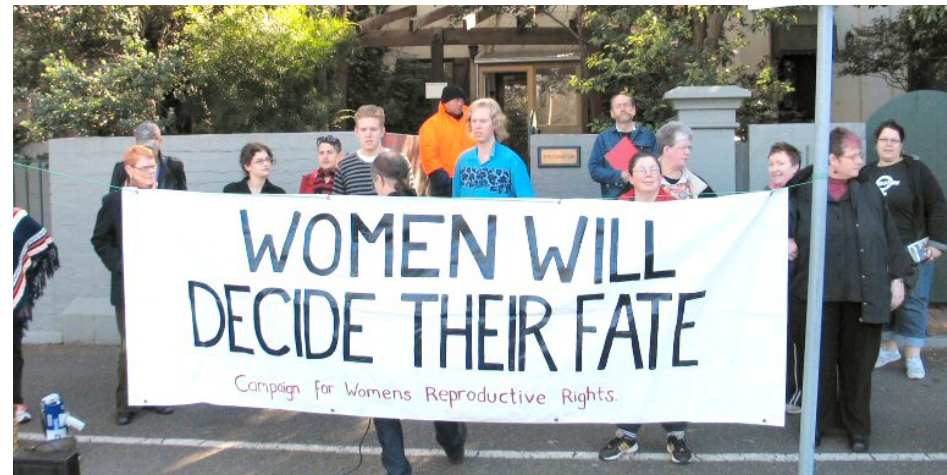


ABORTION ON DEMAND? NOT IN NEW ZEALAND

THERE'S A COMMON MYTH that New Zealand women have the right to abortion. However, although the law is usually interpreted extremely liberally, the Crimes Act and the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act severely limit the circumstances under which women can have abortions. This misapprehension helps to prevent real abortion on demand from being made accessible to all women in the country. As well as the law creating legal loopholes that women have to jump through, it puts significant barriers for access for some women.

Of the 21 District Health Boards in the country, 7 do not offer abortions, meaning woman in the Mid Central, Whanganui, Lakes and Bay of Plenty areas in the North Island, and the South Canterbury, West Coast and Southland areas in the South Island who want an abortion have to travel for the procedure. Some have to travel very long distances - for instance, if you live in Bluff, you'll be forced to drive 8 & 1/2 hours to Christchurch, despite Dunedin hospital being a comparatively close 3 & 1/4 hours drive. As the process often takes multiple appointments, women seeking abortions may even have to make these long trips more than once, which



means taking yet more time off work, education, or any other commitments they may have. First trimester abortion is a relatively simple procedure, and there is no medical reason why it can't be offered in every hospital in the country.

For women who aren't eligible for publicly funded health services, the situation becomes even harder. This includes women in New Zealand on shorter work, student or visitors visas, undocumented immigrants, failed refugees and asylum seekers awaiting deportation and more. These women face a cost of around \$1000 (sometimes upwards of \$2500), and many clinics and hospitals

do not provide abortions for non-eligible woman at all, again potentially meaning extra cost and difficulty associated with long-distance travel.

A woman's ability to decide what happens to her body is a crucial aspect of the fight for women's freedom. Abortion on demand must be legal, but it must also be easily accessible to all those who choose to use it. New Zealand's abortion laws fall far, far short of that at present.

The Wellington branch of AWSM is hosting a discussion on abortion rights activism on October 6th. See column on page 2 for details.

What is AWSM?

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society: anarchist-communism. We are a small national organisation with members in Wellington and Christchurch and in a few smaller centres.

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 a variety of struggles, including protests against National's proposed industrial legislation and more. We encourage working class people to organise themselves against capital and the state. We do not seek to paternalistically organise people from the top down.

To become 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, e-mail or write to us via the contact details listed in the next column.

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

Contact us:

We welcome stories about workplace and community resistance. Write to us at: **P.O. Box 6387, Wellington 6141**
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Website: www.awsm.org.nz

SOLIDARITY

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Newssheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement



WORKERS RALLY NATIONWIDE



Auckland rally against the proposed new employment laws. PHOTO: JOHN DARROCH

WELLINGTON

UP TO 2000 PEOPLE gathered in Civic Square in Wellington on Saturday 21st August, in one of 4 nationwide rallies organised by the Council of Trade Unions (CTU) in opposition to the National Government's proposed changes to employment laws. On a surprisingly warm winters day, members of dozens of unions, political parties and groups and others came together to publicly display their stance against the disgusting proposals which will, if passed, serve to further lower wages and conditions, lessen job security and make it harder to collectively fight back against bosses.

Unfortunately, the decades the CTU

has spent discouraging mass action have taken their toll, as it seemed they no longer actually knew how to organise a rally. The sound system used was so poor that perhaps as many as half the crowd could not hear any of the speeches from the stage. The rally was dominated by unionised workers, and it seemed that few non-unionised workers were in attendance. This reflected the advertising for the rally, which was done primarily within unions. Few attempts were made to attract non-unionised workers, even though all workers will be affected by the proposed laws. This was also reflected in the venue chosen which is effectively closed off on all four sides by buildings and has little foot traffic

passing through it, so hardly anyone who wasn't coming to the rally would have even known it was there. 2000 people shouldn't be laughed at, but with the resources the CTU has available, it should have been able to muster many, many more.

Still, for those who turned up, it was a nice day in the sun. There were plenty of children in attendance, who seemed to be enjoying themselves with balloons and face painting, while plenty of people were fed by the non-stop sausage sizzle. On the stage, there were speeches and entertainment from two workers who had been fired under the 90 day fire-at-will law, union officials, a stand-up comedian, a choir and a dance troupe. Everyone there also walked away with a handful of leaflets, fliers and postcards from a variety of groups and causes.

Following the rally, about 40 people marched on the street up to BurgerFuel and held a noisy demonstration. A Burgerfuel store in Auckland recently fired a worker after 89 days using the 90 day fire-at-will law, simply for asking for the breaks she was legally entitled to. The demonstration sent a clear message to BurgerFuel and any other employer that wishes to use the 90 day bill that they cannot fire workers without any repercussions.

AUCKLAND

BILLED BY THE CTU as a celebration of 'Fairness at Work', the Auckland rally on Saturday August 21st attracted over 1000 workers, though most weren't there to celebrate. There was the inevitable brown nosing of the Labour Party as Helen Kelly gave a shout out to those MPs scattered throughout the crowd, but a speech from the National Distribution Union (NDU) rep Syd Keepa and the music of Tigi Ness countered the CTU message and made it clear that worker's power, not parliamentary power, was needed to win this fight.



Wellington rally in Civic Square

Keepa made the connection between beneficiary bashing and attacks on workers rights, noting that John Key, a representative of the rich, was leading an attack on the poor. It was clear Keepa felt a show of worker's strength was the only means to counter this attack, stating that in his opinion we should be having a general strike. His suggestion was meet by a hearty

cheer from many in the crowd who shared his frustration and anger.

The rally ended with songs by Tigi Ness calling for workers to 'get up, and stand up for their rights' in defence of their whanau and their communities. A nationwide action has been called for Wednesday 20th October, as the struggle continues.

Florence Reese classic about organising in the Kentucky coalfields in the depression. This added a nice touch of explicit class consciousness to the proceedings in contrast to the CTU's fairness rhetoric. The rally was then addressed by CTU secretary Peter Conway before being turned over to the local speakers. These included a nurse, teacher, fast food worker, and wharfie who had travelled all the way from Bluff. Most spoke about the very damaging effects the proposed amendments to the ERA and Holidays Act will have on workers' day-to-day lives. The teacher spoke about the very high rate of trainee teachers leaving the job before they are even qualified because of the lousy conditions they are forced to work under. Attacks to union access and the 90-day law will undermine these even more. The rally ended with Rovics singing 'The Internationale', anthem of international working-class solidarity. Apart from the attempt to stamp the Labour brand on the rally, the day was a reasonably encouraging first step in the campaign to stop the bills from going through.

CHRISTCHURCH

OVER A THOUSAND PEOPLE assembled in the Square on July 21. A few marched to the rally as an anti-capitalist bloc. As with the other rallies, the CTU rally went on for a couple of hours, and featured speeches, music and entertainment. Afterwards, a small group of people marched to the Manufacturers Employers' Association building, but decided to call off their proposed tour of other targets (such as the Labour Party offices and Canterbury Chamber of Commerce) due to lack of numbers.

DUNEDIN

THE DUNEDIN RALLY in the series of nationally co-ordinated rallies organised by the CTU took place on the Sunday due to there being a capping parade the day before. Approximately 500 people assembled at the dental school to march to the Octagon; twice the number of the previous day of action. Unions represented included the PPTA, EPMU, NZNO, RMTU, DWU, Unite, PSA, SLGOU, SFWU, TEU, and NZEI. The marchers were led in chants by members of the International Socialist Organisation, who, unlike the local CTU, own a large number of megaphones. Chants included, "WHEN WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE UNDER ATTACK, STAND UP – FIGHT BACK" and "UNION! POWER! WORKERS! POWER!"

When the crowd reached the Octagon they were greeted by Glenda Alexander, the chairwoman of Unions Otago, the local CTU affiliates body. Glenda is hoping to stand as Labour candidate for Dunedin North in next year's elections and it looks like her campaign is already under way as the podium was surrounded by Labour Party placards. Radical folksinger, and member of the Industrial Workers of the World, David Rovics, was in attendance to entertain the crowd. The first song he did was "Which Side Are You On?", the

NZ SOLDIER DIES FOR TYRANNY

A MONTH AFTER JOHN KEY visits Afghanistan to inform the worn and homesick NZSAS that their role in the war on Afghanistan is to remain one of complicity in war crimes (such as assisting in operations resulting in the torture of prisoners), a New Zealand soldier is killed in an explosive attack.

This couldn't have come at a worse time for John Key, who in 2009 vaguely told NATO that NZ troops would remain in Afghanistan for "three to five years" despite polls showing that public opinion is strongly opposed to the invasion and military personnel are highly doubtful of any sort of victory, amidst growing concern in NZ for their safety. On top of that, over 90,000 classified documents of US military communications were recently published by wikileaks, titled 'The Afghan War Diaries' painting a nauseating picture of the past decade. Depleted uranium, white phosphorous, drones controlled from an underground base in Arizona used for hunting and killing without trial, assassination of innocent civilians and the torture of prisoners are all evidence of the devastating effects of the invasion.

That the war is unjust can hardly be disputed, however some important questions remain for New Zealanders. Firstly, why is it happening, and why are we there?

Not just Afghanistan but the entire middle east region from Syria to Pakistan is of central importance to the US imperialist strategy, and to a lesser extent, British and western capitalist control of humanities most vital resource: oil. With this they need influence over the financial institutions, such as the standard oil export currency which changed from the dollar to the euro shifting profits away from US corporations, who have for long enriched themselves on the petroleum that once transformed into CO2 is responsible for rapidly escalating and catastrophic climate change.

So what is New Zealand's role in US imperialist strategy? Most probably, our commitment to the Orwellian operation 'Enduring Freedom' has been a condition in obtaining a free trade agreement (FTA) with the US. One might ask how 'free' trade can be if war is the condition. It is also an opportunity for the NZ



government to stimulate its military expenditures, create fear in the public mind and pass laws under the guise of anti-terrorism, drastically altering the structure of power relations in our society, stripping civil liberties and creating a police state. The attempted use of the Terrorism Suppression Act against Māori, anarchists and peace activists ending in the October 2007 police raids across the country which followed a two year covert surveillance operation is a good example of this, and of government repression against democracy. So is the introduction of the Search and Surveillance Bill which is presently in the process of becoming law and if passed will consequently lead New Zealand in the direction of totalitarianism.

Summarily, that war is a profit tool for capitalists is a truism, with 39 companies making up the New Zealand Defence Industry Association (NZDIA). The central purpose of the war is ideological and resource based, to obtain control of the vast oil revenues and maintain a domineering state-capitalist power structure adhering to neo-liberalism; in which the working class of the world are subject to more and more exploitation by capital and the state, with the working class in the 'developing' nations taking the worst hit.

As the US is currently expanding their Middle East war efforts in preparing to bomb Iran, the question of what New Zealanders can do to see the NZSAS

withdrawn from Afghanistan remains a moral dilemma. In referring to the prior questions of why it started, we may find some guidance. Active rejection of the main forces, capitalism and government, and focusing on the concentrations of power and capital with a stake in war, such as the NZDIA and those in government seeking a FTA with the US (which would be harmful for workers regardless), are common steps towards peace. And when NZ troops express concern for relinquishing their role in the war, and a desire to be withdrawn, we (the funders through taxation) could support this against the will of government leaders, who are the real murderers along with the NZDIA in this equation.

And lastly; even if a campaign was capable of withdrawing the troops from Afghanistan, it's possible they could simply be sent over the border to fight in Iran, and even more likely now whilst under the National government's administration. John Key would probably jump at the opportunity.

As popular opinion continues to sway against the war, globally and within the military located there, we are finding ourselves with more and more leeway and opportunities to help bring about peace in the region. And as long as we are paying for the bullets with our taxes, it's our responsibility to try.

Upcoming public events

DUNEDIN

The Dunedin Anarchist-Communist Strategy Discussion Group meets every second Monday, 7:30pm @ Black Star Books, at the back of the CORSO building, 111 Moray Place. The next meeting is on 13 Sept.

WELLINGTON

- EVERY FRIDAY, 1-2pm, Cnr Willis and Lambton Quay, support the JB Hi-Fi workers on strike.
- TUES SEPT 14, 7pm, People's Centre, Lukes Lane, meeting of the Wellington Workers' Solidarity Network.
- WED OCT 6, 7pm. Thistle Hall (downstairs), 293 Cuba St. Discussion on abortion rights activism. Hosted by Wellington branch of AWSM. All welcome.

CHRISTCHURCH

SAT SEPT 25, 9.30am-4.30pm, WEA, 59 Gloucester St. Hui to form a collective action network. Organised by Beyond Resistance (<http://beyondresistance.wordpress.com>).