

Water meters too scary for Mayor Kerry

Auckland Water Pressure Group (WPG) spokesperson Penny Bright was invited to address the Wellington Residents Coalition AGM in the public library on 4 April. The WPG has been fighting against water privatisation and is best known for digging up whole streets to rip out water meters.

Wellington Mayor Kerry Prendergast and her 'developer' husband Rex Nichols were amongst the crowd of 45 at the start of the meeting. However, they left early with Prendergast storming out during Bright's speech. The speech covered the legal battle against the Auckland Regional Council and company Metrowater. She argued that 'Rogernomics', the privatisation spree of the 4th Labour government, was to blame for the economic stuff up and the commodification of water. "Water is a basic human right, not something that should be used by corporations to make a profit" she said.

AWSM invited the WPG to send members to Wellington to run workshops training people in dismantling water meters and concreting over them. People from various left-wing organisations attended the meeting (including the Alliance, Workers Party, the Wildcat Anarchist Collective and AWSM) which was another step in the struggle against the commodification of water.

For further info on the campaign against residential water metering, see <http://www.righttowater.org.nz> or email wellingtonresidentscoalition@gmail.com

What is AWSM?

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society: anarchist-communism.

We are made up of revolutionary class-struggle anarchists from across Aotearoa / New Zealand. For now, we are a small organisation with local branches in Auckland and Wellington and members in a few other 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 the struggles against residential water metering in Wellington, the 90 Day "Hire & Fire" Act nationally, strike support and more.

We publish a monthly newsheet (which you're reading right now!) and a less frequent but more in-depth theoretical magazine as well.

To be a member of AWSM, you must agree with our Aims & Principles (available on our website, www.awsm.org.nz), and be involved in the life and activity of the group. If you're interested in joining or just finding out a bit more about us, email or write to us via the contact details at the bottom of this page.



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To subscribe to the AWSM announcements list, email info@awsm.org.nz. Subscribers will be sent .pdf copies of Solidarity each month, along with other publications produced by AWSM and occasional information - we promise we won't spam you with a ton of useless stuff though! The electronic copy is identical to the print version. And, of course, it's free!

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In the sky and on the phones - workers stand strong and fight back!

Flight attendants on Air New Zealand have been taking a range of industrial action. The attendants, contracted to Zeal320 (wholly owned by Air NZ) are demanding their wages and conditions be increased so they are level with flight attendants on other Air NZ planes who are directly contracted to the airline. When taking into account overtime pay and allowances, attendants contracted through Zeal320 make about \$30,000 / year less than their counterparts.

All 250 Zeal320 workers that are members of the EPMU (approximately 85% of the total workforce) are refusing to take



standby work, not doing some paperwork and ignoring their uniform policy (by adding items such as feather boas and wigs). Some workers have already been suspended for these actions.

Strike action was threatened from

April 8th, however the EPMU was taken to court in an effort to prevent this and withdrew their strike notice. However, a new strike notice may still be put in place should the workers not get what they are asking for.

Meanwhile, Air NZ are attempting to hire scabs through Hudson Recruitment. Zeal320 workers have stated "if Air NZ wants strike-breaker CVs then let's give them CVs - as many of them as we can". You can help swamp Hudson and find out other ways to support the Zeal320 workers at <http://epmu.org.nz/take-action/>.

Auckland based call centre workers have also been fighting for better wages and conditions as a part of Unite Union's Calling For Change campaign.

After three weeks of wildcat action by mostly teenaged workers at OCIS call centre, 50 Unite members were locked out on Friday March 27th. By Saturday afternoon, an agreement had



been reached with OCIS, under which the workers receive higher rates of pay, better job security and payments to locked out union members equal in value to the amount lost as a result of the lock out.

As we go to print, over 30 workers at another Auckland call centre, Synovate, have also been locked out, after refusing to accept a pitiful offer of 20 cents an hour pay rise with possibly another 15 cents an hour in 6 months.

Workers picketed the call centre on Saturday April 11th, and successfully managed to keep some scabs out. At one point, the bosses were even locked inside for two hours!

Live updates are being posted from the picket line to <http://twitter.com/uniteunion>

IN THIS ISSUE



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On the privatisation of prisons

The government has indicated that contracts to run newly built prisons can be contested by private companies as well as the Department of Corrections.

Some people have been quick to condemn National for privatising the prisons, fearing that ACC and State Owned Enterprises might be next.

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) doesn't think much of the discussion around privatising prisons. Instead, anarchists have long been arguing for the abolition of prisons, not for their improvement.

The State and its institutions exist first and foremost to uphold 'private property'. Of course, we don't all have the same property. Society is divided into classes: the haves and the have-nots. The ruling class possesses almost all the land, houses, factories and the means of production

etc. On the other side, the workers and unemployed own so little as to amount to nothing.

It is not surprising that people, who are struggling to survive, commit theft and burglaries just to feed themselves. The police force is then used to arrest you, the courts supposedly give you a fair go, and at the end time in prison is the punishment. It is therefore



not surprising that they are full of poor people who are just struggling to survive in this exploitative system.

We recognise that some prisoners are convicted of violence and abuse. However, we think that we don't need the State to lock people away.

Instead, things can be worked out on a community level through systems of restorative justice.

The government obviously doesn't care about the well-being of prisoners - locking someone up in a 6m2 room for 23 hours each day over years is proof of that.

We in AWSM don't know if prisoners are better off in a State-run prison or a private prison. We know that they are better off in freedom and that's exactly what we stand for: for a society without prisons, a classless and stateless society - anarchist-communism.

Solidarity with migrant workers

In times of recession, those with power will inevitably try to turn those of us without against one another. Instead than asking why we should lose our jobs when the bosses are still making megabucks, the people with power would much rather have us fighting amongst ourselves to try to keep our jobs.

Often those with the least power are attacked first, and so it is no surprise that we've seen recent attacks against migrant workers in the media. These attacks, coming from union bosses and newspaper columnists, must be resisted. Workers are strongest when we stand together, and we must not let our solidarity be divided by arbitrary lines on a map.

Graeme Clarke, general secretary of the Manufacturing and Construction Workers Union

(M&CU) and Andrew Little, national secretary of New Zealand's largest private sector union, the Engineers Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU), have both come out publicly with anti-migrant worker statements in recent weeks.

Little stated on Campbell Live that "We are saying that where the employer is left to choose between New Zealand workers and migrant workers on short term visas then they ought to favour New Zealand workers". This narrow, nationalistic point of view is the complete opposite of what workers in New Zealand actually need.

Rather than attempting to beat on migrant workers to save jobs for NZ citizens, we need to all



be organising collectively to protect and increase all of our wages and conditions.

When we are divided, we are weak. Through joint action, we begin to realise our own strength, and we can ensure that during this time of economic recession, that the bosses who profited from the good times are also the ones taking the hit during the bad, not us.

Shark alert in the Hutt Valley

- By Nate

Like many other beneficiaries or working poor struggling to make ends meet on the benefit or in low paying jobs I recently had to visit a pawn broker to raise some money to pay overdue bills.

Super Loans Hutt Ltd (04 586-3735, formerly known as XtraCash) at 3a Pretoria Street, Lower Hutt was the place I visited, although of course there isn't any shortage of Pawn Brokers and Legal Loan Sharks operating in the Hutt Valley.

Super Loans charge an astounding 416% per annum on any contract you take out with them. In their contracts they state that "This is a short term loan only" however given that most of the people who visit Super Loans are in no position to negotiate a bank loan or a bank overdraft the chances are that they will lose their goods as they can never catch up on Super Loans interest rate of over 7% per week.

In many cases you can roll the loan over for another three months (by paying the interest only, in the case listed below of a loan of \$120.00 the interest alone is \$134.40) and find yourself paying back over 111% in interest.



Of course, Super Loans win either way, whether you manage to pay the money back or if you lose the goods. For one loan of \$120.00 the amount to be paid back at the end of the three month contract is \$254.40. This is over

111% in interest over three months. If you can't afford to get the goods back do not worry - Super Loans will auction off your goods on Trade Me (Super Loans Hutt Ltd trade as Superloans1 on Trade Me) and maybe you can bid on them.

The problem of course is that Super Loans fill the gap that is left when you can not get a overdraft from a bank or access a WINZ Special Needs Grant if you do not meet WINZ's criteria. For a lot of people they are the only option when they need to raise cash to pay the monthly power bill.

Super Loans prey on the poor and the working poor in the Hutt Valley, like so many other loan sharks taking advantage of people who struggle every week to put food on the table for their families.

Super Loans will continue to make money of other peoples economic misfortunes as long as people continue to use their services.

We must stop feeding the Sharks.

What is anarchist-communism? Part 1

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement, who produce this newsheet, are an anarchist-communist group. But what does that mean? In part one of an ongoing series, we look at the problems with capitalism.

We live in a truly beautiful world. There is easily enough of everything to go around for everyone to live comfortably. However, while a few live in luxury, most of us spend our whole lives slaving away just to get by. We, the working class, own very little property and so to survive we can only do one of three things: work for a boss, claim benefits or steal. And the latter two options are neither available, nor desirable to most.

This is what capitalism is based on: we have to sell our ability to work - and hours of our life - for a wage. Our work produces things and provides services. But our wages are less than the value of the products and services we provide. The difference between the value of what we make and what we get paid is the profit which is being stolen from us. Someone answering

phones may perform work which makes the boss £400, but only gets paid £50 in wages. The rest is taken by the boss and called "profit" - which the bosses are entitled to just because they own the office the phones were answered in. So to make money, you must first have enough money to own something. By this system, the rich get richer and more powerful while we get poorer and, of course, less powerful.

Capitalism produces things for profit rather than need. For example, in famine-ridden Africa, big corporations will grow cash-crops like cotton while millions starve all around. If you can't pay the mortgage, your house is repossessed. Treatments and medicines for fatal diseases which cost pennies to make are sold for thousands of pounds to pay for marketing, while millions die.

These are not problems with capitalism that can be fixed, they are capitalism. The relentless drive to accumulate, make profit and expand drives capital. Profits must always come before people and planet because if not enough profit is made the

corporation will go bust or be bought out. War, poverty, crime, famine and environmental destruction - these are all signs that capitalism is working perfectly. They are also signs that it is unsustainable and needs to be replaced.

We don't want to replace one set of bosses and politicians with another like in the USSR. We want to abolish government and the control of production by the market. We want workers and service users to democratically control their own workplaces and see ordinary people run the world together without money or authority. This is what we call anarchist (or libertarian) communism.

Taken (and shortened) from Libertarian communism, capitalism and direct action - an introduction by LibCom.org - see <http://libcom.org/thought/libertarian-communism-capitalism-direct-action-introduction> for the full version.

Look out for part 2 of this series in the next issue of Solidarity.