



The SPARK

For workers' power and international socialism

ISSN 1177-0724

The Spark March 2011

1951 - 60 years on

Socialism and women's liberation

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Editorial

Jared Phillips

It's only March and the year has already been defined politically both on the globe and in New Zealand. In North Africa we've witnessed massive uprisings of people standing up against undemocratic governments and against the agenda of major imperialist powers in the Middle East. In Christchurch we have seen the worst catastrophe ever to hit New Zealand. We'll continue to report on both subjects.

Rosa Luxemburg and Jock Barnes appear on the front cover of this month's issue. Sixty years ago Barnes was a workers' leader of the 1951 waterfront lockout which we review in this issue. Luxemburg was a foremost theorist and working class revolutionary who - on the orders of the Social Democratic

government in Germany - was executed in 1919. In this issue we publish a major piece on women's oppression and liberation. Luxemburg was at the front of the fight for women's liberation.

As is usual, we offer coverage of workers' actions around the country. The actions being taken are particularly important as the government is about to enforce new anti-worker legislation from April 1st. We also have some coverage against a company which attempts to silence and discipline its employees for speaking out of synch with the company line.

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The Spark magazine is now in its 20th year as we continue the long-term fight for socialism. Readers and supporters may consider remembering us in their will with assets or money that will help the struggle in the long-term. If this is you please put in your will 'Workers Party, PO Box 10-282, Dominion Road, Auckland' as well as what you would like to leave to us.

Freedom of expression at work – a short interview with Julie Tyler

First published 8/2/11, at workersparty.org.nz

Jared Phillips

Friday January 4, Burger King held a disciplinary meeting against Dunedin employee Julie Tyler. Her alleged misconduct was the posting of the following sentence on a friend's Facebook wall, 'Real jobs don't underpay and overwork like BK does'. Julie's union, Unite, her friends, and other workers successfully built up public opposition against BK before the initial disciplinary meeting took place.

At the initial meeting Burger King adjourned the case until today, saying they were seeking further legal advice. During the adjournment BK's censorship of staff members became a national media issue. BK New Zealand's own Facebook page was jammed by comments of protest. Other Facebook groups – which attracted heavy traffic – were created and used in Julie's defence. An informational picket was put on at Julie's store today during the second disciplinary meeting. As a result the company has threatened legal action against Unite Union but Unite has replied that it will not be silenced.

The case not only raises issues surrounding the use of social media, it has also drawn attention to very basic working class issues such as freedom of expression and the right of workers to take action. Later on today we had the opportunity to have a quick word with Julie about how the case has unfolded so far:

The Spark: Your original comment on Facebook mentioned being overworked and underpaid. It describes the way a lot of people feel. Do you remember when or where you first heard that turn of phrase?

JT: I kinda just put two other work mates comments together and voiced my own feelings about the situation! The phrase is mine!

The Spark: Freedom of speech within so-



Julie Tyler, Unite Union activists, and her supporters, outside the Andersen's Bay Resturant, Dunedin

cial forums is a growing issue, especially with regard to employment matters. How does it feel to be at the centre of the issue?

JT: I have mixed feelings about it all, I would say it's very overwhelming.

The Spark: Have you found there has been more public sympathy or more public opposition to your case? Who's getting behind you?

JT: I have a ton of support and it's been amazing, most supportive are those who work in the fast food industry and therefore know the pressures that we face everyday. And Unite, I couldn't have done this without their support!

The Spark: In general, what's the biggest lesson you've learnt about employment, management, unions, workers rights etc?

JT: That's a hard question, um, maybe that we (employees) are entitled to more than what we think, or are lead to believe.

The Spark: What happened at today's disciplinary meeting?

JT: I received a final written warning.

The Spark: Unite union says that the final written warning is unjustified. Are you prepared to challenge it?

JT: Yes I can confirm that the union and I have agreed to pursue this and get the warning lifted.

(The union will also be going into negotiations with Burger King later this year as part of the Campaign for a Living Wage).

Social networking sites: Why are they censored?

Marika Pratley (Wellington branch of Workers Party)

Julie Tyler was threatened with serious misconduct by Burger King for posting the comment “Real jobs don’t underpay and overwork like BK does” on a friend’s Facebook page. This event highlighted the limitations of democracy on the internet and social networking sites. It also brings to question limitations on freedom of speech in general – for example – in the workplace.

This is not the first time that workers or activists have faced censorship on social networking sites. In 2010 individual profiles and groups were shutdown by Facebook for expressing support for organisations such as the Popular Front for the Liberation (PFLP) and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In 2011 Egypt’s entire internet services were shutdown by the government in an attempt to prevent communication between organisers and to stop democratic protests from taking place.

Julie Tyler vs Burger King

The response of Burger King New Zealand (BKNZ) was to use Julie as an example to its employees that you cannot speak thoughts on workplace conditions freely to your friends, co-workers publicly. When Julie’s supporters posted comments supporting her right to freedom of expression on the BKNZ Facebook page, the immediate response by BKNZ was to shutdown the page down (4th of February 2011). When the page was put up again shortly later BKNZ had censored all comments made by Julie’s supporters, and prevented them from posting messages challenging BKNZ.

This reveals that there is not only a double-standard between employers and employees, but also that a power-relationship exists. Employers currently have a strong degree of control over what

employees can say and do, while workers are expected to give up their rights to freedom of speech and other aspects of control they could and should have in a workplace. BKNZ and other employers do not want workers like Julie speaking out against them, especially with truths relating to being ‘overworked and underpaid’.

Who controls the internet?

The potential of the internet as a democratic medium is limited because it is ultimately subject to control by capitalists (whether it’s the internet providers or the CEOs of companies like Facebook and Burger King) and capitalist governments. Social networking sites do allow anyone to sign up, but it’s on the condition that users abide to the politics and ideologies of the owners controlling the site.

It is ambiguous as to whether social networking sites are in a private or public space, but regardless of that whatever is produced on a social networking site the

website owners still have control over what happens with the content/product.

Internet censorship simply mirrors the limits to freedom speech that workers have in other avenues of their lives in the ‘real world.’

BKNZ was able to do or say whatever they wanted publicly without any repercussions. When the FARC and PFLP Facebook solidarity groups were shutdown, Facebook was able to do or say whatever they wanted. And when Murbaraks government in Egypt shutdown the internet, and Vodafone shutdown cellphone coverage in Egypt, they were able to do this because they are in control of these services.

The internet shutdown in Egypt did not stop people organising against the government, and Burger King’s censorship won’t stop workers from venting about being overworked and underpaid. From a socialist perspective it’s very important to expose and oppose censoring as the role of the internet in real daily life continues to expand.



“The internet shutdown in Egypt did not stop people organising against the government...”

Pike River update: Compensation and investigation

Byron Clark (Christchurch branch WP member, and editorial board of *The Spark*)

“I know a number of external parties who have expressed interest in the asset”. These were the words of Pike River Coal chairman John Dow, quoted in *The Press* on January 14th in an article where the main topic was the police decision to ‘pull the plug’ on attempts to recover the bodies of twenty nine miners from the Pike River mine. It’s a strange world we live in where “asset” and “mass grave” can be interchangeable. With the police ending their recovery attempt, responsibility for the mine lies with the receivers, PricewaterhouseCoopers. Receiver John Fisk told Radio New Zealand that they have about \$10 million in cash, plus a number of assets above the ground and in the mine. However, if there is not enough money to re-enter the mine, the land will be handed back to the government. If that happens, the Department of Conservation is most likely to assume control of the mine, and responsibility for the bodies of the workers still encased within it.

The families of the deceased miners have continued to speak of being “kept out of the loop” in regards to the body recovery programme. Bernie Monk who lost his son Michael in the disaster and is the spokesperson for miners’ families told NZPA that they believed Police Commissioner Howard Broad and Prime Minister John Key were given the wrong information when they said it was too dangerous to carry on with recovery attempts. Mr Monk said the families wanted Harry Bell, a gas and mine expert who had worked on West Coast mines for more than 40 years, to be running the recovery and giving police the advice they needed. He said the families wanted to know from the police who made the decision to abandon the body recovery programme, and where and how they got their information. The families have the backing of the EPMU, the union that represents miners.

The bulk of their compensation to families has come from public donations, and ACC is expected to be paying out



between \$10 and \$20 million in total. Pike River Coal’s receivers paid \$10,000 for each miner to their families plus \$2500 for every child and/or parent just before Christmas. Other Pike River employees who were made redundant were paid up to \$18,200 each. Pike River Coal’s secured creditors (NZ Oil and Gas and BNZ) however, will be paid \$80 million by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The EPMU has found other jobs on the West Coast for a hand full of the 150 former Pike River employees, the rest have received offers from mining companies operating in Australia.

Over the next four months the Department of Labour (DoL) will be conducting an audit to determine if there were any breaches of the Health and Safety in Employment Act prior to the November 19th explosion. The audit will involve physical inspections of the mine, and a review of the health and safety systems and processes that were in place. As was noted in the December/January issue of *The Spark*, concerns about the safety of the mine have already been raised. Safety standards were condemned by experts such as Andrew Watson, the operations manager of United Kingdom Mines Rescue Operations, who noted that methane levels had to have reached 5 to 15 percent of the atmosphere for the explosion to occur. In British mines, work stops if methane levels reached just 1.25 percent, and mines are evacuated once they reach 2 percent. There was no backup generator for the

mines ventilation system and geologist Murray Cave had warned back in 2007 that the geological risks at the mine site included a pit bottom with deep, highly gassy coals and the associated risk of “outburst”, or gas explosions. What may be neglected by the Department of Labour investigation is the failure of the government to implement what workers and unions asked for when the DoL held public consultations on ways to improve health and safety in mines following two underground deaths in 2006. They simply wanted check inspectors elected by workers.

Wider issues concerning cause and possible prevention are likely to be covered by the Royal Commission of Inquiry which began on January 27th, which was the same day that miners families were issued with death certificates. The DoL are conducting their audit independently but may share information. At the time of writing the latest from the DoL is that “It is too early to say what, if any, enforcement action, the Department may take as a result of this investigation.” This vagueness reflects the whole attitude that the state apparatus and government have been spinning since the incident occurred. We argue clearly for severe sentencing and punishment for the culprits at the conclusion of the investigation.

First published 6/2/11, at workersparty.org.nz

Casino workers hit New Year with festivity and militancy

Jared Phillips

SkyCity Casino workers in Auckland took strike action after the clock turned twelve on New Year's eve, with more than 150 employees filing from the building and filling up its Victoria street side, and with the same number, combined, walking out from later shifts.

First was an all-up open air meeting to hear the company's final offer which was then rejected by secret ballot by over 95% of members present. This was followed by a remarkable picket on the casino's main entrance. Perhaps deliberately to curb the action, the bosses had put a high volume sound display at the entrance. This was over-run by the picket and several songs were over-run by the strikers, for instance 'Ice Ice baby' was derailed and became 'Strike! Strike! baby!' At that stage partying people came to us from the street and the casino, joined the action, danced and sung against the

company. Groups of workers went home instead of back to shift. The later strikes held the same character.

The workers are members of SEA-Unite (SkyCity Employees Association – Unite) and the SFWU. At every level they've now undertaken to fight-back against this employer which would not allow union members to conduct a paid meeting to discuss the company's final offer unless the union bargaining team recommended that workers accept that offer. This is a good example of how the employing class tries to fuck with workers' democracy.

The company's offer includes that the next union agreement be in place for three years but will contain no changes to workers' or union rights, including in regard to redundancy and restructure procedures. The company's offer includes tight-fisted years of service payments and

the leanest possible allowances for work undertaken during the Rugby World Cup, including lean allowances for extra shifts. The company has refused to meet basic demands for a Living Wage of \$15 per hour starting rate in all departments and a reflective increase for higher-graded employees.

SEA-Unite's coordinator, Mike Treen, pointed out that having a stronger level of workers' voice over procedures and receiving a Living Wage are not radical demands.

Despite the company's menacing use of some outside labour during the strike, and despite the company's threatening lie campaign about the illegality of the strike, the workers responded to the company offer by intensifying their resolve.

Whilst festive, the attitude at the casino is also militant. For the 60 hours

leading into the strike SEA-Unite maintained a permanent presence of officials on site. Forty people who were not members of a union joined as a means of retaliation against unfair treatment by the employer. During the strikes, delegates mobilised groups of workers from some departments that have not been highly represented in previous actions for prior union agreements.

Happy New Year everybody, let it be a year of democracy, unity, and combatancy!

Since January, industrial action has continued. As we go to print we understand the workers are to hold a further action and discuss a new Company offer.



Casino workers made vocal and vibrant picket lines, over four shifts, starting from mid-night December 31st.

Migrant workers scammed and starved in New Zealand

Byron Clark

Fijian migrant workers who paid up to \$17,000 for visas to work in New Zealand ended up foraging maize from a paddock to feed themselves. Stacey Watson, of Piopio, Waikato, who sourced workers from recruitment company 'Til Da Cows Come Home' told Waikato Times journalist Nicola Boyes "We were noticing that the guys didn't have anything to eat and they didn't have any supplies and they were foraging for maize to eat." Til Da Cows Come Home is one of two recruitment companies ran by Mike Neil Molan, who recently pleaded guilty to one charge of forgery and one charge of misleading an immigration officer after a sting at the offices of his company and other related Auckland-based immigration consultants. According to what the company told Stacy Watson, the workers wages were paid into a trust that they could access after they had completed their twelve weeks training and their work visas had been approved. In reality, the visa applications were forged and the dairy industry jobs that workers were promised would be waiting for them at the end of their training never existed. Molan's ex-wife Nikkie, who was a director of the now defunct second company, Cow Tech, said she got wind of the scam in about November 2008 and confronted Molan.

The scam had been going since June or July of that year "It was just a way of getting cash out of people." she said.

Manju Pillay was employed as accounts and administration manager at Cow Tech for three months. She paid \$6000 of Molan's \$12,736 bill for residency and a work permit before questioning its legitimacy and returning to Fiji. She was never paid for her work. Cow Tech went into liquidation three months after she started working for it and she contacted the Immigration Department. Molan worked with Auckland based IMAC Recruitment and Romy's Immigration, which have since been struck off the company's register. This is not the first case of its kind, last year four Hawkes Bay men were sentenced to three years in jail for running a multi-million dollar operation that employed hundreds of undocumented workers to pick fruit and vegetables at well below the minimum wage. Between 2007 and 2010 eighteen people in Hawkes Bay, Nelson and Marlborough were prosecuted as a result of Immigration New Zealand investigations. In 2007 it was estimated that there were 20,000 undocumented workers in New Zealand.

There has also been concern about migrant workers who have worked legally

under the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme. Such workers have been left with little money in the hand after deductions are made from their wages and large sums are paid to unscrupulous accommodation providers- last year a 4-bedroomed house calling itself a "backpackers" housed eighteen Ni-Vanuatu workers and charged them \$115 each per week. Lina Ericsson a Swedish political scientist who conducted field work among RSE workers in the rural areas near Tauranga in 2007 found many stories of mistreatment and violation of employment rights. The majority of farm workers (60%) are employed without contracts, almost a year ago the Council of Trade Unions highlighted the need for a farm workers union. At the moment such a project seems elusive when over 85 percent of private sector workers aren't unionised.

Not only are the conditions of migrant farm workers morally outrageous. It's beneficial for all workers in New Zealand to support the cause of such workers because the employment standards set by these most immoral employers impact on the conditions of the whole working class

Call centre workers strike to 'make a point to all those out there struggling with the same thing'

Call centre staff who are members of Unite Union took strike action yesterday morning against their employer Salmat (also known as

Salesforce). Approximately 40 members took part in the action as part of the effort to achieve what will be their first pay rise in three years. The worksite is located at the corporate com-

plex on 666 Great South Road in Penrose, Auckland. With its objective of rebuilding amongst the vast unorganised sections of the working class, Unite has been present on the site for over two years.

Salmat is an outsource operation that holds contracts with major companies, one being Vodafone, for which Salmat has

a contract for handling both customer and business calls. In terms of the modern workplace it's a success to have a strong union membership in an outsource operation.

Speaking from the picket line, Ross Asiata, one of Unite's delegates at the workplace stated to media "Everything else around us increases, GST etc, but our

pay rise (read 'pay rate') stays the same. As you can see behind me that's the staff that are in the same boat as me, trying to make a point to management and to all those others that are out there struggling with the same thing".

What is WikiLeaks and what has it done?

In this article, Ian Anderson, a member of the Wellington branch of the Workers Party and The Spark editorial board, looks back on the breaking of state secrets – including with regard to NZ’s role in Iraq – and how WikiLeaks has helped shape recent international events.

By now everyone with access to mainstream media has heard of WikiLeaks. Whether it’s the latest head-line from a leaked diplomatic cable, or a development in the Assange rape allegation drama, WikiLeaks is a centre-piece in media coverage. This article aims to give some background and analysis, to put the headlines in context.

Launched in March 2006, WikiLeaks relies on donations through the non-profit sector. Donations are processed by the Wau Holland Foundation in Germany, a non-profit organisation named after a “data philosopher” who developed notions such as hacker ethics. WikiLeaks is also registered through various other organisations internationally, many with only covert affiliations.

Like so many NGO-ist operations, WikiLeaks strives for political neutrality and does not have an explicitly anti-imperialist mandate. Until recently they used the following mission statement: “Our primary interests are oppressive regimes in Asia, the former Soviet bloc, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, but we also expect to be of assistance to those in the West who wish to reveal unethical behaviour in their own governments and corporations.”

In its early days WikiLeaks exposed corruption in Kenya, and found itself in conflict with censorious Chinese authorities. However, the website ultimately shot to fame by exposing the machinations of Western imperialism. In April 2010, WikiLeaks released the first file from PFC Bradley Manning, a video nicknamed “Collateral Murder.” This video depicted the US army murdering Iraqi civilians and firing upon reporters in a 2007 airstrike. In the weeks following this leak “WikiLeaks” was the search-

term with the most significant growth on Google.

In his position as Intelligence Analyst for the US military, Manning had leaked two videos of airstrikes and about 260,000 diplomatic cables – many still unreleased by WikiLeaks. After former hacker Adrian Lamo blew the whistle, Manning was arrested and placed in solitary confinement. WikiLeaks continues to release the cables in batches, despite various attempts to shoot the messenger.

Who is Julian Assange?

With the increased popularity of WikiLeaks, and its infamy in imperialist circles, co-founder and spokesperson Julian Assange has come under intense personal scrutiny. Not only WikiLeaks’ enemies, but also commentators across the political spectrum have placed Assange under the microscope.

Bruce Sterling, a cyberpunk author with a keen interest in hacker culture, commented in an article that: “As major political players go, Julian Assange seems remarkably deprived of sympathetic qualities. Most saintly leaders of the oppressed masses, most wannabe martyrs,

are all keen to kiss-up to the public... [Assange is] the kind of guy who gets depressed by the happiness of the stupid.”

Conservative demagogue Sarah Palin has called for his assassination and described the Australian citizen as “un-American.” In fact, he has inspired such personal venom that a website has been dedicated solely to collecting the names of public figures “OK with murdering Assange.” International authorities have sought to charge the individuals involved in WikiLeaks, without any legal reason to attack it as an organisation. This is easily done with Bradley Manning, with charges of treason pending. But Assange is not a US citizen, and is hard to pin-down with his regular nation-hopping. On the 7th of December 2010, Julian Assange was arrested in London, pending extradition to Sweden where he is wanted for charges of rape and sexual assault.

The charges against Assange have sparked a debate on rape myths. Progressive commentators including Naomi Wolf, John Pilger, Michael Moore and Gordon Campbell criticised the charges, many calling the women’s testimony into question. Feminists responded that



WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange

progressives should not have to deny rape in order to defend WikiLeaks, and pointed out some myths perpetuated by those defending Assange: that Swedish law has an unusual definition of rape, that if a woman continues to be friends with a man it demonstrates she has not been raped, and various misrepresentations of their testimony. These criticisms haven't fallen entirely on deaf ears, with Michael Moore retracting his statements on the subject.

Community media program Democracy Now provided a public forum for this debate, hosting feminists Naomi Wolf and Jaclyn Friedman. This demonstrated different interpretations of the accounts given by the women, particularly his holding one down and ignoring her request for a condom. Naomi Wolf asserted that since the woman did not explicitly say "no," it was consensual; Jaclyn Friedman responded that the onus was on Assange to ensure affirmative consent. Significantly, Friedman and Wolf agreed that the Swedish authorities do not usually handle charges of sexual assault in this fashion, and that their actions were intended to undermine WikiLeaks. In fact, Assange's personal life is largely irrelevant to the nature of WikiLeaks. The cables leaked by Bradley Manning have been encrypted and sent out to hackers world-wide. Recent actions against Assange clearly have nothing to do with justice for rape survivors, and are only aimed at undermining this wider project. We do not have to assume Assange is innocent, or perpetuate rape myths, to oppose all attacks on him by the state.

What does WikiLeaks tell us?

WikiLeaks is an invaluable toolbox for the international left, exposing the machinations of the bourgeoisie in every country. Often the leaks make explicit what many already knew: disregard for civilian life in the siege of Baghdad, or US worries about Chinese "authoritarian capitalism" expanding.

In Tunisia, this confirmation helped galvanise a mass movement. Students and workers have long considered the US-backed state corrupt, with President Ben Ali putting smaller local expenses scandals to shame by buying yachts as the nation starved. Protests in rural regions of Tunisia were spurred by rising prices



Mass demonstrations in Tunisia during January

and unemployment, but did not spread. However, when a leaked cable by the US Ambassador confirmed the corruption everyone had previously whispered about, the Tunisian state chose to ban WikiLeaks and clamp down on online activism in general – catalysing mass protest, involving students and trade unions, throughout the country. President Ben Ali has now fled Tunisia and a regional rebellion has taken hold.

Cables on NZ illuminate our relationship to the US, as sections of the left argue for 'national sovereignty.' The cables do show a fair amount of imperialist meddling by the US, particularly relating to the ban on nuclear ships. In particular, they further confirm Nicky Hager's argument in *The Hollow Men* that US diplomats, including former ambassador Charles Swindell, got heavily involved in Don Brash' 2005 election campaign, attempting to secure nuclear access in exchange for trade agreements. US diplomats also extensively analyse the position of various NZ politicians on the anti-nuclear legislation, and the best tactical approach to rolling back the nuclear laws. New Zealand does not emerge as an innocent victim however, but more as a junior imperialist playing tit for tat. In a particularly revealing cable, it emerged that Labour Party Prime Minister Helen Clark sent troops to Iraq in order to secure Oil For Food contracts for Fonterra. This demonstrates how New Zealand capitalists benefit from imperialist pillaging of the Third World, and why we should not see them as our allies in the fight against imperialism.

Abolish secret diplomacy!

As many leftists have noted, WikiLeaks

is not without precedent. In the lead-up of the October revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks demanded the release of all secret treaties. After seizing state power, they released these treaties both to Russian newspapers and the British Guardian. In the daily newspaper, *Izvestia*, on October 25th, Lenin declared, "All the secret treaties must be immediately published in order to strengthen the confidence of the proletariat." We've again seen this strengthened confidence in Tunisia.

While in 2011 New Zealand we're a long way from seizing power, Lenin's words do have some resonance here too. Watching Hillary Clinton and various functionaries go into damage control, it's a small comfort to be reminded that the emperor has no clothes. Ruling-class bureaucrats carry out these secret actions not because they have any democratic mandate, but because such actions are necessary to an ultimately unsustainable system. A system nobody wants, that must lie to survive. Emerging social movements draw both information and inspiration from this project. In addition to Lenin's writings and speeches, Trotsky published a statement on the release of documents in his position as Commissar for Foreign Affairs, which offers a useful historical analysis: "Secret diplomacy is a necessary tool for a propertied minority which is compelled to deceive the majority in order to subject it to its interests... The abolition of secret diplomacy is the primary condition for an honest, popular, truly democratic foreign policy." In fighting for a classless, stateless society, we must demand the abolition of secret diplomacy and the release of all state secrets. WikiLeaks is an important ally for the international left.

Lessons of 1951: The Waterfront Lockout 60 years On

Josh Glue (Workers Party, Hamilton Branch)

The waterfront lockout of 1951 was one of the most important events in New Zealand labour history. For 151 days, the men who worked the waterfront and those who supported them fought back against the combined power of the ship-owners and the state, determined to force cutbacks upon them and destroy their union. Seen as an historical defeat by some, an inspiring fight-back by others, the waterfront lockout holds important lessons to those who struggle for workers rights today.

In this first of two articles about this pivotal moment in the history of the working class of this country, we will look at the history of the Waterfront Workers Union and the events that led up to the lockout. In the second article, to be published in the April issue of *The Spark Magazine*, we will examine the way the lockout ended, the repercussions of that conclusion then, and the relevance of these events for working New Zealanders today.

Lampblack to Lockout

The Waterside Workers Union (WWU) was one of the most militant unions in New Zealand, at a time when union membership was often compulsory, and unions were a lot more willing to fight than they are today. The WWU had been a fighting union for a long time, taking a militant and often highly principled stand on a number of issues over the years. In an inspiring show of international solidarity, the wharfies refused to load ships with scrap iron bound for imperial Japan in 1937. The first Labour government, despite the fact it still espoused a Socialist political project tried to force the men back to work, only accepting their stance when they wouldn't back down.

This determination and sure sense of right and wrong animated the men of the WWU, especially under Auckland branch and then national president Jock Barnes, who would rise to prominence for this leadership in the hard months of '51. The wharfies were often seen stopping work to refuse to work ships with unsafe gangplanks, refusing to move toxic chemicals like lampblack without extra pay and safety equipment or to demand the application of hard-won workplace rights. In these struggles the men often ran into opposition from the Waterfront Authority, a supposedly impartial body much like the employment court today, one which usually ruled in favour of the shipowners. Even a pro-wharfie ruling was no guarantee of fair treatment, as one ship's captain could always ignore the ruling. The Authority often stood



March in support of the watersiders, May 1951

idly by such action, leaving it up to direct action of the men to get their legal rights respected by shipowners.

The NZ media, in particular the NZ Herald and their cartoonist Minhinick, invariably took the side of the bosses in any dispute over wages or conditions at the waterfront. Even when the shipowners position was untenable, in obvious breach of labour law, the Herald always jumped to blame the wharfies and never retracted or corrected articles when proven wrong. Jock Barnes was often accused in later years of misleading his men to follow his grudges against this or that Waterfront Authority member or government figure. In reality it was the media, the shipowners, the government and many former comrades of the WWU that took actions against the union and its members to the level of Vendetta.

The Lockout Begins

As with most great industrial struggles, the events which started the dispute were

small, while the rights and freedoms at stake were of massive significance to the lives of the men and women involved in that struggle.

In 1950 the employment courts ordered a 15% pay rise across the NZ workforce. This pay rise would start to compensate for years of pay restrictions during and after the Second World War. The shipowners confederation, knowing full well the wharfies were paid far less than workers in similar branches of skilled labour, refused to honour this ruling. The wharfies called a work-to-rule strike in protest, insisting no overtime would be worked without a guarantee of decent pay.

In response, the shipowners locked out the waterfront workers on the 19th of February, 1951 and refused to let them back unless they accepted overtime and presented their grievance to the Waterfront Authority, safe in the knowledge the Authority would probably rule in the shipowners favour.

All branches of the WWU voted to resist this ultimatum. Within two days the National government under Sid Holland declared a state of emergency and soon sent troops to work the wharves. On the 26th of February Holland passed a set of Emergency Regulations, draconian and far-reaching, which made it illegal to be involved in any strikes, to support strikers, to publish material critical of the regulations or supportive of striking, or to engage in picketing or protest.

The people had no legal recourse against the regulations, which also allowed the government to seize union funds, send the army to strike-break and

gave the police unlimited power of search and arrest to enforce the law, with a maximum penalty for breaching the law of 100 pounds fine, 3 months hard labour or both.

In many ways the regulations are themselves as interesting as the lockout. They showed the speedy willingness of the New Zealand ruling class to sacrifice democracy and workers rights for the sake of waging class war. In essence, the ship-owners and the Holland government set out to destroy the WWU. A general attack on all workers' wages and conditions would only militarise the working class more and be likely to fail, but a directed attack on one vanguard union, backed by a vitriolic propaganda campaign, might isolate and neutralise some of the best working class fighters and leave other, weaker unions, open to coercion and restriction.

The mainstream media, 'the voice of the people' responded to these massive

restrictions on freedom of speech by folding overnight, publishing insulting cartoons and editorial diatribes against the watersiders and especially their leader Jock Barnes.

Negotiation and Betrayal

The Federation of Labour (FOL), a forerunner to the TUC, showed its collaborationist nature by deregistering the WWU and seizing their union funds. They continued by attacking the WWU leadership as communist stooges and calling for their removal, as well as rushing through the registration of scab unions up and down the country.

The Minister of Labour refused to acknowledge Barnes and National Secretary Toby Hill as the wharfies representatives, because the WWU had been deregistered.

The Minister also gave conditions to the WWU for return to work (includ-

ing "open" employment, an anti-union condition which would have seriously endangered unionism on the wharves). The WWU refused at first, but when Barnes accepted their conditions, the government added another: separate port unions with no national wharfies union. It became clear the government had no intention of letting the WWU make it out of this strike alive.

In the next issue of the Spark Magazine, we will look at the way working people came together to oppose the Emergency Regulations and support the wharfies, the way the government of this country attempted to crush this support, and the way the lockout ended. Most importantly, we will see the importance of these events for modern New Zealand, what we can learn today from the men and women who stood up for their rights in 1951.



A truck carrying strike-breaking labourers enters the Wellington Wharf, June 5 1951

Ordinary people in the Arab world, particularly in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, and Libya, have been rising up against their respective governments. In the next issue of *The Spark* we will publish an original Workers Party analysis of these events .

In the meantime we are reprinting the following statement on the Egyptian uprisings released by the Revolutionary Socialists of Egypt, a group affiliated with the International Socialist Tendency, whose website is viewable at <http://www.e-socialists.net/> - *The Spark* editors

Statement of the Revolutionary Socialists of Egypt

Glory to the martyrs! Victory to the revolution!

What is happening today is the largest popular revolution in the history of our country and of the entire Arab world. The sacrifice of our martyrs has built our revolution and we have broken through all the barriers of fear. We will not back down until the criminal 'leaders' and their criminal system is destroyed.

The handover of power to a dictatorship under Omar Suleiman, Ahmed Shafiq and other cronies of Mubarak is the continuation of the same system. Omar Suleiman is a friend of Israel and America, spends most of his time between Washington and Tel Aviv and is a servant who is faithful to their interests. Ahmed Shafik is a close friend of Mubarak and his colleague in the tyranny, oppression and plunder imposed on the Egyptian people.

Over the past three decades this tyrannical regime corrupted the country's largest estates to a small handful of business leaders and foreign companies. 100 families own more than 90% of the country's wealth. They monopolise the wealth of the Egyptian people through policies of privatisation, looting of power and the alliance with Capital. They have turned the majority of the Egyptian people to the poor, landless and unemployed.

Factories wrecked and sold dirt cheap must go back to the people

We want the nationalisation of companies, land and property looted by this bunch. As long as our resources remain in their hands we will not be able to completely get rid of this system. Economic slavery is the other face of political tyranny. We will not be able to cope with unemployment and achieve a fair



Mass demonstrations have been occurring in Cairo, Alexandria and other cities across Egypt since January. After 18 days of protest action the President was forced to step down

minimum wage for a decent living without restoring the wealth of the people from this gang.

This system does not stand alone. Mubarak, as a dictator was a servant and client directly acting for the sake of the interests of America and Israel. Egypt acted as a colony of America, participated directly in the siege of the Palestinian people, made the Suez Canal and Egyptian airspace free zones for warships and fighter jets that destroyed and killed the Iraqi people and sold

gas to Israel, dirt cheap, while stifling the Egyptian people by soaring prices.

This is not a revolution of the elite, political parties or religious groups. Egypt's youth, students, workers and the poor are the owners of this revolution. In recent days a lot of elites, parties and so-called symbols have begun trying to ride the wave of revolution and hijack it from their rightful owners. The only symbols are the martyrs of our revolution and our young people who have been steadfast in the field. We will not allow them

to take control of our revolution and claim that they represent us. We will choose to represent ourselves and represent the martyrs who were killed and their blood paid the price for the salvation of the system.

Everyone asks: "Is the army with the people or against them?". The army is not a single block. The interests of soldiers and junior officers are the same as the interests of the masses. But the senior officers are Mubarak's men, chosen carefully to protect his regime of corruption, wealth and tyranny. It is an integral part of the system.

This army is no longer the people's army. This army is not the one which defeated the Zionist enemy in October 73. This army is closely associated with America and Israel. Its role is to protect Israel, not the people. Yes we want to win the soldiers for the revolution. But we must not be fooled by slogans that 'the army is on our side'. The army will either suppress the demonstrations directly, or restructure the police to play this role.

This revolution has surpassed our greatest expectations. Nobody expected to see these numbers. Nobody expected that Egyptians would be this brave in the face of the police. Nobody can say that we did not force the dictator to retreat. Nobody can say that a transformation did not happen in Middan el Tahrir.

What we need right now is to push for the socio-economic demands as part of our demands, so that the person sitting in his home knows that we are fighting for their rights. We need to organise ourselves into popular committees which elects its higher councils democratically, and from below. These councils must form a higher council which includes delegates of all the tendencies. We must elect a higher council of people who represent us, and in whom we trust. We call for the formation of popular councils in Middan Tahrir, and in all the cities of Egypt.

The demonstrations and protests have played a key role in igniting and continuing

our revolution. Now we need the workers. They can seal the fate of the regime. Not only by participating in the demonstrations, but by organising a general strike in all the vital industries and large corporations.

The regime can afford to wait out the sit-ins and demonstrations for days and weeks, but it cannot last beyond a few hours if workers use strikes as a weapon. Strike on the railways, on public transport, the airports and large industrial companies! Egyptian Workers! On behalf of the rebellious youth, and on behalf of the blood of our martyrs, join the ranks of the revolution, use your power and victory will be ours!

Glory to the martyrs!
Down with the system!
All power to the people!
Victory to the revolution!

6 February 2011

Seventy percent of workers in New Zealand want new jobs

Byron Clark

Job advertising website SEEK's 2010 Employee Satisfaction and Motivation survey, which had about 3000 respondents, has found that 70% of New Zealand workers are wanting a new job this year with one in four planning on leaving their jobs in the next three months. The main reason was looking for 'a challenge' (28%) followed closely by feeling unappreciated at work (23%). Nearly half of those surveyed (49%) responded negatively to the question "How's the current morale in your workplace" and a slightly higher number (52%) said they would not recommend their friends apply for jobs at the organisations employing them.

What would change that would be better management (49%) and more employee motivation (41%) about a quarter of respondents also said better pay and work environment would make a difference. This open ended question also drew responses such as "Cut the amount of work required to increase the salary to bring it into line with the extra work done for no pay" and "stop breaching employment law".

When asked what they liked about their jobs, the most common response was "people I work with" (19%) and when asked what they hated 24% said the stress levels and 23% said the overall quality of management. Those in

'service and support' industries appear to have it worst, feeling less happy and less secure, as well as more likely to hate aspects of their workplace. Most were planning on leaving their job in the next six months. While 30% of young "generation Y" workers cited boredom as a reason for seeking new jobs (compared to 15% for generation X and 12% for Baby Boomers) they "tend[ed] to be more upbeat, [and] confident about their future" according to the report.



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Revisiting socialism and women's liberation

part one

The following is the first instalment of a three-part series by Kassie Hartendorp, organiser of the Wellington branch of the Workers Party. The Workers Party has decided to run a regular section on the subject of women's liberation in each issue of *The Spark*. This and the next two instalments of this article are the first item to be published within this new regular section.

Historically, one of the most controversial topics within Marxist theory is 'the woman question' which continues to create debate and disagreement within socialist politics. August Bebel defined the woman question as dealing "with the position that woman should hold in our social organism, and seeks to determine how she can best develop her powers and her abilities, in order to become a useful member of human society, endowed with equal rights and serving society according to her best capacity." Because the demand for women's rights is often seen to conflict with the priority of class struggle, some Marxists have refrained from tackling this topic, as it has not been uncommon for groups to split over disagreements on how to end women's oppression. In this article we will review four writers; Frederick Engels, August Bebel, Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai and analyse what they have put forward in regards to women's suffrage, marriage and the family, motherhood and love, and sexuality. This is only a small selection of the plethora of issues within the woman question, but due to word restraints, I will be just discussing these four areas. We choose here to use the term 'women's oppression' rather than the more recently used 'gender inequality'. While the terms are similar, the former is the historically specific description of the oppression and exploitation of women within the longer trajectory of capitalism.

Women's Suffrage

Women's suffrage is often associated with first-wave feminism, but the well-known suffragists of the Western world were not the only ones demanding change within the electoral system. Most socialist groups agreed that women should be



Left: German socialist Clara Zetkin who was instrumental in the fight for women's suffrage. German women gained the right to vote in 1918.

Right: Rosa Luxemburg.

given full political rights, which included the right to vote and to be elected to public office, however, these matters were treated in terms of whether or not

they were prioritised. Clara Zetkin, a German socialist active from the late 1870s through until the early 1930s) was devoted to the issue of women's suffrage,

arguing that it was of utmost importance for socialist organisations to demand voting rights for women. Women did not gain the vote in Germany until 1918, and Zetkin was a key figure in forming a socialist women's movement that fought for women's political equality. Her paper "Social Democracy and Woman Suffrage" was given as a speech to the Conference of Women before the opening of the Annual Congress of the German Social-Democracy in 1906 (when 'social democracy' was a term still in use to describe revolutionary socialism).

Using the Marxist method of historical materialism to analyse the fight for women's rights, Zetkin began her speech by stating that women's suffrage is a "direct consequence of the capitalist mode of production." She linked women's oppression, and the fight for gender equality back to the idea that all social relations and structures are based on the mode of production, and without surplus-value, and the rise of capitalism, both the conditions of women, and their fight for equality, would not exist.

Zetkin went on to say that the middle-class agitation movement - or what would be described now as first-wave feminism - demands that women's suffrage be granted because it is a 'natural right.' In contrast, Zetkin stated that:

We, on the contrary, basing our demand on the teachings of economics and of history, advocate the suffrage for women as a social right, which is not based on any natural right, but which rests on social, transient conditions.

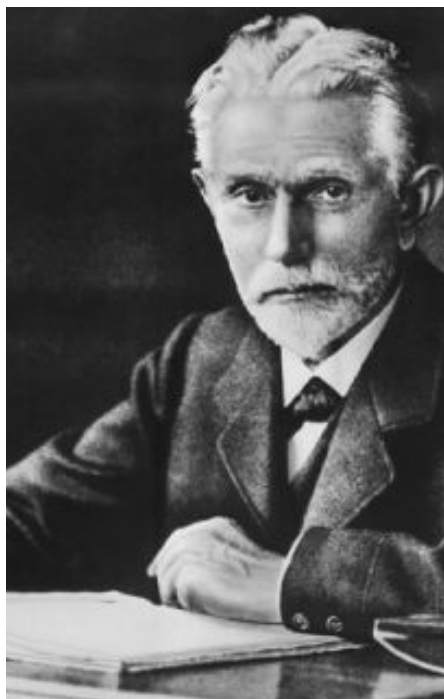
Here she differentiated the socialist struggle for women's rights, from that of the bourgeois women's movement by punctuating the understanding the world through the theoretical foundation of Marxism - dialectical materialism.

Engels described the materialist dialectic as the cycle in which every finite mode of existence of matter, whether it be sun or nebular vapour, single animal or genus of animals, chemical combination or dissociation, is equally transient, and wherein nothing is eternal but eternally changing, eternally moving matter and the laws according to which it moves and changes.

It is the idea that nothing is static, and that everything, including social and economic structures, is constantly in a

process of motion. Within the first part of her paper, Zetkin has immediately stated her viewpoint on the issue as coming from Marxist theory, which sets her apart from first-wave feminists who were working towards the same goals, but from a different theoretical and practical standpoint.

Zetkin continued by stating why, in her opinion, women should be given the vote. She argues that because of capitalism, and the poverty that it brings, many women have a harder time giving birth to, and raising children in such conditions. Of this she states that "the demand for Woman Suffrage is only a phase of the demand that their high social worth should be more adequately recognised." In this sense she believes that women are not idle, thoughtless creatures as was predominantly thought at this time, but rather they contribute to society as much as men do but in a different way. Her argument continued that women should be recognised for this contribution and should therefore be allowed to vote for their political leaders, as well as stand for office. Zetkin goes on to argue from the perspective of difference feminism, by stating that she believes men and women are different in physical strength, and what she calls, "spiritual insight and intellectual aims." However she follows this assertion up with the line: "to be



German Social Democratic leader August Bebel

different does not necessarily imply inferiority, and if it be true that we think, act, and feel differently, then we say that this is another reason which condemns the action of men in the past, and a reason why we should try and improve society." Here she argued that due to their peaceful, nurturing nature, women would bring something different to society once they had achieved political equality. More recent history has shown that women are just as capable of performing aggressively when in positions of public office but during the period that she was agitating her view was not uncommon, and many first-wave feminists argued from a similar perspective.

Zetkin went on to discuss her own reasoning for fighting for women's rights. She addressed the conference by saying: "Comrades, I declare that the strongest and greatest demand for women's rights is not due to the increase of wealth among women, but that it is based on the poverty, on the need, on the misery of the great mass of women." In this line she is linking women's oppression to the wider class struggle, and identified that it is the masses of women in poverty that need political equality the most and are currently fighting for it, in order to change the system that exploits them both as workers, and as women. She elaborates on this further in the passage:

The working women demand the Suffrage, not only to defend their economic and moral interests of life, but they wish for it not only as a help against the oppression of their class by men, and they are particularly eager for it in order to aid in the struggle against the capitalist classes. And they ask for this social reform not in order to prop up the middle class society and the capitalist system. We demand equal political rights with men in order that, with them, we may together cast off the chains which bind us, and that we may thus overthrow and destroy this society.

In the above, Zetkin identified women's suffrage as a reform, rather than a final outcome. From a socialist perspective, the vote will not be used to prop up the capitalism, but must help to overthrow it. This is the major difference between socialist feminism and bourgeois feminism, in that the latter is often only looking to make reforms to the current system, with the political and legal equality of

Women's oppression

women being the end outcome. Socialist feminists on the other hand, see such equalities as being necessary reforms that help to ease the oppression of women, but that only through social revolution it can be abolished in its entirety. It is important to note that in the above passage, Zetkin also appeals to the idea of class unity, and that women and men must not be divided in the fight for women's rights, but rather that they must work together to bring about a truly egalitarian society.

August Bebel (also a long-serving leader within German social democracy) was also a strong advocate for women's suffrage and devoted a chapter to the topic in his book *Women and Socialism*. First written in 1879, this book is a key text on the position of women in society, its contents still relevant. Bebel firmly believed that women must be given both the right to vote, and the right to be elected to office. During this time, men across the Western world were for the most part, strongly opposed to these demands for a variety of reasons, including that women belonged in the domestic sphere, that women were biologically emotionally unstable and unable to vote, as well as the idea that they were just uninterested in and unfit for political life.

He reasoned that women contribute to the community just as much as the men. He pointed out that the number of women who die during childbirth, or whose health is detrimentally affected because of it, is far greater than those men who die or are wounded on the battlefield. This was one of the reasons why women should be "entitled to full equality with man". He was responding to the argument from anti-suffragists that women did not risk their lives during war, and were therefore not entitled to the vote. Bebel's reasoning was similar to Zetkin's in that it emphasised women's social worth and why they deserve political equality. Again, this perspective differs to that of first-wave feminists, as it does not come from the standpoint that the vote is a 'natural right' and rather that women had earned it in those social conditions.

In the same period as Zetkin, the Russian socialist Alexandra Kollontai was also putting forward arguments for political equality. During a speech at the Second International Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1910, Kollontai



Alexandra Kollontai, centre.

stated that the call for voting rights for women is one of the most basic, and essential demands in the full democratisation of the electoral system. She specifically stated that the women's socialist movement was acting in close cooperation with the socialist parties of that period rather than with the bourgeois women's movement. Once again, the distinction between the two is emphasised, and was further discussed in Kollontai's *The Social Basis of the Woman Question* written in 1909. She put forward the same argument against mere reformism as Zetkin:

For the feminists, the achievement of equal rights with men within the framework of the contemporary capitalist world is a concrete 'end in itself'; for proletarian women equal rights is merely a means to be used in the continuing struggle against the economic enslavement of the working class.

Like Zetkin, Kollontai has a contrasting view to first-wave feminists, as the priority for socialist feminists is first and foremost, to bring about a social revolution. Electoral rights are simply seen as a necessary reform to be used into order to achieve this goal. This differs to 'liberal' feminism, as the basis for their work, is predominantly to gain equality with men. However, the socialist feminist's demands

do not stop there, and call for a complete re-organisation of society. Their answer to women's oppression lays in Kollontai's question:

Political rights, access to the election booth and a seat in parliament – this is the real aim of the bourgeois women's movement. But can political equality in the context of the retention of the entire capitalist-exploiter system free the working woman from that abyss of evil and suffering which pursues and oppresses her both as a woman and as a human being?

Political equality for women is not the only thing that people need to be fighting for and it needs to be tied into the wider class struggle. She also drew attention to the intersecting oppressions that a working-class woman of her time was forced to endure. The proletarian woman is not simply oppressed by men, but by capitalist relations of production and the capitalist state, and to truly be free she must throw off her chains from both oppressors.

Please visit the [March 2011 archive](#) at [workersparty.org.nz](#) to read the whole article and to access sources.

Major decisions of internal conference

At the end of January the Workers Party held its major internal meetings in Christchurch to guide the future strategy of the organisation.

Party structure changes

In terms of changing and developing party structures we did the following:

- Altered the leadership body and renamed it 'Representative Committee'.
- Combined *The Spark* production team and the website committee.
- Combined the positions of national organiser and national secretary.
- Elected a discipline and disputes committee.
- Endorsed a new national recruitment officer position within the leadership body.
- Held membership criteria discussion. Membership categories to be fully decided by end of June 6, 2011.
- Held dues/finance discussion. National dues structure to be fully decided by end of June 6, 2011.

Elections to leadership positions

We elected members into relevant national positions. Two members who had held national leadership positions decided to not stand for re-election, those positions were national organiser and national secretary.

Rebecca Broad was elected to the merged national organiser/national secretary position. Broad has industrial experience in both the meat industry and stores/ hoist operating and was the first woman elected to the National Distribution Union executive from the Transport, Energy and Stores sector. Within our organisation Broad has previously been finance officer and has laid out *The Spark* on a monthly basis for four years. In party work she also led the membership campaign to register on the party list for the 2008 general elections, gained the party's highest ever vote in the 2007 Waitakere mayoral campaign, and

co-lead our organisation's participation in the campaign to free Iranian detainees from Mt. Eden prison.

Joel Cosgrove, a former Student Union president, was elected to the new role of national recruitment officer. Cosgrove has a strong record in party recruitment. The role has been established to refine and expand recruitment strategy.

Leadership positions that have been retained are national education officer (John Edmundson), national industrial officer (Mike Kay), *The Spark* coordinating editor (Jared Phillips). John Edmundson has also been elected as second coordinating editor of *The Spark*.

Branch organisers also comprise the Representative Committee. Since the late January internal meetings Kassie Hartendorp has been elected as Wellington branch organiser and Mike Walker has been elected as Christchurch Branch organiser. Former branch organisers Joel Cosgrove (Wellington) and Byron Clark (Christchurch) have shifted focus to other areas of party work. Rebecca Broad has retained Hamilton branch organiser role, and Mike Kay is to rebuild the Auckland presence which has been affected by two resignations and other members moving to more of a support-member role.

The discipline and disputes committee has been formed to provide a body separate from the Representative Committee which will be able to address serious internal disputes or serious matters of individual indiscipline. This is currently an interim body, to be formalised in June, consisting of Kassie Hartendorp, Paul Hopkinson, and Josh Glue.

The Worker's Party role in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Solidarity campaign continues to be led nationally by Paul Hopkinson and Mike Walker.

Resignations

Since our national internal meeting there have been resignations by four long-standing party members. (For clarification, none attended the national internal meetings). We received a joint-letter of resignation on February 4 from the previous national organiser, national secretary, and two other party activists with strong standing within the organisation. They have concluded that party building is not viable in the conditions of downturn of working class struggle. We understand that the intention of both party members and those who have resigned is to maintain working relationships in various campaigns.

National conference 2011

We have decided to hold our national public conference over Queen's Birthday (June 3 – June 5) in Hamilton. This is the main national event that we are now working towards. We will also be working on internal consolidation leading up to the internal part of that conference on June 6.

General elections

In 2008 the Workers Party signed up around 700 members so that we could register a party list for that year's general election (a party requires 500 members, which is audited, to stand a party list). The lack of any real results from that campaign has confirmed to us that it was a superficial form of building. We had an understanding of this at the time but had internal agreement to go ahead with it as part of experimenting with strategies which may help with rebuilding the radical Marxist left. It is still within possibility that we may stand some candidates in electorates this year.

The implications of the Terrorism Suppression Act

Jared Phillips

Public meetings have been held in New Zealand's major centres to build opposition to increasing state power being used against activists and oppressed groups. Early this year the Workers Party and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) Solidarity Campaign hosted one such forum in Christchurch with a focus on the implications of the Terrorism Suppression Act (TSA). Five speakers – Michael Knowles, Valerie Morse, Murray Horton, Paul Piesse, and Michael Walker – explored the local and international dimensions.

The legal/social interface

The first speaker was civil rights lawyer Michael Knowles. He recently ran the successful legal defence of three Christian social justice activists belonging to the Ploughshares group who were charged with intentional damage and entering a property with intention to commit a crime after they physically deflated a dome covering a satellite dish at the Waihopai spy base in 2008. The Waihopai complex is used to provide intelligence to New Zealand and allied military,

including the U.S. military.

Knowles started his presentation by reflecting on how he'd stood in the same hall decades ago (the forum was at the Workers Education Association) debating the introduction of the Bill of Rights, which he opposed because it legislated restrictions upon civil rights. He spoke of how the Bill of Rights put the decision as to what is 'reasonable' into the hands of judges and the police, and that with the Bill of Rights in place, the government continued to go after its 'usual soft targets' such as Maori, Pacific people, people of lower economic status, as well as political activists'. He then used the example of the 2007 armed police raids and arrests carried out against Tuhoe (a Maori Iwi) as an example of how the government was using newer legislation – in this case the TSA – to go after its traditional targets.

Knowles then turned his focus to the Search and Surveillance Bill which was initiated under Labour and will probably come into effect in 2011. His key point was that most of the power in this forthcoming legislation already exists. The intention is to tighten up on any gaps, so will give police greater powers

of questioning and greater legal powers to enter homes. He touched on the earlier case of social justice activist Aziz Choudry's home being illegally entered by the SIS and how this would be legal under the search and surveillance laws.

Knowles said that the government's targets will remain the same and that the search and surveillance legislation may further the opportunity to expose the hypocrisy of the system. For example, commercial and corporate entities that commit serious crimes including fraud are unlikely to be targeted under the upcoming legislation.

Operation Eight, the removal of the right to a trial by jury

Valerie Morse is a Wellington-based anarchist who was one of those arrested during Operation Eight which consisted of police raids on Tuhoe and political activists in 2007. Morse outlined the issue starting with some background as to how the arrestees originally faced charges under the Terrorism Suppression Act. Those charges were withdrawn in November 2007 when the Solicitor-General found that there were no charges to be answered under the Act. Instead the arrestees are being charged under the Arms Act on charges for which the state has no evidence.

Similar in some aspects to Michael Knowles's presentation, Morse then made a broader argument that the state has continually targeted 'those at the bottom of social and class society'. She pointed out that prior to the events of 9/11 those groups were targeted but the targeting has been increased under the post-9/11 conditions.

The legal struggle of the Operation Eight arrestees took a new turn in December 2010 when the Supreme Court ruled that the defendant's will be trialed by judge alone and without opportunity for a jury trial. This course is available to the crown as a result of



Wellington anarchist Valerie Morse speaks at a public forum held in Christchurch during February, on the implications of the Terrorism Suppression Act

the Criminal Procedures Act which was passed in 2007 under the Labour –led coalition government. Phil Goff was the Minister of Justice. This legislation – allowing the crown to trial by judge alone – was passed in the same year that the Operation Eight raids were carried out. Previous to this the option for a judge alone trial could only be granted to defendants. The defence are having the judge alone decision reviewed in the Court of Appeal.

TSA's international aspects

Murray Horton of the Philippines Solidarity Network of Aotearoa gave a primer on the history of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front which is a federation of progressive mass organisations in the Philippines. Horton demonstrated the clear and leading role that these organisations play in the genuine liberation of poor and oppressed groups in that country. He also highlighted the state-terrorism and human rights abuses carried out by the Philippines government against political organisers, trade union organisers, and oppressed groups.

New Zealand's Prime Minister John Key announced in October 2010 that the Communist Party of The Philippines and the New Peoples Army, amongst other organisations, are now listed under the TSA. This means that a person assisting (or belonging to an organisation that is assisting) those organisations can be charged under the TSA. Key openly admitted that there was no connection between the newly listed groups and domestic threats to New Zealand and that the listing was made to support the efforts of the international community. If we unpack that politically, it means political support for the foreign policy of the U.S. and other Western powers.

With regard to the judge-alone trial for the Operation Eight arrestees, Horton said that the removal of people (i.e. a jury) from the case is symbolic of the removal of the only democratic aspects within the judicial system.

Case of the Cuban Five shows hypocrisy

Paul Piesse, Christchurch spokesperson for the Cuba Friendship Society, focussed

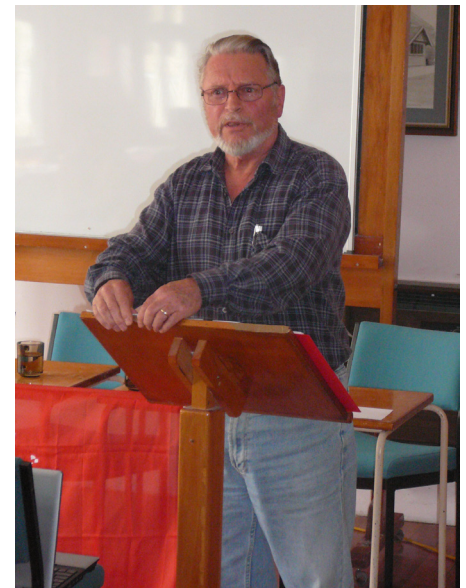
his presentation on the campaign to free the Cuban Five. 'The five' were detained in the U.S in 1998. They were falsely accused, and then falsely convicted in 2001, of espionage against the United States government. The men had been operating in Miami to monitor the activities of far-right, non-U.S. government paramilitary groups that operate with the implicit support of the FBI/CIA and have carried out terrorist acts against the Cuban people which have resulted in the deaths of more than 3000 Cubans over the last 40 years.

The Cuban Five are collectively serving 4 life sentences and seventy-five year's imprisonment for monitoring the paramilitary activity on U.S. soil. The five had their convictions overturned and a retrial secured in 2005 but the decision for retrial was then overturned. Piesse said that the U.N. Human Rights Commission, 10 Nobel Laureates, the U.S. Bar Association, two former Vice Presidents of the European Parliament, the current Vice President of the European Parliament, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu are amongst those who have supported the release or retrial of the Cuban Five. (Piesse noted that while the campaign had gained a lot of response from progressives and unionists in New Zealand, there had been no response from the Green Party, and in fact the least friendly response came from Green MP Kennedy Graham).

The U.S. government continues to imprison (without fair trial) operatives who were seeking to prevent real acts of terror against civilians. This is a powerful illustration to show that combating terrorism is not what motivates U.S foreign and military policy.

Restricting liberties while practicing state terror

Speaking on behalf of the Workers Party and the PFLP Solidarity Campaign, Mike Walker opened with some remarks about a recently published New York Times (25/1/2011) article which had branded PFLP founder George Habash as the godfather of Middle Eastern terrorism. In fact terrorism has continued to reign on Palestinians, including by paramilitaries, since the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. As a response to such Western assertions that liberation organisations



Paul Piesse of the Christchurch Cuba Friendship Society made a presentation on the Cuban Five

are terrorists, Walker showed footage of U.S troops in Iraq indiscriminately firing upon groups of civilians going about daily life. The footage was taken from behind U.S lines atop of a building, and revealed U.S troops making comments such as 'light that bitch up' in reference to a woman civilian who was then murdered, along with others, in the gunfire.

What about New Zealand's role in the Middle-East? Last December two SAS soldiers in Afghanistan led a raid on a plant which resulted in the deaths of two civilians and injuries to two more. The Director of criminal investigations for the Kabul police reported that "It was murder... I have seen a lot of cases of violence, but I have not seen an incident where they kill civilians like this for no reason." Walker used this example to highlight the charade. The New Zealand state – with its armed apparatus murdering civilians – is using 'terror' to justify legislation at home which restricts civil liberties and restricts the ability to support progressive/revolutionary struggles elsewhere.

Following from the speakers, the audience (40 people attended) had an open discussion about the necessity of continuing to build opposition to repressive laws.

Christchurch earthquake

Workers Party statement on Canterbury earthquake disaster

Issued by Workers Party Representative Committee, Wednesday February 24th

To local and international friends, supporters, and readers, Yesterday, February 22, an immense earthquake hit Christchurch, New Zealand's third largest city. Currently there are 55 confirmed dead, 20 unidentified bodies, and an estimated 300 missing. The quake occurred at 12.50pm and was followed shortly after by a major aftershock.

This is the second major earthquake to strike Christchurch in 5 months. This more recent quake – 6.3 – in magnitude was far more destructive than the last, as it occurred only 10 Km south of Christchurch at the shallow depth of 5 Km. It happened during the lunch hour of a working week day which has compounded human suffering and trauma.

As well as injury and loss of life there has been major damage to buildings, houses, and infrastructure. Soil liquefaction has damaged roads and transport. Originally there was an estimated 80% loss of power, as of mid-day today the estimate is now 50%. Currently three quarters of the city has no water. Phone lines and signal towers have also been wrecked or severely damaged. The Canterbury television building completely collapsed and has been one of the focal points for rescue efforts. There is concern that the Hotel Grand Chancellor- the tallest building in Christchurch – may still collapse from extreme buckling. The township of Lyttleton was at the epicenter of the earthquake and was extensively damaged.

To support local services, search and rescue, medical, and other teams have been deployed and continue to be deployed from other New Zealand cities and a range of countries including Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, and the UK. A specialist urban search and rescue team from Australia was the first group of international helpers to arrive. This has highlighted the great possibilities of international solidarity.

Thousands of ordinary people have volunteered to help, including through the Red Cross and also grassroots groups

such as the post-earthquake University of Canterbury Student Volunteer Army. Such voluntary activity reveals the potential for people to act in a strong spirit of social solidarity.

The government has declared a state of emergency and this afternoon held its third emergency cabinet meeting. The Christchurch City Council has advised people to help in their local communities and suburbs but to not travel. Five main welfare centers have been established in/ around Christchurch.

Earthquakes are unavoidable and the government will of course do its best within the constraints of the capitalist system to coordinate the best possible response, especially in the search and rescue phase. However, because of

the social inequalities inherent within capitalism, it will become particularly important for progressive organisations raise our voices high in regard to the welfare of ordinary people and those with the least resources when the city enters its recovery and rebuilding phase.

Amongst those who have suffered from the earthquake are Workers Party members and their families in Christchurch. Thankfully they are all uninjured.

At this early stage the Workers Party has no formal relationship to any particular relief provider. Currently we encourage all members, supporters, and readers to contribute financially and materially, particularly through workplace collections.

