believe in drawing class lines. We would consider a workers candidate even if we were not satisfied with his or her programme. But there is no way that we would consider a vote for Obama. He stands for gross class collaboration. He stands for the reactionary Democratic Party. He supports the imperialist war drive against Iran and comforts Israel against this "threat". An Obama will administer the system, business as usual. Its time to build a revolutionary alternative.

## **Split in Democratic Socialist Perspectives: the return of Direct Action.**

The Democratic Socialist Perspectives, the main group behind the Socialist Alliance, has recently split. Last Month, fifty members were expelled for breaching democratic centralism over Venezuela solidarity work at Sydney Uni. Those expelled are familiar. They include former leaders such as John Percy, Doug Lorimer, Helen Jarvis and Allen Myers. They call themselves Revolutionary Socialist Party and publish a monthly newspaper which looks familiar also. Its name is Direct Action. They have formed a group called Revolutionary Socialist Party. One incident provoked the split but the majority argue that this action was symptomatic of a general disrespect for DSP democratic centralism. Surely there was no justification for expelling the whole faction, even those not involved!

There are indeed political differences between the two groups. These, though significant are basically tactical. There is no fundamental class line involved and therefore the split was unjustified. For example, both factions support Fidel Castro, virtually uncritically and the Chavez regime in Venezuela. Whilst they share some of Trotskys criticisms of Stalin's Soviet Union, they oppose Trotsky forming the Fourth International and drawing a fundamental line between Trotskyism and Stalinism. If anything, the splitters are even more proCastro than the DSP.

The main issue at stake is an estimation of the current relevance of the Socialist Alliance which DSP dominates. According to the minority, this is currently not a real alliance but a rump propped up by the DSP. This means that the DSP is effectively liquidating. Basically we agree. But we have scant respect for the Percy minority. They have supported the process all along the road. Now they don't like the destination. In fact they bare direct responsibility for steps such as changing the name of the newspaper from Direct Action to Green Left Weekly in order to merge with the radical green milieu.

Direct Action hankers for the old days. It even has the same layout and font as their previous version. It clearly is targeted to a similar audience and has similar political priorities. The old leadership who lead Revolutionary Socialist Party are extremely experienced within this milieu and are good at organising. Indeed they could have a degree of success.

The problem for the DSP is that the RSP are fundamentally correct. The Socialist Alliance is in decline. More and more it is propped up by the DSP. This takes resources, money and dilutes the politics. Green Left Weekly projects itself as a broad paper. Direct Action projects itself as paper of a particular tendency. This fact alone makes the latter harder and clearer.

As we said, the split is about tactics and not about strategy. The majority merely differ about the viability of the Socialist Alliance. Neither rejects it on principle. The Boyle majority are prepared to relinquish the Alliance in certain circumstances. They merely think that it is currently still viable.

It is the responsibility of both sides to renegotiate unity. When in the DSP, the RSP were given full rights to fight for their programme and put forward alternative reports. As long as they have this right they should use it to educate the rank and file of the DSP. They do, however, have to respect democratic centralism.

Bolsheviks do not split over tactical differences and there should only be splits if there is a fundamental line if principle involved. There is a fundamental class line between revolutionary communists and the DSP/RSP but no fundamental line between the DSP and RSP.

We urge members to break from both. Historically, the Socialist Workers Party (which both identify with) has had a minimalist programme including bourgeois nationalisation and democratic demands. Workers need a revolutionary programme to expropriate the ruling class.

The DSP originated in Australia as the Socialist Youth Alliance which formed the Socialist Workers League. Within the campaign against the war in Vietnam, they argued for the single issue demand Out Now in order to attract as many as possible. This meant opposing drawing class lines. This is popular front public opinion politics not revolutionary politics. Ever since they have been supporting popular fronts including the anti- uranium, pro-abortion and East Timor solidarity which unite all classes including bourgeois pacifists to pressure the government. Both factions identify with this

rotten heritage. Only revolution can stop war! Neither the hard line RSP nor the more liquidated DSP is the party workers need to fight the system.

## **NSW. The fight against lemma Labor's privatisation of electricity.**

It is no exaggeration to state the dispute over privatisation represents the deepest rift within the NSW State Labor Party for decades. The rift cuts across factional lines. Members who consider themselves right (and are on most issues) are aligning themselves with those on the left and the union movement to oppose this privatisation -- initiated by a lemma Labor Government. It's a case of Premier Morris lemma, Treasurer Michael Costa and a gang of mps versus the rest. Labor members are crossing the floor. Correctly they are stating that they are adhering to NSW ALP policy. lemma and Costa are not. But it is clear that they are going to get away with it. They are treating with contempt a resolution overwhelmingly carried by NSW State Conference. Contempt is the best description of their attitude to the rank and file anyway.

We too are opposed to privatisation. The grounds for opposing both lemma's proposal and privatisation in general are well founded. They say privatisation is more efficient but this efficiency is not for us. Privately owned electricity is more efficient in attacking us!

They will increase charges. They will lay off workers. They will only increase plant in areas where they perceive more profit will be made. So if you live in the country side it may be bad luck. You could suffer blackouts through cut backs in production. The country will suffer as it is more expensive to provide services over great distances, it simply is less profitable.

The first responsibility of any private entity is to its shareholders. This means profits come before consumers who will suffer in the interests of share holders. In Victoria, workers have been laid off. In Auckland NZ consumers have suffered black outs. Only in Queensland has privately owned electricity companies have developed more infrastructure. There is nothing to gain for consumers for privatisation. The Greens also oppose privatisation on an environmental basis. They point out that private companies have no interest in seeking solutions in harmony with the environment if there is no profit to be gained.

So why are lemma and Costa so gung ho in promoting it? Well it's for the money they will get from the sale and for the states AAA credit rating. For lemma and capitalist allies, this must take priority. lemma is backed by Kevin Rudd who considers privatisation of NSW electricity "an important part of his reform agenda.

Of course it is not revolutionary merely to support a public electricity scheme. Electricity is a basic necessity and rank and file unionists and ALP members realise that there is no guarantee of this under a privately owned scheme. They also realise that even though electricity may be available it may not be safe or affordable. lemma is talking about safeguards but don't guarantee these lasting, especially if the Liberals are elected. The current power struggle poses serious questions: who should control the ALP and who should that party serve? What does ALP democracy mean if Labor premiers can treat policy with total contempt? It is to be hoped that lessons will be learned.

For decades, Labor governments have run roughshod over unionists and working people. Labor governments, state and federal have been only "in power" on the condition that they serve capital

and attack the class who built the party in the first place. lemma and Costa can afford to be arrogant because they know that their rivals have no fundamental alternative perspective. Therefore the rank and file are treated with contempt. Policy voted on by elected delegates can be thrown on the scrap heap.

On this issue, lemma and Costa, know they have the support of the Liberals. So they will push it through irrespective of defiant backbenchers crossing the floor.

For a revolutionary workers and small farmers government!

There are many reasons for breaking from Labor. These include Rudd supporting the US in Afghanistan, reactionary legislation against building unions, Labor supporting the NT invasion against Black communities. Labor supporting work for the dole. But no other struggle has polarised Labor Its lemma and cronies versus the rest.

There is, of course an alternative. It is the alternative of class struggle. It is the alternative of a revolutionary communist party. Factory committees are important for workers to debate action on the ground. It is up to rank and file workers to organise on the job against privatisation and resist it by direct action. This action must be linked to a programme which fights both the government and the system itself

ALP's contempt to the overt wishes of both ordinary working people and their own rank and file shows that Labor is clearly a boss's party.