

## Upcoming public events

The Wellington branch of AWSM, and Beyond Resistance (<http://beyondresistance.wordpress.com>), in Christchurch, organise monthly discussion evenings on the first Wednesday of every month. The next meetings will be on August 4th.

The details of the topics to be discussed, the times and the locations of the discussion groups can be found on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>.

In Wellington, there was a film screening in July, of the film **Choropampa**, about a communities fight for justice following a destructive mercury spill at a gold mine in Peru in 2000. In August there will be a public discussion on Prisons: Race, Criminalisation and Privatisation, held in conjunction with the Wellington Anarchist Black Cross (<http://abcwellington.org.nz/>).

In Christchurch, the July discussion, organised by Beyond Resistance, was on the topic of Anarchism in Action — 100 Years of the CNT, the anarcho-syndicalist union in Spain that played a large role in the Spanish Revolution of 1936-39.

## What is AWSM?

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society: anarchist-communism.

We are made up of revolutionary class-struggle anarchists from across Aotearoa / New Zealand. For now, we are a small organisation with members in the cities of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and in a few smaller centres in between.

As class struggle anarchists our priority is active involvement in workplace struggles and industrial action as well as community based campaigns in our neighbourhoods. We are currently involved in the struggles against residential water metering in Wellington, the 90 Day "Hire & Fire" Act nationally, strike support and more.

We publish a monthly newsheet (which you're reading right now!) and a less frequent but more in-depth theoretical magazine as well.

To be a member of AWSM, you must agree with our Aims & Principles (available on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>), and be involved in the life and activity of the group. If you're interested in joining or just finding out a bit more about us, email or write to us via the contact details at the bottom of this page.



## Subscriptions

If you want to make sure you don't miss an issue of Solidarity, you can subscribe to either the print or electronic version.

To subscribe to the AWSM announcements list, put your email address in the form on the top right of each page on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>.

Subscribers will be sent .pdf copies of Solidarity each month, along with other publications produced by AWSM and occasional information - we promise we won't spam you with a ton of useless stuff though! The electronic copy is identical to the print version.

Or, you can subscribe to the print edition to receive a copy of Solidarity in the post. \$8 for 12 issues. Mail a cheque to our PO Box listed below, or contact us to organise an alternative method of payment.

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# SOLIDARITY

Issue 10 - July 2010 - FREE!

Newsheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement



## Oppose Prison slave labour

Not content with attacking workers rights and conditions and selling off our national parks to the latest venture capitalist, prisons appear to be latest victim of a global crusade to turn everything into a commodity to be bought and sold on the market.

If the government gets away with its latest plan to fund the new Wiri jail in Auckland through costly 'public-private partnership' in other words privatisation subsidised by the taxpayer, we should expect to see more prisoners behind bars so that companies will make a quick killing from profit and prisons being used as source of efficient cheap labour. These latest proposals fit in with wider neo-liberal offensive to introduce a 'three strikes policy' similar to the US which has increased re-incarceration levels and acts as filter to criminalise and discipline our class.

Prisons are not a deterrent and offer no long term solution to eradicating crime. Prisons kill; rates of suicide are

increasing which is directly related to neglect and suffering inside. Prisons bolster the crime of capitalism which creates the socio-economic conditions for 'anti-social' crime in our society to flourish. While the real criminals, who are as responsible for redundancies, lay-offs, insecurity and wars remain in power.

class backgrounds that are locked away due to the inequality in wealth and power in our society. The difference, is that in a libertarian communist society where everyone has free and equal access to the social wealth created, and a criminal justice system geared firstly towards protecting the interests of the rich and powerful abolished, we will decide.

As anarchists, it is important to build a culture of resistance and class solidarity inside as well as out by providing a platform for prisoners and their families to organize and agitate. Prisons are an integral part of the class system and vital to the survival of capitalism and the preservation of wealth and privilege. Prisons can only be abolished as part of the social and political revolution that destroys capitalism and the state. In the meantime, we must win improvements in the

here and now. This debate goes the heart of what type of society we want to live in and opposing prison privatisation is an important first step in this struggle.



There is no doubt there are a small number of offenders who need to be removed from society for their own good and that of others, but the vast majority of prisoners are from working-

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Mad Butcher

# Against Nationalist Thugs – For International Working Class Solidarity

The recent attack on the flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza has come as a shock to the so-called 'international community'. Even for a State which in recent memory has massacred thousands and which to this day continues its



brutal military occupation of Palestine, a massacre of unarmed activists carrying aid to one of the most impoverished places on Earth (in international waters no less), is a particularly brazen act. However as opportunistic politicians use this tragedy to score cheap political points those of us who have nothing to gain from their system of exploitation and oppression need to keep our wits about us.

Already Turkey has been the most vocal in its denouncement of the Israeli State, unsurprising given the widespread anti-Israeli sentiment of the local populace, that the boat was a Turkish one and the fact that Israeli-Turkish relations have been deteriorating for some time now (most notably since Turkey pulled out of a joint military exercise with Israel last year). However

moral condemnation coming from a State which has been ruthlessly oppressing its own Kurdish population for decades and which has long been supportive of Israel (and, therefore, Israel's brutal oppression of Palestinians), ought to be taken with a grain of salt.

Predictably the Parliamentary opposition in this country has been quick to seize what it sees as an opportunity to mend its own beleaguered public image, with Labour Party leader Phil Goff condemning Israel's disproportionate use of force. Ironic coming from a man who was directly involved in supporting what is now almost a decade long occupation of Afghanistan, is a staunch supporter of Israel and who is part of a government which was itself a product of the near extermination of an indigenous population. Of course we also can't forget that impotent organisation the United Nations, which has called for those responsible to be held to account. Given that it was the United Nations which supported the creation of the Israeli State (and the subsequent displacement of near 800,000 Palestinians) in 1948, Ban-Ki Moon and his cronies would do well to take a look in the mirror.

Though perhaps asking smooth talking politicians to consider their own involvement in the bloodbaths which characterise modern day international relations would be too reasonable a request to be taken seriously.

As the nationalist thugs who prop up this bankrupt system

known as capitalism continue with their denouncements, proclamations and calls for accountability, the people living in Gaza continue to suffer, starve and die and the families of nine sincere and dedicated activists will continue to mourn their losses. After being shelled back to the stone age little over a year ago, rebuilding in Gaza has been sluggish if not non-existent as a result of the crippling blockade on its borders, enforced by Israel and Egypt.

No matter what they might say, the politicians don't care about this repugnant fact of life in the Middle East, and they have no intention of changing it. Just like everything worthwhile we have gained in this world, an end to the siege on Gaza will be a product of direct action, self-organisation and international working class solidarity. If we want to help our brothers and sisters in Gaza we need to reject the petty nationalists who seek to divide us in order to promote their own opportunistic agenda. We need to take matters into our own hands; nine activists have given their lives doing exactly that.



## General Strike in Tahiti

On 15th June workers in 'French' Polynesia ended a general strike, which was sustained for over a week. The strike was organised by a coalition of 11 unions using the name 'Collective for Peace'. With deteriorating social and economic conditions in the already poor territory affecting a wide range of workers, the strike gained support and achieved some

degree of success but fell short of its potential.

The strike was built around bread-and-butter calls for an end to job losses, better wages, secure pensions, unemployment insurance and health cost repayments for locals suffering from the effects of past nuclear weapons tests.

When negotiations broke down, the strike was declared and workers moved swiftly to picket the main domestic and international transport links. This included the disruption of international air flights and the harbour operations in Papeete especially key ferry links between Tahiti and Moorea. Workers at Mamao Hospital also joined, with essential

## General Strike in Tahiti (cont)

emergency services being maintained throughout. The public sector teachers' union STIP added its support to the strike despite impending examinations. STIP argued that in current circumstances it would be pointless for students to have exams and then no jobs to go to when they graduate.

The strike was finally called off during its second week, after President Gaston Tong Sang agreed to ask the United Nations' International Labour Organisation to investigate the possibility of establishing an unemployment fund. While this could be considered a partial victory for what was a defensive strike to maintain and extend basic living conditions, there were clearly flaws in the strike. On a positive note, by workers in strategic sectors taking the initiative, they showed where real power lies, since nothing can operate for long without transportation and socially

significant facilities such as hospitals and schools. On the other hand, major trade unions in the private sector failed to support the strike and groups such as the Union for Youth tried to discourage student involvement. Without universal recognition that an injury to one is an injury to all, no strike can succeed for long let alone provide a springboard for greater action.

Likewise, though it is possible to make small gains here and there, putting faith in union leaders, governments and the UN to solve the deeper problems of the economy in Tahiti or anywhere is misguided. Professional union leaders often use their positions as a means of personal advancement and take direct control out of the hands of those they claim to represent. Governments whether elected or not are comprised of a minority of parasites that rely on the labour of the vast majority for their

positions. As for the UN, it has always worked in the interests of the elite within the rich countries, with nothing being done unless it suits them and often with terrible results as in Iraq. The requirements of the poor on a remote neo-colony don't feature highly on their list of places to bother with. The only people with a genuine interest and ability to deal with the fundamental cause of economic decay are those suffering its effects at the bottom internationally, not those who perpetuate the system that creates that decay.

The workers of Tahiti have shown what is possible when the working class organise to defend the limited benefits we possess. That's a start. The task ahead in 'French' Polynesia, in Aotearoa and globally is to extend such struggles with the aim of overturning the whole system of capitalism.

## Working Class Millionaires?

Auckland's 'Mad Butcher' Peter Leitch has claimed his recent knighthood was striking a blow for the working class. In media interviews after he was awarded the title he repeatedly made the claim that he was a working class bloke who loves his sports and likes swearing a lot. He told the Dominion Post "I'm not bloody PC mate, not a bit" as if this proves his working class credentials.

About the only time we hear the phrase working class being used in a positive way in the mainstream media is when a millionaire or politician is trying to prove they are just ordinary people like you and me.

The reality is Peter Leitch has made his money from other peoples work. He built his business empire by employing hundreds of other people to make profits for him, then sold the business and is now living off the proceeds. He is now described as a philanthropist, which means he doesn't actually need a job, and spends his days

watching sports and giving away some of his money to charity.

their labour, and also includes those who do unpaid labour or are unemployed.



A small minority of people live off the profits generated by the working class just because they happen to own businesses, factories and other property. Despite being born to a poor family in Newtown, Wellington, Peter Leitch has far more in common with his corporate millionaire friends in Auckland than he does with the people working behind the counter in one of his butcher shops.

Auckland mayor John Banks and National Party Minister of Social Development Paula Bennett are also examples of ruling class figures who often use their working class backgrounds to appeal to ordinary people. Like Peter Leitch, they also like to portray themselves as outsiders, not afraid to rock the boat, and "not PC" as if they are rebels or anti establishment. All three are part of the ruling class and are the enemies of working class people.

The Mad Butcher company website features photos of Peter Leitch posing with various sports stars and even wearing one of those old "working class" cloth caps. Anarchists do not define class based on your dress sense, accent, or taste in sports teams. We see society as fundamentally divided across economic lines. The working class are the vast majority of people who survive by selling