

Vanguard

For an Independent Australia and Socialism

Volume 47 Number 11

December 2010

Print Post Approved PP332582 0006

Recommended Price \$2 inc GST

Vanguard expresses the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist - Leninist)

Mass struggle wins “a victory for working Australians”

by Nick G

On Wednesday November 24, a jubilant Ark Tribe emerged from the Adelaide Magistrates Court pumping the air with both fists and shouting “We got ‘em!” Then he added, “This is a victory for working Australians!”

Charges brought against Ark Tribe by the reactionary ABCC had just been dismissed.

Rudd and Gillard had given protected status to the ABCC – a fascist-like entity set up under Howard. They call it a watchdog, but the circumstances of its birth reveal it to be a mongrel outfit that needs to be put down as quickly as possible.

Ark’s victory is a result of a mass movement for the scrapping of the ABCC.

Tribe’s lawyers had successfully argued that the charges had not been laid by a duly authorized person, but the scale and significance of the victory can’t be dismissed by claiming he got off on a technicality.

Ark got off because tens of thousands of workers had left their jobs to attend rallies every time he had appeared in court – seven times over eighteen months. The word about the ABCC and Ark’s resolute stand in the face of threats and intimidation was spread far and wide. Public meetings, petitions, articles in union and community magazines, support from civil libertarians and mass organisations galvanised wider support. Unions warned of national strike action if Ark was found guilty.

He got off because the giant multinational building and property corporations, and their minions in the ALP, sensed the scale of struggle that was ready to explode if Tribe was sent to gaol.

A technicality can be a wonderful thing for a ruling class that needs an excuse to back down.



And this was no ordinary technicality. As Ark’s lawyers succeeded in arguing, the ABCC had delegated the powers, but not the functions of the ABC Commissioner to a Deputy Commissioner and that it was the latter person, and not the Commissioner, who had determined that Ark was “capable of giving evidence relevant to an investigation”.

The ABCC notice to Ark that he was required to attend an investigation also erred in not identifying the person before whom he was to appear.

In other words, whilst purporting to investigate an illegal act by Tribe, the ABCC itself had acted unlawfully.

When we speak of creeping fascism, we refer precisely to the use of coercive powers, (unregulated and unsupervised), that shows no respect for the laws of the land, even as bourgeois and anti-worker as they may be in their essence.

Powers of the type exercised by the ABCC which are allowed to thrive under their own direction and at the exercising body’s own interpretation are an abuse of the so-called “safeguards” of capitalist democracy.

this evil situation,” he said.

His comments had the full support of the ACTU Secretary Ged Kearney, who described the decision as a “nail in the coffin of the ABCC” and of SA Unions Secretary Janet Giles who said that “Prime Minister Gillard must now adopt Labor’s policy pledge to scrap the ABCC”.

And it’s not only these laws and this organisation that have to go.

The whole apparatus of the capitalist state (police, courts, prisons), together with the restrictions of the bourgeois parliamentary system, stand opposed to the workers and compel their daily sacrifice of the surplus value created by their labour power.

The dominant social ideas, shaped and maintained by media and “entertainment” – prevent people from thinking and analyzing and challenging.

So when a victory like Ark’s comes along, we celebrate its significance and add it to the exceptional acts of defiance that characterise the resistance of the working class in the face of imperialism and capitalism.

Scrap the ABCC!
Guarantee workplace rights!

As thousands of workers burst into chants of “The workers united will never be defeated!” South Australian Secretary of the CFMEU Martin O’Malley warned that the laws that Ark had stood up to were still in place and waiting to be used against any construction worker around the country.

“The CFMEU is determined to overturn the laws which have spurred

In This Issue

US military in Australia	2
Editorial: The spirit of Eureka lives on in our struggles	3
High Court decision on refugees	4
Women won’t stop fighting for equal pay	5
Marxism Today: Housing in Australia	6
Action on the banks is required	8
Interview with National Democratic Front of the Philippines	10
Victory for Woolies workers	12

Labor takes a belting in the Victorian election

by Alice M.

In the immediate aftermath of the Victoria's elections on 27 November a hung parliament appears to be a strong possibility. Although vote counting has not been finished and the final outcome was still not clear at the time *Vanguard* went to press, the single and most telling result is a resounding backlash against Brumby's state ALP government.

There were predictions of a shift away from the state ALP government, but the magnitude of the swing from the ALP directly to the Liberal/National Coalition was not expected. The swing from ALP to the Coalition parties is more than 6%, with about 12 seats going to the Coalition.

The strong vote against the ALP

government spread across most of the metropolitan Melbourne, and was enough for Labor to lose seats in some of the outer suburbs of Melbourne. This is where working class families are straining under a heavy burden of debt, mortgages, increasing living costs, health, education, charges for privatised water and power bills, and neglected community services and infrastructure for public transport, schools and hospitals. Brumby's own seat of Broadmeadows, one of the safest Labor seats in Victoria, was hit by a 12.7% swing against Labor.

The Greens did not gain a lower house parliamentary seat, but their overall vote did go up. Many residents were angry with Brumby's government protecting the profiteering developers, whilst vigorously removing the rights

of local communities to defend their amenities and environment.

In all of this one thing is certain. The neo-liberal economic policies of global imperialism embraced by both Labor and Liberal parliamentary parties will continue to be rolled out, irrespective of who is finally in government. Equally, the working class and the people are compelled to fight to protect and extend improvements in working and living conditions and for democratic rights.

In the course of these immediate

struggles, lessons will be learnt that real power does not reside in the corridors of parliament but in the boardrooms of multinational corporations and big business.

Workers' real strength lies with the mass organisation and action on the ground. Promoting a vision of a future anti-imperialist, independent and socialist Australia, as an alternative political power that is truly democratic, will give confidence to the long struggles ahead.

No foreign military in Australia



by Bill F

Prime Minister Gillard and Foreign Minister Rudd have even outdone John Howard's sucking up to US imperialism. Quicker than you can say "Deputy Sheriff" they have chucked out any illusions of Australian sovereignty by offering US military forces semi-permanent use of Australian bases, airfields and ports.

The latest flurry of sucking up started at the AUSMIN talks in Melbourne, where Defence Minister Smith and Foreign Minister Rudd met with US Defence Secretary Gates and Secretary of State Clinton. This annual meeting sets the agenda to ensure that Australian foreign policy is tied to the latest strategic thinking of US imperialism. It preceded meetings between Prime Minister Gillard and US President Obama at the APEC and G20 meetings. In turn, these later discussions were mainly to confirm that Gillard had the 'right line' prior to attending the NATO summit in Lisbon for discussions on Afghanistan.

As well as rubber-stamping US strategy in Afghanistan, our puppet government has signed up for more joint military exercises, more US naval visits and much greater access to Australian bases in Townsville, Darwin and Western Australia. The Australian Jindalee radar network will be integrated into the US anti-ballistic missile defence system as part of a US spy satellite network that controls the Aegis missiles on US destroyers.

Australians ought to be alarmed at the scope of these new agreements.

US Defence Secretary Gates didn't push his luck by asking outright for new bases. He said he didn't want to create "political difficulties", meaning angry Australians chanting "Yankee Go Home", as happens in every other country where US forces are based.

It is all aimed at shoring up US imperialism from the competition of China and carries the threat of a renewed arms race that puts Australia in no-man's-land. US imperialism wants to protect and strengthen its dominance in Asia-Pacific by increasing Australia's role as its deputy sheriff in the region.

Those who think that Australia can steer a middle course here need to think again. For example, academic Hugh White has written, "So we should be asking the US to strike a delicate balance, playing a strong role in Asia while allowing China scope to satisfy its legitimate aspirations for more influence. We have to be careful not to appease aggression, but we must also be sure we do not incite aggression by refusing to accommodate legitimate ambition. This will not be easy, but a peaceful future for Asia, and for Australia, depends perhaps more than anything else on the US getting this balance right."

No chance of that, mate. The only answer to secure a peaceful future for Australia is to break free from US imperialism and assert our own independent foreign policy based on principles of non-aggression, non-interference and fair trade.

Vanguard

Vanguard is a national monthly newspaper which expresses the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist - Leninist), the CPA (M-L). Readers are encouraged to comment on, criticise or contribute material to *Vanguard*. Articles, digital graphics, cartoons, clippings, comments or a few lines are all very welcome. All material should be sent to:

Vanguard Editorial Staff
PO Box 196, Fitzroy, Vic. 3065

Vanguard strives to provide a Marxist analysis of Australian society, economy and politics. An important aspect of developing this analysis is an intimate knowledge of and close involvement in all aspects of Australian struggle.

The cost of producing a national newspaper is considerable. Readers are encouraged to contribute whatever they can by sending donations to the above address.

The CPA(M-L) may be contacted through *Vanguard* at PO Box 196, Fitzroy, Vic, 3065.

Email: cpaml@vanguard.net.au

Subscription rates

For *Vanguard*, plus all new leaflets and special broadsheets

* Individuals and organisations: \$15 (GST inc)

* Students, pensioners, unemployed: \$10 (GST inc)



I enclose:

\$..... for *Vanguard*

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

New subscription Renewal

Send to PO Box 196, Fitzroy, Vic. 3065

Schooling or education – preparing students for a life beyond school

-Contributed-

The Institute of Public Affairs gets a good airing in the Murdoch Press; they have interests in common, giving voice to international capital and its advocates wherever they operate.

The Institute for Public Affairs cites itself as being Australia's leading free market think tank, promoting "public policy based on individual liberty, limited government and free markets". Source Watch (online) however, describes it as a right-wing think tank funded by the mining, tobacco, oil etc industries, and of course, Murdoch's News Limited.

The Institute of Public Affairs has run a prolonged campaign against public school teachers and the promotion of authority based learning under the guise of teaching phonics and grammar. They fear the influence teachers may have over the thinking of students and their demonising of teachers is a precursor to their push to have greater controls placed on teachers' work.

A recent article (in the Murdoch Press) from an Institute of Public Affairs writer decries the use of the Al Gore film on climate change in the Secondary School English curriculum, where one focus of study is critical analysis of the written word and visual image. The Gore film invites a true/false, appearance/reality dichotomy, but it is not just the showing of the Gore film that troubles the Institute of Public Affairs; it is the use of a resource that will generate classroom discussion of climate change.

From the perspective of the Institute, discussion of social issues and the critical thinking it generates has no place in the classroom.

For primary and secondary schooling the focus and reason for being should be the teaching and learning of skills to enable students to slip easily from school into an alienating workplace. Even at the tertiary level, there is a push for the focus of learning to be on acquiring the advanced skills for social

maintenance and economic stability for the benefit of capital.

The Institute's fear of teachers and its resultant teacher-bashing, results from an inflated concept of the power of teachers to construct the thinking of their students.

Schools aren't the only source of knowledge students have. Ask any class of students in working class schools, from primary school up, how many of them know someone who is in prison, how many have an unemployed family member, and how many parents run out of money for groceries before the end of the week and you'll see where they are coming from.

Even for young children, their thinking about the world around them and their place in it is influenced by the material conditions of their daily lives. They know about social injustice is. They live it.

One of the objectives of education is that everyone comes out of schools with the skills to participate in political, economic and social life, but there is more to social involvement than becoming a muted worker for capital.

Liberal and progressive ideals for education are deeply entrenched in the Australian system; the struggle in which the Institute of Public Affairs fronts up for international capital is to contain teaching and learning to workplace skills and the absorption of approved information.

The teaching of skills is not an end in itself if education, as opposed to schooling, is what teaching and learning is about, but a necessary prerequisite for the construction of knowledge based on individual and collective experience and an examination of external reality.

One effect of knowledge acquisition whether acquired in school or in the workplace, or the streets, is the ability to assess the justice of existing conditions and to envision ways of making things better.

From the perspective of the Institute of Public Affairs, that is dangerous thinking.

Editorial

The spirit of Eureka lives on in our struggles!

December 3 marks the 156th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade. It was white Australia's first organised mass struggle of ordinary people against the oppressive British colonial authority, and for justice and democratic rights.

Symbolising their rejection of British colonial authority, the rebellious miners created a flag based on the Southern Cross constellation. At the time, Melbourne's *Age* correctly described it as "the flag of Australian independence". Kneeling beneath the flag on November 30, ten thousand miners swore the Eureka Oath: "We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties". More than 20 nationalities were involved in the uprising, including Afro-Americans. Raffaello Carboni, a revolutionary Italian leader, declared the flag "As the refuge of all oppressed from all corners on earth." Many of the rebel miners were political and working class activists fleeing persecution in their own countries in Europe.

Fourteen diggers were killed and another eight died later from wounds when the colonial troops attacked a depleted Stockade early on the morning of December 3.

Although defeated in the short term, this was a part of important milestones in the transition from colonial autocracy to local self-government and progressive (for the time) bourgeois democracy that followed in its wake. Wide support for the just cause of the miners ensured that no jury would convict any of the thirteen "ringleaders" tried for the hanging offence of treason.

However, for the working class and the people, Eureka's fight for a genuine people's democracy, economic justice and sovereignty is not finished and continues today. In common with all struggles against oppression since the emergence of class society, the Eureka Stockade showed that it is right to rebel against reactionaries. It showed that organised mass defiance of injustice is a good thing. It is the spirit of rebellion and defiance in support of a just cause that constitutes the great historical legacy of the spirit of Eureka and its flag.

This spirit resurfaced when the Eureka flag flew above the armed shearers' strike camp at Barcaldine in 1891 and when 86-year old Eureka survivor Monty Miller toured Australia in 1917 campaigning against conscription. Port Kembla wharfies swore the Eureka oath in 1939 when defying Menzies' order that Australian pig-iron be supplied to the Japanese militarists for use against the people of China. The spirit of Eureka and its blue and white flag continues in many struggles of working people. It flies in rural communities fighting against multinational mining companies operations destroying their livelihoods, health and the local environment.

The Eureka flag was prominent in Communist publications during Menzies' attempts to ban the Communist Party in 1950. Many current veterans of the democratic struggles of the World War and Cold War eras joined as revolutionary youth in the Eureka Youth League, formed by the CPA in 1941.

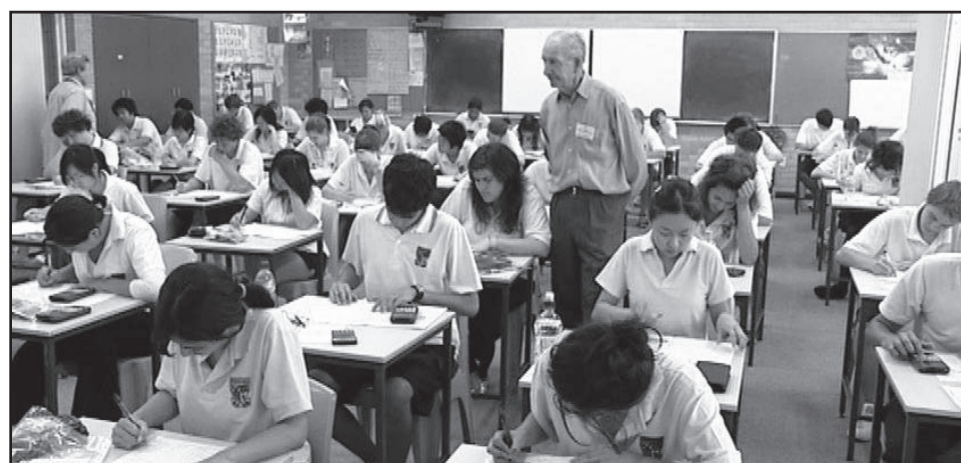
The spirit of Eureka lives on and gives a unique identity to the class struggle in Australia and to the anti-imperialist movement led by the working class.

In every significant struggle by organised workers or by community and issue-oriented organisations, the Eureka flag surfaces. Celebrations of the significance of Eureka to the development of democratic rights, and their defence, take place not only in Ballarat, home of the Eureka Stockade, but across the nation. Local governments in some cities fly the flag during Eureka Week in broad acceptance of Eureka's pivotal place in Australian history. The reciting of the Oath becomes a part of celebrations.

The enduring Eureka flag flies over many workers' struggles and the rebels' oath is frequently recited during strikes and rallies. Eureka flags flew proudly during the 1998 MUA struggle and in the nation-wide struggles against WorkChoices, with the rebels' oath recited by tens of thousands at mass rallies with clenched fists. It flies in all rallies against the ABCC and on many construction sites.

As the revolutionary movement with its guiding star of socialist red prepares for its ultimate tasks, the great struggles of the present for the defence of working class rights and for independence from imperialism are enjoined under the banner of the rebel flag of Eureka.

Long live the spirit of Eureka!



High Court wags a finger at government refugee policy

by Bill F

A unanimous decision of the High Court has ruled that refugees arriving by boat have the right to appeal to the Australian courts against rejection of their asylum claims. It gives them the same rights of appeal as those arriving by plane.

The detail of the court challenge was well explained in an article by Julian Burnside SC in the Melbourne Age.

“The case, brought by the Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre, arose this way. In recent times, a number of asylum seekers have arrived by boat at Christmas Island, which is part of Australia but a long way from the mainland. Christmas Island was excised from the migration zone under the Pacific Solution legislation in 2001. When asylum seekers arrive in a part of Australia that has been excised from the migration zone, they are classified as ‘offshore entry’ people.

“A person who arrives on the mainland is entitled to apply for a protection visa, but offshore entry people are not. The Immigration Minister has power to grant the right to apply for a protection visa, but he is not obliged to exercise that power. If the minister decides in a particular case not to allow an offshore entry person to



apply for a protection visa, the decision cannot be reviewed. Although the Rudd government scrapped the Pacific Solution, this part of the Howard government’s policy remains.

“What happens to offshore entry people is that a company of independent contractors assesses whether they are likely to be refugees. It then makes a recommendation that the minister should or should not give the person permission to apply for a protection visa. While all this proceeds, the offshore entry person is held in detention, potentially for months or years.

“The government’s position was that the recommendation of the independent contractors cannot be reviewed by a court, and that, in substance, there is no

obligation to act fairly in deciding what to recommend.

“The High Court held that the court is entitled to review the process, and asylum seekers are entitled to procedural fairness.”

A class act

While that seems fair enough, and about time too, there are other issues that go beyond the narrow legal and constitutional considerations.

In the first place, the High Court decision reflects disquiet in sections of the ruling class over the spread of public cynicism about the parliamentary process, and not just on the asylum seeker issue. This was kick-started by

the ruthless and arbitrary conduct of the reactionary Howard government, continued by Rudd and Gillard, and resulted in a fragile minority government.

The High Court acted, in part, to restore some credibility to bourgeois democracy and to its own position within the system. In simple terms, it reminded the government that it does not have absolute power to do whatever it likes, but must take account of the long-term interests of the ruling class as a whole. For the time being, those interests are best served by maintaining the illusion of freedom and democracy and equality before the law.

Just in case this message didn’t get through, another decision over-turned South Australian government laws on so-called ‘outlaw’ motor cycle gangs, asserting that members had the right to associate together. Again, there was widespread public concern at the targeting of a marginalised group and the fear that this precedent could be applied to other minorities or political organisations.

It should be noted that the discriminatory treatment of boat arrivals is not only racist, but also shows a savage class bias against poor people. Class outlook always determines thinking in the end.

Woodside residents are not racists

-Contributed-

If there was an equivalent of the Tidy Town Awards for boring normality, the little town of Woodside in the Adelaide Hills would be an easy winner. Sipping a latte *al fresco* in the main street, I can see nothing that seems out of place.

At a nearby table a man stops a stranger walking past and they chat about her dog. It’s that sort of place.

But last night the cockroaches were scurrying about in the dark. I don’t know who they were, but these brave-hearts had sneaked into the grounds of the local primary school and put anti-refugee leaflets around where the kids would find them in the morning.

Luckily the teachers found them first and binned the lot. At least two other local primary schools were targeted.

The reason? Woodside was identified on October 18 as the host town for a Detention Centre at nearby Inverbrackie and it is intended that detainees’ children will attend the local schools.

A public meeting was held not long after the announcement, attended by

some 400 people, where resentment over the lack of consultation with the community over the announcement was hijacked by a small redneck element that put through a motion against asylum seekers coming to Inverbrackie.

Positive responses not reported

The lack of consultation meant that issues that could have been addressed in a sensible way were raised in a hostile environment and used to inflame community anger.

One of those related to the local school where enrolments are growing and existing classrooms are full.

Those issues have since been clarified.

The principal of the primary school, with the support of parents on the school’s governing council has issued a statement to all parents saying that “We would welcome having detainee children at our school.” He thought the school could accommodate 15-20 students and added “My main concern at the moment is that, for whatever reason, we may miss out.”

He may have been alluding to the fact that other nearby public schools are under capacity and just as keen to take in students from the detention centre.

The Woodside community has been unfairly demonised as racist by the bourgeois media.

In fact, as the issues that were raised at the public meeting have been dealt with one by one, passions have subsided and most residents want it to be known that they will welcome the asylum seekers into the community.

“I live in the same street as that fellow who had the big sign saying ‘No to refugees’. There’s only a few who think like that, but they get all the publicity. It isn’t fair,” said one resident.

The sensationalist and reactionary media monopolies reported little of these sentiments, preferring to brand all residents as racists.

Uncover the cockroaches

The leaflets that had been intercepted this morning were authorised by Australia First Party, whose national president is the longtime Nazi and

National Action activist Jim Saleam.

Because Adelaide is not much more outward-looking than Woodside, Saleam is unknown here and he was able to get print and radio interviews without anyone knowing of his convictions for fraud and for organising a shotgun attack on Australia’s ANC representative Eddie Funde.

Saleam has refined his propaganda to appeal to anti-foreign sentiment that uses demands like “protecting our sovereignty” and “controlling foreign investment” as a cover for his anti-people actions.

His message has some appeal because he uses language such as “If you don’t fight, you lose” and “It is people’s action that is decisive”.

These are phrases that he has lifted from the genuine anti-imperialist and people’s movement. It is typical of the demagoguery of fascists the world over.

I finished my coffee and watched the woman with the dog move off.

In the warm sunshine of a spring day there were no cockroaches in sight.

ALP leaders in South Australia on the way out as people take action

by Ned K

The top leaders of the ALP government in South Australia, Premier Rann and Treasurer Foley are on the way out. As willing servants of big business in South Australia they have been over-exposed and are no longer much use to their masters.

Rann and Foley have led the attack on public servants' conditions of employment and job security.

In November 2010, they were the overseers of a bill through parliament that has stripped back public servants' long service leave and abolished annual leave loading. The new legislation also puts parliament's stamp of authority on 3,700 public servant job losses and the ability to enforce redundancies. They also championed state legislation (the Anti-Bikie laws) designed to prevent groups of people from freely associating with each other, taking South Australia back to the Tolpuddle Martyr days of the early 1800s.

These actions came at a cost for Rann, Foley and other ALP Ministers aligned with them. The great Chinese revolutionary, Mao Zedong once said something about servants of imperialism "lifting a rock and dropping it on their own feet". That's exactly what Rann and Foley have done.

Their attacks on public servants have seen wide and deeply felt anger, followed up by collective action from sections of the public sector workforce who have been 'in slumber' for years. The collective actions are on-going, with public sector unions and SA Unions representing public and private sector workers prepared for a protracted struggle against the government, right up until the next state election in 2014, if need be.

The level of anger and action in the community against these anti-worker moves has also been reflected within the ALP itself.

At the ALP November State Council, angry rank and file ALP members voted strongly to condemn the ALP leaders and called for a reversal of the decision and a return to 'true Labor values'. Union officials from rusted-on ALP affiliated unions called for Rann and Foley's heads, and for 'generational change' in the leadership.

Freedom of Association

The Rann Government's attacks on people's right to join together, all under

the guise of 'law and order' against Bikie gangs received a legal rebuff from the High Court, which reflects community sentiment against the laws.

The High Court ruled in November that the Rann Government's Anti-Bikie laws were unconstitutional because restrictions could be placed on people suspected of being members of a declared organisation without the courts being able to review the evidence.

The Rann Government's legal defeat is a tactical problem for its big business masters.

According to Barrister and Lawyers' Alliance member, Greg Barnes, with part of the Anti-Bikie laws now confirmed to be unconstitutional, the anti-terrorism laws may also be vulnerable for a legal

challenge.

"The problem with the anti-terror laws is that they rely on secret evidence and decisions made by Government with very little scrutiny" Greg Barnes is quoted as saying in *The Independent Weekly* 12 November 2010.

The defeat of the Rann Government in the High Court and the growing collective action by workers in South Australia to defend their basic working conditions is not happening in isolation from other events around the world.

Workers and students in Europe in several countries have been taking action to protect their rights and living standards, as governments try to make the people pay for the cost of the bail-outs to big business ever since the crash

in the world imperialist economy a couple of years ago.

During these struggles the people learn who they can trust, and who are their genuine leaders. This is a process.

New 'leaders', promoted by the left of parties like the ALP to replace the likes of Rann and Foley, may gain some traction for a while. However, the economic conditions under imperialism and its tendency towards crisis will mean these new 'leaders' will have less room to move. Inevitably they will be forced to make more anti-people moves on behalf of imperialism. As they do, the people will gain more experience in relying on themselves to defend their rights and basic conditions of working life.

Women won't stop fighting for equal pay

by Alice M

The latest act of betrayal in the long and hard struggle by women for equal pay and economic independence is not new. It reaffirms women's historical experience that the fight for equality and equal pay lies mainly through mass struggle on the ground.

In fact, the Gillard ALP government's disgraceful opposition to granting equal pay for work of equal value to workers in the essential social and community sectors who are predominantly women, will only strengthen women's determination to fight harder and broaden the support.

Women workers earn, on average 18% less in wages than men, have less job security and are mainly concentrated in lowly paid industries and in part-time work. The cheaper labour and higher exploitation of women ensures the capitalist class reaps bigger profits for itself. And the less public funds allocated to community sector workers' wages means the more people's taxes are funnelled into the coffers of big business.

The Australian Services Union, representing the underpaid social and community services workers, lodged an equal pay test case with Fair Work Australia. It is a very modest and polite claim for incremental wage increases over a period of five years, that will bring wage parity for community sector workers with wages of workers in other industries of similar value and areas of



responsibility. Hardly a challenge to the capitalist exploitation of women!

In 2009 Gillard, as Minister for Industrial Relations, pledged her support to the ASU for the test case. Many women pinned their hopes on winning the test case that would eventually pave the way for income equality for all women across all industries.

But true to form, Gillard, who rode into parliament and prime ministership on the backs of women deeply yearning for gender and wage equality, justice and respect, cynically reneged on her commitment to women and opposed the ASU test case.

Gillard threatened the ASU and Fair Work Australia with cuts to community services, if equal pay was granted. The Gillard ALP government is blackmailing and taking advantage of community workers' loyalty and dedication to their work for improvements in ordinary peoples' lives. It's a similar tactic Gillard used against the AEU and hard working teachers over the Schools League Table fight, trying to pit parents against teachers and their union.

Big business is demanding that the

depleted public funds (people's taxes) be directed to the big end of town. It fears that working women's demands for equal pay for work of equal value will spread across all industries. The Gillard government sings from the music score written by big business and sells out the women who delivered her the plum job of Prime Minister.

Workers in this country create enormous wealth. Taxing the gigantic super-profits of mining monopolies and big banks will provide more than enough to pay workers in the community services sector equal pay for work of equal value. These profits should be used to substantially increase more spending on neglected community services, public hospitals, public transport and more.

Ultimately, real economic and social equality for women will be realised through building a socialist society where class exploitation ceases and women take their place as equals at work and at home.

Women will not be held back from continuing the fight for equal pay for work of equal value in today's Australia.

Marxism Today

Some Notes on housing in Australia

by Alex M

According to an October 2010 report by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) which looks into the benefits and risks of home ownership for low-moderate income households, "Australia has long been a society of home owners."

This report and others like it on the AHURI website (www.ahuri.edu.au) provide a wealth of information about the political, social and economic factors that shape and have shaped this "society of homeowners".

Overview of housing policy

In the 1950s, in line with post-war reconstruction in general, home ownership was promoted.

A combination of housing and non-housing policies encouraged this ideal. These policies included: "exemption from capital gains tax, discounted/controlled interest rates for home mortgages, cash grants to first home buyers, provision of low interest home loans directly by governments and via intermediary organisations such as state banks, sales of public housing to sitting tenants, mortgage deductibility (for a short period only), development of "affordable" home ownership lots by state land developers, and planning policies which promoted detached housing, the house type desired by purchasers".

It was clear that governments at Federal and State levels saw it as their duty to help people achieve the 'Australian dream'.

With modifications, the broad policy settings of Australian governments continued along the lines mapped out in the 1950s.

Economic stagnation

With the stagnation that accompanied the ending of the long boom of capitalism in the late 1970s - early 1980s, government policies regarding housing were re-assessed.

The 1990s ushered in "a fundamental change in policy settings on home ownership with the elimination of some of the more explicit measures to promote home ownership. In particular, governments no longer saw it as their role to assist the 'marginal would-be home owner' in purchasing a home".

Emphasis in government housing

policies shifted from the promotion of home ownership for 'marginal' people to the provision of rental housing assistance for those with urgent housing needs.

Such a shift in emphasis was driven by neo-liberal ideology which promoted the market as the most efficient resource allocator, with governments having the reduced role of safety net providers "for some 'at risk' households".

The rise of the investor

Financial deregulation, which began under the aegis of Paul Keating

individual rental investors claiming a net loss for taxation purposes increas[ing] from 58% in 2000-01 to 70% in 2006-07".

The rise of the rental investor or landlord in the 1990s is directly connected with the influence of neo-liberal ideological brain-washing about market efficiency and de-regulation. What gets overlooked or downplayed in reports by many research bodies is the class aspect of their social analysis.

The class aspect of housing

Clear from what has been outlined



the Hawke Government's Treasurer, contributed significantly to the rise of the investor in the housing market. One of the consequences of financial deregulation was the easing of credit. In turn, the easing of credit has been one of the factors causing a steady increase in borrowing by rental investors.

The authors of the October 2010 AHURI report state that "in January 1990 investors accounted for 14% of the value of all housing loans but 20 years later accounted for 32%." (Reserve Bank of Australia 2010: Table D5, Bank Lending Classified by Sector, June).

Furthermore, in Melbourne where the report's authors conducted their case study, "lending to rental investors accounted for 50% of residential loans in June 2010, the first time that investor lending has exceeded loans for owner occupancy".

Another factor impelling rental investment has been and continues to be capital gain through the use of negative gearing. Negative gearing, the claiming of losses on rental property "against all income for tax purposes" has become more popular, with "the percentage of

above about declining government involvement in and concern with housing policy and the rise of rental investors/landlords, is the power of particular class interests.

Financial capital in the form of banks, home loan brokers and others have big stakes in the housing market and some rental investors do too, though the latter do not necessarily have the same clout as the financial capitalists.

As has been pointed out before in these pages, the provision of housing and related government policies necessarily reflect the values of the dominant class. That is, the provision of affordable housing to low and middle income families, or working class families, is not a priority for governments, landlords or finance capitalists.

For the latter two, their priorities are profit maximisation. For governments, beholden as they are here in Australia to capitalist class interests, the social reforms of the 1950s and the long boom years are things of the past.

The neo-liberal mantra says governments no longer are in the

process of social engineering because governments 'always' stuff things up. Markets are said to be the most efficient mechanisms for distributing commodities such as houses.

In his article, *The Housing Question*, Frederick Engels wrote about the attitude of capitalist states to the issue of working class access to affordable housing.

He said: "It is perfectly clear that the existing state is neither able nor willing to do anything to remedy the housing difficulty. The state is nothing but the organised collective power of the possessing classes, the landowners and the individual capitalists (and it is here only a question of these because in this matter the landowner who is also concerned acts primarily as a capitalist)... If therefore the individual capitalists deplore the housing shortage, but can hardly be persuaded even superficially to palliate its most terrifying consequences, then the collective capitalist, the state, will not do much more".

Housing in Australia will continue to be fraught with problems of affordability for working class families, and finance capitalists and landlords will continue to rake in the profits. This is the stuff of capitalist social relations.

Social housing

Long experience has shown that there are times when even the capitalist state is able to provide a measure of social housing. It does not do so willingly, but sees this as the lesser of two evils.

Good examples were major housing redevelopment in England responding to the emergence of an organised working class during the 1830 -1840 period.

Another was in Australia, with the growing strength of the working class after World War Two.

The common thread is that the ruling class will make concessions in the face of pressure, as a safety valve to dampen the militancy of the workers.

The demand for a large scale increase in the provision of social housing by the capitalist government is legitimate and should be put forward.

The housing question can only be ultimately resolved through putting an end to capitalism and removing the provision of housing from the hands of the capitalist class. In Australia's conditions that means an independent, socialist Australia.

Housing crisis hits the poor in Victoria

by **Bill F**

A lively rally outside the office of the Victorian Housing Minister, in the inner Melbourne suburb of Collingwood, was held in the run up to the Victorian state election.

It exposed the extent of the housing crisis that has blown out under the ALP state government, contributing to their shabby result in the election.

Those hardest hit by the housing shortage are pensioners, young people, indigenous people, migrants and sole parent families, as well as the many working poor struggling with high rents or crushing mortgages.

The rally was organised by the City Is Ours community group, and attracted support from many other community organisations, political groups and local residents.

In a leaflet given to passers-by, the organisers pointed out that the state

government has made millions of dollars from the collection of stamp duty, as housing prices and rents have skyrocketed. At the same time, the government failed to invest nearly enough in public housing, creating a waiting list of more than 41,000 and tens of thousands more homeless or in emergency accommodation.

In their service to the big developers, the state government has sold off outer suburban land cheaply and allowed developers and speculators to sit on it, exacerbating the shortage of housing and forcing up the prices even further.

To add insult to injury, the Victorian government, along with the governments of NSW, Western Australia and the ACT, have refused to exclude last year's one-off \$30-a-week pension increase from rent calculations.

This means that single age and disability pensioners in those states are paying an extra \$19 a fortnight for public housing from September, while



their benefit payments only increase by \$15 through periodic indexation.

Speakers at the rally put forward demands for an end to negative gearing, for a substantial reduction of stamp duty, and a massive increase in decent, properly maintained public housing. These measures would make housing more affordable for working people and those on fixed incomes.

In addition, there were strong

demands to regulate rents, to cap public housing rents at 20% of income and to support housing cooperatives.

Well applauded speakers included popular local Councillor Steve Jolly, standing in the state election for the Socialist Party, and Sharan Firebrace, the indigenous activist. Needless to say, there was no sign of the Housing Minister, or anyone else prepared to defend the ALP record on housing.

No way out for the working people under capitalism

by **Bill F**

Workers in Australia were the first in the world to win a standard 8 hour working day in 1856. This continued well into the latter part of last century, before the globalisation agenda of modern imperialism carved into the wages and hard-won working conditions of Australian workers.

In the wave of retrenchments, downsizing, restructuring, casualisation, out-sourcing and other buzz-words for increasing the rate of exploitation, workers sought to shore up their incomes and job security by working more and more overtime. Nevertheless, their basic living expenses and debt levels just kept climbing; rents and mortgages, privatised water, gas, electricity and telephone, postal charges, education fees, healthcare and other insurance; it all ran ahead of wages and salaries. In a couple of decades, a generation of working poor became entrenched in Australia, while the share of wealth going to company profits increased hugely.

Working overtime hasn't solved anything for workers. They are still falling behind in the struggle to make ends meet, let alone get ahead.

A report released by the Australia Institute puts a spotlight on the amount of unpaid overtime bullied out of workers lucky enough to have full time jobs, by exploiting bosses taking advantage of the weak position of the working class in the current situation.

This is a time when Labor governments care even more than usual about the profits of multinational corporations than the welfare of working people.

The executive director of the Australia Institute, Richard Dennis stated, "If you could convert all of the unpaid overtime into new jobs you could create more than 1 million new jobs... Australian workers are donating more than \$70 billion a year to their employers in terms of unpaid overtime and that's a very generous gift."

He continued, "We're saying to people we want them to tackle lifestyle illness like diet through fixing their diet, fixing their exercise and seeing their doctor before they get sick, but what our survey respondents are telling us is that they're too busy to cook home-cooked meals, they don't have time to exercise and, in fact, when they're sick they're more likely to soldier on and go to work than they are to go to the doctor and find out what's wrong."

This is the ugly situation for many workers considered 'lucky' to have a job!

As for those out of work or on measly welfare payments, it is much worse.

During Anti-poverty week in October, a Salvation Army report said more than 1 million people seek assistance from its 900 centres each year, including 80,000 new clients last year. It noted that that about 12% of Australian children aged up to 17 were living in poverty, while similar reports

by Anglicare and Mission Australia noted much the same.

In our lop-sided economy, profits keep flowing to the corporations, the banks and finance companies and big business, while the government tells

us that we're doing really well and that everything's under control and working well. But it's the workers who are kept under control and forced into working harder and harder. As for capitalism, it's not working for the working class.



Australian Communist

Australian Communist is the theoretical journal of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). It seeks to encourage investigation and study of the actual economic, political and social situation in Australia, and the role of the various class forces. Based on collective investigation and study, it aims to provide theoretical guidance to the struggles against imperialist domination and to promote the Party program for revolutionary change and the winning of socialism.

The October-December 2010 Issue can be accessed in full from www.vanguard.net.au and copies can be ordered from Vanguard, PO Box 196, Fitzroy, Australia 3065 at a cost of A\$10, including postage.

Action on the banks is required

by Jim H

When the Reserve Bank of Australia recently raised the interest rate and the private banks followed almost immediately with significantly higher hikes, a broad range of Australians expressed their condemnation at the show of obvious greed. The anger echoes the feeling of most Australians.

Federal Treasurer Wayne Swann was compelled to stand in front of the cameras and join in the condemnation. So did Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who had to add a few words from overseas. The opposition was also caught up and also had to sing a few notes against the banks.

But when the initial wind died down, there was little left. No real and positive action has been taken. We get a promise of an investigation. How much more investigation is required?

It is no secret that the banking monopolies have for a long time wasted no opportunity to rip off their customers. A decade or so ago, they were caught imposing a range of unjustified and what had been secret charges. Then it was collusion, and to an extent never seen before, over interest charges. They have consistently been raised above what the market rate is.

There is some talk about introducing special bonds that will allow the banks to cover losses through dipping into depositor's accounts with the government acting as cover of last resort, by covering losses with taxpayer's money.

The rationale is that this should lower the cost of providing loans, and this should translate into lower interest rates. Judging on the past record, the bonus would not be willingly passed on.

Massive profits

In the last financial year each of the five banks secured over \$6 billion in net profit. This year, the big four banks earned pre-tax profit of around \$1300 per annum for every man, woman and child in Australia (a total of \$28.8 billion). The new interest rate will bring an extra \$3 billion in the next year.

This is excessive by anyone's standard.

The banks failed to relieve some of the pressure on those who were getting into trouble through no fault of their own. More important still from the longer point of view, there was escalation of speculation towards ensuring that bank funds were consciously used to build



the Australian economy, particularly our manufacturing base.

People want the government to rein in the banks.

Once upon a time the Commonwealth Bank was government owned. While it remained a capitalist bank working in the interests of capitalism as it operated in Australia, it restrained the other banks, at least to some extent. They could not easily move too far out of step. The privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank removed this

protection. Recognising this, some have suggested that a new government operated bank should be established. This should be supported. However, the establishment of a new government operated bank is insufficient on its own.

Another demand that should also be supported, is the introduction of a super profits tax on the banks.

The deregulation of the financial industry carried out by Hawke and Keating and built on by subsequent

governments, has done the most to guarantee concentration of ownership of the finance sector, feeding the greed and misdirection of investment funds.

As a first step, we need a nationally planned and strictly controlled finance sector that services the needs of Australia's people and leads to nationalisation of the main banks.

All we get from our so-called leaders is that the solution lies with free market competition. The implication being that allowing foreign banks to operate in Australia in a much more open way is the answer. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The problem is not that most of the domestic market is taken up by the big four banks. The problem is who controls these banks. A decisive proportion of shares in these banks are in the hands of a small group of British, US and Australian large scale investors. They decide what happens and they pocket the lion's share of the proceeds. Whichever way you look at it, this is a monopoly cartel and any meaningful action needs to take on and put an end to the cartel.

Finally, Australia faces some huge future challenges in connection with sustainable development and building a more just and equal society, based on what we actually produce.

Prerequisites for this are economic independence and control over our resources. This includes financial resources. In the short term, strict controls should be placed on foreign and local banks. But the real answer lies with their nationalisation.

The Corporatisation of Government and the merging of public and private signifies the collapse of social conscience

-Contributed-

With the rise of the global economic crisis we have seen a greater and greater shift towards conservative politics that offers no hope, but only a move towards further societal destitution. Programs that previously provided services to citizens are now seen as commodities to lever governments – local, state and national – out of debt.

Many governments are moving to models that mimic corporations – opting to outsource staff, treat essential services as commodities and sell off assets that previously had been the common wealth of its citizens. In Queensland,

we have seen citizens lose their freight rail network, as it is being floated on the stock market for private investors to reap profit. Water has become a state commodity charged to citizens per the kilolitre, and a number of toll roads have opened, attempting to force citizens to pay for infrastructure that used to be provided by commonwealth taxes.

Government no longer serves the people, it serves the dollar. The public service industry has suffered cuts to staff, and government roles have been replaced by contractors and other outsources. It is quite possible that the emphasis on being in the "black" as a means to measure government success has subverted "serve the people" to

"serve the debt".

But where will the money come from when governments no longer own infrastructure? Government assets like telecommunications, freight and transport, electricity, water and housing are primarily handed over to private profiteers, leaving the citizens to pick up the shortfall through increased taxes and charges for essential services.

Government should not be in business in the same way that capitalist industry is. Its success should be measured in the health of its society; the lack of poverty, the adequate level of health, education and housing. Government moves further away from providing essential services to charging its citizens for

Racism and state power

-Contributed-

Recent deaths in custody, particularly the repeated tasing to death of an Aboriginal man with mental health problems, and the death of an Nyangah Aboriginal elder who was confined in a paddy wagon for eight hours whilst travelling across desert country in Western Australia in 45C degree heat without ventilation, water or stress stops, are ample evidence that the recommendations of the Deaths in Custody Royal Commission, despite some initial talk of reform and compliance with the recommendations, have been all but abandoned.

The inquiry was the result of prolonged struggle across all States that, having received international and United Nations attention, embarrassed the Government into taking some action. The inquiry was wide ranging. Its recommendations were intended to protect Aborigines in custody, as well as to implement strategies to keep Aboriginal people out of prison in the first place.

These focussed on improving the living conditions in Aboriginal communities, particularly in the areas of health and education and housing. We know what happened to those.

It was also meant to improve relations between police and the Aboriginal communities they were meant to protect. This has not happened; if anything, relations between police and the Aboriginal population have deteriorated. In spite of occasional efforts by individual police, relations between Aboriginal people and the police forces of all States remain in conflict.

This is often attributed to individual police who are deemed to be rogue or racist. Other theories point to a culture



of racism that permeates Australia's police forces or institutionalised racism. Others point to the contemporary impact of a history of police being used to implement discriminatory and punitive Government policies and legislation. Still others point to colonial relations and structures. Colonialism as an exercise of power requires strategies to ensure subjection: these persist.

All of these play a role in structuring relations between police and Aboriginal individuals and communities. Of course, there are individuals in the police force who are racist, and there is institutionalised racism in the police as well as other agencies with which Aboriginal people have to interact, and of course, colonialism persists in a variety of ways. All are part of the mix. But the extreme measures police have been authorised to take in subduing Aboriginal resistance are about more than these generally cited factors.

The extreme force used against dissident Aborigines is about more than restoring order. It has a political

function. The response to the Palm Island 'riot' resulting from a no-fault finding of the colonial enquiry into the death of Cameron Doomadgee was described at the time (by the *Australian*) as an invasion of Palm Island by armed Queensland police.

Other excursions into Aboriginal communities by police are described by criminologist Chris Cunneen (*Conflict Politics and Crime*, 2001) as 'policing by terror'. Cunneen cites the over-use of the Tactical Response Unit armed with pistols and flak jackets and frequently using dogs and mounted police and a convoy of four wheel drives.

These extreme tactics have been used in cases of Aboriginal resistance to removal from land as in the oft-cited 1963 case of Mapoon, and more recent examples where Aboriginal groups are attempting to claim land tenure. But they have also been used to police purely social activities.

Why this 'undue force' and in documented cases, 'police terror' used against unarmed Aboriginal

communities, often with a majority of women and children?

One of the problems is that no matter what damage has been done to Aboriginal culture, an oppositional history persists and subjugated knowledge keeps resurfacing. These coalesce into oppositional ideologies. Similarly, the working class in capitalist economies present with a history and knowledge that challenges and has the potential to destabilise existing governance.

Racism is not separate from class but integral to it, and in fact in the case of colonised peoples, class categorisation is the foundation for establishing 'race' differences and the exploitation that is the reason for colonial and imperialist adventures. Similarly, the pre-existence of armed forces of the State are necessary for the penetration or takeover of other economies and for the protection of foreign and domestic investment.

The violence and terror directed at Aboriginal communities is not meant to go unnoticed. The criminalisation of Aboriginal people, particularly males and youth, justifies the high level of police intervention and curtailment of Aboriginal activities and struggles for self-determination.

There is a lot at stake: self-determination could threaten not only mineral resources, but space for the very lucrative trade in Uranium waste.

The level of armed intervention that is aimed at dissident Aboriginal communities and the undue force that can be used against individuals can be applied across cultures. It is a reminder of the power of the capitalist State; power that can be called into play whenever and wherever the State or its interests are challenged.

them, marks the fall of compassion in our community.

From this shift in emphasis we create a more impoverished class structure; it is no longer just the workers and the bosses. The new class structure is made up of three; the destitute trampled below, the struggling worker attempting to remain on top of increasing debt, and above them both, the ignorant and oblivious top dogs feasting on the scraps they order up from below.

We can't continue to live oblivious to the facts that more people are homeless, including whole families; more people suffer health problems because they can't afford medical and dental care;

more children fail school because they lack stability at home and are being funnelled into an underfunded education system. It has been found that with mortgage pressure and increased living costs, many people skip meals or reduce their food intake in order to meet increasing debt. When did money become more important than health and well being?

If "Cash" has been made King we can only hope that its citizens will soon revolt and bring in governments that place citizens above business, and services above surplus.

As in previous times it was recognised that there must be a

separation of church and state, now is the time to recognise that there must be a separation of capitalist interests and government. Without this separation we risk living in a society without a social conscience, without compassion, without care for its people.

Governments should look after their citizens through public health, education, housing, infrastructure and utilities. This should be why government exists.

Let us never forget our brothers and sisters who struggle more and more under the burden of the capitalist State, because only when it is abolished will their burden be lifted.

Interview with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines

In mid-November, Vanguard was honoured to conduct an interview with Luis Jalandoni, Chairperson of the NDFP Negotiating Panel, and Connie Ledesma, Member of the NDFP Negotiating Panel, during their speaking tour of Australia. Extracts from key sections of the interview are published below.

Vanguard: *What does the NDFP want to achieve for the people of the Philippines?*

LJ/CL: After the first big strike against Marcos in October 1975, workers faced the certainty of military attack and had to decide what to do. There was silence – then a woman worker said, “We have to go on; otherwise our children will have no future.”

The NDFP wants to achieve land reform for the peasants, freedom from oppression and exploitation and democratic rights for the 90 million people, and national sovereignty as an anti-imperialist country free from the domination of US imperialism. A free, independent and prosperous Philippines would uphold the rights of women and the rights of indigenous people. It would provide free, quality healthcare and treat people with care and dignity.

The peasants dream of reclaiming the land stolen by the big land-owners and multinationals, the workers want national industrialisation, the people want proper schools and healthcare, and an independent and peaceful foreign policy.

Our 12 point program also covers the demands of women for equality, respect, and control of their own bodies, and the demands of the indigenous people for autonomy and return of their ancestral lands and the preservation of their culture and language. Other points deal with the demands of the youth, especially around education and employment, protection of the environment, and demands to restore the proud history and culture of the Filipino people. Trade and foreign investment should be based on fairness and mutual benefit.

The NDFP wants to establish a free and independent democracy, with the perspective of building socialism into the future.

Vanguard: *What are the main classes, sectors, and groups that support the NDFP within and beyond the Philippines?*

LJ/CL: The NDFP is a united front; a broad alliance composed of 17 organisations and various forms of struggle.

Armed struggle is carried out by the New People’s Army which has fought

to protect and defend the people since 1969 and is active in 70 provinces. It expects to move from ‘strategic defence’ to ‘strategic stalemate’ within five years.

Other forms of struggle are the mass movement for human and political rights, and for socio-economic reforms, and the legal and parliamentary struggles, as well as the struggle for progress in peace negotiations.

The most resolute classes are the workers and peasants who represent 15% and 75% of the population respectively. The worker-peasant alliance is the basis for the united front, which operates under strong working class leadership.

Classes which are also represented in the NDFP and make important contributions are the low and middle petty-bourgeoisie, the patriotic national bourgeoisie and progressive intellectuals and professionals. Even some sections of the ruling class can be part of informal, tactical alliances on issues.

Key sectors where the NDFP attracts support are among women, youth, indigenous people, and among the 9 million Filipino workers forced to emigrate to find work. One day, after victory, we hope they can return and use their skills for our country.

We value the warm support and solidarity of international contacts and anti-imperialist organisations.

Vanguard: *What are the prospects for the resumption of peace negotiations between the NDFP and the Aquino government?*

LJ/CL: Peace talks conducted with Norway as a facilitator have been stalled since 2005 due to the Philippines government following the US line of ‘terror-listing’ opponents and actually arresting 11 NDFP consultants. However, the NDFP has taken a position and is ready to negotiate on the root causes of the conflict, such as genuine land reform, implementation of agreements on human rights, the workers’ struggle, and social and economic reforms.

To allow talks to take place there must be safety and immunity guarantees and the dropping of charges against NDFP panelists and consultants. Outstanding human rights issues also



Luis Jalandoni and Connie Ledesma

have to be resolved, including the release of political prisoners and the Morong 43 health workers, with an end to extrajudicial killings of trade union activists and other civilians.

There needs to be some preliminary talks to set the necessary steps to resume formal talks in Oslo, Norway and to reconvene the Joint Monitoring Commission in Oslo, Norway.

So far, there has only been a “show of peace” from the government, which is working according to the US Counter-Insurgency 2009 blueprint document, and pressing for a military victory. In these circumstances, the armed struggle must continue at the same time as negotiations are conducted to resolve the basic issues. In the course of negotiations, if and when reforms are undertaken, there is the possibility of a truce, but no surrender of weapons.

Vanguard: *Has there been any significant change in the political atmosphere in the Philippines since the election of Aquino – for example, the situation of political prisoners and trade union activists?*

LJ/CL: There has been no change at all. While 388 political prisoners are still held in gaol, as well as the 43 Morong health workers, the government has released more than 400 soldiers who participated in the last abortive military coup attempts.

The ‘honeymoon period’ of the new government just didn’t happen. Extrajudicial killing of trade union activists continues, now totalling 97. In fact, there have been 25 killings since Aquino was elected, more than one for

every week he has been in power.

The most recent insult to the people is the news that US troops are to hold exercises on the Hacienda Luisita where the people are still waiting for justice following the brutal military massacre of unarmed workers and peasants there in 2004.

Vanguard: *What is the role of US imperialism in the Philippines?*

LJ/CL: US imperialism has been a basic problem for the Filipino people since 1898.

It dominates economic and political life in the Philippines and exerts control over the military to sustain the local ruling classes.

It uses the big bourgeois compradors and landlords to control the state to exploit and oppress the workers and peasants.

It keeps the Philippines as an underdeveloped country, forcing the people into great poverty and as a source of cheap labour.

There is increasing US military intervention in the Philippines under the Visiting Forces Agreement with more and more “exercises” leading to thousands of US troops staying for extended periods. There are at least 600 special forces in Mindanao, allegedly to fight the Abu Sayyif kidnap-ransom gang (established by the CIA), but also involved in combat operations against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the New People’s Army.

The US military equips and maintains the 250,000 armed forces of the Philippines. Australia also trains about 130 Filipino officers each year.

Resistance to imperialist ambitions and the G20

by *Jim H*

The G20 meeting in Seoul (South Korea) occurred on November 10 and 11 and resulted in the failure of the leaders of the world's biggest economies agreeing on a comprehensive strategy to deal with the global economic crisis. This failure can be seen as a negative, or, when considering the context, as the result of a positive shift in world affairs.

For too long the G20, as with other high level international forums had largely been a rubber stamp for US imperialist ambitions. This began to unravel in the Doha round and has continued in this vein since.

The character of the present situation is that the division between imperialism and other nations has widened. Rivalry between US and European imperialism has become more intense as the economic crisis bites.

There is also the emergence of China as a major international economic player. The US tries to unburden its economic difficulties on China. Economic crisis

is deepening tensions between the big powers.

Obama had come armed with a policy that would essentially open up the rest of the world to penetration by multinationals, through the imposition of new trade liberalisation, a further loosening of currency exchange rates together with the imposition of a strict limit on trade surpluses and deficits.

The problem is that while the US demands one thing from the rest of the world, it applies different rules for itself.

An immediate issue is the growing volatility in currency values. Behind this is the economic crisis. Politically this is being played out in two ways.

The most important is growing tension over the relationship between the American Dollar and the Euro. There are definite signs of a growing currency war. It figured highly in Seoul. This is about which centre of imperialism is going to protect its own interests at the expense of the other. A relatively lower currency means cheaper exports and a larger market for commodities that are over-produced; an incentive to bump up the export of capital and some

protection against penetration by rival imperialist capital.

China has rebutted efforts, led by US imperialism, to give up controls over her exchange rate. Doing so would disadvantage China in its terms of trade and would undoubtedly lead to the importation of the US crisis. It is said that China takes an unfair advantage, which has made her the largest exporter of commodities in the world. China realises that there are limits to this position and has adopted a policy of turning from reliance on exports to reliance on the national economy. This is one of the objectives for imperialism – the wish to penetrate and exploit the Chinese market.

US imperialism is compelled to protect its existing markets and dependencies whilst aggressively seeking new markets in the developing countries, including China.

To pursue its imperialist interests, the US has taken the step to effectively print money (\$US600 billion) in order to devalue its own currency.

This is widening the rift between US imperialism and the rest of the world. Countries, particularly developing

ones, are seeking greater independence from foreign control and resisting paying the bill for both the economic crisis and the threat of global warming. The circumstances have created the conditions for deepening a broad united front of resistance that is isolating US imperialism.

For the anti-US imperialist forces the key is to shape a global economy that is not dominated by any superpower, and which is truly democratic in that it serves the interests of all countries and peoples.

Institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and their regional counterparts must be replaced to meet this need.

The most important aspect of the G20 gathering is that the plans of US imperialism were thwarted.

It is also true that opponents did not get all their own way either, which is indicative of a strategic stalemate situation.

Consequently there was a pledge to “move towards market determined exchange -rate systems” and to refrain from “competitive devaluation of currencies.” But this will mean little in practice.

Mass protests greet G20

by *Jim H*

The G20 summit was met with huge protests aimed against the growing subservience of the south Korean government to US imperialism, and against attempts to use the summit as a vehicle to impose the burden of economic crisis on south Koreans and the peoples of the rest of the world.

Broad alliances were formed involving more than 80 organisations, including the Korean Central Trade Union (KCTU), and People's Solidarity for Social Progress (PSSP). Many others have joined forces under the banner “People Must Come First.”

They condemned the assault on civil and democratic rights unleashed



by the Lee administration which “is using the G20 as an excuse to carry out widespread crackdowns against migrant workers, street vendors and homeless people.”

The KCTU issued a call for a week of action from November 6-11 and affirmed that the workers and people will take all measures to defend their rights. In its call, the KCTU denounces the

anti-worker policies being implemented by the Lee regime, saying, “Instead of putting decent work at the heart of the recovery and growth, he is promoting proliferation of precarious jobs and insecurity of employment. In addition to this, the government is mobilizing every means of violating basic labour rights and suppressing trade union activities.”

Riot police, part of the more than 50,000 police mobilized, brutally tried to contain the protesters with water cannons, pepper spray and formations using police buses and trucks. But the people stood their ground and militantly denounced the G20, the proposed US-South Korea free-trade agreement, and the austerity measures of the G20.

A win for Sunshine residents

-Contributed-

Residents in working class West Sunshine in Melbourne's western suburbs (a former Ministry of Housing estate), have won an important victory in their battle to stop the Victorian government from building a freeway through their neighbourhood.

Facing the prospect of losing their homes (for which they could only get about \$250,000) and decimation of

their long established community, the realisation that they would have to fight hard to defend their rights came on pretty quickly. On the back of this, neighbour talked to neighbour, an eventually, the Sunshine Housing Acquisition Group came into being.

Right from the start its strategy was based on doing a solid job on the ground, talking to each other, keeping each other up to date with winning over potential supporters. Representatives made a point of establishing dialogue

with relevant government officials and politicians, while at the same time maintaining their resolution about what they were after.

Attention was put on building the support of unions for the community. It was very successful and no doubt played an important role in the final victory. Every aspect requiring attention in the struggle was covered.

But most important was the determination, clear sightedness, and shall we say, solid working class

outlook that won the day. Because of this outlook it was possible to think and act strategically. This means to develop the struggle by stages, to negotiate the zigs and zags through recognition of conditions and being prepared to use whatever methods are necessary.

Saving peoples' homes and uniting and mobilising the people is a great victory. From the longer point of view, these struggles really do a lot to teach those who are involved how to fight better, and this is a victory also.

NUW members win security and respect at work

by Marcus H

At Woolworth's Hume Distribution Centre in Melbourne, workers returned to work victorious on Friday November 5, following a week-long period of industrial action.

Negotiations for the new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement broke down a week prior, following three months of discussions.

Despite a fourteen year period of successive record profits, and coming off a \$2.02 billion profit over the 2009/10 financial year, Woolworth's were unwavering against the workers' quest for a decent wage increase and to maintain job security.

Unwilling to negotiate around the members' priorities, the National Union of Workers took out an order from Fair Work Australia to conduct a secret ballot.

The members' priorities lay in having the choice between the ability to take a redundancy package or be redeployed to another area of the business. The company said a straight "no" to handing out redundancies upon the plant's closure.

Another concern for workers was the company's demand for an expanded ordinary span of day shift hours. The greatest fear was this was a solution to the abolition of the afternoon shift, a shift which has been subject to many alterations in recent years.

Upon declaration of the secret ballot result, an overwhelming majority of 98.8% elected to take industrial action against Woolworths. Morale was at a low point; workers knew there was just one option.

On Friday October 29 at 12:01am, the picket line was set up at the Hume Distribution Centre's Broadmeadows location, in Melbourne's north.

In the early hours of that morning



word surfaced that the company had shifted their operation to another facility in Somerton.

The striking workers split their protests between the two sites. After a successful day of action, particularly at the Somerton site, Woolworths made applications to the Supreme Court of Victoria.

At 7pm that night, the Court delivered an injunction effectively removing the workers from both sites.

Undeterred, the workers in struggle protested through the second day of action at over fifty of the company's retail stores across Melbourne.

Following those efforts the striking Hume workers moved their action to the Melbourne Liquor Distribution Centre on the Sunday, with over three hundred workers and supporters arriving unannounced.

The scene at Laverton was a sight few people protesting that day will forget.

Across a ten hour period, the striking NUW members, along with other supporters, slowly shuffled in front of a never ending procession of trucks attempting to enter and leave the site.

In the cold and wet conditions, workers occupied Leakes Road for the entire day, proclaiming "NUW – Here to Stay!"

Despite Supreme Court Orders removing us from the Broadmeadows and Somerton sites, the workers stood tall and reclaimed the dispute that day.

Just as the workers, fighting against great odds, gained the upper hand once more, no sooner was the company back at the Supreme Court.

In defiance against court orders and surveillance by the company, the following days saw the protesters take their action to shopping centres across the Melbourne and Geelong regions and to a rally held in the CBD. All this at a time when most Melbournians were caught up in "the race that stops a nation".

With the supermarkets shelves running empty, discussions between the company's national management and the Union Delegates were back on the table.

The workers' victory was declared on Thursday November 4, 2010. The united force of the Union members ensured this victory after the workers fought hard against great odds.

Major gains to be won out of the dispute included; Hume workers now having the choice between redundancy or redeployment, the ability for permanent employees, both full and part-time to

work over and above the thirty eight hour week. Afternoon shift workers are now guaranteed and other shift workers find themselves with greater protections against shift changes.

Another victory came in the way Public Holidays will be rostered in the future. Subject to hearing after hearing in Fair Work Australia in recent times, Public Holidays became voluntary only. Much anger built up in members through the process whereby the company would demand that workers attend the Distribution Centre on a holiday at two week's notice, only to attend and most times be sent home after only a few hours of work; destroying long weekends that could otherwise be spent with family.

Another key area addressed in the new EBA is the return of cleaners' jobs to the Distribution Centre employees after those jobs had been replaced some years ago by contract labour, working below the site rates.

In all, this was a massive victory for all Woolworths' workers and a credit to their solidarity and the good leadership provided by job delegates and union organisers.

Workers of all status, full-time, part-time, day shift, afternoon shift, casual, agency labour, stood united at long last against a company with endless resources and capital.



No January Issue

The *Vanguard* team is taking a short break over the New Year. The next issue will be published early in February; however any important matters will continue to be posted on www.vanguard.net.au for the information of readers and supporters.

Our thanks to readers and subscribers who have supported Vanguard throughout the year, with their contributions, comments, suggestions and donations. Your encouragement is much appreciated.