

THE WAR FOR CYBER-SPACE IS A CLASS WAR



ON 14 APRIL the National Government passed the New Zealand Copyright (Infringing File Sharing) Amendment Bill, which would see draconian punishments dished out to those who get caught downloading music, movies, games, software and other forms of media from the internet.

The bill, which passed with 111 votes to 11, will give three strikes to anyone caught engaging in illegal file sharing. First the user will receive a detection notice, then a warning notice, and finally an enforcement notice which could result in a fine of up to \$15,000 as well as being banned from the internet for up to six months. Individuals have a right to chal-

lenge any notice by making a submission to the Copyright Tribunal, meaning that you will be presumed guilty until proven innocent.

In order to introduce industrial capitalism in Europe in the 17th century, capitalists forcibly stole or 'enclosed' collectively owned land called the 'commons', hence forcing peasants off the land and into the cities and factories. In order to introduce capitalism in New Zealand in the 19th century, capitalists and the state forcibly stole and enclosed collectively owned Maori land, driving Maori into little pockets of poor quality land and thus into extreme deprivation, and eventually into the factories after WWII.

Fast forward to today. It's necessary for the state (on behalf of the capitalist class) to forcibly uproot us from the vast wealth that is available on the internet in order to fully impose capital on cyberspace, and make us pay for material that was for the most part freely available on the web.

It is quite clear that the Copyright (Infringing File Sharing) Amendment Bill is an attack on the many in order to secure the mega-profits of the capitalist few.

When the bill comes into effect on 1 September, the most effective form of protest will be simple non-compliance. Carry on downloading as usual and make this stupid law unworkable.

Child poverty in New Zealand

A REPORT BY THE Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) states that "child poverty rates rose sharply in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. During this period, inequality rose more in New Zealand than in any of the 20 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries for which comparable data is available. The key drivers were low wage growth for many working families, high unemployment and reductions in welfare payments."

Many people will remember the effects of the policies of the 4th Labour Government and the National government that followed. Rogernomics was to the working-class here what austerity cuts currently are in Greece, Ireland and other European countries.

Fast forward to 2011, and the situation has not changed. Today, over 200,000 children live in poverty in New Zealand. When considering that the country's population is only 4.4 million, this number is huge.

The OCC report continues: "According to the most up-to-date data available, in 2006/07, 230,000 or 22% of all children were living in households with incomes below the 60-percent-of-median income poverty line, after taking account of housing costs. This figure included 170,000 children (16%) below the more restrictive 50-percent-of-median income threshold."

"Of particular concern is the fact that child poverty is unevenly distributed across society. For children living in sole-parent families, the rate of poverty is five times as high as that for children in couple households. Poverty rates are also significantly higher among Maori and Pacifica children than Pakeha children."



Cannons Creek is one of the poorest suburbs of Wellington. The median income (half earn more, and half less, than this amount) there is \$16,800, compared to the NZ average of \$24,400 (figures for 2006). The population of Cannons Creek is overwhelmingly Polynesian, with over half of the population Pacifica. Cannons Creek School principal Ruth O'Neill says: "I've taught in Porirua East for 30 years, [poverty] is probably at the worst it's been."

A charity called KidsCan provides food and clothing for school children. The charity is funded by individual donations and also receives money from companies like The Warehouse (and

the workers there will tell you all about what life on miserable pay-rates is like).

Almost the whole Cannons Creek school benefited from KidsCan on a weekly basis, where about three quarters of parents unemployed. All 170 school pupils had raincoats from the charity, about 100 pupils each week had breakfast at school, another 20 had lunch, and each week, one pupil got new shoes.

Believe what you want about this country: the glorious stories of Rugby World Cup campaigns, the 100% Pure Tourism brand, the history books that talk about a classless society and world-class treatment of indigenous peoples. At the end of the day, there are 230,000 children living in grinding poverty. And this poverty is not the product of people's individual failings or choices, but the product of a system that is based on class exploitation, racism and oppression, a system that is producing deeper and deeper inequalities.

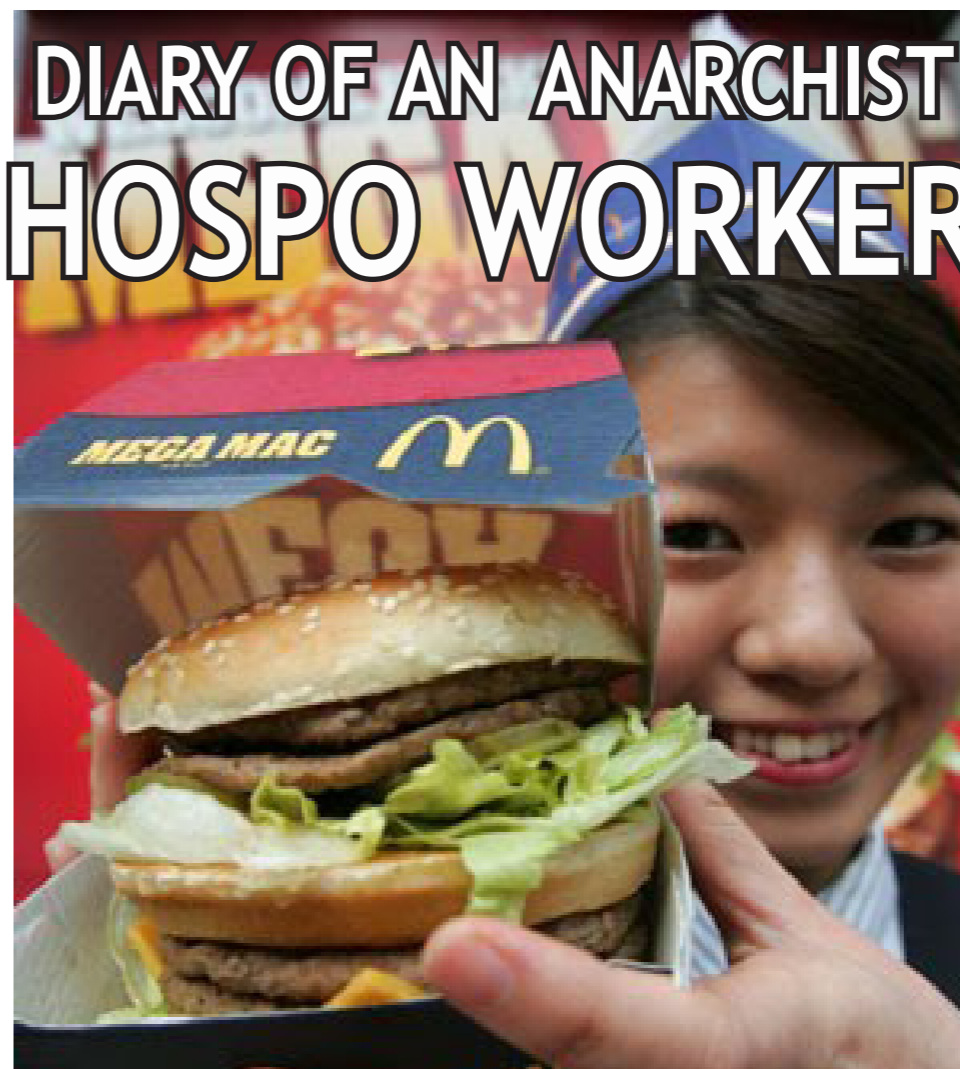
SOLIDARITY

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Newsheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement



DIARY OF AN ANARCHIST HOSPO WORKER



I HAVE SPENT THE BULK of my working life doing various hospitality work, everything from washing dishes to bartending to delivering pizzas. At the moment I'm working at a small restaurant in Central Wellington which basically makes glorified fast food for pretentious rich people; those members of the upper-echelons of the public service who ask for trim-soya milk in their decaffeinated lattes. If you live in Wellington you'll know the type I'm talking about.

As with my previous jobs I am currently on minimum wage and am not holding my breath for a pay rise any time in the next decade. There is no union in my workplace, actually nobody has even signed a contract with the boss, and what's more we know that there are countless

unemployed workers who would happily do our job. The boss knows that we know this and so we have little option but to accept our crappy wages and hope that we actually get paid for all the hours we work (it is not uncommon for staff to be underpaid in many workplaces when the boss reckons they can get away with it). What's more there is one young guy, a recently arrived immigrant who speaks hardly any English, who is not being paid a cent. He does the dishes on our busy nights in return for a reference from our boss, he has been doing this for months. One time I heard our boss joking to a co-worker about how he can just make him do all the nasty, boring jobs. My blood boiled with class hatred but I was smart enough to keep my mouth shut.

Anyone who has worked in the service industry will agree that it is quite a schizophrenic existence. That old slogan of the bosses 'the customer is always right' becomes a mantra which forces you to silently grit your teeth time and again when 'the customer' treats you like a soulless machine. Just as you might whack a television when it stops working, so some individuals will become abusive toward a front of house worker when their food is slightly late, eftpos machine won't work, order taken down wrong and so on. At a previous job I was told on my first day that our 'thing' is that we're always friendly and smiling (clearly the boss was thinking way outside the box). In other words the subtle facial expressions which human beings use to communicate mood and emotion belong to someone else when you punch that time clock, they belong to the company. And the company is invariably cheerful. This is alienation at its finest, the total separation between body and mind. The first and most natural act of rebellion for any service worker is inevitably the rebellion against this absurdity, and believe me this is very common. Whether the bosses like it or not, most service workers aren't going to bother smiling when they're upset. When I see my fellow workers steal back a life which doesn't really belong to them, it fills me with hope.

Organising to fight for our interests as hospo workers is an incredibly difficult task. Not only is industrial law weighted in the interests of the bosses, it is common practice for service industry bosses to ignore some of the few work rights we still have. For example as I mentioned earlier I am not on a contract, which is illegal. I didn't get paid my full wages over Easter, despite being assured I would. I have friends who have been paid \$10/hour cash in hand, no contract. One was simply fired for no reason, employed during the busy season and suddenly let go, with rent and bills to pay. An important factor here is naked class collaboration. Many small businesses foster an atmosphere where you feel the business may be constantly on the edge, so it is not uncommon for staff to help out by working overtime

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ARSEHOLE OF THE MONTH

ALASDAIR THOMPSON, the boss of the bosses' group the Employers and Manufacturers Association, gets this reward for saying women get paid less and are less productive "because once a month they have sick problems...Not all women, but some do, they have children they have to take time off to go home and take leave." Which has understandably produced a public furor against Thompson's comments. Some have suggested women take national period days in response. No surprise that filthy rich capitalists like Thompson are sexist – they benefit enormously from paying women less (inequal pay between men and women is built into the system to increase the profits and reduce the costs of the capitalist class, not to mention how that class benefits from unpaid domestic labour). Capitalists like Thompson just want to increase productivity in any way they can just so they can squeeze more profits out of us. Hence his nasty little attack on female workers.

PROTEST AGAINST BENEFICIARY BASHING CONFERENCE

ON TUESDAY 21 JUNE about 25 people attended a protest outside a swanky hotel in Wellington that was hosting a \$1700 a head welfare conference. Key attendees were far right-wing politicians Paula Bennett and Tariana Turia. The conference discussed how to implement the Welfare Working Group's savage proposals to discipline and punish beneficiaries. These include slashing benefits (through creating

just one 'jobseeker' benefit) and forcing beneficiaries (including the sick, invalids and solo parents) to work during a deep recession when there are hardly any jobs about. Solo mums will be forced to look for work just 13 weeks after they've had a baby. Their ruthless witch-hunt even includes one proposal to sterilise beneficiaries by offering them free long-term contraceptives. That's one step away from forced sterilisation, also known as eugenics. It's a shame that the protest wasn't better supported, but let's hope we see the creation of sorely needed beneficiaries direct action groups, and more support for the most vulnerable and impoverished wing of the working-class (which we define broadly to include the unwaged) to fight back against these brutal and disgusting attacks.

MASSIVE REVOLT ROCKS GREECE

SINCE MAY 25, there has been a humungous escalation of working-class resistance in Greece against vicious austerity attacks on people's standard of living. For a month in Athens and numerous other cities and towns, there have been square occupations and daily demonstrations of up to hundreds of thousands of people. These were inspired by the occupations of squares in Spain, but they have taken a different direction, one that favours direct democracy against parliamentary democracy and representation.

The focal point is the people's assembly at Syntagma square in Athens – the Parliament square with all its political significance. Thousands gather to discuss

and deal with the most urgent problem – extreme austerity, the debt, and now the impending sell-out of all the assets of the Greek state imposed by the 'troika' – the IMF, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank. On 22 June they issued a statement which we reproduce:

For a month now we have flooded the squares all around the country reclaiming our lives back. In late June, our struggle reached a turning point. The government, with zero social legitimization, is attempting to pass the Mid-Term Memorandum. Their plans should not be passed. We cannot allow the looting of social wealth, we will not tolerate the misery of the many to secure the profits of the few. The media manoeuvres, the fake reconfigurations and the blackmail of the government/IMF/EU, does not trick us. Now we know that the dilemma is not between bankruptcy and Memoranda, because Memoranda lead mathematically to the social bankruptcy.

Unions have called for a 48-hour General Strike during the two-day debate and vote of the Mid-Term in the House of Parliament. During these two days nobody should work, consume or support in the slightest way the breaking of the strike. On the morning of the first day of the strike we gather in Syntagma Square together with the assemblies from all over the country and all the neighbourhoods of Athens.

On the day of the enactment of the Mid-Term, we encircle the Parliament and we send the message that the people reject it!

For a month now we manifested that there are no one-ways, that we have the power to chart a new course for society. Now is the time to take the next big step. Now is our own time, now we talk!

It's us, or them – Direct Democracy Now! The People's Assembly of Syntagma Square

What is AWSM?

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society: anarchist-communism. We are a small national organisation with members in Wellington and in a few smaller cities and centres.

As class-struggle anarchists our priority is active involvement in workplace struggles and industrial action as well as community based campaigns in our neighbourhoods. We are currently involved in a variety of struggles, including protests against the government's austerity cuts and more. We encourage working class people to organise themselves against capital and the state. We do not seek to paternalistically organise people from the top down.

To become a member of AWSM, you must agree with our Aims & Principles (available at <http://www.awsm.org.nz>), and be involved in the life & activity of the group. If you're interested in joining or just finding out a bit more about us, e-mail or write to us – see our contact details in the next column. We look forward to hearing from you!

Subscriptions

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Contact us:

We welcome stories about workplace and community resistance
Write to us at: **P.O. Box 6387, Wellington 6141**
E-mail: info@awsm.org.nz
Website: www.awsm.org.nz

DIARY OF A HOSPO WORKER (cont.)

without pay, not asking for pay rises, more shifts and, shamefully, they say nothing when someone is either paid peanuts or fired on a whim. What's more it is not uncommon for the boss to actually spend the most time at the workplace when it is a small business, so you get to know them personally. Inevitably this complicates things as it is difficult to stick up for yourself when you feel sorry for your boss and when your co-workers identify with the workplace. Further, the intense competition amongst cafes, restaurants and bars in Wellington means that militancy in one workplace is likely to just put the boss out of business very quickly. Of course when I find myself in sympathy with the boss I just have to remind myself that, should the business go tits up, he will at least have property to sell. Whereas the rest of us will be back where we started; with little of value on the 'free' market except our lives. Which are worth 13 bucks an hour apparently.

Although the general picture may be bleak, there is already a tendency toward resistance which can be built upon. The class relations of capitalist society compel us to resist, even if we are not all that conscious of it. Theft is common. I remember at a previous job one of my co-workers actually told me off for not stealing enough! Although it can be a somewhat atomised method of struggle, theft becomes collective when it requires the complicity of other workers who don't tell the boss. Another method is simple sabotage, this is useful when you are understaffed and being made to do more than one job. Basically you just do a very sloppy job, on purpose, so that the boss puts another person on during that shift. This is good because you can slow down the work to a comfortable pace and provide another shift so that someone new is hired or someone else just gets more shifts. Depending on your position in the production process sabotage can be done individually, but it is obviously more effective if implemented as a conscious, collective action. Further, the goal of such action should not be limited to the immediate gains being sought, but also developing trust and fraternity amongst workers. Such relationships make the work more enjoyable and also make it easier to stick up for ourselves since a coherent group is stronger than any one individual.

Funnily enough, I actually kind of like my job. Those tasks which many people may find tedious and irritating, like

chopping vegetables, are actually very relaxing and pleasurable for me. When I do a good job making some food naturally I feel proud of myself. Nevertheless I hate the fact that

someone else makes money off of something I enjoy, and frankly I'm not about to use that as an excuse to just get exploited and treated like dirt as if i'm a sucker. Doing a job you are passionate about is possibly the most effective way of turning yourself into a passionless beast. Despite the impression a person may get from celebrity chefs like Jamie Oliver, there are bugger all professional chefs out there who actually give a toss about food once they've been in the industry for any length of time. That's because wage labour sucks the life out of you. I hate getting bossed around by someone who only cares about their profit margins, and I hate watching people spend more in one sitting than I will make in an entire shift. The only thing that really makes the job bearable are the social bonds I form with my co-workers, bonds which necessarily reflect the shared misery of workers. These bonds are the only force which will ever break capitalism. The bosses have the entire world, whereas all we have is each other.

For a world without bosses!

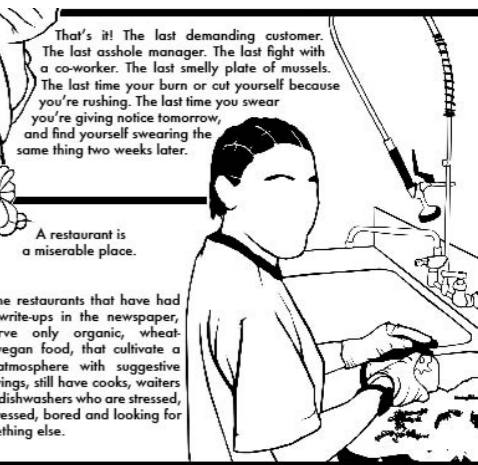
SEND IN YOUR STORIES

WE'D LOVE TO hear more reports and stories like this one about life in today's workplace or on the benefit. Send in your stories about how you've been treated, and your attempts at resistance. Or get in touch if you want to be interviewed to get your story out there. We aim to make these reports a regular feature of this newsletter. Most of the left look down on workers, seeing us as a dumb or passive blob that needs to be organised by small elite groups of union or party bureaucrats. The left also ignores beneficiaries. We want to make *Solidarity* more into a paper by workers and beneficiaries, and not for workers and



You catch bits and pieces of customers' conversations, while having constantly interrupted ones with your co-workers.

"Oh isn't it nice, this restaurant gives money to that save-the-wolves charity."



Images from *Abolish Restaurants* by Prole.info. Available from <http://libcom.org/library/abolish-restaurants>

beneficiaries. Rather than spouting some irrelevant dogma and shouting slogans at people, we need to learn from the nitty-gritty of how we experience life everyday under today's brutal capitalist conditions, and share our attempts at resistance to find out methods that work. Resistance comes not from the ideologues, activists or bureaucrats, but from us. When we come together, organise ourselves, and act for ourselves it is pretty hard to be shat upon. Instead we can shit on bosses and bureaucrats alike.