



The **SPARK**

For workers' power and international socialism

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Fight racism

- **Defend migrant workers**
- **30 years on - 1981 tour**
- **NZ in the Pacific**
- **Book review: *Remains to be seen***
- **Science and Maori**
- **Interview: GLBT update**
- **Palestine solidarity**
- **Theory: Russian Revolution and the National Question (Part two)**
- **Marriage and Marxism**
- **Christchurch recovery**

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Editorial

Jared Phillips

On top of normal sales and subscription copies Workers Party members sold an additional 50 copies of the July issue of *The Spark* at a number of one-off events in Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington (see page 6 for an account of those activities). This issue includes commentary on the Christchurch rebuild, along with articles on a broad set of topics ranging from Palestinian liberation to the 30th anniversary of the protests against the 1981 Springbok tour. The issue concludes

with the second part of John Riddell's article on the Russian revolution and the national question. In next month's issue we will begin a series of articles relating to the upcoming general election.

Donations and bequeathments

The Workers Party is non-profit and relies on financial support from progressive people, supporters, and members for all its activities including producing this magazine. To financially support us please deposit to 38-9002-0817250-01 with your initials and surname (or anonymous). Large and small, regular and one-off donations are all appreciated and listed in *The Spark* from time-to-time.

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.

Local and international events show need to unite against racism and defend migrant workers

This article, compiled by writers for *The Spark*, looks at two anti-migrant events that occurred in July 2011 and asserts the necessity of defending migrant workers and advancing the socialist principle of open borders for working people.

Prime Minister John Key last month displayed an openly hostile attitude towards asylum seekers. The *Elysia* was carrying more than eighty Tamil asylum seekers who were detained by Indonesian maritime authorities near Sumatra. Many of those on the boat were videoed with hand written signs and New Zealand flags signaling that New Zealand is a desirable destination for them.

Key stated blankly, "Our very simple message is they are not welcome". He continued,

It confirms what I've been saying for some time; it's only a matter of time before large vessels, steel-hulled vessels capable of navigating their way to New Zealand... or far away parts of the world would try to make their way here. They would not be allowed into New Zealand.

Key's uncompromising position went further than other mainstream politicians - such as former Prime Minister Helen Clark and Key's own immigration Minister Jonathon Coleman - who both asserted that it is unlikely that such boats as the *Elysia* could make it down to New Zealand. It is likely that Key's position was driven by electoralism and an attempt to galvanise amongst non-liberal voters.

Some commentators though like to portray New Zealand as fair and decent. The Helen Clark-led government won some liberal sympathy when New Zealand took in some of the asylum seekers involved in the Tampa refugee 'crisis' in 2001. Such liberal sympathy towards that government was misplaced. In parts of Australia refugees are being kept in inhumane conditions for years

in detention centers. It's both morally deplorable and against the interests of working people. But the reality in 2001 and today is that the New Zealand government is in many respects worse than others. It accepts less asylum seekers than does Australia. It has a commitment to the UN to take up to only 750 refugees per year, a comparatively small number, and even then it usually accepts less.

Whilst New Zealand does have a tradition of deep conservatism, it does not have strong traditions of fascism or right-wing extremism. The presence of the far-right in Europe has been highlighted by the terrible events in Norway.

The bombing of government buildings in Oslo which killed seven people was carried-out by right-wing extremist Anders Behring Brevik as a decoy to distract authorities whilst he went about massacring 85 young people and injuring a further 67 at a social democratic youth conference on Utoya Island. Being a right-wing extremist, he blamed the social democratic youth for contributing to what he called 'cultural Marxism' and 'Islamic colonisation'. Brevik's ideology appears to be a blend of rightist conservatism and Nazism.

Brevik's careful planning of the attack, including the financing of the attack, was carried out over a number years. This shows that he was a focused right-wing extremist, and it wasn't the case that he is simply psychopathic. Whilst Brevik's action is amongst the most extreme carried out by far-rightists in Europe in the post-war period, it should not be seen as a one-off act of violence.

Far-right activity carried out by boneheads and more organised right-extremists regularly occurs in Europe and in Russia. It consists of violence towards immigrants, leftists, and intellectuals, and has resulted in murders of immigrants. Organised groups on the far-right in Russia have achieved the capacity to execute people in the legal system who

have prosecuted or convicted far-rightists.

What should be taken from both centre-right politicians like John Key and from far-rightists who are galaxies to the right of the political centre, is that the most predominant form of racism today is contained in theories against immigration. John Key displays none of the signs of a typical conservative racist. He works with the Maori Party and shortly before the *Elysia* asylum seeker saga he was touring India participating in sound-bite-sized activities which he probably hopes will shore-up support amongst Indian conservative voters in New Zealand.

However, what we have seen from the ruling class in New Zealand is that it is always at the ready to adjust its position on migrants when the economy contracts. Europe, which obviously doesn't have the type of insulation as does New Zealand against the global financial crisis, is seeing heightened activity from the far-right. As Socialists, no matter what level of persecution is being meted out, we stand up for migrant workers and argue for them to have full access, full opportunity, and no lesser wages, conditions, or income than New Zealand-born citizens.



Right-wing extremist Anders Brevik

1981 Springbok tour

Thirty years on: The 1981 Springbok tour and protest today

The following article is written by John Edmundson, a member of the production team of *The Spark* and Christchurch Branch of the Workers Party. John was highly active in the anti-apartheid movement and was arrested during the Gisborne match of the 1981 tour.

This year New Zealand hosts the Rugby World Cup and TV viewers all over the world will be getting up at all hours of the morning to watch the games. Something similar was happening exactly thirty years ago this month, when

South Africa's Springboks accepted an invitation from the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU) to tour this country. The 1981 Springbok Tour was a momentous time in New Zealand's history and has been the subject of much debate since. It is sufficiently significant that it is taught in school social studies and history courses as one of the defining and formative episodes in New Zealand's history.

Apartheid

In 1981, the apartheid system was at its

vicious peak in South Africa; memories were still fresh of the 1976 Soweto uprising, when the South African security forces gunned down black school children in the streets for protesting against discriminatory schooling. South Africa was fighting a war in Namibia and was projecting its war into the "frontline states" of Angola and Mozambique with virtual impunity. For its part, the South African resistance was engaging in mass strikes, popular mass protest and a fairly limited armed struggle, primarily through the medium of the African National Congress's (ANC) Umkhonto we Sizwe



In Hamilton, a group of several hundred anti-tour protesters stormed the pitch at Rugby Park. This in conjunction with another protester threatening to dive the stadium in a plane succeeded in stopping the game.

(Spear of the Nation).

The campaign to oppose the Springbok tour of New Zealand was part of a huge international campaign to isolate South Africa in every aspect of its international dealings. There was a widely supported boycott of South African exports, a campaign to prevent trade with the Republic, and a sporting and cultural boycott. In New Zealand, the campaign had really kicked off with the “No Maoris No Tour” campaigns in the 1960s, a response to the South African demand that teams touring South Africa “respect” South Africa’s apartheid system and select only white players for their national squads. South Africa’s response to that campaign was to grant “honorary white” status to Maori All Blacks, thereby allowing them to stay in the “Whites Only” team hotel, travel on the team bus etc, rather than use the inferior “Blacks Only” facilities they would normally have been restricted to. The activists leading the anti-apartheid movement saw this as mere window dressing” and argued that even a fully merit based South African team would not be sufficient to lift the boycott since the boycott was not really about sport, but a lever to use against the apartheid system as a whole.

The old style conservative Muldoon government paid only lip service to international agreements to isolate South Africa and saw the impending tour as an opportunity to shore up crucial support in marginal, primarily rural, electorates in the general election due later that year. The government was an unpopular one and had only won the previous election due to the vagaries of the electoral system, polling less actual votes than the Labour opposition but winning a majority of seats in parliament. The prospect of the government actually losing the election was very real and the tour, a very long one with fixtures in many smaller towns in marginal electorates, along with the chance to play the law and order card, was an opportunity too good for Muldoon to pass up.

The Protest Campaign

The campaign here saw the largest popular mobilisations in the history of New Zealand protest movements. Prior to the arrival of the tram, the focus had

been on building such large numbers at demonstrations that the government would abandon their tacit support for the tour as an electoral liability but Muldoon’s calculations – essentially that those opposing the tour were not in the critical marginal electorates – meant that he completely ignored the demonstrations. Once the tour was in progress, the strategy changed to a two pronged approach. The movement would attempt to disrupt or stop the games themselves in the various centres as they were played, while people in other centres would organise large disruptive protests that would stretch police resources, preventing them from deploying reinforcements to the locations of the games themselves. The protests were well supported throughout the whole tour and, while only one game was actually stopped, there is a case to be made that the campaign was a success as no South African team ever toured again until after the dismantling of the apartheid system.

In other respects though, the campaign was less successful. Despite the mobilization of tens of thousands on the streets, and of thousands willing to confront the police, wearing helmets and carrying shields to protect themselves from the unprecedented scale of police violence, the movement evaporated as quickly as it had formed. Focused on a single issue and with a predetermined timeframe, the momentum was lost once the Springboks had left the country. Of course it was inevitable that the intensity of activity could not have been sustained without a tangible target, and that exhaustion would take its toll. But the reality was that most people simply retreated back into their old lives, voted at the next election Labour (with no joy since Muldoon’s gambit had worked) and engaged in no further radical political activity. Those who remained involved in political protest activity generally moved either into the anti-nuclear movement or the Maori Sovereignty movement. The left barely grew at all, as was evident when a neo-liberal Labour Party was elected in 1984 and only a few years later, the Employment Contracts Act was passed without effective militant opposition.

South Africa today

In South Africa itself, apartheid had reached its peak and the clock was ticking. The 1980s had been dubbed “The decade for victory” but it was not until 1994 that the first elections were held under universal suffrage. The election resulted in a landslide victory for the ANC and for Nelson Mandela as the country’s first black president. The euphoria of this victory was short lived however as the ANC in government launched a program of neoliberal economic reforms that preserved the wealth of the white minority, enriched a small black minority and left the vast majority to languish in continuing poverty. In fact the continuing effect of the global economy over the decades since liberation combined with the ANC’s harsh economic strategy has left the majority of South Africa’s black population worse off than under apartheid, in both relative and absolute terms.

Lessons for the future

Internationally, the closest contemporary equivalent to the anti-apartheid struggle is the campaign around Palestine, and in particular the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Activism in support of the Palestinian cause has the potential to involve large numbers of people once again in militant struggle. The danger is that the same mistakes will be repeated. Building a campaign around a single issue, however worthy that issue might be, without making effective and clear links to the root causes, the everyday functioning of capitalism and imperialist domination of the less developed world, could well see another dramatic but short lived campaign that does not lead on to greater things. That the BDS campaign is building now, just as the “Arab Spring” also unfolds, is a positive sign, but of course the long term direction and success of that movement is far from certain. For us in the West, remaining true to radical left politics, and bringing those politics to broader campaigns, is more essential than ever.

Workers Party news and activities from around the country

Workers Party members and branches were active in a range of events in July. In mid-July the Wellington branch had a good independent presence on semester two orientation day at Victoria University. This led into another event on Sunday July 17 - the Big Left Radical Fair - which was held at Crossways Community Centre in Mt. Victoria, Wellington. Workers Party member Joel Cosgrove who has helped to form 'Mutiny' - a local left networking group - was a key organiser of this event. It was attended by approximately 200+ people and 15 local organisations, including Palestine solidarity groups (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Wellington Palestine Group, and Students for Justice in Palestine), climate change groups, and other Marxist and anarchist groups.

For many of the people who attended this event it was their first exposure to radical politics. Cosgrove gave a speech on the topic 'What is the Workers Party?' The Queens Avengers - a recently formed GLBT group in which Workers Party members are participating - was another organisation that was represented at the fair (see interview page 11).

Also on Sunday July 17 Workers Party members in Hamilton and Auckland, plus party contacts/supporters, met for a day of study and political discussion. For the first part of the day the group studied a small work by American Marxist leader James P. Cannon. This was followed by an appraisal of the situation of the Workers Party in New Zealand and subsequent discussion. Time was assigned for the Mana Party/Movement to be discussed in the final session for the day. This was a serious political discussion about the political nature of the Mana Party and its class composition. The discussion also touched on aspects of Marxism and Maori liberation. It was very interactive



Auckland activist Matt Billington played his Myth of Democracy acoustic set in Hamilton as a fundraising event for Hamilton Workers Party branch.

as between six and eight young Mana activists asked if they could join in the discussion.

In Auckland and Hamilton Workers Party members have become involved in the Mana Party/Mana movement. In June of this year Workers Party members resolved that Mana is a Maori-led working class movement that our members would engage with in a constructive manner. In Auckland that has meant door-knocking and contributing towards policy ideas. In Hamilton Workers Party members and

some rank-and-file workers are going about forming a workers'/socialist branch in Hamilton West with a view and proposal to look after Mana activity on a weekly basis at the Frankton markets and as such have been involved in Mana Hauraki/Waikato formative meetings so far, with one member being elected to the interim committee of that branch.

Workers Party members in Hamilton also helped to organise for a GPJA-initiated (Global Peace and Justice Auckland) public meeting at the 30th anniversary of the anti-apartheid protest

in Hamilton which stopped the game between the All Blacks and South Africa.

Auckland activist and musician Matt Billington played his *Myth Of Democracy* acoustic set in Hamilton as a fundraiser for the Workers Party.

Byron Clarke has again been elected as branch organiser for the Workers Party's Christchurch branch. Activity in Christchurch has continued to be limited because of the impact of the earthquakes and the heavy snowfall in the area.



Meeting held in Hamilton, July 25th, involving a pannel of speakers who discussed various aspects of the 1981 anti-Springbok tour campaign. At the front left presenting is guest speaker form South Africa , film maker and activist Mark Fredericks, who is on a speaking tour a several cities in New Zealand.

NZ imperialism

New Zealand state's oppressive international role shown in Cook Islands

Heleyni Pratley, Workers Party, Wellington branch

In 1901 administration of the Cook Islands was handed over to New Zealand from the British with some conditions. One was that there would be no sale of land to New Zealand, with the British saying they were dissatisfied with the New Zealand government's handling of Maori land. This meant that all Cook Islanders, including those living abroad, had land rights and native land in the Cook Islands which could not be bought or sold, except to the government for public purposes. In 1902 New Zealand set up a Land Court with the aim being to increase the commercial productivity of the land and to lease it to Europeans. The New Zealand government believed that the native population was 'dying out' and it wanted Europeans to farm tropical produce for export to New Zealand. So the authorities leased land to Europeans while leaving ownership in the hands of Cook Islanders who would - according to their thought at the time - eventually disappear.

There are now approximately 130,000 Cook Islanders, and the vast majority had

retained rights to their customary lands. Even those who left the Cook Islands still have land ownership and hundreds of people had rights to blocks of land.

But in 2009 new legislation was passed in regard land ownership called the Land Agents Registration Act 2009. The reason this new law needed to be passed was because the majority of the land in the Cook Islands was owned collectively by large families and community groups.

Why was this form of ownership a problem? If it ain't broke don't fix it right? Well it depends on who you are talking to on deciding whether this socialised ownership of land was working or not. It was working pretty well for the majority of Cook Island people but for the ruling class of the world who own big business and for government's which look after those capitalist interests this was a big problem. Why? Well because if you don't have an individual owner it makes it very hard to buy and strip all the assets and sell the land. And how can you build a Hilton hotel if you can't buy the

land to build it on?

In 2005 the World Trade Organization recommended that in order for pacific countries to grow 'economically' and become more like their 'Asian Tiger' counterparts (Hong Kong, Tai Wan), the individualising of land ownership would be an essential building block.

The 2009 law required that a family may nominate one single owner of the land and that this individual has the sole legal authority to lease the land with a maximum lease period of 60 years. If a family can't decide which person to nominate then the government appoints someone.

From a market point of view, now the Hilton can be built on land that can be leased for very low rent. After the 50 year lease is up the family can have the land back on the condition that any assets that have been built on the land are bought as well. Pacific Island nations have a history of being dominated by imperialist powers that rip off the people. The New Zealand government is one of the worst culprits.



John Key in Rarotonga, 2009, with the then Cook Islands Premier Jim Marurai after signing a tax agreement.

Book Review

Remains to be Seen: Tracing Joe Hill's Ashes in New Zealand

Jared Davidson

Rebel Press, 2011

Reviewed by Byron Clark

When Swedish born union organiser and radical song writer Joe Hill was executed in the United States in 1916, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) sent packets of his ashes all over the world- to every state in the US (except Utah where he died), Asia, Europe, every country in South America, Australia and supposedly, New Zealand. But were his ashes actually sent here? And if they were, what happened to them? Why is there so little historical record of their fate?

These are the questions that Jared Davidson sets out to answer in *Remains to be Seen*. After extensive research drawing on archival material, much of it previously unpublished, he concluded that while there is no "concrete evidence" of Joe Hill's ashes arriving in New Zealand – or even being sent here in the first place – it is highly likely they were. While the IWW in New Zealand was on the decline in the later half on the 1910s (a result of state repression) there were many members who were still agitating and maintaining contact with the US IWW.

Ashes did arrive in Australia (though they were destroyed by police soon afterward in a raid on the Sydney IWW offices). At the time Australia and New Zealand shared the same postal shipping route which went to Sydney via Auckland so if the ashes were indeed sent here, chances are they arrived. The mostly likely scenario is that they were intercepted and destroyed by state censors.

Remains to be Seen is largely a historical account of the New Zealand state's repression of militant labour

during World War One. Under the War Regulations Act the state was given immense power to censor publications and imprison agitators. Solicitor-General John Salmond had the ability to circumvent parliament in deciding what material needed to be censored, and described IWW publications as a "public evil".

The book is an easy read and doesn't require a great amount of prior knowledge about labour history on the part of the reader and would serve as a good introduction to anyone wanting to discover more about repression of dissent in New Zealand during the first world war. Some of the material may come as a shock to those unfamiliar with



this history. In the forward a number of books on the topic are suggested for further reading.

Jared Davidson has written books on design and does the design work for the Labour History Project. This is his first labour history book.

Science, technology, and Maori

By Mike Kay, Workers Party Auckland

The ACT party receives little support from the actual capitalist class, therefore we argue that opposing Act (on the basis that they appear to be the worst of the bunch) should not be a key focus of activity for working class and radical activists. But their latest advert alleging “Maori privilege” has shone a light on some of the racist attitudes still lingering in New Zealand society.

ACT’s Marketing director John Ansell, quit his job with the comment:

These guys (Maori) have gone from the Stone Age to the Space Age in 150 years and haven’t said thanks. That’s the nature of the thing. In Maori world, if one tribe conquers another you eat the guys’ eyeballs. The Brits were pretty civilised by that standard.

It’s hard to know where to begin with a comment like that. The British ruling class built an empire from the profits of the slave trade on which the sun never set and the blood never dried. That they called civilisation. Meanwhile Maori, along with many other indigenous people, have long been painted as cannibalistic savages. The academic Paul Moon’s recent book alleges that cannibalism in traditional Maori society was a common practice. However, the science tells a different story. Ian Barber of Otago University’s Department of Anthropology stated:

I’m not a cannibalism denier. I think there’s good traditional and historical evidence for a limited form of cannibalism. But what we don’t find in the archaeological record is clear or unequivocal evidence of any kind of widespread or comprehensive cannibalism that would involve the consumption and preparation of significant amounts of human flesh. (NZ Listener 26/2/11)

But the idea that Maori should be grateful for “Pakeha technology” is probably the most commonplace, and not just amongst rednecks.



Former marketing director of the ACT Party John Ansell

Recalling his discussions with his mate Aussie Huata, Dun Mihaka wrote in 1989:

The phenomena of science and technology are not, contrary to popular belief, the sole preserve of the Pakeha, or anyone else for that matter. Rather, it is the cumulative effect of the most advanced ideas that all mankind has gathered from the beginning of time... all peoples, without exception, contribute to it... The two ways by which we all do this, is by way of the hand or by way of the head. In some cases many did both. In other words you either contribute to it by way of the intellect or you contribute to it by way of your labour power. The example I regularly used to illustrate this point was the case of the work that Te Whiti o Rongomai, and his pacifist land rights followers from Taranaki did on the Otago Peninsular. I would say that while I did not dispute the fact that the engineering plan for the road running

from Anderson’s Bay out to the Kaik arrived on the same ship that brought the whiteman, the pox, the bible, modern science and technology... the labour-power, the blood, sweat and tears so to speak, that made that engineering plan into a reality was to work of Maori slave labour. I have still to meet someone who, using this method of reasoning, has been able to effectively refute this statement of fact.

Mihaka thus used the scientific method of historical materialism to reveal that the way in which new technology is introduced into other societies is shaped by class forces. This is in contrast to the Pakeha world/ Maori world division that both the rednecks and some Maori nationalists subscribe to. The recent formation of the Mana movement is an opportunity for a class analysis of the position of Maori to be put back on the agenda.

GLBT campaigning in Wellington

- interview with Queer Avengers

The following interview is with Jason Frock (Workers Party Wellington branch education officer, Schools Out facilitator, and secretary of Wellington Gay Welfare Group) and Kassie Hartendrop (Wellington Workers Party branch organiser and Schools Out facilitator). Both have been in highly involved in the recent Queer the Night demonstration and formation of the Queer Avengers campaign organisation.

The Spark: What was Queer the Night?

KH: Queer the Night was a march organised in response to a series of violent attacks on members of queer community in Wellington.

JF: I think we noticed that while there was an overriding individual response to these attacks, there was a general silence on the homophobia and transphobia which are implicit in many actions of daily life, including what was becoming regular queer bashings.

KH: The purpose of the march was to organise and empower those who came on the march and those who heard about it and, in terms of the march itself on the night, we achieved that.

JF: We wanted to organise the community to collectively say “enough is enough” and to begin to think about how to collectively organise beyond the march itself to fight such oppression.

KH: I guess it’s important to note the awareness of the community’s atomisation and what it means. Queer and Transsexual issues are real, but there is a real gap between knowing that and being able to achieve some collective action in response. Part of what we’re saying is that people need to see that the answer to violence in the community is community action.

JF: Within that perspective we really

wanted to get people to see their structural oppression.

The Spark: How did the march itself go?

JF and KH: Overwhelming success. The energy was amazing. For many of us it was the most militant march we’ve been on. There was a good turnout, of about 400 people. The militancy, size and feel, was much greater than the raw numbers. I’ve been on bigger marches that weren’t nearly as powerful. There were four guest speakers, who were received well by the crowd. It was a very powerful and emotional event. People were crying. It was a very powerful and moving event and space for people who came along.

JF: For me my first gay experience in a queer social setting was in a gay club. The space to come ‘out’ is so limited. For a lot of the Schools Out kids, it was their first empowering queer experience. It led to some very personal and passionate speeches.

KH: It was a very politicising event. I’ve had people who were apolitical, saying to me that they feel way more politicised, realising that their identity is itself a political issue. I had some friends who were really challenged to step up and join the march.

JF: The reason it was so successful, was that it was connected. On the march people weren’t afraid, people could hold hands. It was real and it struck them, what it meant to be strong and to be able to say ‘enough’...

KH and JF: A lot of implicit homophobia or transphobia is not talked about and it was good to be in a group, which really hammered home the structural aspects of queer oppression. People were talking about the feeling of acceptance and sense of community. There has been a change in consciousness because of that temporary creation of a safe space in Cuba Mall that night.

JF: At least 3 of the people we work with in Schools Out have personally stood up against homophobia. The whole situation where St Pats [Catholic secondary boys school] banned same-sex partners from their school ball was an outcome of queer youth being radicalised from the Queer the Night. It flowed into the public meeting where 87 people, all active and with something to say about how to go forward met to plan going forwards.

The Spark: Where has the focus/energy gone now?

KH: We made it clear on the night, that no matter how powerful people felt on the march, the next morning would still be the same. We made sure that we could organise to fight to build longer-term support for the cause and opposition to oppression.

JF and KH: We’ve had a series of 4 meetings now which have culminated in this group on the 8th of July which was a day before the 25th anniversary of the homosexual law reform bill being passed, which we’re calling the Queer Avengers.

We’ve decided on three campaign areas: 1) Queer youth groups in all schools around the country: The state has not provided safe spaces for queer youth to the point where 20% of queer youth will attempt suicide, for heterosexual youth it’s 4%. We need to educate the new queer generation to make them strong and aware of what can be achieved collectively. 2) Our second campaign is going to be around supporting the older queer population. The institutions that are meant to deal with older queer are just not up to the task. Some of the worst places in society to be queer are our schools and rest-homes. In many rest-homes there is no one who is ‘out’ there. 3) Our third campaign will be focused on gender and the discrimination that Intersex, trans and gender queer face.

Palestine solidarity

JF: These are our focuses which we'll be active in. We're looking at organising around those issues, but at the core we're a social and political organisation dedicated to eliminating homophobia

and transphobia. Within this framework we want to build an inclusive and empowering movement that allows people to liberate themselves. We want people to be able to see the

intersections of other struggles and oppressions and the need for us to link up and support other struggles.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) campaign update

Paul Hopkinson, PFLP Solidarity Campaign co-ordinator and member of Christchurch Branch of the Workers Party.

As I sit down to write this PFLP update, after being trapped at home under a heap of snow for two days without computer access, I wonder what else can go wrong. I try to log into the PFLP English

website to get an updated report on what is happening with the now stalled unity agreement between the different Palestinian factions and find their website is down. It is not uncommon for

the PFLP website to be brought down as it regularly comes under cyber-attack from Zionists.

The PFLP campaign is now in its third year and made impressive progress



Palestine solidarity

in the first two years of the campaign building a strong relationship with the PFLP including polito bureau member Leila Khaled (an interview with her is available for viewing at <http://wpnz-pflp-solidarity.blogspot.com/>). There have been PFLP Solidarity Campaign-supported events in the main centres around the country, including a benefit concert with international singer song writer David Rovics supported by Don Franks, a Palestinian photo-exhibition, regular stalls and T-shirt sales (including international sales) and the sending of one thousand dollars to the PFLP of profits from those sales.

One of our next goals is to meet face to face with the PFLP by travelling to Palestine and by trying to get a PFLP speaker to New Zealand. We were making good progress towards this goal until the September 4, 2010 earthquake. The on-going earthquakes and disaster in Christchurch that followed impacted on the campaign as both national campaign co-ordinators live in the city. While all the people involved with the solidarity campaign in Christchurch escaped

without injury our ability to organise and co-ordinate the campaign has been severely disrupted. However, this is a long term campaign and we are committed to overcoming these issues and getting the campaign back on track.

The PFLP and our contacts within it have been busy dealing with the fast changing political environment due to the uprisings throughout the Middle East and developments towards a unity government within the Palestinian movement. The PFLP has been working on negotiations to try and get a unity government made up of the different political factions for some time. They had been involved in the negotiations that saw the unity agreement signed between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo at the end of April 2011. This has seen PFLP members return to attending PLO executive committee meeting, something they have not done since before the Oslo Accords.

The agreement between Hamas and Fatah has broken down over the Palestinian Authority's President Abbas wanting to appoint Salam Fayyad to be

Prime Minister of the unity government. Hamas considers Fayyad, a US-trained economist to be a stooge of the West and Israel.

The solidarity campaign in New Zealand has recently found out that the PayPal service on the blog which allows people to buy T-shirts over the internet has been disconnected. As this service is based in the US we suspect that - like the Facebook PFLP Supporters page that was set up - this has been shut down in line with US foreign policy to undermine Palestinian resistance. We are currently in the process of asking PayPal why the service has been discontinued and are looking into other possibilities or services.

The PFLP Solidarity Campaign is committed to working in solidarity with the PFLP and the Palestinian people until they gain a democratic secular state in all of Palestine, where all people regardless of race or religion have equal rights.

Support Palestinian Resistance: buy a shirt!



\$30 each

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e-mail address.....

No. of shirts.....

e-mail [wpnz.pflp.solidarity@
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Road, Auckland
[http://wpnz-pflp-solidarity.
blogspot.com/](http://wpnz-pflp-solidarity.blogspot.com/)

small ☐

large ☐

XL ☐

XXL ☐

10-fitted ☐

12-fitted ☐

14 fitted ☐

The following is the second and final part of an article initially published on November 1, 2006. It was written by John Riddell, then a co-editor of the now ceased Socialist Voice which was produced in Canada. Part one appeared in the July issue of The Spark, and can be read on-line at www.workersparty.org.nz

The Russian Revolution and National Freedom: How the early Soviet government led the struggle for liberation of Russia's oppressed peoples - part two

The soviets take power

On November 15, 1917, one week after the workers and soldiers of Russia took power, the Soviet government decreed the "equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia" and the right of these peoples to self-determination up to and including independence. (John Riddell, ed. *To See the Dawn* [hereinafter cited as TSD]. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1983, p. 248) Subsequently, five nations on the western border, including Poland and Finland, asserted their independence, which the Soviet government recognized. Others opted to federate with the Russian Soviet republic.

But the matter did not stop there. The Soviet government invited each nation within Russia to hold a soviet congress to decide whether and on what basis to participate in its federal structure. National minorities were offered not only the ultimate right to separate but autonomous powers over language, education, and culture that gave expression to the right of self-determination. The government spelled out this policy in April 1918 with reference to Russia's Eastern peoples in an article by Stalin, then its Commissar of Nationalities. These regions, he stated, must be "autonomous, that is have their own schools, courts, administrations, organs of power and social, political and cultural institutions," with full rights to use the minority language "in all spheres of social and political activity." (Smith, p. 24.)

This policy applied also to religious customs and traditions. Thus the Sharia—the Muslim common law—was recognized in traditionally Muslim territories as an integral part of the Soviet legal structure.

The Soviet government also endorsed the rights of the Muslim peoples to lands recently seized by Russian

colonists, including when these lands had been utilized only seasonally by Muslim peasant nomads. It supported local initiatives to repossess such land in the North Caucasus and endorsed resettlement of Russian colonists in Turkestan as a means of restoring land seized by settlers after the defeat of an uprising of subject peoples in 1916.

It also worked to educate government personnel as to the social structure of the Eastern peoples. An appeal to Red Army personnel in 1920 urged that soldiers see the small independent producers and traders of these regions as allies, as toilers, not as profiteers. It noted that among these peoples, "a clear class differentiation has not yet taken place.... The producers have not yet been torn away from the means of production. Each handicraftsman ... is also a merchant. Commerce ... rests in the hands of millions of small traders, [each of whom] only has a penny's worth of goods." Given all this, "the rapid implementation of communism ... nationalization of all trade ... of handicraftsmen ... is impossible." This analysis is strikingly applicable to the conditions of the indigenous masses today in Bolivia and other Latin American countries. (TSD 307)

Promotion of national culture

With regard to the Eastern peoples, Soviet policy went far beyond support of land claims and autonomous governmental structures. The Soviet government supported the evolution into mature nationalities of peoples still only at the dawn of national consciousness. In this way, these peoples would be able to reach a cultural and political level that would facilitate their integration into Soviet society on a basis of equality.

The soviets therefore embarked on an ambitious program to promote national cultural development. Local experts were engaged to choose, for each ethnic group, the dialect best adapted to serving as the basis for a national language. Alphabets were devised for the mostly pre-literate peoples. Dictionaries and grammars were written and put to use in the publication of minority-language newspapers.

Education was started up in the minority languages, including within the Russian-speaking heartlands—in every locality where there were 25 students in the minority language group. By 1927, across the Soviet Union, more than 90% of students from minority nationalities were being educated in their own languages. The governments of autonomous republics were responsible for education in their national language beyond their own borders—a policy that bore some similarity to the Austro-Marxist program of "national-cultural autonomy" against which the Bolsheviks had argued prior to 1917.

The same principle applied to the Jewish minority, which had no national territory. A Jewish commission of the Soviet government administered hundreds of Yiddish-language schools scattered among several national republics. Many leaders of this body came from the Bund, a Jewish Socialist current that had advocated such structures, against Bolshevik objections, before 1917.

By 1924, publishing activity was under way in the Soviet Union in 25 different languages, rising to 44 in 1927.

Preferential hiring

The Soviet government strove to assure that each nationality was represented in local governmental organs in proportion

to its size in the population as a whole. This policy was termed “korenizatsiia” — “indigenization” according to the Oxford dictionary, or “affirmative action” in modern idiom.

The Turkestan region of Central Asia provides a good test case, for there the soviets initially excluded Muslims from their ranks and turned a harsh face to the demands of the Muslim majority. In March 1918, the Soviet government called a halt to this policy, and when soviet elections were held in Turkestan the next month, 40% of those elected were Muslim. The proportion of Muslims in the local Communist Party membership rose from almost zero to 45% by the end of 1918. In 1919, the Communist Party central committee specified that candidates for government office could be nominated independently of the party by any Muslim workers’ organization.

One veteran of those days recalls that Lenin reacted angrily to information that all the soviets in Turkestan used the Russian language, saying, “All our talk about Soviet power will be hollow so long as the toilers of Turkestan do not speak in their native tongue in their institutions.” (Smith, p. 145)

By 1927, minority nationals predominated in the soviet executive bodies in their regions.

The Communist Party universities, a major source of new cadres for party and state, gave preference to candidates from minority peoples. By 1924 these peoples made up 50% of the overall student body, roughly equal to their weight in the population. But it took time to make good the imbalance in party membership. By 1927, Muslim peoples’ weight in the party membership had reached about half their proportion of the population as a whole.

Efforts were also made to speed economic development in territories of the Muslim peoples. They were encouraged to enter the working class, which in these territories had previously been almost entirely Russian in composition. Progress was rapid: by 1926 minority peoples made up a majority of the work force in Tadzhikistan, Turkmenistan, and Dagestan, and about 40% in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

These achievements, of course, were possible only through the initiative

and leadership of revolutionists from the minority nationalities themselves. With rare exceptions, there was no Bolshevik movement among the Muslim peoples prior to 1917. The leaders of this transformation came mainly from revolutionary nationalist movements—which many Marxists, then and now, disparagingly term “bourgeois.” The central leadership of the Communist Party repeatedly allied with these forces in order to overcome resistance to its policies toward Muslim peoples from within its own ranks. (For Lenin’s comments in 1920 on the terminological side of this question, see Riddell, ed. *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite*. New York: Pathfinder, 1991. Vol. 1, p. 212 or Lenin, *CW* 31:241, or do an Internet search for “unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement”)

Baku Congress

The Bolsheviks argued within the Communist International in support of their approach toward oppressed nationalities, and it was codified by resolutions of the Comintern’s Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920 and Second and Fourth World Congresses in 1920 and 1922. In his closing remarks to the Baku Congress, Gregory Zinoviev proposed an amended wording to the closing words of the Communist Manifesto: “Workers of all lands and oppressed peoples of the whole world, unite”—a concept that remains valid for our times. (TSD 219) And armed with this understanding, the International won support rapidly during those years across Asia.

The mood of these years is captured by Babayev, who attended the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku as a young Muslim Azerbaijani in 1920, serving as a guard. Interviewed many years later, he recalled that “when the call to prayer came, he found it natural to set aside his gun during devotions, after which he would ‘go back to defend with our blood the conference and the revolution.’ Inspired by the [conference’s] ‘declaration of holy war against the enemy of revolution,’ he explains, “thousands of people, convinced there was no contradiction between being a Bolshevik and a Muslim, joined the

Bolshevik ranks.” (TSD 29-30)

The Muslim delegates also utilized the Baku congress to voice their concerns about chauvinist abuses by Soviet officials in the autonomous republics. A lengthy resolution on this topic was submitted by 21 delegates, representing a wide range of nationalities. In his closing remarks, Zinoviev promised energetic corrective action. After the congress ended, 27 delegates traveled to Moscow to meet with the Communist Party Political Bureau, which adopted a resolution drafted by Lenin. The resolution’s sweeping provisions included the decision to found the University of the Peoples of the East and instructions to rein in the authority of emissaries of the central government in autonomous regions.

Stalinist reversal

During the 1920s, a privileged bureaucratic caste arose in the Soviet Union, headed by Stalin, which showed increasing hostility to the rights of minority nationalities. This trend led Lenin, in his last months of activity, to launch a campaign to defend the rights of these peoples. (See “Lenin’s Final Fight,” Pathfinder Press, or do an Internet search for Nationalities or “Autonomisation”)

After Lenin’s death in 1924, the Stalinist forces gained control of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet state apparatus. Soviet republics in Asia were subjected to bureaucratic centralization, chauvinist policies, hostility to minority language rights, and massive counterrevolutionary terror. Nonetheless, the gains of the Russian revolution in the domain of national rights were not wholly extinguished. In particular, the Asian Soviet republics retained enough strength to successfully assert their independence when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Conclusion

Lenin’s pre-1917 articles on self-determination provided the Bolsheviks with a foundation for their course during the revolution. But the Bolshevik approach to the struggle of the oppressed nationalities was radically enhanced by

Theory

the experiences of the revolution itself. In the process, the Bolsheviks showed a capacity to ally with and learn from the most advanced fighters for national freedom. They set aside old schemas and allowed real social forces to shape their strategy, one that might today be called “unity through diversity.”

Today, in the midst of a new rise of liberation struggles in several continents, the policies of the Bolsheviks of Lenin’s time provide an example of how the working class can ally with oppressed peoples in common struggle. The unity of the working class depends on solidarity with oppressed peoples and sectors. The

program of this struggle includes not just political self-determination for oppressed nationalities, but unconditional support for their struggle to win the political, cultural, and economic rights needed to achieve genuine equality. And that may well involve—as in the case of the indigenous peoples of Russia in the years



Opening rally of the Baku congress, August 31, 1920. The rally was held jointly with the Baku soviet and Azerbaijan

following the 1917 revolution—positive measures to assist these peoples in developing their cultural and political potential as nationalities.

Further Reading

This study has drawn extensively on

Jeremy Smith's important work, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, which utilizes Soviet archives released after 1990. See also Dave Crouch, "The Bolsheviks and Islam," in *International Socialism* no. 110.

In the Pathfinder Press series, "The Communist International in Lenin's

Time," edited by John Riddell, see *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International for the pre-1917 discussion; To See the Dawn*, for the Baku Congress; and *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite*, for the Second World Congress.



unions in the Baku Opera house.

(Gay) Marriage and (Queer) Marxism

Ian Anderson, Workers Party member

Internationally, demands for gay marriage are galvanising important mass movements. These movements develop from diverse origins: Australia's Equal Love campaign regularly mobilises thousands, while same-sex marriage is one of the constitutional demands in Nepal's ongoing revolutionary struggle. In countries such as Sweden and South Africa, activists have achieved the demand for gay marriage; in countries such as New Zealand, activists have achieved an equivalent in the Civil Union Act.

These achievements leave important question marks. The Civil Union Act did not grant adoption rights to same-sex couples; did not grant any rights to polyamorous relationships; both Civil Unions and marriages are fairly uncommon. Ultimately the new status quo leads many in the queer movement back to questioning marriage itself. Activists in Wellington's newly formed Queer Avengers, which mobilised hundreds for its Queer The Night march, have discussed 'repeal of the Marriage Act' as a possible slogan. It's important in this context to tease out the historical nature of marriage, and the arguments for marriage abolition.

This piece aims to provide a brief review of the Marxist take on marriage, followed by a discussion of its historical development in New Zealand. The aim is to establish the conditions in New Zealand today, the significance of reforms like the Civil Union Act, and the relevance of calls to repeal the Marriage Act.

'Traditional' monogamous marriage

Marxists have written screeds on the marriage question, but the definitive early work is Engels' *Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*. This draws on extensive research by Marx, Engels and anthropologist Lewis H Morgan, to flesh out the basis of the modern nuclear family. Engels' guiding logic is that family

structures are not fixed, not permanent or natural, but transform based on the requirements of class society.

Marx and Engels argued that the first division of labour was the gender division, between men and women. In *Origin*, Engels expands on this to argue that monogamous marriage is an important basis for class society: 'The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage. Engels notes the division of labour within monogamous marriage, a division between domestic toil and wage labour. Ultimately he argues for the abolition of marriage as an essential condition of women's liberation and the end of class society.

While Engels does not discuss queer oppression, his observations are useful in a queer analysis. In particular he identifies the nuclear family as a distinct historical development, driven by economic factors, highlighting a range of family structures throughout human history. In other words, monogamous marriage is not traditional but historically specific, and its day will pass. 'Traditional' marriage is just one form of relationship, given privilege ultimately to maintain property relations through the husband.

Bolshevik revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai advanced probably the most significant expansion of Engels' theory in a range of articles including *Communism and the Family*, *Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle* and so on. Unlike Engels, Kollontai's work on the family drew from her experience of socialist transformation; rather than anthropology; she tended to focus on the immediate demands of the revolution. Kollontai argued in *Communism and the Family* that private domestic tasks, including cleaning and child-rearing, should become a collective responsibility. She noted that those with buying power already had access to child-care, to restaurants, to cleaners, and

argued for collectivising these services: "the four categories of housework are doomed to extinction with the victory of communism."

Decline of marriage?

Society in every country has shifted since Kollontai's time and further since Engels', bringing with it shifts in marriage and family structure. The New Zealand Marriage Act of 1854 was very much a colonial transplant from Britain, similar to what Engels dealt with, but the subsequent Marriage Act of 1955 has been revised many times in the last half-century. Moreover marriage appears in decline, with around one third of marriages ending in divorce, and a growing number of couples living together in *de facto* unions.

This is linked to a huge shift in social relations since the end of the post-war boom. The previous "wage earner welfare state" was eroded to pave the way for a flexible accumulation scheme, called neoliberalism, or Rogernomics in New Zealand. Over this period more women entered the paid work-force, and family structures transformed.

However, Engels' analysis of the division between domestic and wage labour is not so dated as it first appears. In fact, Engels noted that the expansion of industry in the 19th Century led to more women entering paid employment, and observed a division now referred to as the "work/life balance" -

if she carries out her duties in the private service of her family, she remains excluded from public production and unable to earn; and if she wants to take part in public production and earn independently, she cannot carry out family duties.

Some now treat this balancing act as a product of feminism, as if feminists argue it is easy to balance child-care with paid employment: We are the daughters of feminists who said "You can be anything," and we heard "You have to be



A pro gay marriage rally held in Melbourne during June

everything.”

As Engels observed however, this difficulty in balancing domestic labour with wage labour is a product of capitalism, which privatises family relationships. Capitalism tends further and further towards atomised family units, eroding communal family structures. Time Use Surveys and Census statistics show that women still perform the bulk of private unpaid labour, in particular care for children and the elderly.

As conditions become increasingly precarious, the family is an important site of struggle. Reactionaries cling to monogamous heterosexual marriage as a bastion of stability, while reformers and revolutionaries chip away at the edifice from various angles – begging the question of what we want to carve in its place.

Reform (and revolution)

As noted, marriage in New Zealand has undergone various progressive reforms. Some of these take the form of direct amendments to the Marriage Act. However many use separate legislation, constitutional arguments or wider social change, to challenge the limitations placed by the capitalist state on consensual relationships and family structures.

Many of these reforms challenged women’s status as property. Through the

Married Women’s Property Act 1894, women won the right to own property within marriage. This early victory for women’s rights was not followed up for nearly 100 years: divorce remained a privilege for the wealthy until 1982, and rape within marriage was legal until 1985.

Various states have also granted some assistance for unpaid domestic workers – free childcare for example. However these services are under attack as capitalism goes into crisis, a point explored in more detail by Rebbecca Broad in her article for the Women’s Liberation section of this issue. The privatisation of the family, and domestic labour, remains a major drive in capitalism.

Along with the struggle to recognise married women as human, queer activists have also fought for a greater range of relationships to be recognised. In 1996 a lesbian couple held a wedding and applied for a marriage licence on the basis that the Marriage Act does not specify gender, but were overruled by the High Court. More famously, the Civil Union & Relationships Acts 2004 achieved an equivalent to marriage for same-sex and de facto couples. This was only supported by a slim majority in opinion polls and was a conscience vote that split the major parties.

At the time, lesbian Marilyn Waring, a former National MP who has written significant contributions on women’s

liberation, argued that queer activists should instead focus on amending the Marriage Act. Moreover the Relationships Act actually limited access to the DPB for many women, as their partners were now recognised: even by recognising relationships, the state seeks to regulate them.

There are other limitations to these reforms. Same-sex couples still have no right to adopt – in fact the Adoption Act has not been amended since 1955. Polyamorous relationships, one of the oldest forms of human relationship, are not legally recognised. In addition intersex and genderqueer folks, those who aren’t solely male or female, have no legal recognition.

Ultimately, whatever piecemeal reforms we might make, the fundamental contradiction will remain: the right of the ruling class to sanction and set terms for consensual relationships, while excluding others. Sections of the ruling class may support gay marriage, but they retain the right to maintain property relations by regulating consensual relationships. Arguably, at this stage the Marriage Act is less oppressive for what it includes than for what it excludes. Socialists must argue for a clean slate under which all consensual relationships are recognised, between any number of partners of any gender identity. While the Marriage Act exists, we must support progressive reforms. Ultimately, we must aim for abolition of the Marriage Act.

Class imbalance will determine nature of Christchurch recovery

Byron Clark, Christchurch branch organiser for Workers Party

The public consultation for the rebuild of central Christchurch – done through a combination of public meetings and the web 2.0 ‘Share an Idea’ website has thrown up some great plans. The summary of submitted transport ideas outlines a walkable central city with greater cycle facilities, integrated public transport with a central hub, and surprisingly for a city with one of the worlds highest car ownership rates, talk of a car-free central business district like some European cities are heading toward. Is that what’s going to happen though? Architect Ian Athfield who was appointed the city’s architectural ambassador after the September 4 earthquake, has told The Press that his bottom line for the rebuild was “no one-way streets and no unnecessary buses through the city”. Mayor Bob Parker said he has “lots of sympathy” for Athfield’s view.

The need to reduce bus congestion in the central city is a valid one, indeed the public consultation has brought the suggestion of small shuttles in the CBD connecting with the suburban bus routes (and potentially light rail, something the city is yet to develop). Significantly however there has in the past been opposition to public transport initiatives (especially bus priority lanes) from business owners in Christchurch, who see private transport as drawing in the most customers. As such, businesses want car parks near their shops and building

owners want to meet that demand to attract tenants.

For those who work in the CBD (a third of Christchurch workers prior to the February earthquake) the city already had one of the highest ratios of car parks to employees in the OCED, and a central hub for public transport would make it the most viable option for workers commuting to the city from the suburbs. Athfield has said “We need to remove buses from the middle of town and replace them with people,” but more likely than not removing buses will replace them with cars, requiring more space for parking and less for people.

Given that both of Bob Parker’s prior election campaigns have been backed by the city’s building owners (his relationship with David Henderson is particularly infamous after the council bailed out the bankrupt property developer) it’s likely that his support for Athfield’s view is reflective of the desires of the people who financially supported him in his mayoralty bid. The Central City Business Association, a cabal of property owners including Henderson, Antony Gough and Richard Ballantyne, was the leading force pushing for de-pedestrianising Cashel Mall, a move the council voted to go ahead with despite 70% of public submissions being opposed to it (though in the end the council did bow to public pressure on this issue). Is public consultation a farce when the councils record shows their reluctance to

listen to the public?

Improved public space has been a popular idea as well; prior to the earthquake the city was moving more toward pseudo-public space – seating on public footpaths reserved for paying café patrons for example. Cashel Mall was a place where, unlike the suburban malls, activities other than shopping (for example, political leafleting, collecting for charity, and meeting friends with no intention of buying something) is permitted, but the council approved a team of private security guards (paid for by the Central City Business Association) to patrol the area. They also approved building owners to install speaker systems to play music with the aim of driving out undesirable youth (this was not a success – evidently the local bourgeoisie underestimated young peoples appreciation for classical music).

The owners of central city land, whose newly formed lobby group Core (City Owner Rebuild Entity), shows their attitude toward the city, will be excited about the ‘blank slate’ given to them by the earthquake providing an opportunity to recreate the city in their own interests, with a city council they know they can rely on. Those interests are going to come into opposition with the interests of the community, who have demonstrated they care just as much about what kind of city they end up with.



Night shot of Christchurch City, by Ivan Woods.