

# LABOUR ~~NOT~~ so worker-friendly

**M**any people recognise that National is no friend of the workers, but should workers and unionists be called on to vote for Labour? They have been in government for the past 9 years but are workers better off as a result? Check the record:

## Union rights

- Labour repealed the Employment Contracts Act, but replaced it with the Employment Relations Act. The new law maintained nearly all the restrictions and penalties for striking that National introduced.
- Under Labour solidarity striking - even by members of the same union - can be punished by fines and or imprisonment.
- Under Labour union membership has not recovered from the decline in the 1990s (around 80 percent of workers are not in unions) and collective employment contracts have actually dropped from 373,100 in 1999 to 329,300 in 2004.

- Labour has set the adult minimum wage at \$12 an hour – a poverty level income and just 50 percent of the average wage. There are 100,000 workers on the minimum wage.

## Rich-poor gap

- The gap between rich and poor has grown. The number of food parcels being distributed has doubled since 1998, while the people on the Rich List have had a 300 percent increase in their wealth. Between 2002 and 2004 the rise in wealth of the super-rich was the greatest since the Rich List started in 1986.
- One in five children live in poverty in New Zealand but child poverty is largely neglected while Labour brags about its budget surpluses.
- Inadequate housing and overcrowding is still rife and contributed to the deadly meningitis epidemic, which then spread to the better off communities. With few new state houses being built the housing problem remains.
- The \$47 million refurbishment of Government House announced in the 2008 budget could have provided over 3000 hip operations.



- In 2000 a CEO could expect to earn eight times as much as the pay of an average worker, by 2006 the average CEO pay-packet was 19 times the average wage. ([www.neon.org.nz/newsarchive/nzlwe/](http://www.neon.org.nz/newsarchive/nzlwe/))

## Donations from the rich

- Labour is a capitalist party whose members are mostly from the middle class. Its president Mike Williams is a business man, like his predecessors Bob Harvey and millionaire Michael Hirschfeld.
- In 2002 Labour got \$1.6 million in donations for its election campaign, more than National. Donations from the rich to speak volumes about what sort of party Labour is.
- Multi-millionaire Owen Glenn donated \$500,000 to Labour for its 2005 election campaign.

## Attacking beneficiaries & the poor

- Labour has maintained National's benefit cuts of 1991 and continued the policy of attacking beneficiaries. In 2004 it launched "Jobs Jolt" and declared 259 towns no-go areas for the unemployed.
- Households are subsidising electricity to industrial and commercial consumers. Rises in domestic electricity prices since 2000 have averaged 5% each year, faster than inflation, compared to price rises to commerce 1.5% and industry 4%. (Domestic Energy Users Network).

- Working for Families has delivered gains to middle income groups and excluded the poor.
- The KiwiSaver scheme will cost the taxpayer about \$1.2 billion in 2011. This is public money being redistributed mostly to the wealthy.

## Civil liberties

- Algerian refugee, Ahmed Zaoui, was imprisoned without trial for two years and held in solitary confinement for 10 months under the orders of this government. Other refugees have been locked up for months without charges being laid under Labour's draconian terror laws.



- Labour sent naval vessels to assist US blockade of waters in Middle East. Helen Clark sent troops to Afghanistan and Iraq and still has forces in Afghanistan.

- The 2008 budget delivered \$3.1 billion for Law and Order and \$1.7 billion for Defence.

### Taxing the poor

- The fourth Labour government introduced GST, a tax on the poor. Not only has Labour kept GST it has increased other indirect taxes on alcohol, tobacco, petrol and drivers' licence fees.

- Labour lowered corporate taxes to 30% in 2008. NZ now has among the lowest corporate tax rates in the world.

The evidence shows that Labour and its coalition partners are not "worker friendly". Like National and the other parliamentary parties they govern on behalf of the elites. We can expect nothing else from capitalist parties. Fundamentally there's little difference between any of them.

The rights and benefits that do exist have come from workers' struggles and are concessions forced out of the rulers. For instance, it was in the 1960s and 70s that

workers won through strike action the third week's holiday, paid sick leave, redundancy agreements and holidays



paid at average rates of pay. It was the relentless campaigning of Unite union that raised the minimum wage and got rid of youth rates.

If we tolerate the "Labour is not so bad" myth, we commit a crime against the working class. We hold out false hopes to low paid workers, cruelly deceive them and delay their liberation. The truth is that liberation cannot come courtesy of any capitalist politicians, but only from the struggle of the workers themselves.



election  
manifesto



[www.workersparty.org.nz](http://www.workersparty.org.nz)

- **Job Losses:** Jobs belong to the worker, not the employer. For the unrestricted rights for workers to organise, strike, speak and publish.

- **For working class unity and solidarity** - equality for women, Maori and other ethnic minorities and people of all sexual orientations and identities

- **Wages and Prices:** Wages to be indexed to real inflation, not CPI. Data needs to be collected to determine real inflation rate as it affects workers.

- **Abolish GST:** this is a regressive tax that takes money from workers' after tax income.

- **Repeal all Anti-democratic Laws:** including the Terrorism Suppression Act, the Electoral Finance Act and the anti-strike provisions in the ERA.

- **Open Borders:** abolition of all immigration controls and full rights for migrant workers.

- **All Elected Representatives on the Average Workers' Wage.**

- **Public Services run on the basis of need, not profit:** Abolish Labour's State Owned Enterprises and Local Government Acts, which currently require vital services such as housing and electricity to be run as businesses.