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## **Labor Wedged!**

Joe Hockey is a clever man who knows how to appeal to mass sentiment and at the same time expose Labor in the eyes of much of its heartland. He opposed banks putting up interests at a rate greater than that proposed by the Reserve Bank and suggested the government do something about it. This has caught Labor flat footed. The Banks did precisely as expected and the public is understandably angry. Many will be financially hurt by this and will possibly lose their homes as a result. As expected Labor has done nothing.

Hockey is opposed by the financial establishment, most Liberals and of course the economically sound Labor Government whose chief spokesman is treasurer Wayne Swan. All criticised Hockey as irresponsible. Of course the Liberals didn't do so publically. Tony Abbot diplomatically disassociates but is happy that Hockey is getting media attention. He boasts that the Liberals are setting the economic agenda. It is doubtful whether Hockey's statements will become Liberal Party policy. Nevertheless what is perceived is that Liberals are standing up for little people and Labor is defending the status quo. Swan has since made verbal condemnation of the banks and perhaps action in a month's time. Compared to Hockey he appears mealy mouthed. Hockey proposes action now.

Labor is now a pussycat in front of the lion tamer of capitalism. Swan dare not step out of line. Of course the Libs can be more flexible as they do not have to establish their economic rationalist credentials. Labor has to prove it has conservative economic credentials.

As the Liberals point out Labor is weak and insipid. Labor is being wedged! Labor is now torn between heartland, politically correct and the economic powers that rule this country.

The other way Labor is being wedged is from the Greens. People generally vote Labor either out of a sense of economic justice or a belief in economic change. They hate the status quo where Labor tries to convince people it is the more humane conservative party. The Greens offer middle class protest policies. On many issues the Greens offer progressive policies. There seems no reason to vote for the nicer conservatives called Labor.

There is no reason for workers to vote for a party which jails unionists such as Ark Tribe. Union leaders are taking out an insurance policy by financing the Greens and independents. This is pragmatic not principled. Labor has sold out its historic ambition to represent the unions in parliament and legislate for worker's wages and conditions. Now it attacks the unions. The Greens will never be a worker's party even in the unionist sense. What is needed is a revolutionary party, based on the working class, committed to proletarian revolution

Labor would probably be re-elected if there was an election tomorrow. The Libs have their problem of popularist mobilization of potentially fascist and chauvinist middle class and labour aristocracy or alternatively offering themselves as a respectable administration of capitalism. For the moment, they have chosen the former. Malcolm Turnbull is waiting in the wings to offer the second option. The election is almost three years away and thing might change.

The other factor Hockey and Abbott are taking advantage of is the failure of the Left to pose any sort of challenge to Gillard on any level. While the banks attack, they too are silent. There is also no significant opposition in the trade union movement.

There are many reasons for this. The Labor left also was historically propped by Stalinism. It has been compromised by the Prices and Incomes Accord. It was effectively seduced by Rudd in his bid for a humane conservative Labor government. But, more recently, the union left has been compromised by the Your Rights at Work Campaign which successfully defeated Work Choices. The problem is that whilst opposing workchoices, they offered no alternative except Labor. Therefore they have been forced to accept what Labor has had to offer. This means attacks on the working class.

As far as revolutionary communists are concerned, we are not merely interested in containing the banks lust for profits at ordinary people's expense. We want working people to expropriate the banks. Their profits are stolen from ordinary people. They make billions. We suffer.

The fact that someone like Hockey can even appear to be caring whilst Labor does nothing shows just how degenerate Labor has become.

## **Obama in Crisis**

In the US midterm elections, the Democrats were solidly thrashed. Things could be worse; they still have a Senate majority. Also some of the Tea Party candidates weren't elected. Nevertheless, anyone who thinks that this was not a massive no-confidence in Obama is kidding themselves. Basically Obama has given billions in tax payer's money to big business in the name of stimulus. It hasn't solved the crisis. There are more than ten percent of US workers unemployed. As well as others losing their homes due to mortgage stress. Obama can point to minor improvements but frankly, it's not good enough.

So what is the alternative? The only grouping seriously putting one on the mainstream agenda is the Republican faction known as the Tea Party. This semi-fascist movement harks back to the US war of independence when the slogan was "No Taxation without representation" Thing have changed since then. Those bourgeois independence fighters were progressive. Today the middle class extra-parliamentary movement is malignant and rotten

The Tea Party attacks on taxation amount to attacks on unemployed and the poor. There will be even less money for welfare, social security and housing. The middle America whom the Tea Party represent don't particularly care. They care about how much tax they pay. Of course the defence budget won't be cut. That's sacred!

Obama is in trouble. His Keynesian big spending didn't work. He has acknowledged defeat and offers more co-operations with Republicans. He still says "Yes we can". He just argues that it will take more time.

Unfortunately, Obama has been identified with communism. His "Yes we can" rhetoric empowered many poor oppressed Americans. Especially Black ones! But this empowerment has been shown to be false. Unfortunately his failures give the message to many desperate middle Americans that the Left has no answers to their desperate situation. Instead of going to the Left they will go to the Tea Party.

The Tea Party has not ruled out breaking from the Republicans. We must not rule out a fully fledged fascist outfit. This would declare war on the poor oppressed and the workers movement. It would be virulently racist and opposed to Blacks and Hispanics.

In America, the worst possible mistake is to be tied to Obama There is a serious possibility that an impotent left and workers movement might be crushed.

## **Freedom for Aung Sun Su Kyi Burmese bourgeois democrat released from house arrest**

In Burma and throughout the world there is elation. Aung Sung Su Kyi spent fifteen of the past twenty years under house arrest. Now she is free. This has been compared to the release of Nelson Mandela. She is though very well aware that the junta still rules Burma and could re-arrest her at any time. But she is in a position of power. The masses are definitely on her side. Her crime was to win an election in 1990. Her fans include Barak Obama and Julia Gillard.

We want her free too as we do not see repression by a junta as a means of defeating the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it makes them heroes. It strengthens the bourgeois hold over the struggle against the junta. Suu Kyi is heroic and courageous. But in no way she is our ally.

Bourgeois politicians are not merely cashing in on a bandwagon, they know where their bread is buttered Su Kyi as someone who represents their interests. Multinationals are eyeing Burma's vast resources. They know that she will assist in their bid to exploit both these resources and Burmese labour. The multinationals and the politicians know their interests and who Su Kyi represents. They know what side of the class line they are on.

Suu Kyi is talking reconciliation. for her. this is a possibility. The armed forces are, after all bourgeois. For the proletariat any "reconciliation" would be at the expense of Burmese workers and peasants...

It has been suggested that her release is linked to a major crisis in the Burmese economy. The economic blockade is hurting. Possibly her release is to re-establish trading relations.

Others have suggested that her release is a cover for an attack on minority nationalities persecuted by the junta. Yes this is possible. In Burma, as elsewhere, the revolutionary proletariat must champion the right of self-determination of all national minorities. They may have the right to secede if that is their desire.

The reason why reconciliation is a possibility for Suu Kyi is that she represents capital both local and international. In fact she is the preferred option. In no way will she represent the working class. In fact she will hand the working class over to the multinationals for their super-exploitation

Backing Suu Kyi is the imperialists. There is even talk of imperialist intervention. For us this is the worst possible option even if it is "for democracy" Intervention in any form will only facilitate imperialist domination.

We must know what side of the class line she is on also. Yes, she is heroic. But in no way must we have anything to do with her movement for democracy. In fact it is a death trap. Revolutionaries raise democratic demands to win over the middle classes to the proletarian vanguard not for selling out. Any leftwing organisation who liquidates into her movement is selling out.

The military regime must be smashed. The only force which can consistently do this is the revolutionary proletariat. A revolutionary communist party must be built in Burma.

Neither in Burma nor in most colonies and semi colonies, the proletariat need allies. These allies include the peasantry. Without a principled alliance the revolution will not be victorious. A revolutionary party in Burma would take the progressive demands such as the nationalisation of the land.

For a revolutionary workers and small farmers government.

The junta is desperate. Economic sanctions are hurting. They are forced to make concessions. No doubt Suu Kyi will show them an option which will allow the military to have power with minimal democracy for the rich. This will please the imperialists.

Currently Suu Kyi is standing up for national minorities. It would not surprise us if she sold these minorities out in her quest for national unity. Whilst it is not clear how the issue of national minorities will be resolved, we are confident that in any agreement, workers will lose!

## **France. Workers and students fight Sarkozy pension reform.**

In Australia Gillard and Rudd increased the old age pension. But the sting in the tail was an increase in the minimum age it could be received. This was a serious attack. If you are in your sixties and doing a heavy labouring job you really look forward to your retirement. In fact you need it. As one French unionist put it "We work 365 days a year in extreme conditions. Dust and noise means we are wearing ourselves out and going beyond 60 will send us to a certain death". This applies to many workers in Australia as well as France.

Yet in Australia, there was no active opposition to what amounts to a vicious attack on workers' rights.

Not so in France! When Sarkozy announced an increase in the pension age. There was militant and inspiring protest. Millions of workers backed by students have hit the streets in protests which are totally justified.

The reason for these attacks is not hard to find. It is the economic crisis which is hitting the French economy. Sarkozy is a full blooded ruling class leader. He is a hard core economic rationalist who is committed to balancing the budget. He will use any means to achieve his objective. No doubt he thought pensioners would be vulnerable and isolated. He was wrong It is to the credit of the union movement that this is not so.

In October three and a half mobilised against pension attacks. Included were four hundred and fifty Lycces, oil refinery workers in Marseilles and Nantes. In Paris smoke bombs were thrown against gendarmerie.

We give French unions credit for standing up and being militant. However they didn't defeat the attacks and they didn't bring down the Sarkozy Government. Sarkozy seems to have weathered the storm and got his legislation through parliament. Sarkozy is not for turning. He is committed to carrying out the ruling class agenda. He will do so until he has been overthrown.

The point is that Sarkozy is still in office His cuts attacks will continue. So too will his racist attacks on Romany people (Gypsies). His government is evicting them from camps and forcing them back to Romania, a country which doesn't want them. The

European Commission is challenging this legally. doubt if they will enforce anything even if they fin the French government's actions illegal.

What must be worked out is a political campaign to bring down the Sarkozy government. These attacks are not accidental. They are a response to the economic crisis. In France as elsewhere every majority party, whatever its name, is committed to the stability of the system, at our expense!

The only way we can stop the attacks is if we overthrow the system. In France this requires a revolutionary communist party.

The militant actions of unionists are impressive. But they will go nowhere unless they are linked to a programme to smash capitalism. A revolutionary communist party is required, urgently.

## **Suicide at Villawood. Refugees riot!**

It comes as no surprise that after waiting a year to be processed, a refugee should take his life in despair. He had asked to be taken back to home country Iraq but officials didn't listen. No-one should be forced to live in a concentration camp, especially for that long. The conditions at Villawood are barbaric and disgusting.

The refugees are angry. The response to this incident and other barbaric treatment has been to riot and to go on hunger strikes. They have fled persecution in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan or Sri Lanka. They risked their lives to cross the seas. When they get to Australia they are forced into concentration camps until they are "processed". This is barbaric.

Kevin Rudd promised a more humane treatment for refugees. He was not expecting the influx of Tamils from Sri Lanka. This gave Tony Abbott the pretext to suggest that Labor's lenient policies were responsible. In order to get closer to ALP westie heartland Julia Gillard promised a tougher line. Since then there has been a race to the bottom.

The Tony Abbott solution to the refugee crisis is "send them home" In many cases, especially Sri Lankan, it means sending them home to death or torture. This is the case also with Julia's barbaric policies. Both sides are reactionary. The difference is only one of degree.

Communist Left welcomes all those who want to live in Australia. This applies whether they are "genuine refugees" or those who merely prefer the lifestyle here. Working class people should have the right to live in whatever country they choose, irrespective of whether it is good for the economy or otherwise!

Basically the official philosophy is those needed for the economy are not just welcome but encouraged. The bosses need skilled workers so they are welcome. Those not needed should be forced away. We put the interests of workers before the capitalist economy.

As the Abbott campaign last election showed clearly the ruling class use immigration to co-opt workers into supporting capitalism and reactionary attacks on all working people. We defend refugees not merely for humanitarian reasons but out of our class interest. If we accept the capitalist offensive when it attacks refugees then we accept the system which is attacking us.

Communist Left believes in a workers movement to defend the refugees, smash the detention centres and oppose immigration controls unconditionally!

The main radical movement in defence of refugees is the Refugees Action Coalition. This is led by the revisionist Solidarity Group (formerly International Socialist Organisation). Whilst they do some good casework the perspective of this group is to mobilise the student radical left for media protests and as well pressure the ALP and adapt to the trade union bureaucracy. This is not a proletarian movement against immigration controls.

Julia Gillard argues us that detention centres such as Villawood will remain as part of her strategy. This means that there will be more and more attempts at suicide and more and more riots.

The workers movement must be prepared for active solidarity. Of course if there weren't such barbaric detention centres, there wouldn't be suicides. We must organise to change this situation.

Smash all immigration controls!

## **Gillard sells out equal pay for women.**

The Australian Services Union has launched a campaign for equal pay for women. There have been mass rallies around the country. Initially Julia Gillard supported this campaign. Now she urges arbitration to "consider the economy" By this she means oppose their claim because the economy cannot afford it.

For decades, equal pay for women has been an article of faith for the union movement. It has also been supported by liberal bourgeois parties such as Australian Democrats and even some

conservatives. Rightly so! One can be critical in terms of how effectively they have fought for this demand. Sometimes this principle has been sold out. Nevertheless, the demand for equal pay has been on the agenda.

In the old days it was argued that “women’s place is in the home” or “women do not deserve as much as they are not as strong.” These arguments have been disposed to the dustbin of history.

Irrespective of strength, women are exploited at least as much as men and therefore deserve at least as much pay. Many families cannot adequately survive unless both partners work. It is also recognised that not all women are suited to full time housework. They may prefer to be sociologists, mathematicians or even plumbers. It should be their choice.

Julia Gillard is not a supporter of the old reactionary arguments. She is a supporter of capitalism. She argues that because capitalism cannot afford it in Australia at the moment women should give up on the idea and accept inferiority.

Through most of her life, Gillard has been an activist for equal pay. In the past any discovery about capitalism not being able to afford equal pay would have meant that a consistent struggle for the demand would mean socialism. Today, thoroughly modern Julia sells out her sisters for capitalist profitability. Socialism has been thrown out the window!

If capitalism cannot support equal pay, well we must destroy capitalism. Communists support the struggle for equal pay unconditionally!

Capitalists expect to pay discount wages for female workers. But women are still expected to pay the same for food, rent and other expenses. Often they are expected to bring up children.

It is disgraceful that the gulf between male and female wages is actually widening!

Communists support equal pay for women We also support equal pay for young people. The bosses use these divisions to super-exploit. They also use these divisions politically. Sexism is a powerful weapon which ties male workers to capitalism. Basically, the ideology that “women’s place is in the home” has meant that women’s jobs are not defended. For sexist unionists, the male jobs are what matter.

Communists want full equality between the sexes. This means issues such as child care and housework must be addressed. Communist Left wants the socialisation of housework and childcare. This means that these tasks should not be the responsibility of one individual or one family but that of the whole of society. This will only be achieved under communism.

There has been much debate over “wages for housework” which is advocated by some leftists and feminists. Of course we would not oppose such wages, if granted. But the demand does not challenge the whole nature of the individualisation of housework and the family.

Currently, the male wage is barely enough for one. Yet female home workers basically survive on what their male partner gives them. Society demands that children be brought up properly. Yet this is a difficult task for one person and there is inadequate child care.

Child care should be a right and should be available everywhere. This includes workplaces, Centre Link offices, courts and shopping centres.

Communists support other demands essential to the liberation of women. This includes the right to gain any job without discrimination, free abortion on demand, and the right of lesbians to marry

There is a lesson in Gillard's sell-out. Those loyal to capitalism will sell out the rights of women. Gillard's long path to treachery is a long sad story. The fight for women's rights requires drawing class lines.

## **The End of the Block.**

The Block is an Aboriginal housing project in the Sydney suburb of Redfern Black people have been living in the area for decades but it was in 1972 that it was formalised as a Black community and placed under the control of the Aboriginal Housing Company.

Today, there are fourteen houses left. These houses are derelict. The occupants are facing eviction.

Houses were constructed with the assistance of the Builders Labourers Federation, a union which was then led by Communist Party members Jack Munday and Joe Owens. When the Block was completed there was elation. There was wholehearted belief that a vibrant and progressive community was established.

The key lessons of the Block experience are firstly that you cannot build a successful community amongst a sea of rampant racist capitalism and secondly the Black bureaucracy acts as agents of the system.

The Block was ravaged by the attacks of capitalism. This included poverty, unemployment and drug peddling. Most poverty ghettos are. There is plenty of dysfunctional behaviour elsewhere in Redfern and Waterloo not to mention, Macquarie fields and Minto. However The Block is close to the city and more noticeable. It could be more easily targeted by white reactionaries such as Peter Debnam who campaigned for its destruction over ten years ago.

Big business has had their eye on the Block. Many millions of dollars could be made from selling off the land. The Block would then be redeveloped for yuppies.

The pressure has been on and the Black bureaucrats of the Aboriginal housing company have caved in. Houses have been left to run down and the occupants evicted, often by stealth as the houses became unliveable.

The Aboriginal housing company, the landlords deserve to be condemned for allowing this to happen. Now there are only fourteen houses left.

Both the bureaucrats and the government are promising re housing to the remaining occupants. They should have the right to move if they want to should be their choice. Communist Left supports the right of the remaining occupants to stay on the Block if they want to. For many of the remaining occupants this is their community and they know nowhere else. Let them stay!



The Block has represented much more than housing It has been a centre for the Black community and symbol of Black power. For this reason it the establishment have paid far more attention to it the many other communities, equally dysfunctional. "Proving" that the Block was unworkable has been part of their racist offensive.

Communist Left supports what those Blacks and unionists did to establish the Block. However, many communists and Blacks had illusions in the system There was not programme or perspective for a generalized struggle against capitalism. Before there can be any real community, issues such as poverty and unemployment must be tackled. The struggle had to be extended and linked to an anti-capitalist programme.

COMMUNIST LEFT is a revolutionary propaganda group for the construction of a fifth communist international.

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