

NEW ZEALAND'S highest profile fascist has been in the news this month. Kyle Chapman's latest group, Right Wing Resistance, has been putting racist leaflets into letterboxes in Asian neighbourhoods and in assorted other places around the country.

The media have whipped up a frenzy and interviewed as many alarmed Asians as they can find, asking if they are concerned about nazi racists rampaging through the streets of Auckland. The problem is that doing this sort of shock horror story is much easier than doing real journalism.

Christchurch-based fascist leader Kyle Chapman (pictured) knows that he can provoke a reaction from the media by being as crude and offensive as possible. The more attention he gets the better he feels. He has stated that the aims of the leafleting campaign are to recruit members for his organisation and to get media coverage of the issue. The media, outraged at his open racism, interviewed a whole lot of middle class liberal academics that pointed out how uncivilised Chapman and his followers were. This was exactly what Chapman wanted. He and his group are trying to appeal to angry alienated white working class kids who hate smug middle



class liberals.

There are huge numbers of white working class people in Christchurch and around the country who have been ignored or treated like shit by the political mainstream and they are justifiably angry. Fortunately most people who come into contact with Chapman and his group realise that a sad bunch of middle aged nazi skinheads with bad tattoos who like

beating up Asian kids is not the solution.

Working class people of all races should oppose both Chapman's poisonous politics and the useless anti-working class politics of the mainstream political parties. We need a radical working class movement that recognises that the real enemy of the poor (of all colours) is the capitalist elite (they also come in all colours) who are exploiting us all.



Resisting cuts at NZ Post



IN MAY NZ POST announced the closure of seven Post Shops around the country, and the downgrading of services in seven others, potentially making up to 90 workers redundant. The reason given for closures is a decline in mail volumes of an expected 4% this year and 5% next year. A reduction in staff numbers is underway by increasing automation including the installation of self-help kiosks in post shops along the lines of those in airport check-ins. Although NZ Post, a state-owned enterprise, has returned steady profits to the government since its inception, the network of postal shops, taken in isolation, has been running at a loss. This kind of compartmentalisation of an organisation, turning interdependent departments into businesses within businesses, is a common managerial strategy to make cutbacks in services and attacks on workers' pay and conditions through such familiar tactics as outsourcing/contracting-out. Where NZ Post considers costs to be too high in their own stores they will consider franchising the service to a private operator, or else simply cut service to a community completely.

In Dunedin, the post shop in the Exchange area is slated for closure this month. This has attracted a broad-based community campaign to keep the post shop open. A petition has attracted approximately 2500 signatures so far and pressure has been brought to bear on local councillors and MPs who have approached NZ Post management after some initial indifference and reluctance. It is unclear at this stage whether this campaign will have any effect on NZ Post's decision or if there is any potential for direct action which would be more effective.

The post shop workers union, the Engineering Printing

and Manufacturing Union (EPMU), has shown no willingness to fight the decision. In a press release they simply accept the company's logic, and rather than challenging the fact that a still-profitable state-owned company is laying off workers in the midst of a serious depression, they sound proud that they have managed to secure a one-off \$800 training bonus on top of redundancy entitlements. Although NZ Post is heavily unionised there is division within the workforce with a large proportion of the posties and sorters being members of the more militant Postal Workers Union of Aotearoa (PWUA). NZ Post and the EPMU have consistently tried to side-line the PWUA. The EPMU has steadfastly refused to take part in joint-bargaining with the PWUA thus severely weakening the workers' bargaining power. Retaining their representation of the majority of NZ Post employees is more important for them than winning a better deal for the workers. The EPMU has signed off on a new collective agreement that introduces a new pay model for posties that brings in a piece rate system and a 0% increase in 2011 (a 5% pay cut in real terms) in return for a one-off signing bonus of \$1000. The PWUA negotiating team have reluctantly recommended the offer, but it is yet to be ratified by PWUA members.

There may yet be industrial conflict at NZ Post this year. Any effective movement to fight cuts to public services and attacks on wages and conditions must start bringing together the different strands of resistance. Those fighting against post shop closures must support the postal workers in the fight against the erosion of their livelihoods and workers must be prepared to support campaigns that are trying to retain services.

SOLIDARITY

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OBSCENE PAY RISES FOR BOSSES, PAY CUTS FOR US

THE BOSSES of New Zealand's biggest companies (including state-owned enterprises) received a massive average pay rise of 14% in the 2010 financial year. This has bumped up their already whopping salaries – some earn as much as \$5 million per year – earned by profiting off our labour.

At the same time, the average wage rise for all wage-labouring New Zealanders for the year up to March 2011 has been a paltry 2%. This is actually a pay cut, because the rate of inflation for the year up to March 2011 has been 4.5%. For the million of us who are beneficiaries, our paltry benefits are also being effectively cut, as benefits increased by only 1.96% in April 2010.

Yep, as we already know, the cost of living is soaring and our pay packets or benefits aren't keeping up. The increase in the cost of living has been caused by the government raking in money from increasing GST (a retrogressive tax which penalises working-class people), big increases in the basics such as petrol, food and electricity, as well as increases in rates, and school/ university fees. Yet again capitalist companies like dairy company Fonterra and the electricity giants are profiting gleefully from our hardship. While hundreds of thousands of us struggle to pay the bills, such profiteering has gone unchecked in the 'free market.'

The contrast between pay rises for bosses and cuts for us is pretty stark. It's pretty obvious that while capitalists and their mates in the top levels of government give themselves extravagant pay increases, and the government bails out various financial institutions to the tune of billions of dollars, this elite class is deliberately passing on the vast majority of the costs of the recession on to us, on to working-class people. Indeed, they are viciously cutting our standard of living, including the recent



The anti-cuts budget day rally outside parliament in Wellington, May 19. About 1000 to 1400 people attended, listening to speeches mostly from politicians. The rally was supposed to be a joint union and community protest, yet union officials and members largely dominated the crowd.

budget cuts announced by the government (see article on page 2).

It's also pretty obvious that they want to keep our wages at paltry levels. While there has been much song and dance from the government about closing the wage gap with Australia – our wages are 30% on average lower than Australia, hence thousands of NZers understandably migrate to Australia – this rhetoric is complete bullshit. The wage gap has been widening. Finance Minister Bill English revealingly told a conference of his capitalist cronies (i.e. 'business leaders') in early April that low wages were a 'fact of life' and would attract 'investment'. Prime Minister Key chimed in that bargain basement wages were one of the reasons why Canon had recently decided to set up a call centre in Auckland. Translation: the low wage economy is good for business,

and even better for their profits, so we should just bloody put up with it you ungrateful sods, so keep on working your arse off, being underpaid, overworked and overstressed is good for you, and so is having such a sped up life where you don't have much time outside work. Work is freedom! (Bollocks).

A major reason why wages have been kept so low is the failure of unions, who are often aligned with the anti-worker pro-business Labour Party, to provide any effective opposition to wage freezes and cuts, spiralling unemployment, anti-union laws and anti-worker laws designed to clamp down on workers' resistance (such as sickies and strikes). Unions' opposition to the new anti-worker laws and government cutbacks has been purely symbolic. Crucially, it did not involve industrial action apart from some unions holding

YET MORE CUTS

THE GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET, which was delivered on May 19, announced yet more cuts. Yet again the government, in league with its capitalist cronies, is attempting to pass the costs of the global recession and the Christchurch quake on to us, the working-class. The 'zero budget' deepens the government's attacks on us by cutting back public services, retirement savings in the form of Kiwisaver, and the working for families government tax credits (which in effect is a govt. subsidy paid out to prop up families who are living off pitifully low incomes paid out by capitalists). The cuts will lead to thousands of job losses (particularly in the public sector where one billion dollars has been cut), more poverty, and more day-to-day struggle just to pay the bills.

Although the government has announced more spending on health and education, the money set aside for these is way less than needed given inflation. So in effect we will see yet more cuts to these services. And the government's inadequate support for reconstruction in Christchurch has been partially funded by cuts from elsewhere. In line with its mean spirit, the government's scheme for supporting out of work workers has been cut back drastically – it now supports only 4,000 workers, down from 43,000. And it plans to phase out this support altogether.

Compared to overseas, there has not been mass resistance to these cuts. In Greece, Spain, the UK and throughout the Arab world, popular and inspiring mass movements have sprung up against austerity cuts. In NZ, resistance has been limited to a few single-issue

campaigns, such as against cuts to accident compensation and after hours education. Links between these campaigns have not been made. Crucially, unions haven't really resisted the cuts, preferring symbolic and ineffective action like holding a protest a few hours before the budget was delivered in Wellington, an action hardly likely to stop the cuts that were about to be announced. With much nastier cuts in prospect after this year's election, there is a massive need to start forming and building up an anti-cuts movement.

MAY DAY IN BLACKBALL

MAY DAY IS INTERNATIONAL workers' day. It has been celebrated in the little West Coast mining town of Blackball for a number of years. This year's events involved a forum on the elections, a sombre unveiling of a memorial to the Pike River miners who lost their lives, an opening of an exhibition about a little-known struggle by Greymouth clothing workers in 1990 that involved a factory occupation, and a big potluck with traditional socialist music. The event worked well – it was inclusive and involved many people (including non-politicos). The organisers have done well in not alienating local communities. The focus on the elections – rather than what communities and workplaces can do to resist cuts – and the domination of the event by MPs was objectionable. However, even more objectionable was how the EPMU (Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union), the union who represent miners, did not officially attend the events and instead held their own unveiling of a Pike memorial a few days earlier, on workers' memorial day, in Blackball.

OIL COMPANY PUTS WORKERS AND ENVIRONMENT AT RISK

THE ANCHOR LINES of a drilling ship snapped during a storm off the Taranaki coast in late April. 114 workers were on board the 'Noble Discoverer' drilling the Ruru-1 exploration well 50km out at sea. In txt messages to their loved-ones, workers said that the huge ship "nearly drifted into Maui-B", an existing gas rig. "During the night I received a series of messages from [my husband] saying the ship's crew even had trouble getting the main engine going as the ship rolled, and that during that time it just missed the Maui platform" said one woman.

The well's operator, Shell Todd Oil Services (STOS), disputed that the ship had come close to one of the Maui gas production platforms. They claimed that "the ship's engines operated properly throughout the exercise. The vessel was steered well clear of the Maui platforms and the Tui oilfield. It passed Maui A at a safe 2.7km and was more than 10km from the Tui field".

Interestingly, the statement didn't mention how close the boat came to the Maui-B platform. Maui-B is unmanned but had the 'Noble Discoverer' rammed the rig, it could have been a major disaster, threatening the lives of the workers and an environmental catastrophe.

One year ago, 11 workers lost their lives when the Deepwater Horizon rig blew up in the Gulf of Mexico. We were lucky that another profit-driven oil company did not cause a similar catastrophe in NZ.

ineffective one-hour stopworks. The CTU (Council of Trade Unions) then called off proposed rallies in April and May this year against the new employment laws. Timid union bureaucrats keep getting wet toes and calling off action when more action is needed. Thus the 'fairness at work' (under capitalism, is work fair?) campaign has gained little momentum. Union bureaucrats have mostly avoided confrontation with capital and the state, and instead promoted class collaboration (i.e. 'partnership') with the very people who are attacking us. Even the unions who claim they are struggle-based have been unprepared or unable to take widespread strike action. Workers generally are sceptical whether unions can deliver them benefits.

Hence incidences of strikes remain pitifully low. Government figures claim that only 17 strikes occurred in 2010, the lowest since way back in 1935, when just 12 strikes occurred. Yet their figure of 6,394 people participating in strikes last year, while historically very low, is misleading given that up to 16,000 teachers went on strike in late 2010. Strike figures for this year will depressingly be even lower given that so many pro-Labour Party unions like the PSA (Public Services' Association) have unsurprisingly given up on any industrial struggle after their brief spell of relative 'militancy' against the National government, and instead have focussed on putting Labour back in parliamentary power in this year's election. Yet this electioneering is illusory: under Labour we won't be much better off, as they have consistently attacked working-class living standards over the last 25 years. If they were voted in, Goff has said he will promote a financially responsible budget, and no matter how much they claim to have turned leftward, they will be forced by capital's economic constraints to cut back services and wages just like National. We don't trust Labour, just like the vast majority of the population. Labour needs to be actively opposed.

SO WHAT DO WE DO?

We don't have all the answers: they need to come from ourselves, from working-class people, out of the conditions we face everyday, and not from organisations that claim to represent workers and seek to lead and manipulate them from above.

Here a few rough ideas for action.

Action needs to be based on the actual forms of resistance in society, and build from there, rather than imposing foreign models from the outside. In the workplace, most resistance is unofficial, informal and hidden: it does not occur through

formal channels like unions. Unions only represent about 20% of the workforce. Most resistance, apart chucking your job in and getting a new one (which has become more and more uncommon given the lack of jobs), occurs through small groups of workmates who watch each other's backs. These informal work groups in both unionised and non-unionised workplaces slow the pace of work (eg. by making deliberate mistakes until the workplace is slowed to a level everyone is comfortable with, and other forms of sabotage), take longer and longer breaks, slag off management and isolate those who



PM John Key makes an appearance at the anti-cuts Budget rally in Wellington

collaborate with managers, take sickies, steal, and so on. These forms of resistance are not individualistic, but require much co-operation. If you can't find such a group in your workplace, steadily form one with workers who you can trust.

Once a culture of trust, support and co-operation between workers has been established, and bosses attempts to break up these informal groups have failed, then this resistance needs to become more open and less clique-like (limited to small groups of workmates). Once it becomes more open, then things like strikes become possible.

Yet this does not mean we believe all action needs to occur outside unions. For the minority of workers in unions, you can still use workplace resistance groups to encourage everyone to vote for officially sanctioned legal industrial action such as strikes (but sadly only if your bargaining negotiations have broken down). If key

informal groups in the workplace support industrial action, then the action is far more likely to succeed and be effective, regardless of the manipulations of management and union officials. Sure, it's very difficult to take direct action in today's climate with all the legal leg-irons on us taking industrial action, the rightward drift in parties, unions and popular culture, and how so few workers are involved in unions and are unable to afford to strike. But where it's possible, it's supremely necessary to take such action, especially if we want wages to increase. If workers cannot afford to strike, you can stay on-the-job and take action like go-slows and work-to-rules, which can be quite effective. Also it's a good idea to take regular common breaks, and involve all workers in your workplace in such actions, not just unionised workers.

Once resistance has become more open, take control of the strikes and actions. Make decisions in open workplace meetings where all workers (temps, permanents, contractors, part-timers etc) are invited and able to participate rather than leaving it to union full-timers. Call for mass assemblies of workers to control action. Make sure these meetings are run from the floor and not by union officials. Fight against class collaboration by union officials.

We also need to look beyond our own workplace and try to form links with other workers (waged and unwaged): we are all in it together. It is a good idea to visit other workers' picket lines and discuss how you can help each other. It is also useful to form support groups or solidarity networks that support all workers and can take action outside legal leg-irons on struggle, such as the Wellington Solidarity Network.

Beneficiaries are also an important part of the working-class, and one that is often overlooked or sneered at. Beneficiaries mostly resist WINZ by individual scams to get more money on the benefit. This resistance needs to become more collective and open. There is a real need for vibrant beneficiaries groups run by beneficiaries themselves (and not professional advocates) to be formed to fight against benefit cuts and bullying from WINZ, and to provide mutual support. These groups were around in the 1980s and 1990s, and it's a pity they've disappeared.

Overall, we need to build upon hidden forms of resistance, and make them more collective, popular and open. This struggle needs to be controlled and directed from below, and independent of union and party bureaucracies. We know that without this struggle and widespread direct action, we cannot stop and begin to roll-back the attacks on us.

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!

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