

NO VOTE FOR ANY PARTY THAT THREATENS TO JAIL UNION ACTIVISTS UNLEASH UNION POWER TO SMASH THE ABCC!



Sydney, 30 October 2009: Demonstrators gather outside Trades Hall and prepare to unfurl their union flags for a march through Sydney's CBD in protest against the ABCC.

11 June 2010 - For years they have been attacking picket lines, persecuting union organisers and fining union members. Now the Australian bosses and the courts and cops that serve them want to sink to even greater depths - back down to their lows of previous centuries. Once again they want to imprison workers. Right now, South Australian construction worker Ark Tribe is facing jail. His alleged "crime": refusing to attend a secret interrogation by the union-busting Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC.) Under laws introduced by Howard and maintained by Rudd's ALP, a worker can be jailed for six months for simply exercising their right to remain silent when the ABCC demands to interrogate them. Yet, in the face of this threat Ark Tribe stood firm. No way was he going to dob in his union comrades to the ABCC when it demanded he be interrogated about discussions at a CFMEU union meeting about workplace safety issues.

For June 15, the day that Ark Tribe's trial will begin, the CFMEU and other unions have called protests across the country in defence of him. The Sydney rally will assemble at 12pm at the Corner of Bathurst and Dixon Streets in the city. Trotskyist Platform calls on all our readers to join this demonstration.

Union leaders have vowed that if Ark Tribe is jailed they will call all out industrial action. However, we should not let it even get to the stage that a union comrade is jailed. What is more, we should not even allow the bosses' state to impose **any** conviction or fine on our union brother. That would allow them to intimidate workers from involvement in future union organizing activities. Moreover, if Ark Tribe is hit with a non-custodial sentence, the threat of the ABCC getting workers jailed in the future will still remain. That is why the time for strike action is **NOW! It is time to unleash the industrial power of the union movement to demand not only the dropping of all charges against Ark Tribe but to demand the complete abolition of the ABCC.**

Of course, whenever workers launch an industrial campaign we come up against all the institutions currently arrayed against Ark Tribe: from laws restricting strikes to rich people's courts. However, we should not think that these laws and institutions represent some sort of "democratic" will of the people that we are obliged to bow down to. No, in this society laws and elections are shaped by the bankers, developers, mine owners and factory bosses. Just look at the way the billionaire mining tycoons like Andrew Forrest are carrying on over the proposed Resources Super-Profits Tax. It is the ultra-rich who have the money to finance advertising, who own and control the media and who are able to threaten to close projects and sack workers just to get their way.

Furthermore, no matter who is in government, the actual administrative organs of power in Australia – including the police, army, courts and commissions – and their key personnel are tied by a thousand threads to the corporate elite. That is why the justice system is so biased. On the one hand, workers who stand up for their union face jail and Aboriginal people who fight for their rights are imprisoned (such as those jailed following the 2004 Redfern and Palm Island struggles against racist killings by police.) On the other hand, the billionaire crook Richard Pratt who made illegal deals to rip **\$700 million** from Australian consumers through higher prices was treated with kid gloves, had charges dropped against him and was even given a state funeral. Meanwhile, when China jailed four corrupt Rio Tinto executives, the entire Australian establishment went hysterical that China had the audacity to treat top executives from such a corporate giant with such firmness.

Indeed, for all the harmful inroads that the Beijing government has allowed capitalists to make into China's socialistic system, at least there the justice system is weighted against greedy tycoons (China's richest person, Huang Guangyu was last month jailed for 14 years for economic crimes) and corrupt politicians. Here it is the opposite. The capitalist elite is above the law while the harshest treatment is meted out to union activists, Aboriginal people and unemployed workers. That is why the working class has no obligation to be bound by the diktats and anti-strike laws of the Australian state. Instead, we should mobilise our industrial power in such a powerful and united way that the anti-worker state will not be able to stop us from winning justice.



Sydney, 30 October 2009: CFMEU union building workers and their supporters occupy ANZ Bank headquarters in Martin Place in opposition to the bank's refusal to pay workers entitlements for a failed construction project that it had taken over. Including a large contingent of Korean-speaking unionists and their supporters, a highlight of this action was the multiracial crowd being led through chants of "The Workers United Shall Never Be Defeated" in both English and Korean! Despite attempts by the NSW police, hands on gun holsters, to intimidate the crowd the protestors held their ground until ANZ bosses agreed to a meeting with union officials. The organised workers movement has the power to smash the ABCC and defeat all the 'Workchoices Lite' anti-strike laws. (Trotskyist Platform photo.)

WORKERS UNITY MEANS UNITING WITH MIGRANT & OVERSEAS WORKERS TOO

To win our struggles, we need maximum unity. That means that we should not fall for the ruling class's attempts to whip up nationalism and racism to divide us. We should not let them shift the blame for unemployment and the lack of affordable housing onto refugees and other vulnerable people. Unfortunately, the leadership of the CFMEU's NSW branch has a policy on so-called "illegal" immigrant workers that falls into the bosses' divide-and-rule trap. That policy is to call in the Department of Immigration against these workers. This policy goes against all union principles of solidarity. What is more it flies in the face of the real solidarity work that the CFMEU does do: for example, in support of Colombian trade unionists and in defence of the oppressed Palestinian people.

Moreover, the practice of encouraging government raids against so-called "illegals" working on sites will not even achieve its stated aim which is to protect the jobs and conditions of local workers. This is simply because retrenchments and cuts in conditions are not caused by "illegal" or overseas workers, they are caused by the greed of the capitalists. To stop these corporate owners from cutting back on hiring we should demand, through real action, that they increase the size of their workforce at the expense of their bloated profits. However, to win such campaigns we precisely need strong unity between workers of different ethnicities. That means holding out a hand of solidarity to so-called "illegal" workers and at the same time preventing the bosses from misusing them to undercut wages. It means demanding that these workers get the same conditions as other workers, are organized into the union and are won the full rights of citizens so that they are better able to stand up for their own rights. If this is fought for, not only will these workers become the most determined fighters for the union but big chunks of their ethnic communities - who after all face racist discrimination from the same authorities who are targeting Ark Tribe - will also stand on the side of the union. So let us stop our unions from doing acts that would reduce our favourite chant - "The Workers United Will Never Be Defeated" - into empty words. Let us truly follow the spirit of that chant on the way to new victories for the united, multiracial working class.

WORKERS NEED A PARTY THAT WON'T RESPECT THE CAPITALISTS' "RIGHT" TO EXPLOIT WORKERS

The persecution of construction workers under Rudd puts the coming election into clear light. Of course no class aware worker is going to vote for the openly pro-boss Liberals. But why should workers vote for the ALP either when the Rudd/Gillard regime has upheld laws that threaten to jail workers?

Although Labor may want to improve conditions for its working class base, it is incapable of doing so because it refuses to challenge the power of the corporate bosses who exploit workers. Take a look at the way the ALP is handling this Resource Tax. Potentially, the tax could allow a mild redistribution of income from the mining magnates to working people. Yet, desperate to win support from business owners, Rudd will instead direct most of the revenue from the tax into lowering company taxes and into infrastructure projects benefitting mining firms. Hence, the new tax will mostly redistribute wealth from the big miners to other capitalist exploiters - be they construction bosses or owners of smaller mines. The only amount that workers will get is from a small increase in Superannuation payments. However, since these increases will be on a percentage basis, managers and foremen will gain much more than workers. In the end any benefit to lower paid workers will be very small and that is offset by the threat that the ever-increasing reliance on Super will see pensions gradually abolished. Of course, the prospect of even the minutest transfer of their profits has the greedy mine owners up in arms. Yet in the face

of their threats to slash jobs, the ALP government has no plan to enact legislation to ban profitable companies from cutting their workforce. No, the Rudd gang accepts the “right” of the possessing class to own and control the corporations – even though it is workers who built them up out of their own toil. That is why the ALP dares not even mention the one measure that could both improve the certainty of mining jobs and at the same time allow a serious redistribution of resource wealth to the masses: and that’s nationalization without compensation of companies like BHP, Rio Tinto and Fortescue Metals.

Some say that as bad as Rudd is, Abbott will be worse. Yet, because their inability to deliver benefits for the masses breeds contempt for the “left”, the rule of social democratic parties like the ALP paves the way for hardcore right-wingers like Abbott. Furthermore, to insist that we should in any way support this current regime is telling workers that we are so powerless that we should support those who would kick us in the gut in order to save us from being kicked even harder by someone else in the head. However, the working class is far from powerless. It has, in fact, enormous power that comes from the fact that it is the working class that makes the wheels of industry and transport turn. The problem is that for too long this power has not been utilized – so much so that the bosses’ agents think they can get away with jailing unionists and sinister elements think they can car bomb the Sydney CFMEU office. If pro-ALP union officials and certain socialist groups stop telling workers that they have “no choice” but to “with gritted teeth” vote ALP then workers would have a better sense that they indeed **do have a choice**: the choice to unleash their own industrial power in order to defend their rights.

What the working class needs is a party committed to mobilizing such action. Such a perspective is not only very different to that of the ALP but also counterposed to the program of the Greens. For although they oppose the worst anti-union laws, the Greens push the middle-class pipedream of “industrial harmony” between workers and their exploiters presided over by arbitration courts. We need instead a party of struggle, a party that will understand that there can be no real “harmony” until the capitalists are finally swept from power.

It is the capitalist system itself that is the cause of the increasing repression faced by workers. This system cannot keep ticking over unless profits are continually sweated away from workers at an ever-increasing rate. That in turn means governments using ever more draconian means to stop workers’ resistance. And if it seems bad now, it will eventually get a lot worse. This country was somewhat cushioned from the worst of the Global Recession only because China’s booming state-owned enterprises sucked up Australian exports. However, China’s socialistic enterprises cannot hold up Australia’s capitalist economy forever. It is a matter of time before Australian workers are hit with the 20% unemployment rate faced by Spanish workers today and the severe cutbacks being imposed on the Greek masses. In the long run, the capitalist system threatens still

more severe crises and then horrific wars between bankrupt states trying to plunder their way out of trouble.

That is why workers need a party whose final goal is the replacement of the capitalist profit system with a socialist system of collective ownership and control of all the mines, banks, construction equipment, factories and big buildings. Such a party will include not only the best worker militants but the most committed fighters amongst other oppressed groups including Aboriginal people, working class women, gays, embattled “ethnic” minorities and unemployed youth. However, a revolutionary party will not be built simply through nice resolutions and articles, it will be constructed in the course of real battles in the interests of the masses. Today, a key battle we face is the struggle to mobilise working class power to smash the ABCC and all the Howard-Rudd anti-union and anti-strike laws.

