

NATS ARE RATS NATS ARE RATS NATS ARE RATS

What the Nats want to do:

*Bosses can sack workers for no reason in first three months on the job.

*Union organisers restricted from talking to workers.

*It's all part of their plan to steal tea breaks, scrap ACC, raise GST, steal your holidays, lower wages.



Make no mistake, John Key and the National Party have declared war on the trade union movement and are mounting an ambitious attack on the wages and conditions of workers across the country. The Tories have been waiting for thirteen years to bring in some of these changes but history shows that these attacks can and must be resisted.

From the National Party conference until the days the Tories leave the Beehive unions and workers' activists must engage in a sustained campaign of direct action and mass resistance to these attacks. John Key promised us a safer, more prosperous and more ambitious country. Wages are growing at the lowest level in a decade, violent crime

has shot up and the only thing Key has ambition for is building more jails and destroying public services. The struggle against these attacks is not just about getting rid of the Tories, we need to get rid of capitalism. To do this we need a revolutionary, anti-capitalist alternative - Socialist Aotearoa.

FROM ECA TO ERA - Whose law is it anyway?

National's attacks have brought back memories of the 1990s when the National Government and big business completely restructured the economy and modified the social welfare state. NZ was opened up to global capitalism, the tariffs protecting local industries removed, public owned assets like Telecom and the electricity corporations privatised and benefits cut. The centrepiece of this attack was the passage of the Employment Contracts Act in 1991 passed amidst a storm of mass protests.



The ECA abolished national award coverage and instead replaced them with individual employment contracts, contracts that were to be made on a supposedly “level playing field” between individual capitalists and workers. Under the ECA, unions did not have any special privileges in representing workers. The ECA made most forms of strike activity illegal, including strikes over job losses, solidarity strikes, political strikes, strikes over sexual harassment and damage to the environment, thus bringing in some of the harshest anti-strike laws in the “advanced” capitalist world and comparable to countries such as China. Unionists were denied access to workplaces to talk to their members. Click: [http://libcom.org/files/The Myth of Passivity1.pdf](http://libcom.org/files/The_Myth_of_Passivity1.pdf)

Unions failed to fight in the 1990s

With the passage of the ECA unions were forced onto the defensive and retreated from organising and membership activism. Many workers and radical union leaders believed that the ECA could have been defeated if the CTU had called a General Strike in 1991. 10% of New Zealand's population took part in the protests against the ECA, some 350,000 people. It was the biggest mass mobilisation in the country's history. But union leaders had already made friends with failure, refusing to call for a general strike or even use the line defeat the bill because “We don't think it can be defeated”. The majority of workers wanted a general strike, the Nurses for example voted 87% in favour of action. Thousands of workers did participate in strike action against the ECA but the CTU and many unions failure to support this action meant it died out quickly.

With the ECA came huge attacks on wages and conditions. At this time employers began their big push to destroy unions in retail and service industries. DeKa refused to negotiate a collective, Whitcoull's threatened to cut off union deductions (a teachers boycott stopped that) and Armourguard cut penal rates and allowances of armoured car couriers. Peter Conway said, “Good communication will be vital in this period along with a much greater focus on basic union organisation”. Yet unions retreated from organising, locked out of the workplace and without a combined strategy to fight the National Government. The *PSA Journal* would complain that by 1997 wages had increased in real terms by just 0.3% while productivity increased 0.7% in the last ten years and fell in 1996. By 1997 another round of attacks seemed imminent with employers seeking to destroy the Employment Court, increase youth rates and remove minimum wage and holidays laws. Jane Kelsey at the time bemoaned the union movements disorganisation saying, “What is lacking is an effective, co-ordinated, and pro-active strategy to seize some of the initiative and mobilise all available forces to get in the way”.

When the National coalition began to collapse so too did their hopes for further attacks. Labour took power in 1999 and replaced key parts of the ECA with their Employment Relations Act, but many unionists saw it as still too biased against workers and restrictive on strikes. The lessons of the 1990s, the need for rank and file strike action, sustained & strategic mobilisation, and for the CTU to call for campaigns that go from protest to resistance to supporting union growth and workers action was also forgotten at the sametime. Remembering our failed struggles can help us prepare for succesful ones in the future.

Where is John Key taking Aotearoa?

John Key told us he was ambitious for New Zealand. He promised the country on the campaign trail in 2008 a lot. National, he said, would deliver tax cuts, higher wages, better economic performance, faster broadband and more roads, frugal public spending but good quality public services, cuts to the bureaucracy and education reform. He also said he'd get tough on crime in the wake of high profile killings of children and a growing feeling that youth gang violence was out of control.

Key asked the questions that Labour could never answer. "Why, under Labour, is the gap between our wages, and wages in Australia and other parts of the world, getting bigger and bigger? ..Why is violent crime against innocent New Zealanders continuing to soar and why is Labour unable to do anything about it?" On election night Key beamed, "Today across the country, New Zealanders have voted for a safer, more prosperous and more ambitious New Zealand." We lapped it up and a year and a half later what do we see?

Crime

On the last day of April in the west Auckland suburb of Blockhouse Bay two men robbed a bank. As he raided the tills one man, 31 year old Fijian-born Epinisa Rokobatini shouted, "This is all John Key's fault". Two weeks earlier Herald columnist Tapu Misa had written, "Crime went up last year, the biggest real increase in years. Murders were up by 25 per cent, the 65 recorded homicides being the highest in a decade. And violent crime was up by 8 per cent per capita." Misa went on to charge National of ignoring the real drivers of crime. Unemployment sitting around a ten year high with 59,715 New Zealanders on the dole. People are hungrier as well, South Auckland Sallies staff now distribute 775 food parcels a month, compared to 464 at the start of the recession. Clearly NZ has become a much more dangerous place because of Key's failure to create jobs in the recession.

Prosperity

In 2007 John Key told the Kerikeri Business Association "We would love to see wages drop". But in the election he told us about how we could catch up with Australian wages if only we vote for him and his right-wing buddies to institute their brighter future. Key's actions on prosperity now include welfare reform ("the dream is over"), a minimum wage increase under the inflation level, a pay freeze in the public sector forcing everyone from fire-fighters to radiographers to IHC carers on to picket lines, a law that allows small businesses to sack staff in their first 3 months of work, and of course rising unemployment. Which all equals wages increasing at the slowest pace for almost a decade, just 1.5 per cent in the year to 2010.

As *The Standard* has noted, "Despite all the business collapses and the 21,000 lost jobs, half of all CEOs got a pay

rise last year and the typical pay rise was a massive 5% (only 10% of workers got a 5%+ way rise)" While at the same time "75% of non-union workers received a pay cut last year (that's a nominal decrease, no increase, or an increase less than 2%). 74% of union members got a real pay increase, a pay rise over 2%".



So yes John Key did make some people more prosperous but it wasn't you or me. It was the bosses. Factory worker Chandra Kumar voted for National. Chandra lives on McGehan Close, the Mt. Albert street that became the face of John Key's Kiwi battlers, and the place where he drew a line in the sand and said he'd make things better for the underclass of this country. Well, a year after voting Tory, people like Chandra are waking up. Chandra told the Sunday Star-Times, "They put something in one pocket and take out of the other."

A rank and file strategy to 'Kill the Bill' and rebuild the union movement

Socialist Aotearoa supports the establishment of a rank and file, cross-union, cross-industry network of workers and activists to fight the attacks and rebuild the union movement.

The workers' movement will not develop any real initiative and strength until it learns to organise, educate and mobilise together. Workers' involvement in trade union organisation is often minor and token. Until hundreds of workers decide to join a network to co-ordinate strikes, solidarity action and political education of workers the struggle will be limited to media releases issued from CTU HQ.

Militant unionists, effective delegates and organisers from across the movement need to be brought together to plan the resistance to these attacks, through strikes, protests and education.

This network will be created by organisers and activists putting in the hard yards gathering contacts, organising meetings, talking to workmates and distributing information. It will not automatically appear out of thin air.

A rank and file network will create the first step towards the sorts of workers' assemblies which have been leading the struggle in Greece over recent months against the neo-liberal attacks on workers. Workers' assemblies have also helped to blunt or smash ruling class attacks in Argentina and France. Workers' assemblies create a space for workers and the community to debate democratically the next steps for the struggle and to provide solidarity to each other's conflicts with employers and the state.



They are rich because we are poor

The struggle against the National Party is the struggle against capitalism.

Read the full article by LibCom online here at: <http://libcom.org/thought/libertarian-communism-capitalism-direct-action-introduction>

We live in a truly beautiful world. There is easily enough of everything to go around for everyone to live comfortably.

However, while a few live in luxury, most of us spend our whole lives slaving away just to get by. We, the working class, own very little property and so to survive we can only do one of three things: work for a boss, claim benefits or steal. And the latter two options are either not available, or very unappealing to most.

This is what capitalism is based on: we have to sell our ability to work - and hours of our life - for a wage. Our work produces things and provides services. But our wages are less than the value of the products and services we provide. The difference between the value of what we make and what we get paid is the profit which is being stolen from us. Someone answering phones may perform work which makes the boss \$400, but only gets paid \$50 in wages. The rest is taken by the boss and called "profit" - which the bosses are entitled to just because they own the office the phones were answered in. So to make money, you must first have enough money to own something. By this system, the rich get richer and more powerful while we get poorer and, of course, less powerful.

We think that the people doing the work - us - should get the lot!

Capitalism produces things for profit rather than need. For example, in famine-ridden Africa, big corporations will grow cash-crops like cotton while millions starve all around. If you can't pay the mortgage, your house is repossessed. Treatments and medicines for fatal diseases which cost pennies to

make are sold for thousands of pounds to pay for marketing, while millions die. Global warming and pollution from fossil fuels threatens the survival of humans on the planet because renewable energy sources threaten oil companies' profits.

This happens all over the world. These are not problems with capitalism that can be fixed, they are capitalism. The relentless drive to accumulate, make profit and expand drives capital. Profits must always come before people and planet because if not enough profit is made the corporation will go bust or be bought out.

War, poverty, crime, famine and environmental destruction - these are all signs that capitalism is working perfectly. They are also signs that it is unsustainable and needs to be replaced.

All bosses and shareholders do is get in the way and take a huge chunk of the profit. Imagine how much less work we would have to do if all the people who do ultimately pointless work did useful work instead? Many of us spend most of our lives working jobs which produce nothing useful, or no valuable service, such as products with built-in obsolescence, or the entire financial and insurance industries. We would have more time to do what we really wanted to do and truly live out our dreams and desires.

Socialism is about the democratic control of the economy with ownership of business and production in the hands of the workers and communities. Capitalism is a class system that will always exploit workers so bosses can live off the profit. We need an anti-capitalist, revolution to reorganise our world.

Who is Socialist Aotearoa?

Socialist Aotearoa is an activist organisation of left-wing workers and students. We are involved in the trade union movement as activists, delegates, and organisers. We oppose all imperialist wars and occupations, and support indigenous liberation struggles in Palestine and West Papua. We demand the immediate withdrawal of New Zealand troops from Afghanistan and an end to support for and ties with repressive regimes in the Pacific. We fight for socialism from below. Get involved.

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