

As simple as ABCC ... continued from page 3

Enter John Howard, the most vigorous and intelligent conservative Prime Minister Australia has ever had, and whose entire political life has been devoted to smashing the unions. He understood clearly that extraordinary measures were necessary if the building workers were to be defeated. He set up a witch-hunting Royal Commission in 2001, to whip up public sentiment against the building unions.

Out of its recommendations, the Howard Government instituted the ABCC, with sweeping powers. In particular, it is able to conduct compulsory interviews, interviewees have no right to silence, and interviewees can't reveal what transpired. Effective unionism in the building industry is therefore a crime so dangerous to capitalism that the bosses are prepared to establish police state powers in order to crush it.

These powers are a threat to capitalist democracy. A government determined to stay in office despite massive unpopularity could use powers like these to suppress all opposition. Workers must reflect on this and learn the lesson. The capitalists give their rule as a class a higher priority than the maintenance of democracy and civil liberties. They would rather live under a tyrant than cut their profit margins.

In the light of this, therefore, the building unions' slogan of "one law for all" is a dangerous one. It invites this or any future government to spread the powers of the ABCC to the entire workforce. In fact, there have already been some bosses musing in the press about this very thing. Instead, we must emphasise that the defence of democratic rights is inseparable from the

defence of the working class and its organisations. We have the right to organise, and no government can take it away.

The Australian Building & Construction Commission must be defeated. It's as simple as ABCC.

What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a social philosophy based upon the principles of liberty, equality and solidarity. It is the political dimension of a free society.

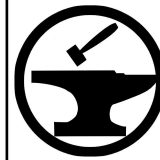
What is Communism?

Communism is the principle of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need". It is the economic dimension of a free society.

What is the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group?

The MACG is an organisation of class struggle revolutionary anarchists who share political positions, articulated in theory, strategy and tactics.

We aim to encourage struggle by the working class for its own interests and, within that struggle, we aim to advance Anarchist ideas as its necessary philosophical basis.



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OUT OF AFGHANISTAN

There is much more to the Wikileaks cables than their entertainment value, because the inner workings of capitalist diplomacy have been revealed. In the case of Afghanistan, what is revealed is the discrepancy between what the governments of the occupying powers say amongst themselves and what they say in public. In short, they tell the public lies.

These, of course, are the problems of the occupiers. The problems of the occupied are somewhat different. Apart from the violent and fanatical Taliban and the violent and repugnant warlords, they have to put up with an occupation force whose violence is an order of magnitude greater than anything the Taliban can perpetrate. Air strikes kill family members as well as Taliban militants - that is, if any of the dead are Taliban at all. Ignorant and oafish occupation soldiers rampage through homes, humiliating parents in front of their children. And trigger-happy sentries at road blocks kill hundreds of people, at least 80% of whom are later identified as non-combatants.

For several years, knowledgeable commentators and the occasional journalist of the capitalist press have spoken about the problems of the Afghan War. President Karzai is corrupt and duplicitous and his writ hardly runs further than Kabul. The regional governors are brutal warlords, drug dealers and reactionary ideologues whose major feature distinguishing themselves from the Taliban is their relative lack of discipline. The Afghan army is an illiterate rabble, riddled with Taliban sympathisers ready to desert once they are armed & trained. And the Afghan National Police are worse - an illiterate and cowardly rabble who go to water at the mere prospect of facing the Taliban.

All the while, the governments of Australia, the US and the other powers occupying Afghanistan have kept to an up-beat series of public statements about the war. They're killing important Taliban leaders. They're clearing the Taliban from this province, or winning hearts and minds in that one. They're training the army &/or the police. And they're funding reconstruction efforts. There's no mention of the crimes either of the occupation or of the regime that they are propping up.

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Out of Afghanistan ... continued from front

The Wikileaks cables, however, expose the lies. The governments of the US, Australia, etc aren't in possession of information justifying a better story than told by the analysts back home. Rather, they're as pessimistic themselves as the pundits who get in the papers, but they keep going because they think it would court disaster to admit defeat. So they lie to the electorates to whom they are supposedly responsible, conjuring up victories and spinning an optimistic line they don't believe themselves.. And the deaths continue, adding to the over 2,000 dead of the occupying forces and the tens of thousands of Afghans killed by them.

The lies about Afghanistan are no mistake. Capitalist diplomacy and policy-making are permeated with them, because the acquiescence of the working class to imperialist war, austerity at home and the destruction of democratic rights could usually not be secured if the public statements of governments were always the unvarnished truth. The lie is an essential part of the armoury of the capitalist class and Wikileaks has performed a vital service by demonstrating just how widespread and systematic the dishonesty of States is.

The Afghan War is an imperialist one. The people of Afghanistan, who have never been successfully subjugated by a centralised State, have no intention of starting now, and certainly not to one run by a corrupt and duplicitous US puppet. The occupying forces should just get out.

No negotiations, no conditions, no residual bases - just pack up & go. Now. Certainly the people of Afghanistan would continue to face both the Taliban and Karzai's warlords, but at least their best-armed enemy would be gone.

It is in the interests of the working class for the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan to be defeated. This will not be achieved by the Taliban (and, indeed, would create its own problems if it was), but by the withdrawal of support for the war by the working class of the occupying countries and the spread of open opposition. The United States, Australia and the other imperialist countries must be beaten by their own working classes. We must impress upon them that we won't fight their dirty wars.

US, AUSTRALIAN & ALL OCCUPYING FORCES OUT OF AFGHANISTAN NOW!

DEFEND THE FERTILITY CONTROL CLINIC

The presence of clinic defenders keeps the anti-abortionists away from the clinic, so that staff and clients can enter and leave, and people can walk the street, free from their harassment. Defending the clinic is still an important part of the battle to decriminalise abortion and make it freely accessible, on demand, to all women.

Organised by Campaign for Women's
Reproductive Rights. For more information, or to
get involved in CWRR, contact Radical Women on
03 9388 0062.

Fourth Saturday every month
10.00 - 11.30am
118 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne

AS SIMPLE AS ABCC

The news that Ark Tribe of the CFMEU was acquitted in November of the charges the Australian Building & Construction Commission brought against him is very good. In the face of a mobilisation of building workers, the courts found a technicality on which to let him off. They did that when Noel Washington took a stand and building workers backed him, too. There's a lesson in there if you look.

Ark Tribe is a building worker in Adelaide who attended a meeting of his colleagues in 2008 called to discuss a safety issue at a Flinders University building site. The ABCC called him in to an interview to rat on his mates and issued its standard threat of imprisonment if he didn't. Ark, to his credit, declined to attend. The ABCC then pursued him through the courts for 18 months and Ark, to his great credit, stood firm. The CFMEU & other building unions backed him in an intense struggle, threatening national strikes if he was jailed, and came out victorious.

The ABCC is an example of the overwhelming priority the capitalists in Australia today place on smashing all traces of working class resistance and self-activity. The decline of the unions in Australia in the last 30 years has been uneven and the building industry is an area where the unions have been neither smashed nor tamed. Although not as militant as formerly, building workers have retained their tradition of on-site organisation and industry-wide solidarity, both of which are anathema to the capitalists today.

Officials of most unions have capitulated to "enterprise bargaining", which started with the ALP Government in the 1990s and intensified under the Liberal Government of John Howard. Resistance has been sporadic and mostly unsuccessful. In the building industry, however, union officials don't have the option of collaboration. The pattern of multi-layer sub-contracting and short-term site-based employment in the industry means enterprise bargaining would result in the destruction of the unions. Put simply, there would never be an occasion to exert economic pressure on an employer both legally and effectively. The building union officials have thus felt compelled to resist this, since it would destroy the institutions on which their social position depends.

Building workers themselves have also fought the strictures of enterprise bargaining, thus keeping alive the tradition of on-site organisation. The hazards endemic to the industry and the bosses' contemptuous attitude make unionism a matter of life and death to workers, not just a vehicle for negotiating an EBA every two or three years. Further, widespread criminality amongst the bosses means workers are frequently ripped off by various means - and union action is far prompter & more reliable in achieving justice than the capitalist courts are.

Given the recalcitrance of the building unions, the bosses hate them like poison. Frequently over the last 20 years, militant bosses or employer associations tried unsuccessfully to subdue them.

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