



# The Anvil



Newsletter of Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group (MACG)

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## OUR RIGHTS AT WORK THE ROAD AHEAD

In deep electoral trouble on a number of fronts, the Howard government has made a few cosmetic changes to Work Choices. It hopes the new "Fairness Test" will calm people down enough to remove industrial relations as an election issue. It's also stopped calling its legislation Work Choices and changed the name of a couple of organisations. The truth is, however, that this is virtually meaningless and it would remain so even if full legal protection was restored to all the working conditions employers have been stripping away under the legislation. The core of Work Choices is the attempt to remove the right of workers to organise. It is about crushing the unions and establishing individual contracts as the norm in the workplace. This hasn't changed and it is this which must be resisted.

### **ALP Promises "Work Choices Light"**

Anxious to be judged "acceptable" by big business, the ALP has adopted a policy which only tinkers around the edges of Work Choices. AWAs will go, but common law individual contract will remain. The courts will still interfere with democratic union procedure and the right to strike will be confined to wages and conditions in one enterprise only after an agreement expires. That means (amongst other things) an end to industry-wide campaigns, no political

protest action and an inability to respond to employer provocations. The anti-Work Choices rallies of 2005 and 2006 would be illegal under the ALP's proposed regime – unless, of course, the boss agrees to give you the day off.

### **Resistance is not yet Dead**

Although the ACTU has turned its "Your Rights At Work" campaign into an exclusive "Vote Labor" one, not everybody has put all their eggs into the one holey basket. Victorian building industry unions are having a mass rally on 26 September, the Victorian CEPU have launched a "Right to Strike Coalition" and, most importantly, Union Solidarity is providing essential picket line support to the handful of grassroots struggles that exist. All of these are positive initiatives that should be taken up and built to the maximum extent possible. Nevertheless, the balance sheet is not looking good.

### **The rank & file have to take charge**

The union bureaucracies aren't going to water just because they're stupid. It's because they are opposed to struggles which aren't initiated by them and they feel powerless against the Labor leadership, the

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media and big business. They capitulate to laws which undermine their own position because they have no faith in their own members.

To repair this terrible situation, rank and file unionists have to take the initiative. We can't afford to wait for the officials to propose effective action, because they're not going to. Call workplace meetings, where the members can discuss matters and instruct their delegates. Build rank and file networks which can act independently of the officials. And if the officials try to block what the rank & file want, build the support to ride over them.

Our rights at work will be defended by grassroots workers' struggle, or they won't be defended at all. And in that struggle, we will build the democracy and the solidarity that embody the values of a different kind of society. It will be a society of liberty, equality and solidarity, where one contributes according to one's ability and receives according to one's need. We will be building the new world within the shell of the old.



# THE LAND GRAB

A government report, "Little Children are Sacred", tells of child abuse and other problems in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. It's the latest in a series, the previous ones of which have been sat on by the Australian Government. This time, however, it's different. The Prime Minister announces that it's a national emergency and drastic measures need to be taken. He outlines a set of sweeping actions that, in official terms, turn indigenous policy in Australia around completely. If you don't smell a rat in there somewhere, you haven't been paying attention.

## The Land Grab

The most publicised measures of the Howard Government in response to the indigenous crisis in the Northern Territory are the program of emergency medical examinations and the influx of police and military personnel. This, in itself, would be bad enough – soldiers are the world's worst social workers and coppers are the second worst, while involuntary medical examinations are a form of serious assault and stigmatise an entire population as child abusers. The most serious measures, however, have received lesser attention.

While the furore over medical examinations has grabbed most headlines, the most important measures are the compulsory leasing of Aboriginal land and the abolition of the permit system. Howard, who has opposed indigenous land rights since they were first conceded by the State, now has a pretext for the biggest land grab in Australian history – and he's taking it.

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Abolishing the permit system, by which visitors to Aboriginal land needed the consent of the community concerned, will provide more opportunities to sexual predators and sly grog-runners. The take over of Aboriginal communities through imposed 5-year leases strips Aboriginal people of their communal ownership and is aimed at introducing capitalist real estate. These measures to wind back Aboriginal land rights and the overturning of the Racial Discrimination Act are cast iron proof that the Government is a pack of liars and has no intention of helping indigenous children.

### **The ALP Joins In**

What is the ALP, the great champion of the underdog, saying while Howard is doing his worst? Giving "in principle" support, that's what. As in almost every aspect of political life, they are showing no difference from the Liberals except in matters of emphasis. There is a reason for this. The ALP aims to manage the same capitalist system on behalf of the same capitalist class as the Liberals do. This requires similar policies when it's something the capitalists seriously want. What the capitalists seriously want right now is to mine as much uranium as they can, so as to cash in on the boom in other minerals around the world in recent years. And, of course, most uranium deposits are on aboriginal land. The rash of uranium exploration companies which have listed on the Stock Exchange in the last couple of years don't want anyone, least of all indigenous people, standing in the way of their dreams of wealth.

### **How to Fight Back**

Aboriginal communities have reacted with almost complete unanimity in opposing the Government's plans. This makes it much easier for non-indigenous people to be clear about the necessity of acting in solidarity with indigenous people and opposing this

despicable land grab. Indigenous people, however, are a small minority and are often economically marginalised within capitalism. Only the working class has the social power to defeat the capitalist class, because of our numbers and the fact that economic production and the flow of profits cease if we stop work.

It is also in our interests as workers to come to the aid of indigenous people in their struggles, because we can only struggle successfully by fighting against all manifestations of racism and backwardness. Firstly, most indigenous people are now part of the working class. Even people in remote Aboriginal communities have been drawn in through Centrelink and the CDEP. Secondly, the scapegoating of indigenous people as responsible for their own problems covers up for the crimes of governments and capitalists, past and present.

Finally, the working class needs to take action because a solution to the plight of indigenous people is not possible without the same revolution to abolish capitalism that we need for so many other reasons. Non-indigenous people in Australia live on stolen land and a just settlement requires the abolition of capitalist property and the allocation of rights over land on the basis social and environmental need. To do that, the non-indigenous population would do well to learn from the 70,000 years of experience indigenous people have living in this island continent.



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

Fourth Saturday every month  
10.00 - 11.30 a.m.

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.

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### **Ongoing G20 Solidarity Network**

Every second Friday, 6.00 p.m.  
New International Bookshop  
Trades Hall

Cnr Victoria & Lygon Sts Carlton  
Next meetings: 5th and 19th October  
This collective seeks to:

1. Provide personal and legal support to anyone under threat or attack from the state due to their involvement in the mobilisations against the G20
2. Launch a concerted political push against the coercive forces of the state, built around the principles of horizontality, a clear rejection of capitalism and a well refined capacity to take the piss out of ourselves.

## **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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