



# The Anvil



Newsletter of Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group (MACG)

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## “VOTE HOWARD OUT!”

### GREAT IDEA - BUT WHO DO WE VOTE *FOR*?

John Howard, Liberal Party Prime Minister of Australia, is on the nose with workers and could very well lose the election on 24 November. Like the rest of the working class, we'd be delighted to see the back of him. And if the Liberal Party can be demolished in a landslide, so much the better.

There is a problem, however, with the strategy of voting Howard out. You have to vote *for* a given candidate or party, not against, so to vote Howard out requires voting for *somebody else* - and this means endorsing them as the appropriate government of Australia. So let's think this through.

First cab off the rank, of course, is the ALP. Rather than recount its appalling history, we'll just concentrate on the present and warn against viewing the past with a rosy nostalgia. The present, however, is ugly enough.

What is Kevin Rudd, ALP leader, doing? Acting like the leader of an Amateur Liberal Party, that's what. Apart from a selected handful of policies, he completely lines up with Howard. Virtually every time Howard says something reactionary, Rudd stands up immediately and says "We totally agree. Our policy is identical". Support for rich private schools? Totally agree. An environmentally destructive pulp mill? Totally agree. Locking up refugees? Totally agree. Invading Indigenous communities in the Northern

Territory, stealing their land, garnisheeing all welfare payments and smearing the entire Indigenous population as child molesters? Totally agree. And the list goes on.

The most unpopular policy of the Government is Work Choices and the ALP is promising to keep most of it. Virtually the only changes they propose are a phasing out of AWAs and a partial re-introduction of protection against unfair dismissal. Crucially, our right to strike remains so restricted as to be virtually useless and the union-busting Australian Building and Construction Commission remains in place. Finally, on the Iraq War and on climate change, the differences between Liberal and Labor are far less than the similarities - they both support the imperialist "War on Terror" and rely on free markets and "clean coal" to save the planet from global warming.

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Many workers, disgusted by the ALP, are turning to the Greens. While they are better than Labor on the policies above, however, the Greens have problems of their own. Because they still support capitalism, their solutions to the world's problems will have to be paid for by the workers. The massive reductions in greenhouse emissions necessary to stop global warming, for example, will have to be paid for somehow. Under capitalism, the working class will pay the bulk of the bill, since business has the power to evade or pass on the costs. Thus capitalism can play no part in a sustainable future, so the Greens, despite their intentions, are peddling dangerous illusions.

And finally, voters in some electorates might be able to find a socialist on their ballot paper. In terms of practical policies, they are mostly similar to the Greens. The most obvious exception is foreign affairs, where they are more consistently anti-war. Their major difference is that, unlike the Greens, they put forward socialism as an ultimate solution. The problem with voting socialist, though, is that you can't get it through Parliament. A "socialism from above" would be no socialism at all. The new bosses would wear a government uniform - double the authority and accountable only to themselves.

What, then, is to be done? We have to recognise that "Who should we vote for?" is the wrong question. The ruling class will never let itself be voted out of power. Capitalism and its masters are global and will continue to attack wages, rights and conditions and tear up the planet in endless pursuit of profits. And finally, whoever we vote for will use those votes against us, claiming legitimacy for their anti-worker agenda.

Workers should instead ask "What should we do?" We need to build grassroots resistance to the Government (whichever party is running it) by organising in our communities, our streets and, most importantly, our

workplaces. Further, we need to learn the law of solidarity, that an injury to one is an injury to all, and to organise on the basis of federalism and direct democracy.

We, the working class, are the alternative. In the short term, our grassroots struggle is the only thing that can extract real gains under any government. In the long term, the movement we build will make a revolution and the values on which we build it will become the values of the new world, a stateless society of liberty, equality and solidarity.

Let's vote for ourselves.

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## **HAIL THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION!**

This month marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the overthrow of the capitalist Provisional Government in Russia in October 1917 and the establishment of the power of the workers' Soviets. It was a triumph of working class strength and organisation and, for a few short years, was a beacon of liberation to the workers of the world. Tragically, it was all to end in catastrophe.

Russia under the Czar was a byword for reaction (even the calendar was out of date - it was November in the West during the October Revolution). In February 1917 the Russian people arose, furious at the carnage of World War I and centuries of oppression. The Czar was overthrown and a new Provisional Government came to power. The new government, however, continued the war and dithered about reform. Cabinet reshuffles failed to stem the mounting anger of the workers and peasants. Previously popular workers' parties like the Mensheviks lost

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support, while the Social Revolutionaries, the main party of the peasants, split.

The Bolsheviks, the only significant party opposing the war from the outset, were weak in February 1917, but grew swiftly. The Anarchists at first were insignificant and disorganised, but their strength improved at a growing pace as Russia descended into crisis. The great revolutionary force, however, was the working class itself. Factories and other workplaces elected delegates to a Soviet (i.e. council) for their city, first in the capital Petrograd and then in Moscow and elsewhere. As the year wore on and the Provisional Government dashed the hopes of the population, the Soviets grew in strength and spread from city to city, federating first provincially and then at a national level.

By October 1917, the Bolsheviks had displaced the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries as the strongest party in the Soviets. They were calling for "All power to the Soviets". The Second All-Russia Soviet, with a new Bolshevik majority, was due to meet and Petrograd was rife with rumours that the Provisional Government would impose emergency rule. The Petrograd Soviet acted first. Armed workers' detachments composed of Bolsheviks, Anarchists and others took the Winter Palace and other key buildings with very little resistance and dissolved the Provisional Government. The All-Russia Soviet convened the next day as the new power in Russia.

What followed was both inspirational and tragic. The Bolsheviks, heroic advocates of workers' control in opposition, sabotaged it in power. They progressively suppressed all opposition, both from capitalist counter-revolutionaries and from revolutionaries who wanted to defend Soviet democracy. A State was formed above the Soviets and sucked the life out of them.

Meanwhile, in the Ukraine, a separate revolution unfolded at the same time as the Russian one. The Bolsheviks took longer to get established and events were strongly influenced by an Anarchist peasant army led by Nestor Makhno. The Makhnovists were unfamiliar with urban economic problems, however, so had little strength in the cities. After they had defeated the counter-revolutionary armies, the Makhnovists were crushed by the Bolsheviks.

The other tragic lesson comes from the Kronstadt uprising. Kronstadt was a naval garrison on an island facing Petrograd and was the bastion of the strongest and most committed revolutionaries. In early 1921, after the final victory over the counter-revolutionary armies, the Kronstadt Soviet publicised its support for the demands of striking Petrograd workers. They called for new elections to the Soviets and freedom for Anarchists and Left Socialists. The Bolsheviks replied by crushing the uprising with great bloodshed. They then adopted economic compromises with the peasants which went beyond the Kronstadters' demands - but retained their one-party dictatorship.

Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks, died in 1924 and under Stalin, things got even worse. He abolished the already flawed internal

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Bolshevik (now “Communist”) Party democracy, eliminated many social gains of the Revolution, particularly those of women, and betrayed revolutions outside Russia for diplomatic advantage. And the massacres and purges which made Stalin’s tyranny one of the worst in history have been a stain on the reputation of communism ever since.

While the so-called “Communist” Party eventually drowned it in blood, the Russian Revolution stands as both an inspiration and a lesson for all workers. Hail the October Revolution!

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### **Defend the Fertility Control Clinic**

**10.00 - 11.30 a.m. Fourth Saturday every month  
118 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne**

**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 Debbie on 0425 733 256 or Michelle on 0424 737 150**

### **Ongoing G20 Solidarity Network**

**6.00 p.m. Second Friday every month  
New International Bookshop - Trades Hall  
Cnr Victoria & Lygon Sts Carlton  
Next meeting: 14<sup>th</sup> December  
<http://www.afterg20.org>**

#### **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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