

Vanguard

For an Independent Australia and Socialism

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May Day – Workers have the power

by Alice M.

On 1st May workers around the world gather to show solidarity with people's struggles and hopes for a better life. We put forward our own independent working class vision of struggle and a future that's not tied to the interests of capitalist and imperialist exploitation.

On this May Day 2014 working people in all corners of the world are in intense battles resisting the unremitting attacks by capital's neo-liberal imperialist globalisation.

The people are strengthening, developing and building old and new mass organisations of struggle to resist the attacks of monopoly corporations and big banks. The working class advances its own demands and agenda of struggle that strike at the main enemy of the people today – US imperialism and its monopoly corporations.

Imperialist attack

Capitalism is in a severe and prolonged crisis of overproduction.

The immense record profits created by the labour of hundreds of millions of working people around the world are appropriated by a miniscule group of monopoly corporations and individuals.

At the same time there is spreading poverty, unemployment, homelessness, high costs of living, and diminishing spending capacity for people to sustain their livelihoods.

Public health, education, pensions and welfare services to the people are gutted and privatised.

Deep poverty and unemployment are no longer confined to developing countries under the heel of imperialism, but now grip the people in developed countries at the heart of imperialism, as austerity programs are unleashed across the world.

Cut throat imperialist and capitalist competition is driving all current wars and the threat of war in the Middle East, Ukraine, Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Free trade is simply different sections of monopoly capital and their



governments capturing, restructuring and redividing the world's resources, markets and labour between themselves.

Trade is a tool of imperialist globalisation used to crush wages, conditions, jobs, people's services and remove all obstacles standing in the way of corporate profit making.

Capital is shifting manufacturing and technological industries from the industrially developed nations to developing countries with low wages and few labour and environmental regulations.

People's democratic rights are attacked to suppress people's organisations and resistance to the onslaught by capital.

Working class fightback

In Australia, the economic crisis of capitalism and imperialist globalisation is wiping out the manufacturing industrial base, sending jobs and services off-shore, privatising the few remaining public instrumentalities and services and redirecting public funds away from people's needs into the coffers of big business.

In tandem with this, there is a concerted attack on workers' wages, conditions and rights to organise.

The working class alone has the capacity to unite and mobilise wide sections of the people to resist the assault by big business. To do this we must have our own independent working class movement that goes beyond parliamentarism, building unity across trade unions and grassroots communities.

This movement would take up the immediate demands of the people for secure jobs, decent working conditions, access to quality public health and education, affordable housing, fair and just social services and benefits, affordable childcare, and cheap and reliable public transport. These are the

main things that impact on people's daily lives.

There's enough wealth created by working people in this country to meet these needs. Most of this wealth is controlled by foreign mining and oil corporations, banks and financial institutions, and multinational corporations who send most of their profits overseas.

A movement of the people led by the working class would have the power to nationalise the key resources, industries and banks to build an independent economy that serves the working people and protects the environment. This is all part of the struggle for socialism.

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Climate change threats get worse

by **Bill F.**

The latest report from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a sharp reminder that humanity faces a bleak future unless the domination of the fossil fuel industry is cast aside.

Dealing effectively with climate change requires a rapid reduction in global levels of carbon monoxide and other greenhouse gases released by the combustion of fossil fuels. These gases are the main cause of atmospheric and ocean warming, and the growing acidification of the oceans.

The global fossil fuel industry is, to a large extent, owned and controlled

by a handful of powerful corporate monopolies with interlocking interests and tentacles into every continent. Major ones are the US and European monopoly capitalists at the heart of global imperialism, plus the Russian oligarchs.

The science is crystal clear. The real struggle for the people is no longer an academic argument with so-called sceptics, but a political struggle to oppose, rein in and dismantle the fossil fuel monopolies and establish clean, sustainable sources of energy.

IPCC Report

The report is the second of a three

part report covering the IPCC's fifth major assessment of climate change.

The first part looked at the science of climate change, and the third part considered options to cut greenhouse gas emissions. This report was the collective work of 309 scientific researchers and has been endorsed by more than 100 governments.

Dr Chris Field of the Carnegie Institution for Science in California, who was a leading author of the report, stated, "We look around the world and see widespread impacts of the climate changes that have already occurred.

"...the susceptibility to be harmed by climate change is really widespread in society... there are vulnerable people, vulnerable activities, distributed around the world."

The average temperature across the globe has risen 0.85 since 1880, and without urgent action further increases up to four degrees are possible by 2100.

One or two degrees of atmospheric warming will be disastrous for hundreds of millions of people across the globe.

The report documents the consequences of climate change, making a case for urgent adaptation strategies to halt the rate of global temperature increase.

Some of the more alarming and immediate consequences are...

- Changing weather patterns, bringing drought and heatwaves to some regions and storms and floods to others
- Melting snow and ice, leading to floods and rising sea levels, causing mass migrations of millions of people from low-lying islands and coastal areas
- Warming and acidification of the oceans, effecting fish stocks and coral reefs
- Changes to crop yields, leading to food shortages
- Many species will be unable to adapt in time and are threatened with extinction

All these factors combine to increase the risk of conflict through the displacement of people and growing hunger, poverty and disease in poor and vulnerable communities.

Australia hot and bothered

A section of the report dealing with Australia noted that the rainfall pattern is already shifting south, bringing more frequent heatwave conditions to the temperate zones, but with more frequent extreme storms and heavy rainfall in other parts.

The population, which is concentrated

in the coastal fringes, faces a greater risk from bushfires and heat stress as climate changes rolls on. Water supplies are always an issue in Australia and some regions will suffer.

Economic damage will increase also, with floods causing destruction of infrastructure and the closure of mines and railways. Tourism will be hit as eco-systems dry out, the Barrier Reef coral dies off, and the snow melts on the mountains.

Farming communities will see lower crop yields, while beef, lamb, wool and dairy producers will have lower output and higher costs.

Bad as it will be for humans, it is catastrophic for Australia's unique wildlife. Many species are already struggling to survive, and climate change, even at the current rate, will bring more extinctions of animals, birds and fish species.

No more 'business as usual'

The third section of the report, titled *Mitigation of Climate Change*, looked at 1200 scenarios to reduce the effects of climate change.

It concluded that it was still possible to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius, however even this would require "lowering global greenhouse gas emissions by 40-70% compared with 2010 by mid-century, and to near-zero by the end of this century."

The press release from the IPCC noted, "Through afforestation, land could be used to draw carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This could also be achieved by combining electricity production from biomass and carbon dioxide capture and storage.

"However, as of today this combination is not available at scale, permanent underground carbon dioxide storage faces challenges and the risks of increased competition for land need to be managed."

Co-Chairman of the working group, Ottmar Edenhofer said, "There is a clear message from science: To avoid dangerous interference with the climate system, we need to move away from business as usual."

As stated earlier, the struggle is a political one against the hard core of global imperialist interests, who seek to hang on indefinitely to their monopoly on energy resources and the obscene profits they are making every day.

They will not be swayed by science or logic, and certainly not by appeals to their humanity and compassion.

No, they will have to be put out of business by the anger of the people, who have the energy and capacity to rebuild a clean world for future generations.

Notice to subscribers

A new improved website is being developed which will feature Vanguard articles and statements from the CPA (M-L), as well as downloads of leaflets and other material. When fully operational, it will be updated weekly and widely promoted.

To assist us to make a smooth transition to a better online format, we would much appreciate your participation in the survey of subscribers set out below.

Do you wish to continue receiving *Vanguard* by post? Y N

Do you have access to the internet? Y N

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Vanguard Editorial
PO Box 196, Fitzroy, Vic. 3065

Perth 'March in March'

Speech by WA comrade

Friends, fellow workers and comrades, on behalf of the Bolshevik Club of Western Australia I'd like to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak and also thank you for coming here today to demonstrate your opposition to the policies of the Abbott government.

I'm supposed to be talking to you about the life on disability pensions and the incessant attacks that are directed at welfare recipients, some of which only receive the bare minimum required to sustain life; a miserly sum of roughly \$150 per fortnight, for some.

Comrades, these welfare payments weren't a generous "gift" from the Labor Party or Liberal Party. No, first and foremost, they were a direct response to the social spending policies of the mighty Soviet Union, which had abolished economic recessions, depressions and unemployment.

Secondly, they were a result of the needs and demands of an impoverished and struggling working class of the 1920s who looked to the Soviet Union for answers. It was a time when mass unemployment, housing evictions, "move on" laws, anti-vagrancy laws and anti-association laws were being enacted. Does anything sound familiar?

Comrades, for the first time in many people's lives, job insecurity and unemployment is becoming reality for you, the Australian worker.

Recent events with Holden, Ford, Toyota, Alcoa, SPC Ardmona and Qantas, to name just a few, are forcing many people to seriously consider their future and indeed their children's future.

Add to this the increasing cost of living; utilities, rent, fuel etc. then many fears are becoming reality, which are forcing some people out of their homes, out of the State or even out of the country.

Also we can see a shift from the relative comfort and security of the realms of the middle class and into the realms of uncertainty within the ranks of the working class. In other words, we are witnessing a destruction of Australia's productive forces.

However, there is another form of welfare that is quite often overlooked by many, praised by some and undemonised by its sycophants. It's called "Corporate Welfare".

Recently, we've seen almost \$500 million in corporate welfare offered to Holden, Toyota and the Ford motor companies. Not to produce anything, but just to stay in Australia.

But, not even this exorbitant amount was enough to convince the CEOs and shareholders, who produce NOTHING,

to stay here.

So in the private interests of these CEOs and shareholders, you the Australian worker, face the stigma of unemployment and all its humiliation and demonisation.

Not to mention the possible threat of homelessness and conditions of poverty and being forced onto crumbling health and education systems, crumbling not because they are NO GOOD or USELESS, but thanks to reduced public spending, the very cause of the demise of the public sector.

Look around you people, everything you see has been made and produced by the collective efforts of you the working people. This includes your Wages, Taxes and EVERY CENT of THEIR PROFIT.

These attacks on social spending, welfare cuts, wages and conditions, job losses and corporate welfare, all represent a redirection of wealth, a redirection in order to prop up falling profits.

With this redirection of wealth we see you, the working people, unable to purchase the very things you have COLLECTIVELY produced.

This results in a crisis of over-

production.

Hence the markets, shops become glutted with surplus commodities and so more jobs have to be slashed in order to maximise profits and on and on this psychosis goes until we have economic depression, which results in the destruction of the country's productive forces, which is you, comrades.

None of us are immune from this phenomenon. In case you're wondering, comrades, this phenomenon has a name; it's called CAPITALISM.

So fellow workers, friends and comrades, what can we do about this?

I've heard some people say, "Vote Labor In" or even "Vote Liberals Out" or "Vote Greens, Nationals, Clive Palmer"... And indeed we could.

Alas, we've been swapping the jockeys of this ageing horse since the formation of the ALP. But none of this jockey-swapping has SOLVED the inherent problems that exist in this moribund economic system. If it could, then we wouldn't be having this discussion today.

One suggestion comrades, and I hope the trade unions would seriously consider this option, is to say "Goodbye" to the CEOs and shareholders of these

foreign Nationals. Send them home and they can leave the machinery here.

Then the workers in these industries and factories should form management committees and take over these production plants. Run them not for the CEOs and shareholders of foreign countries, but for us, the Australian people, who still have a need for these items and products.

We know how to run these plants. We've been doing it for years. You have the brains and the skills necessary. If they can do it in Argentina, then surely we can do it here.

Comrades, we should be taking over these closed factories and increase taxes on foreign business. If they won't co-operate, send them packing and nationalise these industries.

This course of action removes the PRIVATE PROFIT MOTIVE from the equation (which is clearly jeopardising your and your children's future) then we can use this newly created PUBLIC PROFIT to sustain and expand better social benefits to all according to needs.

It's time to put Socialism back on the agenda!

Thank You.

Important anti-war activities in Canberra

by Bill F.

Over the Easter period, a large number of anti-war groups and activists came together in the national capital Canberra, making up the 2014 Peace Convergence.

An important part of the activity was the first national conference of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) to consolidate and build a representative national network of the many peace and anti-war groups across Australia.

There were extensive discussions on building and broadening the movement, and the activities and campaigns for the period ahead.

IPAN was formed in response to the US military 'pivot' into the Asia-Pacific region and the basing of US marines, warplanes and military equipment in Darwin.

More than 100 people attended the conference from all parts of Australia, representing over 40 different organisations and interested groups. Many had a long and dedicated history in the peace movement, environmental struggles and support for indigenous struggles.

Guest speakers included Vince Emanuel, an American Iraq war veteran who also spoke at a rally outside the United States Embassy on 24 April.

A statement endorsed at the

conclusion of the conference summed up the concerns and positions that formed a powerful expression of unity and determination among the delegates. It reads...

"This first national conference of Independent and Peaceful Australia Network affirms our support for an independent Australian foreign policy as the most effective path for our country to build peace in the region.

"It is our view that Australia's successive government policies of willingly following the US to wars, the stationing of US bases and troops on sovereign soil and the deeper integration of Australian foreign policies and military into the US war machine is a major threat to peace in the region.

"We're concerned that Australia is complicit and actively involved in the US wars of aggression. We're concerned with successive Australian governments' subservience to foreign powers' economic and military interests.

"We're concerned that the financial cost of militarisation and engagement in foreign wars is a burden on our country that comes at the expense of people's lives, welfare and the environment.

"Through recent decades we have witnessed a steady increase in the level of Australia's military involvement with the US. We are concerned Australian governments' subservience

and complicity in the US military Pivot into Asia-Pacific is increasing the threat of war, rather than building peace and security in the region.

"We are opposed to foreign military bases and the deployment of foreign troops and military in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. We are opposed to the integration of Australia's foreign policies and military into the US plans.

"We want to live in Australia with an independent foreign policy, under which our country is free to choose what is truly in the best interest of peace in the world.

"We also recognise that a truly independent and peaceful Australia cannot be fully realised without a just treaty with Australia's indigenous people."

On Thursday 24 April, several rallies were held outside various embassies and corporations in Canberra to highlight the increasing threat of war and the increasing integration of the Australian military into the plans of US imperialism. Opposition to the TPP was also featured.

On Anzac Day, many peace activists and groups marched in support of the indigenous contingent who carried the memory of the warriors who had died during the 'frontier wars' and violent occupation.

In all, a unifying and inspiring week of anti-war activity.

Marxism Today

The role of a revolutionary vanguard party

Updated from an earlier *Marxism Today* article

by **Bill F.**

Most people who are serious about the need for revolutionary change in Australia agree that the working class is the main force, and that the working class needs its own revolutionary organisation.

The form and style of working class revolutionary organisation is a point of difference between various trends in the revolutionary movement.

Marxist-Leninists seek to build a revolutionary vanguard party as the ideological, political and organisational leadership of the working class.

Here we look at some of the characteristics of a revolutionary vanguard party and examine how these differ from other models sometimes put forward.

An organisation of revolutionaries

A key feature is Lenin's concept of a 'vanguard' party consisting of 'professional' revolutionaries dedicated to organising and leading the working class through its inevitable economic and political struggles.

Revolutionary work should be carried out in a way that steadily develops the political consciousness of the working class.

Political consciousness empowers workers to understand the economic and political features of their particular society, their class position in that society and the need to ultimately overthrow the dominant class rulers of the society, rather than merely pursuing day to day narrow economic interests.

To provide the necessary leadership for this to happen, it follows that party members must study and really grasp the essence of Marxist ideology and philosophy. It is not enough just to be 'progressive' or 'left' or even 'militant' without a depth of understanding of Marxism.

Depth does not mean theoretical understanding alone, although familiarity with fundamental concepts is essential.

It means being able to interpret events from a class standpoint, being able to apply the Marxist method of dialectical analysis to all sorts of struggles, situations and people.

It means finding ways to advance the political awareness of workers in struggle and the class as a whole.

It means finding ways to mobilise

workers into activities and actions where they can learn from their own experience the real nature of the class system that exploits and oppresses them.

It means every comrade must become an active contributor, taking responsibility and being accountable to the collective.

Some may have the time, capacity and opportunity to contribute more than others, but all play their part in advancing the Party Program.

In this revolutionary party Lenin noted, "...all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals, and certainly distinctions of trade and profession, must be utterly obliterated." (*What is to be Done* 1902)

Most other models of revolutionary organisation do not require such high individual and collective standards from the membership.

Some put forward the concept of a 'mass revolutionary party' which usually means that anyone can join, whether or not they are activists or just active when they feel like it, or are merely passive supporters.

Seemingly anti-elitist, this concept ensures that the membership is quickly sorted in tiers, with the leadership dominated by a small group of well-read and articulate intellectuals rather than both workers and intellectuals working and learning alongside each other in struggle.

Mass line method of political work

An important key feature of a revolutionary vanguard party is the way in which it conducts its political work amongst the workers and the masses.

The starting point must always be investigation, both academic and practical.

Mao Zedong put it bluntly enough, "No investigation, no right to speak."

In other words, listen to people, seek the facts and don't just charge in with preconceived ideas.

Knowledge must be connected to practice and this demands research, study and understanding of the principal and secondary contradictions in society and situations.

After investigation, sort out the main contradiction from the secondary ones.

Sort out the strengths and weaknesses of the forces involved, the people's forces and the enemy's forces.

Sort out the tactics of struggle most likely to involve the mass of workers

or people in struggle, and work to win support for this.

At all times, promote unity around the main demands, be where the struggle is hardest, build networks of allies and encourage natural leaders from the ranks of the masses.

In the aftermath of struggle, whether successful or not, be there to assist in summing up and drawing out the main lessons from people's experience. In this way, comrades can move the level of political consciousness to a higher level.

This style of political work is not easy. It requires comrades to have close and regular involvement with people over a prolonged period of time, whether in the workplace, community or in particular issue organisations.

In contrast to this, the style of some petty-bourgeois radical groups is to set up a headquarters and drag people away from their natural circles into a 'left' hothouse.

They hobnob with trade union officials and 'left' personalities.

Some even blow in on activities organised by others and push their newspapers, leaflets and badges promoting often completely different issues. Such behaviour only alienates people and gives a bad name to 'socialists' and the 'left' generally.

Democratic centralism

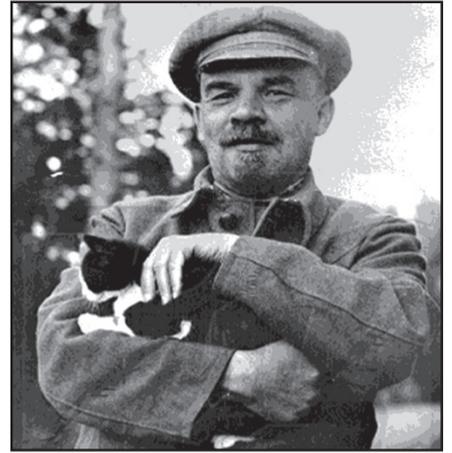
Democratic centralism is also a key feature of a vanguard party. It is characterised by a high level of self-discipline based on an understanding that the role of a Communist is to serve the people and to recognise the importance of the collective, and never to seek personal gains.

Decision-making is carried out through systems of democratic consultation and democratic voting.

Once a decision has been made, there is an obligation on all members to carry it out.

Dissenting minority views can be reserved and re-presented on a future occasion, but in the meantime, all members are expected to unite and work to implement democratically agreed decisions.

It was plainly put by Mao Zedong in his article, *The role of the Chinese Communist Party in the national war* (1938) where he stated, "We must affirm anew the discipline of the party, namely: the individual is subordinate to the organisation, the minority is subordinate to the majority, the lower level is subordinate to the higher level



Vladimir Lenin

and the entire membership is subordinate to the Central Committee."

Mao himself was in a minority position on the Central Committee for more than ten years, but never violated democratic centralism.

In other political organisations, such discipline does not apply. Those with minority views can just walk away from any responsibility to implement the agreed policies. Factional activities are accepted and often formalised, even when the factions work to undermine and sabotage democratic decision-making.

This petty-bourgeois attitude to party discipline stems from the substitution of liberalism and trade union politics and methods over revolutionary politics and methods.

Forces of the state

Yet another key feature is the attitude to the forces of the state apparatus.

While making use of the limited scope of 'legal democratic rights' to agitate, distribute material, conduct meetings and so on, a vanguard party also takes into account the surveillance and disruption instigated by the paid agents of the state apparatus.

It should never be forgotten that many millions of dollars are pumped into spreading rumours, intercepting mail, telephone and email communications, tracking comrades, friends and acquaintances, to say nothing of outright spying, infiltrating agents and poisoning relationships, as well as blatant bribery and intimidation.

There may now be greater recognition of this with the WikiLeaks and Snowden disclosures, but that just means the revolutionary movements must exercise greater responsibility and greater care.

A revolutionary vanguard party guards its members, supporters and mass connections as much as possible.

It does not conduct all its business in public scrutiny. It does not proceed as though the ruling class in 'its' country is so 'civilized', so 'nice' as to never resort to vicious, fascist repression in defence of its wealth and power and domination of society.

No more compulsory income management!

by Nick G.

Compulsory income management (CIM) is being rapidly expanded.

It is being expanded in the five so-called place-based "trial" sites of Bankstown (NSW), Greater Shepparton (Vic), Playford (SA), and Logan and Rockhampton (both in Queensland).

It has been expanded to the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (NG Lands) and Laverton Shire (Western Australia) and to South Australia's Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.

First they came for the Aborigines...

CIM was first imposed in the Northern Territory as part of the racist NT Intervention. Aboriginal people in 73 identified locations were issued BasicsCards into which welfare payments were deposited. Cards could only be used in certain shops and on certain products.

The measure was racist and required the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act in the NT.

At the time we warned "how repression directed at a minority may become generalised across the rest of society", and we then saw the incoming federal Labor government extend these draconian measures to non-Aboriginal people in the Territory and then in the five trial sites.

Great opposition to CIM developed in the affected communities which made it hard for social workers and welfare officers to implement CIM as quickly and as broadly as intended.

Indeed, as late as May 2013, only three people were on CIM in Playford. There was a larger number of people (51) who had accepted inducements to register as voluntary participants in income management. The latter only have 50% of their welfare payments quarantined onto the BasicsCard unlike people on CIM who have 70% quarantined. The "volunteers" also receive a \$250 bonus every six months they are on the scheme.

Labor expanded the scheme last year targeting young welfare recipients. By December 27 2013, 495 people in Playford were on income management, of whom 403 or 81% were on CIM rather than in the voluntary scheme.

This represented an increase of around 700% in just six months.

The same pattern was seen in other trial sites. Rockhampton, which had no-one on CIM in May last year had 396 people by December, most of whom were under compulsion to have their welfare quarantined.

Across the five trial sites as of

last December 2204 people were on BasicsCards of whom 535 were "volunteers", 72 were under compulsion having been referred by social workers, and 1597 were under compulsion as young people automatically transferred from the Unreasonable To Live At Home rate of Youth Allowance.

Referring to the Playford figures, Pas Forgione, Spokesperson for Stop Income Management in Playford (SIMPlA) said, "This is an enormous blow-out in the number of income management clients, the vast majority of whom have been pushed onto the program without their consent. It is a failed policy. It is a counter-productive measure that does not build the capacities of at-risk

clients..."

Simon Schrapel, Chief Executive of Uniting Communities said, "The rapid rise in Playford residents being forced onto Compulsory Income Management should sound a warning for the whole community - the basic right to be in control of how you spend your own money is being eroded and it will only foster a greater level of welfare dependency which is one of the things the scheme was supposedly designed to reduce."

Inga Baker, local resident and SIMPlA member said, "Hundreds of people receiving Centrelink payments are being forced onto the BasicsCard without justification. Why are we being

treated differently? Why are people in the Playford region being treated like second-class citizens? What did we do wrong?"

"This policy is a heavy-handed approach that limits the spending options of the participants and takes away the right to control personal finances."

We join with SIMPlA and other opponents of CIM in demanding no extension of the scheme to other communities, its termination where it currently operates, its administration costs being put into services that build the skills of low-income and marginalised people, and for Centrelink payments to be lifted to alleviate poverty and distress.

The real purpose of the Royal Commission into unions

From an article by Brian Boyd, Secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council

It is important that union members and the public in general understand the real purpose of this exercise, instigated politically by the federal government.

The Chief Executive of the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA), Mr David Byers, spelt it all out loud and clear.

He called on the Abbott federal government to impose "urgent workplace reform."

Byers said "lower costs" were the centre-piece for IR reform so that "global capital" can be attracted to build new plants or expand existing energy infrastructure.

The APPEA head said there was currently \$180 billion worth of investment on the table.

It turns out "lower costs" is code for less wages and conditions for resource sector workers.

Mr Byers called for Tony Abbott to introduce "a new type of enterprise agreement."

He said current EBA arrangements between contractors and miners were "driving up costs."

The whining was pathetic from the APPEA.

Apparently unions, on behalf of workers, used earlier struck agreements as a "the floor for wages and conditions" when renegotiations for new agreements occurred!

Shock! Horror! This process has been going on for a hundred years.

Mr Byers specifically wanted *more* limitations on right of entry of unions, an end of unions using previous agreements to be a starting point for new arrangements and an end to labour market testing for foreign workers coming in on 457 visas.

In recent times APPEA board chair Martin Ferguson (former federal ALP MP and former President of the ACTU) has singled out the MUA and the CFMEU for attack.

Their crime; fighting for decent wages and conditions for workers on major resource projects.

They were disgusting attacks on two unions that work hard to represent their members and potential members.

This behaviour by Ferguson has been sustained for some time.

Recently the West Australian Trades and Labour Council (Unions WA) and the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) have passed resolutions calling on the ALP to expel Martin Ferguson from the Party for his public union-bashing.

Recently, multi-billionaire mining magnate Ms Gina Rinehart has been exposed as misusing Sec 457 workers on her new project at Roy Hill WA.

Some wages are reported to be as low as \$18/hour! Is this the new "floor" the APPEA is aiming for?

The FWBC/ ABCC 11 head Nigel Hadgkiss back in March called for agreement clauses allowing industry-wide Rostered Days Off (RDOs), weekend shutdowns, and restrictions on subcontractors and labour hire to be "consigned to the past where they belong".

The truth behind Aussie wage levels

In *The Age* of Monday February 10, 2014, Ross Gittins reported under the heading: "The fiction of excessive wage growth":

"It's been two decades since we had reason to worry about excessive wage growth. This remains true despite

cabinet ministers and some economists saying we have a problem.

"The structural reason we don't have to worry is the continuing effect of the Hawke-Keating government's micro-economic reforms - particularly the floating of the dollar, the removal of protection against imports, deregulation of many industries and the move from central wage-fixing to bargaining at the enterprise level."

In *The Age* of Thursday 20 February, 2014 Peter Martin reported under the heading: "Wage growth very low, contrary to what government says":

"Don't believe what you've heard. Wages are barely climbing. The Bureau of Statistics compiles the only reliable measure and it came out on Wednesday (19 February 2014).

"In the year to December 31, the bureau's wage price index climbed 2.6 per cent. That's less than inflation - which is 2.7 per cent."

On the same day in *The Herald Sun* of Thursday 20 February 2014, in the business section, under the heading: "Wages growing at slowest rate since 1997" it is reported":

"It is becoming increasingly tough to land a job, but securing a pay rise seems just as difficult, with wages growing at their weakest pace for more than 15 years.

"Labour productivity is improving. Last financial year it rose 2.2 per cent, the fastest growth in 11 years, while Australian workers generate a good deal more output per hour than the average of other developed countries."

The Royal Commission needs to be seen in the wider political and economic context. It also needs to be seen in the broader activities of the corporate sector - where corruption and bribery is in the millions of dollars every day - more on that later.

Queensland laws strengthen class dictatorship

by Nick G.

Recent legislative changes in Queensland reveal with great clarity the class nature of the state.

The state encompasses those agencies, institutions and individuals whose job it is to obstruct, to restrict, to threaten and to oppress the working class and its allies in the interests of the minority who own and benefit from capitalist property relations.

In the uneven application of tactics against the workers, the state sometimes uses softer, at other times harder, methods.

In the current era, Queensland is at the forefront of state use of harder measures against the people.

Intimidation of union officials

In 2013 the State government amended the Industrial Relations Act.

The Act now requires the ten highest paid officials of a union to declare on a public register the assets held by themselves, their spouse and children and "any person who is totally or substantially dependent on the officer" such as a dependent parent.

The officials and their related persons must declare whether they have shares, investments, property, bank accounts and other assets.

The assets extend to gifts, non-cash benefits and remuneration. It includes declarations of reimbursements for costs of travel and accommodation used in the course of the official's union work.

It is highly intrusive and treats union officials as nothing better than criminals placed under a strict parole regime.

The clear intention is to scare people away from taking on leadership roles within unions.

Obstructing unions in their work

The changes also place restrictions on the ability of unions to campaign on behalf of their members.

Any amount in excess of \$10,000 spent on a political purpose in any one financial year must be approved through a ballot.

The ballot will only authorise the expenditure if at least 50% of the union membership vote and more than 50% of those voting support the spending.

For unions of a reasonable size with members spread across the State, such as the National Workers Union, the Queensland Teachers Union and United Voice, this will mean weeks and weeks of dependency on the electoral commission and payment of costs of the ballot to the commission.

It may well take such a union \$40-

50,000 to conduct a ballot for the expenditure of \$10,000.

A political purpose includes donations to a political party and "publication or distribution in any way, including through advertising, of material about a political matter" and even ascertaining "a person's opinion about a political matter, including, for example, by opinion polling".

Restricting unions in their work

Other amendments to the Industrial Relations Act restrict the scope of "allowable matters" in Enterprise Agreements.

Employment security provisions and conversion of contract to permanency requirements must not be included.

Anything that encourages or facilitates union membership such as payroll deductions or providing resources at the workplace for union activity must not be included.

Any agreement around funding programs in the workplace must not be included.

Anything that addresses union right of entry must not be included.

Anything that restricts "flexible" work practices must not be included.

Any agreement on the numbers or

categories of workers to be employed must not be included.

On the other hand, so-called "individual flexibility arrangements" must be included.

The amendments give the Minister for Industrial Relations power to terminate industrial action "if the Minister is satisfied that the action is threatening the safety and welfare of the community, or is threatening to damage the economy".

Thus the window is effectively shut on what little there is in this country of the right to protected industrial action.

Already legislative changes that over-ride enterprise agreements in the Qld public service have seen many of the 15,000 public servants who were sacked last year, lose key entitlements.

For example redundancy pay for long term workers sacked was reduced arbitrarily by 75%.

The bikie law

The Vicious Lawless Association Disestablishment Bill (VLAD law) aimed ostensibly at bikie gangs and their criminal drug activities makes no mention of bike gangs at all.

It is quite possible to be aimed at both public protest (e.g., organisations set up

to protest during the G20 in Brisbane in November), or against active and militant trade unions.

Oppressing the workers and their allies

Although these legislative changes are written with specific reference to unions and their officials, they are actually the iron fist of the ruling class around the throats of all working people.

We have no illusions about the trade unions and their non-revolutionary nature, of the fact that they are tied in a thousand and one ways to the continuation of the social system of capitalism.

Workers need unions.

The best of them actually do try to protect workers at work and win better wages from the employer.

That is why threatening, obstructing and restricting unions is central to the oppression of workers by the ruling class.

The workers of Queensland are the heirs of Barcaldine and the 1890 strikes, of the great Townsville Meat Workers' Strike of 1919, of the struggles against Jackboot Joh, of the SEQEB dispute.

When push comes to shove, they will fight back, and hard!

Public Health workers in Queensland fight back

by Ross G.

The ongoing crisis for capital in most of the capitalist world, including Australia, is leading to greater pressure from governments and business leaders to wind back state financing of public utilities as an "unproductive investment".

The Queensland LNP government elected last year is going about this process in a methodical and politically strategic manner. They have learnt from the heavy handed approach which the Howard government applied that led to its downfall.

Currently they have set one of their sights on the public health system, which currently accounts for 27% of Queensland government expenditure.

In the context of a government campaign aimed at building public support for transferring Qld State assets into private hands, we should question whether the privatisation of public health assets and hospitals is being seriously considered.

The Qld Government has used the widely known Qld Health payroll disaster as a pretext for a sustained assault on nurses in public hospitals.

Secretary of the Nurses Union in Qld, Beth Mohle, said last year that



2,000 doctors and supporters attended a meeting in Brisbane on 19th March, and voted overwhelmingly to reject Government contracts.

"... nurses and midwives are facing privatisations, out-sourcing, cutting of positions, attacks on the Union... Not only have we lost 1100 jobs in 12 months but there's demotions going on everywhere.

"In Metro North they wrote to 3,000 experienced Grades 5 and 6, (that's the base grade registered Nurse and clinical Nurse) to take redundancies so that they could be replaced by part-time, temporary new graduates [with a lower pay rate].

"So they'll save millions of dollars each year, and have a more contingent workforce... they are also rolling back many of the advances that were made for women in the previous two decades,

for example power has been more equally distributed within the Health system with nursing and midwifery, and allied health and other groups getting more power. Now the tables have been turned around, and they're trying to get some of that power back." (Qld Journal of Labour History, Sept, 2013).

Nurses are using their organisation to fight back.

At the Mater Hospital in Brisbane, nurses face severe restrictions on working conditions such as continuing professional development allowance, long service leave, and maternity leave.

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Struggle in the Philippines continues, despite illegal arrests

by Max O.

The Philippine government arrested on 22nd March two leading members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria.

These leaders were captured together with five other members of the CPP in central Cebu Province in the Western Visayas islands, an area devastated by Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) last year.

The CPP and its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA) have for the last 45 years been waging an armed struggle, leading the country's peasants and workers in the campaign to win their liberation against the dictatorship of the Philippine ruling classes and their master US imperialism.

They were arrested on trumped up charges for "... crimes against humanity that include murder, multiple murders, and frustrated murder", by the Aquino regime, a notoriously corrupt, inept, and crony-run government.

Both Tiamzon and Austria were busy investigating the conditions of workers in the Visayas region whose lives were shattered by the Typhoon Yolanda, when they were arrested.

Arrests violation of the peace negotiations

These two leaders, as well as being senior cadres of the CPP Central Committee, are also consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) which had been



carrying out peace negotiations with the Philippine government.

In fact these arrests are in violation of a 1995 agreement guaranteeing the safe conduct and free passage of persons advising the NDFP in its peace negotiations with the government under the auspices of Norway.

The peace negotiations have been stalled since 2011 and the Aquino government declared that Tiamzon and Austria are not entitled to legal protection from arrest, rejecting the CPP and the NDFP demands that the two be released.

Their arrest has stopped them overseeing the efforts of the CPP's and NPA in carrying out rehabilitation work in devastated regions.

They had been organising and monitoring the NPA in mobilising its Red fighters to help build communal farms, till the land, distribute seeds and other agricultural resources from the NDFP.

This is in contrast to the substantial amounts of relief goods that had rotted in the Aquino government's warehouses while the people of Tacloban city, Visayas continue to suffer from lack of food, shelter and income.

The arrests came a week after the CPP denounced the Philippine government of President Aquino for preparing a treaty with the United States, to be signed when U.S. President Barack Obama visited the Philippines in mid-April.

The treaty would give the U.S. access to Philippine military bases and to set up American facilities within those bases.

The Philippine government has been expanding existing camps and bases, especially naval, and setting up new ones in readiness for the American 'move-in'.

The CPP stated, "This agreement is a throwback to the era of U.S. military bases, where thousands of U.S. combat troops, their warships, jet fighters, communication facilities, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction were stationed within the country, and where the bases were used as launching pads for aggression in defence of U.S. interests."

A gift for Obama

The preparation of the treaty and the arrest of the two CPP leaders are considered ideal "welcome gifts" for Obama.

Just as important, the arrests were also meant to undermine the activities

to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the founding of the New People's Army on 29 March.

The NPA has played an important role in the history of contemporary Philippines: developing a successful armed struggle; creating and organising revolutionary bases in the country side; assisting peasants in their agricultural work; expanding participatory democracy amongst the peasants; and carrying out successful militant union worker struggle in the industrial sectors of the cities.

The CPP has condemned in the strongest terms the illegal arrests of Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria.

Indeed, the international revolutionary movement backs up the call of the CPP that these two senior leaders be released from wrongful detention.

As the CPP states: "While the wisdom and guidance of individual leaders is important, the advance of the revolutionary struggle depends more on the collective wisdom, determination and organization of the revolutionary masses. The arrest of Tiamzon and Austria will not stop the main trend of advance of the people's war.

"It is the Aquino regime's puppetry, corruption, brutality and mendacity that teach the Filipino people about the need to wage revolutionary resistance. They are thus ever determined to advance along the path of widespread mass struggles and revolutionary armed resistance in order to achieve national and social liberation."

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The hospital bosses also want the ability to force them into redundancy or redeployment elsewhere.

They have not received a pay rise in the past three years. They are now campaigning to gain public support to restrict these attacks and put in place an agreement that will restore pay rates.

Doctors in public hospitals are also facing a determined attack on their conditions.

They work for wages significantly lower than they could gain in private practice, in order to work in "public service". They are committed to ensuring that patients in public hospitals receive health treatment that is consistent with best practice, not second grade treatment.

Last year, the State Government announced it was breaking an enterprise agreement with public hospital doctors and would introduce statutory individual contracts.

The three unions covering these doctors attempted to negotiate a good

outcome for their members, but in January this year the State government announced it had finalised the contracts to be offered.

The contracts would strip away vital working conditions, for example significant provisions relating to fatigue management, and allow doctors to be dismissed at any time for no reason.

The response from the AMA to these contracts has been a strong rejection, saying:

- Specialist contracts give Government unilateral power to vary hours and pay
- There is no requirement to notify or consult on roster changes, no mechanism for accrued days off
- There are no guarantees rostering will be fair and equitable
- Senior medical officers (SMOs) can be arbitrarily dismissed with no unfair dismissal provisions
- SMOs will no longer have access to the Qld Industrial Relations Commission
- There will be no incentive for junior doctors to train in Qld

Senior Medical Officers (SMOs) and Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs) across Queensland have overwhelmingly rejected these contracts.

On 19th March, 2,000 doctors and supporters attended a meeting in Brisbane and voted to reject the contracts and proceed with plans for mass resignations.

The Queensland Government response to this show of solidarity and strength from doctors has not been to sit down and discuss the extraordinary passion and commitment shown by a traditionally very conservative section of the community.

Rather, the response has been to threaten them with strike breakers, and attack their organisations.

"If we have to recruit people from interstate or overseas, Madam Speaker, we shall do that," Premier Campbell Newman told Queensland Parliament. "...people like ASMOFQ [Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation Queensland] ... they are simply a bunch of people who want a war, not a solution."

The ferocity of the Qld Government attack on doctors and nurses indicates an agenda not based on ideology, but rather on underlying economic and political strategies essential to the major sections of capital in Queensland.

To every action, a reaction.

This attack has united all health workers in Queensland around their ongoing struggle.

It has also led to a widespread support for these workers from workers around Queensland.

A poll conducted by the "Keep our Doctors" campaign group (see their website) in four Queensland electorates found 68% of people support the doctors.

However, they are still pushing ahead with individual contracts for these doctors, as they are for all higher paid public servants – as a means of removing them from union organisation and coverage.

The collective response of these medical workers is an inspiration to all other workers around Australia.

Determination sparks Geelong rally for jobs

by Alex M. and Duncan B.

On Monday April 7th nearly 500 people marched through the streets of Geelong. Many were workers and families protesting about the loss of jobs in Geelong due to the impending closure of industries such as Ford and Alcoa.

According to the Brotherhood of St. Lawrence, about 3000 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 in Geelong and district are unemployed.

The youth unemployment rate increased by 29% to 14.7% over the last two years and is tipped to reach 19.1% for 2014.

The closure of manufacturing industries has resulted in the loss of entry-level jobs for young people. The problem will only get worse as Ford and Alcoa close down, further reducing the number of apprenticeships available.

A study by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research predicts that almost 5000 residents will lose their jobs over the next three years due to the collapse of Victoria's vehicle manufacturing industry.

At the same time as unemployment is growing in Geelong and many workers will be looking for re-training, Geelong's Gordon TAFE College will struggle to assist these workers thanks to massive cuts in State Government funding to the TAFE sector in 2012.

The Gordon's share of this was a \$17 million cut in funding which resulted in the axing of 27 courses and the loss of up to 100 jobs at the Gordon.

The 'Geelong jobs rally' showed that working class people are not only tired of the job losses, but that they are also tired of the promises and hand-wringing that seem to be the only responses coming from local, state and federal politicians.

There is a broad understanding in the community that more needs to be done. Also, if the mood of the rally is anything to go by, there is a quiet determination that working class people, unions and other organisations such as the Trades Hall Council in Geelong will persist to turn the current situation around.

The jobs rally started outside the Trades Hall Council, with the Secretary Tim Gooden leading the crowd through chants on the march down Moorabool Street. He attacked the Government over lack of action to assist Alcoa workers who will lose their jobs at the end of July.

Part of the way down Moorabool Street (the main street of Geelong) the crowd was addressed by union officials from amongst others, the Australian Education Union, the Australian Workers Union and the Australian



Manufacturing Workers Union.

The state secretary of the Australian Services Union Ingrid Stitt pointed out that charity was not what Geelong workers wanted; rather they wanted secure jobs and thus a future for

themselves and their children.

State Deputy Labor Opposition leader James Merlino heaped the blame for job losses in the region squarely on the shoulders of the current Coalition government led by Dennis Napthine.

Private-for-profit capital moves into aged care

by Ned K.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of private-for-profit operators moving into residential aged care.

The giant BUPA private health fund is well established in the aged care industry in most states. More recently, private equity companies like Archer Capital have been buying aged care facilities in the eastern states and now South Australia, with their takeover of Elderly Citizens Homes' residential care.

Archer Capital trades as Allity in aged care and is moving into the sector as the funding arrangements by the federal government enable aged care providers to charge more (and increase profit) from residents under a user-pays system.

Companies like Allity have a strategy of being one of the higher payers of staff in the industry to attract and retain staff to provide a consistency of care to over-charged residents.

This is a clever strategy because companies like Allity know that the increasing numbers of migrant workers in the sector are desperate for a living wage to establish the basics of life for the families.

However, what it disguises is the research done by several university studies which show that the private-for-profit operators in aged care have the worst record on safe staffing levels and safe workloads.

When the Abbott Government announced that it would not require aged care providers to direct increased government funding of \$1.2 billion to staff wages and safe workloads and safe staffing levels, the association representing the private providers

cheered from the rooftops.

Workers in the industry are struggling collectively to win fair workloads and decent work to provide better care for the residents. They are doing this by raising these issues for inclusion in enterprise bargaining agreements where better conditions of work are often the top issue ahead of a wage rise.

Bracks forgives, forgets



Former Victorian Labor Premier Steve Bracks has forgiven Prime Minister Abbott for sacking him from his plum job as Australia's consul-general in New York.

In his new job as Chairman of CBus Super he writes, "Let me give credit where credit is due – the Abbott government has correctly recognised the importance of getting infrastructure development moving..."

"Continuing investment should ease the burden on our roads and public transport systems, making commuting to work from the sprawling corners of our suburbs quicker and safer. It can aid the community and economy in dealing with the challenges posed by climate change."

This conveniently overlooks the fact that the Abbott government has no interest in public transport systems and is downright hostile to doing anything about climate change.

Aside from the usual blame game that the representatives of the mainstream bourgeois political parties childishly indulge in, Merlino did however promise increased funding, training and what he called a jobs plan for Geelong.

Whilst the demands put forward by the speakers, many of whom were union officials, all start from the acceptance of the social, political and economic conditions of capitalism, it is important that working class people and their allies fight back against the closures and the job losses.

The rally in Geelong was just one small step in the long march to Australian independence and socialism, where planning for the all round development of Australia and its working people will be the ultimate goal.

While the Fair Work Act restricts their options for effective industrial action in an industry where going on strike is a last resort, aged care workers have in a growing number of cases voted a majority "No" to Agreements that do not address staffing and safety issues to make a point. Their unity in struggle is sure to grow.

Bracks continues, "... the federal government has initiated a Productivity Commission inquiry focusing on public infrastructure investment, procedures and governance."

In his enthusiasm to win investment deals, Bracks forgets that the Productivity Commission is on a mission to cut community and social services and privatise everything in sight. He also forgets that Abbott and Co. are launching a massive attack on construction workers who make up the majority of members in CBus Super.

He finishes with the absurd conclusion that "More than 5 million Australians are members of industry super funds, through which they hold ownership of ports, airports, rail, roads, utilities and pipelines. In this sense, ownership of these assets remains in the super funds of the public."

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