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For workers power and international socialism

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Editorial

This month will see the end of TVNZ7, New Zealand's only commercial free public broadcaster. It was short lived and never terribly popular. The commercial nature of the other TVNZ channels meant there was a disincentive to promote the commercial free offering. Australian public television signals, which for a while could be picked up in New Zealand with a Freeview receiver, have now been encrypted to stop trans-Tasman free-loading. The extra channels that come with Freeview- two of which are just TV1 and TV3 but with everything broadcast an hour later- are hardly an incentive to go digital even with the coming analogue signal switch off.

With the television landscape so barren, many are turning to Internet based media for intellectual stimulation. The internet based media isn't without its own problems however. For example, since 2006 the Sapling Foundation has released videos of its TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) conference talks online under a Creative Commons license that allows them to be viewed and shared for free. TED has made the work of a number of scientists and other thinkers accessible to the wider public, but in May a video of a speech about income inequality was withheld from the TED website as it was deemed "too political." TIME magazine described it thusly;

"Their slogan is 'ideas worth spreading'. But the folks at TED... evidently think that some ideas are better left unspread. At least when the ideas in question challenge the conventional wisdom that rich entrepreneurs are the number one job creators."

The talk, by multi-millionaire venture capitalist Nick Hanauer is incredibly mild. He proclaims that businesses could not succeed without "middle class" consumers paid a living wage. He doesn't go any deeper than that though, there is no mention that capitalists want to pay the lowest wages possible but require other capitalists to be paying higher wages, and that this is a fundamental contradiction of capitalism. He talks of his support for higher taxes because he has plenty of money, but doesn't question whether venture capitalists like him would invest in businesses that could not return a high enough dividend due to taxes taking a chunk of their profit.

Nonetheless, it was too much for TED. The claim that it was

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The *Spark* magazine is now in its 20th year as we continue the long-term fight for socialism. Readers and supporters may consider remembering us in their will with assets or money that will help the struggle in the long-term. If this is you please put in your will 'Workers Party, PO Box 10-282, Dominion Road, Auckland' as well as what you would like to leave to us.

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simply 'too political' is weak when one considers that many TED talks are given by politicians themselves. A more accurate reason was given by TED Talk curator Chris Anderson ; "a lot of business managers and entrepreneurs would feel insulted". If you want to see what all the fuss is about for yourself, the video has surfaced on Youtube; <http://bit.ly/JMt-Q3i> As John Gilmore, one of the founders of the online civil liberties organisation the Electronic Frontiers Foundation (EFF) once said "The Net interprets censorship as damage and routes around it."

There is much other worthwhile material online, RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts) has featured videos from the likes of Slavoj Zizek, David Harvey and Barbara Ehrenreich. (<http://www.thersa.org/events/video>) For a.tv which describes itself as "Youtube for thinkers" is also worth checking out, though of course there is plenty of good content on Youtube itself. One gem is 'Rap News' which presents issues of the day in an entertaining as well as informative way.

The Workers Party has a selection of

audio and video available on our website (<http://workersparty.org.nz/audio/>) including talks from past conferences. The Spark doesn't worry about business managers feeling insulted. If you value to contribution this magazine makes, consider getting a subscription to support our on-going publication. Subscriptions start at just \$16.50 a year though extra donations are always appreciated (The Spark is produced entirely by volunteers with no corporate sponsorship). For over two decades we have delivered a socialist politics into the public conversation, because these are ideas worth spreading.



Slavoj Žižek is a revolutionary thinker.

Thousands declare: "John Key, you've got mail, Aotearoa is not for sale"

by Ian Anderson, editorial board of The Spark

The Aotearoa is Not For Sale hikoi departed from Cape Reinga on April the 23rd and reached parliament on May the 4th. This march demonstrated that tangata whenua are at the forefront of struggle against privatisation, expressed widespread opposition to asset sales, and raised questions of how to move forward.

Broad kaupapa

The kaupapa was broad, and contested. Thousands were united by opposition to National's plans of selling 49% of state-owned assets to private companies. Other issues of corporate and 'foreign' ownership included the AFFCO meat-works lockout, offshore drilling and the Crafar Farms sale.

In an article for Scoop, Anti-capitalism must feature at hikoi against asset sales, Valerie Morse argued the focus should be on capitalist ownership rather than for-

eign ownership: "A number of very well known 'kiwi' brands equally well meet the definition of a multinational corporation... The fight shouldn't be about domestic or foreign ownership; the fight should be about ownership full stop."

The International Socialist Organisation (ISO) published an article by Dougal McNeill, underlining the importance of anti-capitalism in the Crafar Farms controversy. McNeill noted that "Plenty of major New Zealand capitalists, from Fonterra to Cater Holt Harvey, invest

Aotearoa not for sale

profits abroad already... Profit goes towards the pursuit of more profit, to the expansion of business production.”

ISO's article underlined how Michael Fay, potential Kiwi owner of Crafar Farms, had profited from deregulation and privatisation – and how ‘Kiwi’ capitalists play just as much of a role in dispossessing tangata whenua. Finally, the article pointed out how rhetoric opposing Chinese ownership taps into the ugly history of anti-Chinese racism in this country.

Tino rangatiratanga was a key concept driving the hikoi. Popular Ngai Tahu blogger Kim McBreen posted an article on why she was participating: “To me, colonialism is the fundamental issue, and capitalism is just a part of that.”

Thousands march from Cape Reinga to parliament

The hikoi drew in important layers of nationwide support, while media coverage focused mainly on Auckland and Wellington. The march from Auckland's Britomart attracted estimates of 8,000 supporters, while Wellington's march on parliament attracted around 5,000.

Iwi gave the hikoi its spine, from Cape Reinga Southwards. Unions were also visible, with locked out AFFCO workers forming a significant contingent. The hikoi was endorsed by all the parliamentary opposition parties, and MANA formed a substantial bulk of the organisation and participation. Far-left groups also supported the hikoi, including Socialist Aotearoa, the Workers Party and the International Socialist Organisation.

In Wellington, student group We Are The University organised a feed-in march from Victoria University. Promoted through lecture-speaking, posters and Facebook, the march attracted around 150 students under the slogan “VUW is Not For Sale.” Speakers from the student body opposed the corporatisation of education, and attacks on student access to financial support.

After marching down from Victoria University, students joined the main hikoi on Willis Street. Emboldened by the sight of the hikoi, chants rose in volume including “Go to Vic and what do you learn? Slash and burn! Slash and burn!”, “You do a degree, what do you get? Debt! Debt! Debt! Debt!” and “Hey John Key, you've got mail, Aotearoa is not for sale.”

Parliament grounds: “John Key, show your face”

When the hikoi converged on parliament grounds, Maori wardens were out in force. One activist climbed onto the statue of Richard Seddon to erect two flags: the Confederation of United Tribes independence flag, and a tino rangatiratanga flag. The march surged past the regulation crowd-barriers and about halfway up parliament steps, before stopping for speakers.

Hikoi organiser Mike Smith spoke first. Opposition MPs aroused cheers from the crowd, and Hone Harawira led a chant, but Maori Party speaker Te Uro-roa Flavell received boos and heckling for supporting the coalition government.

Te Whanau a Apinara anti-fracking activist Dayle Takitimu incited cheers by declaring, “Now is the time to rise up, because we are the people who are fighting for the people.” An AFFCO worker delivered a speech largely in te reo, stating that Talley's AFFCO are trying to drive down wages; it's worth noting here that the company is NZ-owned. Workers Party member Joel Cosgrove provided the megaphone and spoke near the end, on the need to oppose capitalist ownership.

Many chanted for John Key to show his face, however it transpired that the PM was in Auckland. Confronted by media Key laughed the hikoi off, saying that in light of the governments' perceived mandate, a few thousand people marching would not change his mind. However, given that 75% of the general population (and 88% of Maori) oppose asset sales, Key's statements came off as arrogant.

What next?

With all of the opposition parties involved, a parliamentary strategy is playing out. Some activists are aiming to undermine the government's parliamentary majority, with long time Ohariu-Belmont MP Peter Dunne seen as a weak link. A range of groups including the Council of Trade Unions, Labour and the Greens have also co-sponsored a petition for a Citizens Initiated Referendum.

However, many remain alienated from the parliamentary system. Last year, 1 in 4 youth were not enrolled to vote. The general election saw the lowest turnout since women won the right to vote, with around one million staying home. We must ask why, given the widespread opposition to asset sales, it is so hard to mobilise voters.

A Labour-led government remains the most immediate alternative to a National-led government. However it's important to remember that it was the Fourth Labour government who introduced the current “State Owned Enterprises” model, which began to run state owned enterprises (SOEs) on the model of private corporations rather than public services. Many of these SOEs were privatised by the National government in the 1990's. While Helen Clark's Labour government brought back shares in some assets including Air New Zealand (essentially a state bail out of a private corporation) there was no change away from the SOE model toward a public service model.

While the campaign against asset sales needs a parliamentary component to stop the proposed reforms long-term, there will need to be a break from the Labour Party among the minority of people who still vote for them- a ‘National lite’ approach to publicly owned assets is not good enough. Workers in those industries that are up for privatisation, such as electricity, could make a significant impact through direct action and consumer boycott campaigns could also be put on the agenda.

Industrial news

International support for Tally's AFFCO workers

Global support for the struggle of meat workers at Tally's owned AFFCO plants is growing when the International Union of Food Workers passed a resolution of support and solidarity from their Geneva Congress last month. A resolution supported the workers has also been passed by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). 450 workers were locked out and a further 700 are engaged in strike action in a dispute lasting the better part of three months.

Eight migrant workers detained in northland

After a joint operation with the police Immigration New Zealand has detained eight migrant workers; seven Thai nationals and one Malaysian. The workers came to New Zealand under the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme but were allegedly working in breach of their visas. While their former New Zealand employers could face fines up to \$50,000 the workers themselves will likely be deported.

Employment law changes announced

The government has announced changes to the Employment Relations Act which will mean that employers are not required to conclude a collective agreement, and will be able to opt out of multi-employer bargaining. A provision that sees new employees covered by a collective agreement for the first 30 days of their employment will also be removed. The changes have been roundly criticised by the union movement.

55 manufacturing jobs go in Auckland

55 jobs are gone with the closure of Auckland based tube and wire products manufacturer, Wire by Design. The company had been embroiled in a three year long legal wrangle with Transit New Zealand over a compensation claim for the relocation of its factory following Transit's building of the Onehunga motorway extension. During that time Wire by Design had fallen behind with his tax

payments to Inland Revenue and went into voluntary liquidation. The EMPU which covered workers at the business says that the government is at fault as the job losses have resulted from government mismanagement.

Foreign charter vessels banned

In a surprise move the government has banned foreign charter vessels from fishing in New Zealand waters. It has legislated a ban that will be transitioned over the next four years. Last year all 32 Indonesian crew on the Korean owned Oyang 75 walked off the fishing vessel in Lyttelton alleging sexual and physical abuse. The Oyang 70, owned by the same company, had earlier sunk claiming the lives of 6 fishermen. Labour conditions in some instances are akin to slavery on some vessels. Allegations of illegal fish dumping have also been made against foreign charter vessels.

Urewera four – fight the imprisonments of Iti and Kemara

by Byron Clark

The crown has decided not to retry the Urewera 4 on the charge of Participation in an Organised Criminal Group. The group were originally threatened with charges under new terrorism laws after being arrested in a series of raids on October 15, 2007. 13 others were arrested but charges against them have been dropped. The only charges the state could make stick were minor firearms offenses against Tame Iti, Rangī Kemara, Urs Signer and Emily Bailey.

"The whole case should never have gone ahead." Commented Ana Cocker from the October 15th Solidarity Group, adding that the firearms charges should also be thrown out. "The charge of Participation was laid specifically in order that the crown could use the illegally obtained evidence. The crown needed to justify Operation 8 and their invasion and spying on Te Urewera, by bringing convictions at any cost" said Crocker "Nothing in this case has been about so-called justice, it is all about criminalising dissent and

halting aspirations for Tuhoe autonomy."

On May 24 Iti, Kemara, Signer and Bailey were sentenced on the firearms charges. Signer and Bailey were sentenced to 9 months home detention while Iti and Kemara were sentenced to more than 2 years in prison. Along with other people and organisations we support their immediate release.

AFFCO lockout



Iwi step in to break Talleys-AFFCO meatworks lock-out

by Byron Clark

After more than three months of hardship for over 5000 people the Talleys-AFFCO lockout has been brought to an end through pressure by iwi leaders. Sections of the trade union movement and key individuals within it were able to generate support from a majority of iwi leaders in the impacted areas where the workforces were often than 70 percent Maori.

The chairman of Waikato-Tainui executive Te Arataura, Tom Roa told Radio New Zealand last month that there was a consensus among iwi leaders to put pressure on AFFCO and its owners, the Talley family, to end the three month long industrial dispute which is having a huge effect on Maori communities. This followed similar comments from Ngapuhi leader Sonny Tau, who suggested farmers from his and other iwi should stop supplying animals to AFFCO unless the dispute is settled.

The union movement has been grateful for the support. Laurie Nankivell, a Shed Secretary for the Meat Workers Union

said on Triangle TV's The Union Report "it's a huge bonus for us up North 'cause we all know Sonny Tau up North, he worked with us in the freezing works in the '80s- '70s and '80s, it was good to see him on our picket line."

"We also want to acknowledge the work the iwi is doing to support the locked-out workers and their whanau" stated CTU Vice President Maori Syd Keepa. In a press release he said, "The support centre opened by Ngati Kahungunu in Wairoa ...provides much appreciated food and other services from the community to the locked out workers and their families."

Not every iwi leadership came on board however- the farming arm of Rotorua iwi Ngati Whakaue came out publically against a supplier boycott, saying the iwi had "long-standing and on-going" relations with the company, and claimed it was "not its place to take a political stance." But of course, it is impossible not to take sides in an industrial dispute like this, and by continuing to supply AFFCO the leadership of Ngati Whakaue took sides against the workers.

Even if they and other suppliers had wanted to continue to supply AFFCO they may have be forced to sell their livestock to other plants as AFFCO didn't have the skilled workforce required to continue processing. At the time Meatworkers media spokesperson Simon Oosterman told the New Zealand Herald that he knew of farmers who couldn't hold on to stock any more, due to the expense of feeding them over winter, and were sending them to other plants.

A consumer boycott of Talley's products was also called for by Mana Party MP Hone Harawira, "The locked out workers have been forced to band together to survive and to keep the working conditions they've won through years of negotiations and they're being locked out because the \$300 million Talley family want to bash the unions".

The role of iwi has been so significant because they came to it with their the ability to hurt the employers production process. Putting a stop to supply and production is again shown to be the key aspect in resolving an industrial dispute.

The War on Women, NZ edition: Beneficiaries and Contraception

This article was written by Anne Russell and was originally published at Scoop.co.nz

The battle over publicly-funded contraception in the US has led to many women breaking ranks with the Republican Party, who like to deny women autonomy over their bodies. At first glance, the National Party seems to be moving in the opposite direction from its US counterpart. The government recently announced proposals to put public funding towards contraception for beneficiaries. Not for poor people, mark you—although many low-income earners also struggle to afford contraception—just for people who receive state support. While easy universal access to contraception would be a splendid idea, this particular policy does not appear to have autonomous women's best interests at heart. Indeed, it arguably plays a part in controlling the reproductive lives of female beneficiaries.

While US Republicans apparently want all women to have more babies, National wants only certain women to stop reproducing. Minister for Social Development Paula Bennett said on TVNZ's Q&A last June that while she was a fan of long-term reversible contraception for beneficiaries, "I don't think we're quite at compulsory sort of stages,"—as though it

is a stage that might be reached at some point. The implication is alarming; as one person put it on Facebook: "The state deciding who is allowed to have children: historically, not awesome."

There is a social Darwinist perception that beneficiaries are on the dole because of personal failings. Often these people are living outside a nuclear family structure (heaven forbid) and thus are seen as a threat to it by conservatives. But neo-liberal economics arguably poses the greatest direct threat to the nuclear family, atomising individuals and shunting them in separate directions according to their economic productivity. As such, motherhood, it seems, is not a social good to be supported by all, but a rare privilege of the affluent individual. Although taxes are the price paid for a civilised society, this goodwill apparently should not extend to non-profitable activities like child-rearing.

Although this idea has intensified in recent decades, it is not a new attitude. In a capitalist framework, having the time and material resources (if not always the know-how) to provide adequate care for babies and children has always been a luxury of the wealthy. Until recent times, women who conceived out of wedlock became social pariahs. A century and a half ago, as women were not allowed to own property, vote or get paid work in

a formal economy, the babies they produced were offered little social protection. The only safeguard against penury was marriage to a man who could afford to look after children. Being a wife and mother was the only viable source of employment most women could hope to have.

Feminist movements have helped change this, and in the global North many women now are far more capable of being financially and socially autonomous, to a degree. However, the ideal of work-beyond-motherhood was taken by many to mean that motherhood itself could be demonised, and subsequent economic policy has eagerly supported this. Women now have rights to recognition beyond the home, but this hasn't necessarily resulted in greater autonomy across the board. More often than not, poor women get to join the oppression that poor men have suffered under for centuries—to work long hours for someone else's financial profit in an industrial framework that relies on great inequality to function. Although giving birth is theoretically productive for this economy, in that it provides future workers, taking the necessary time off to raise these children is an economic drain.

Such a framework is ultimately unsustainable, but calls for change are commonly ignored by dominant societal



Protestors on the roof of Paula Bennett's electorate office.

Beneficiary attacks

power structures. In its capacity as regulator, the government is largely responsible for ensuring the economy works. However, two powerful forces are responsible for the emergence of beneficiaries in an economy. The upper echelons of Western government had unprotected sex with neo-liberal economics, and eventually gave birth to a financial crisis and a mountain of debt. As of 2012, big business has not knitted any booties nor changed the economy's nappies in quite some time. Despite this lax caregiving, the government keeps its mouth shut when big business gets drunk and violent at family events. Relatives shake their head in disapproval at the government's inept parenting, but often neglect to hold big business to account. While those crazy lovers nut it out in the back room, the economy is left crying in a cot.

With such incompetent or uninterested parents, it's unsurprising that this economy, born around 2008, is still unable to walk on its own. But beneficiaries are a product of such a broken economy, not the cause. The financial crisis was not preceded by increased public spending, but by a swathe of privatisation and tax cuts. Public spending serves to undo the drastic personal and social consequences of free market reform. As such, most beneficiaries do not freely choose to take the benefit, but do so from necessity. In desperation (or 'confidence', as John Key likes to think of it), many are looking hard for work in increasing numbers, despite growing unemployment rates. A university graduate choosing between a freezing works job, the dole and starvation hardly marks a healthy society, but apparently any job, no matter the personal, social and environmental cost, is more honourable than taking the dole.

Welfare reform has forced parents to look for a job (on top of the work they are already doing raising a child), but provides little to no jobs for them to get. If neither effective child-rearing nor work in the formal economy is possible, it is difficult to see that welfare reform on its own has any purpose other than keeping parents

in a state of constant agitation, stuck halfway between home and the office. The pressure comes on harder if women give birth while on the dole, as they will be forced to look for work when the child is 1 year old rather than 5. Choice offered to women here is either taking possibly health-altering contraception (as I shall discuss later), or being deeper thrust into government-created and/or condoned poverty as punishment for giving birth. National's policies seem to involve taking a firm grip on beneficiaries' hands and telling them to stop hitting themselves.

There is some puzzlement at women's outrage around the contraceptive poli-

“it is difficult to see that welfare reform on its own has any purpose other than keeping parents in a state of constant agitation, stuck halfway between home and the office.

cy—after all, having resources provided to enjoy sex safely is what many women have been waiting for. But it is the role of doctors and other trained health professionals to provide contraception, not the benefit office. WINZ case managers are not renowned for their sensitivity to clients; take for example the woman who was told to dumb down her CV so she could get a job. Getting the benefit, even if being unemployed is usually for reasons far beyond the beneficiary's control, is to be made as humiliating an experience as possible. Given the lack of effective customer service training at WINZ, it is unlikely that adequate training will be given to deal with particularly sensitive issues surrounding a beneficiary's reproductive life.

Of particular concern are the negative side effects that long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) can have on women. Copper intra-uterine devices (IUDs) are unsuitable for women who have heavy or painful periods, as it may worsen them. Depo-provera and the contraceptive implant work via hormones, and can cause depression—hardly helpful in getting beneficiaries motivated for commercial work—euphoria, weight gain, hair loss, decreased libido, among other things. The compromised bone density caused by prolonged depo-provera usage is particularly troubling, as the teenage women targeted by the contraceptive policy will need to maintain good bone health in order to avoid osteoporosis later on. Although all this information is readily available online, many may not have easy access to computers or know exactly what to look for.

There is clearly a need for more discourse around safe sex, since it is often not practised by either gender. But perhaps this debacle could be avoided if women stopped having sex entirely. Certainly an element of slut-shaming is present; at least one WINZ officer reportedly told a woman to “shut your legs”. Suspiciously, no contraceptive policy counterpart for men exists, although long-term reversible male contraception is available. Moreover, LARCs do not prevent STDs, and so may be less appropriate forms of contraception for non-monogamous people.

Will WINZ case managers provide advice on condom usage, to male beneficiaries as well as female? If not, it appears that this government is implying that people who have sex outside of a long-term monogamous relationship, particularly women, deserve any and all of the potentially negative consequences of their lifestyle. And strangely, the same follows even for those who want to look after children, monogamous or otherwise. ‘Breeding for a career’ is a compliment when it is economically convenient to have women fill that role, and an insult when not.

Report: Twenty years of the Wellington People's Centre

By Ian Anderson. Sue Bradford, who helped set up the Peoples' Centres, will be speaking on the unemployed and beneficiary fight-back at the Workers Party's Socialism 2012 conference.

After 20 years of support for unemployed and low-income workers, the Wellington People's Centre (WPC) closed its doors on the 28th of April 2012. However most services continue to operate independently, and by decision of the membership the WPC remains as a legal entity.

Background: by the people, for the people

Peoples' Centres first formed in the early '90s, out of the radical unemployed workers' movement. In an interview for the April Spark Sue Bradford explained, "This was partly because things were getting tougher, and partly because having a paid membership base made our work with unemployed workers more effective. People's Centres provided services, including hair-dressing and medical services."

The WPC itself formed out of the Wellington Community Law Centre, Wellington Unemployed Workers Union, DPB Action and Downtown Community Ministry in 1992. The only centre to last for two decades, by early 2012 the WPC provided cheap dentistry, counselling, Social English classes, Workers' Rights advice and benefit rights advocacy.

Isolation of the Wellington Peoples' Centre

In recent years the WPC has become isolated. In the late '80s and early '90s the unemployed movement was galvanised by large-scale redundancies, how-

ever with the near-destruction of the left & organised labour movement this ultimately waned. The movement's retreat undermined the membership base of people's centres across the country.

Most WPC services, while necessary, were not profitable. Given the unprofitability and fluctuating paid membership base, services became dependent on diminishing grants funding. Ultimately the centre was unable to meet its rent obligations, and was evicted.

Services continue in new forms

Each of the services has had to find a new home. Given its cashflow issues the WPC was already restructuring prior to the eviction, but the eviction demanded far more drastic changes.

The management committee consulted with membership on how to restructure services. A well-attended Special General Meeting on Wednesday the 28th of March saw discussion of priorities, and some amendments to remits proposed by the management committee. The mem-

bership overwhelmingly passed motions that the WPC continue as an incorporated society, and that the management committee seek to sell the dental service to an appropriate like-minded organisation.

The dental service could only continue in its location under new ownership, but the membership sought to ensure it remain low-cost. By selling to the highest buyer, the WPC would sacrifice the lowest cost dental service in the region: 80% of dental services in Wellington are owned by the corporation Lumino, which sets targets incompatible with maintaining a low cost service. Staff are aiming to set the practice up as an independent trust.

Other services such as benefit advocacy and worker's rights advice have found new homes in the community. Details for these can be found at wellingtonpeoplescentre.org.nz

The WPC retains a membership base, a website and a bank account. By maintaining the existence of the People's Centre as an incorporated society, the membership is leaving the door open for future developments.



Queer the night

Queer The Night demonstration in Wellington

The following is a speech given by Workers Party member Kassie Hartendorp at a 'Queer the Night' protest last month which was organised by the Queer Avengers.

Kia ora whanau,

My name is Kassie and I work for School's Out, a queer youth organisation, and I am also a member of the Queer Avengers. I'm here speaking to you today, because I want to really drive home that the experiences of the youth up here tonight are not isolated cases.

The whole reason that queer youth support organisations exist is due to the fact that our schools, our families and our communities are not always safe places to come out as a queer or questioning teenager. Our entire existence is based on the fact that so many of our youth and adults, are still unaccepted, marginalised, or treated as second class to heterosexual or cis-gender people.

As a youth worker, I see many of the younger generations coming through

with a confidence that even I, as a 22 year old find absolutely inspirational. When I was young, even going to a queer group was too terrifying for me, let alone starting a Queer Straight Alliance, or standing up at a march in front of so many people.

But there are some who haven't quite reached that confidence yet, or have to go through hell to get there. I'm talking about the youth that do experience verbal or physical abuse for being or just appearing queer, or who get forced or kicked out of their homes with nowhere to go. I'm talking about the youth who turn to self-harm, or drugs and alcohol to cope. I'm also talking about the youth who have to go through the very basic fear of coming out to those they don't know, and more scarily, the ones they do know. I'm talking about those who leave school because of bullying or unacceptance, and I'm talking about the ones who take their own lives.

Now these are big issues we're dealing with. Big issues that require a lot of a support, right? And these are only with

the youth that feel confident or are connected enough to be able to reach us in the first place. We don't know how many slip under the radar, as family secrets, isolated and unsupported.

Now, many of our schools won't let School's Out in to try and create environments that accept and affirm queer identities. It's funny, they tell us they have no gays here. That's just bad math. Statistically, you're gonna have queers present, but you have created an environment where not one feels safe enough to express their sexuality. But at the moment, no one is holding these schools to account.

Members of School's Out went to meet with local gay MP, Grant Robertson last year to discuss the issue of homelessness in queer youth, which has taken a sharp increase not just here, but in Auckland as well, over the past year. After asking advice on how to find emergency housing from a parliamentary representative and fellow queer, we were told that there was nothing he could do or that we could do. He then referred us on to a known transphobic service where we were abruptly sent away.

The Queer Avengers also had a meeting with senior advisers from the Ministry of Education, where those on the other side of the table, told us that they didn't have the powers, or rather, the motivation to make our schools safer places. They can't tell schools what to do, they say. But they are more than willing to bully schools around when it comes to national standards, they're just not willing to do anything when queer youth are taking their own lives. They say "it's just the system." Well we're here to say, your system isn't fucking working.

You know, we shouldn't have to be fighting these fights, we shouldn't have to be watching youth go through the hardest time in their lives as a queer, when it should be a time when they are learning who they are, growing and develop-



Kassie speaking at the Queer the Night rally.

Queer the night/Homophobia

ing in a positive way that affirms their identities. It's not too much to ask, and maybe we wouldn't be asking it, if we had those in power accepting that we need to have the resources to get up there on that damn cliff, miles before the edge, with some warmth, understanding and acceptance, rather than standing at the bottom waiting for them to all drop off one by one, hoping to hell that you're there in time to cushion their fall. And more often, you're not.

Now all that we have had to rely on, over the decades, is each other. The responsibility for looking after ourselves is mostly done through our communities together. We can't rely on a broken system, that

even if it got its act together and stopped cutting important social services, and putting through bills like the 90 Day Hire and Fire Bill which all have a negative impact on our most vulnerable; it would still be fundamentally broken at the end of the day. We have queer MPs in the House, we've had legislation like the Homosexual Law Reform Act: WHY ARE WE STILL HERE TODAY?

We need a two-tier movement that yes, works in Parliament, but also is on the ground, demanding for more than the meagre hand we have been dealt. We need strong queer groups, and solid straight alliances. Furthermore, we need to support and give solidarity to women's

groups, Maori groups, Pasifika groups, Asian groups, unions, groups spread across the community that understand oppression, because we can't do this on our own.

Lastly, I wanna tautoko all the volunteers for places like School's Out, Tranzform and other queer organisations across the country. I wanna thank the Gay Wellington Welfare Group and the wider queer community for its continuous support in helping us out. I wanna thank the organisers for not being afraid to get out there and say what needs to be said, and all of you for coming here tonight in support. It makes me feel like I know, that with a bit of work, things are gonna get better.

Homophobia is still a real issue in New Zealand

By Robert Read, a Workers Party supporter in Christchurch

On Saturday the 26th of May 2012 at around 7pm an 18 year old, Zakk Davies, was walking home after dropping some friends off at The Viaduct. He was approached by three males.

These males began to flirt with Zakk which he believes is because they had thought he was a female. Even though he was dressed like any other teen male on a Saturday night in jeans and a t-shirt, once they realized he obviously wasn't they very quickly became aggressive towards him. They began to punch him until he fell to the ground at which point they proceeded to punch and kick him mainly in the abdomen.

He remembers, while they were kicking and punching him, they were shouting some of the most disgusting homophobic comments he had ever heard. He recalled that they were "Calling me disgusting and a burden on society", but the worst comment he can remember was that they "wish they could do to the gays what Hitler did to the Jews".

At some point they were kicking him in the head and he must have been knocked-out, as he awoke 3 and a half hours later in gutter. Bloody, crying and bruised he got up still not sure entirely of what happened and walked to the next place he knew would feel safe, his friend's



Zakk Davies after his attack.

place.

He has posted on his facebook account a picture of his face, battered and bruised, with this statement.

"I am uploading this not for sympathy, but as a warning to the gay community. When in town at night, always stay as a group because homophobia is still around, and there are people out there that want to hurt you. Thank you to the 3 guys that decided to beat me up last

night, for taking it out on my body and avoiding my face."

His facebook profile has been flooded with messages of support and outrage that this is still happening not only around the world but in our own backyard. Zakk said his "spirit will never be broken" and that he strives to use his experience to help the gay community.

A comment from Gay Bi NZ online community personality Ricardo Edwards says "It saddens and angers me greatly that atrocities such as this continue against members of the gay community. Against members of the HUMAN RACE. This incident has further fuelled a desire that has already been burning in me for some time, and that is to rid our beautiful country of the hatred and bigoted attitude that still lingers in ugly pockets throughout our society. Our goal, our dream, and it WILL be our reality. True equality."

The Workers Party supports gay liberation and continues to be active in day-to-day struggles against homophobia.

Science and socialism

How science can be used to benefit the majority: Part 1

In this first of two articles lab technician and Workers Party member in Hamilton Josh Glue discusses the nature of science and the limitations and advantages put upon it by the capitalist system. In next month's issue of The Spark, a follow-up article will examine the possible advantages for scientific discovery and application in a socialist future.

“Science, generally speaking, costs the capitalist nothing, a fact that by no means prevents him from exploiting it.” So Karl Marx said in Volume 1 of his masterwork *Capital*. Science is not often cited as a central focus of socialist thought, but the interplay between the advance of scientific thought and application and the continuing operation of the capitalist economic system is an issue of great importance for the future of humanity and another reason for the growing need to replace capitalism with a better economic and social regime. Marx hit the nail on the head. The expense in funding a ground breaking piece of scientific discovery is sometimes massively overshadowed by the profit for private capital gained from the use of the technology that discovery creates.

Public sector and public-funded science

For example, the most commonly used methods of creating transgenic plant lines were developed by universities with public and private funding (the majority public in the form of buildings, infrastructure, equipment and staff salaries) yet the majority of profits from these ground breaking sciences go to private capitalist conglomerates like Monsanto. Indeed, this is a common archetype of public-funded innovation going to line the pockets of the private sector. Universities are built by workers, funded

by workers taxes and filled largely with workers children as students, yet the universities themselves either feel no need to “repay the favour” to society at large, or else are severely restricted in doing so by their desperate need for greater funding and thereby led into the arms of capital to fund further research which is also expropriated.

In other ways scientists are more restrict-

“...the overarching purpose of private science is profit, which means theoretical research in more esoteric branches of science is generally underfunded or ignored, despite the fact it may lead to great advances in the future...”

ed and their precious funding squandered by the way science has to operate under capitalism. In universities and research institutes alike, funding is typically modest and short term, meaning application is a constant process, so that the most experienced and skilled members of a research team, usually the team leader or supervisor, is more often in the office than in the lab where their passion and talent lies. Administrative costs are also abnormally high in NZ, with a greater percentage of funding wasted on a top-heavy undemocratic model of management and leadership that reduces the

ground floor scientist's ability to get the resources she or he needs promptly and to have a say in the operation of the institutes that their research makes possible.

Science in the private sector

In the private sector as well, structural and systemic problems restrict the ability of scientists to advance human thought and apply scientific discoveries for the benefit of all. The competitive model of capitalism makes for leaner funding models and less bureaucracy in some companies, but that isn't necessarily a good thing because less bureaucracy can result in less efficiency in other areas. Compared to the public sector, private research and commercial science is also plagued by unnecessary levels of management and an even greater lack of science workers having a say in the running of their labs. Furthermore, the overarching purpose of private science is profit, which means theoretical research in more esoteric branches of science is generally underfunded or ignored, despite the fact it may lead to great advances in the future, help in understanding complex ecosystems, or simply expand mankind's knowledge of the universe.

In the same way, funding for research and technology that might benefit the great majority of humanity is always minimal. How else can you explain the lack of funding to eradicate the decimating parasitic diseases of Sub-Saharan Africa or money to actually fight global warming properly while millions of dollars goes to creating “terminator seeds” of transgenic high-yield crops, with engineered seed infertility so farmers must buy their seeds anew each year, or engineering high lysine corn to breed fat, high-value pigs instead of creating disease resistant subsistence crops for poor countries?

Against the mistrust of science – for science as a tool of liberation

Much of the present distrust and misunderstanding of science amongst the public is due to a fear of advanced and powerful science like nuclear power and transgenic techniques being in the hands of a class of humanity who constantly seek their own enrichment at the expense and exploitation of their fellow human beings. People understand, often without realising they do, that even technology with massive positive potential is corrupted if used only for private gain. If you press the average opponent to genetic engineering you will find they are actually opposed to the general operation of capitalism and its effect on the technological products of human thought.

The great scientific thinkers of the past and present have spoken highly of the ideals of science, and well they should. The purpose of science, the spirit or heart of the thing, is an issue of debate that is broad and philosophical. But, put simply, for many idealistic scientists the purpose of science is this: The expansion of pure human knowledge of the material universe and the advancement of sustainable human prosperity to eliminate the horrors of want, disease and suffering for the greatest possible number of people.

In the early 1950s Dr Jonas Salk developed an effective oral vaccine against polio, saving countless lives from disability or death. Rather than patent his incredible discovery for his own enrichment, he gave it free to the world, ensuring it could be distributed to the furthest corners of the globe in the hopes of eradi-

cating the disease altogether. While polio still clings on in some of the poorest parts of the world, the failure to eradicate it worldwide speaks far more to the impracticality and weakness of world bourgeois democracy than to Salk's excellent vaccine.

Science and technology are the collective product of thousands of years of human thought, work and the mind-boggling capacity of the human spirit. This wealth of knowledge should be the common birth-right of all the people of the world.

If all of scientific thought could be used without greed or restriction against the great horrors of disease and hunger, in a democratic world without class or borders, what wonders would humanity be capable of?

CODE GREEN

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Music review

Born Villain (2012) Marilyn Manson Hell, etc/Cooking Vinyl

Reviewed by Byron Clark

Born Villain is the 8th studio album from shock-rocker Marilyn Manson, and the first released on his own label after his departure from Interscope records (who censored part of his previous album). It's been described as a comeback album and this has led some critics to praise Manson's return to form, and others to lament the sameness of this album. One critic described it as "Manson by numbers".

It certainly does sound familiar, though with a somewhat heavier baseline than previous albums- the track The Gardener could even be described as funky. Lyrically though the album is something of a disappointment. There is some stuff that will shock and offend, but its shock for shock's sake. While it's a stretch to describe Marilyn Manson as a political artist, part of his appeal was always his ability to hold a mirror up to society and cast a critical reflection. Manson was known for exploring the American obsession with "the three G's", Guns, God and Government, which was the title of his world tour a decade ago. His previous album, The High End of Low was his most explicitly political with songs like Black and White and We're From America but there is little in the way of social commentary on Born Villain.

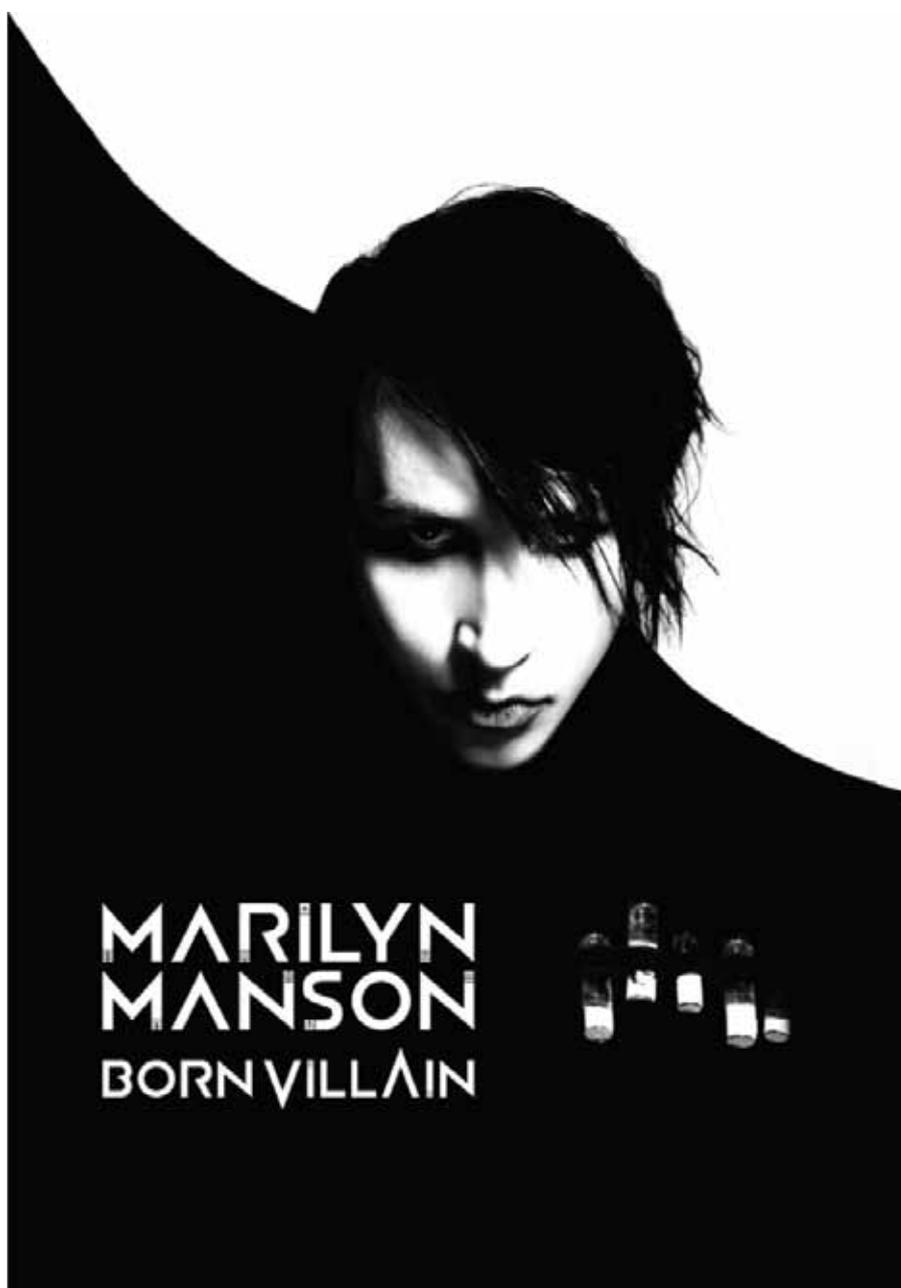
As an artist and musician, Marilyn Manson is a good as ever. But the world now is a very different place than at the height of his popularity. Shock rock was a great way to draw attention to things that perhaps we'd rather not think about, but in the years since Manson's 2003 album Golden Age of Grotesque one hasn't needed to look to art to show us just how grotesque the modern world is. Since then we've been exposed to the photos of torture at Abu Ghraib prison, the Wikileaks video 'Collateral Murder' showing journalists being gunned down

by U.S. soldiers, and most recently photos published in the LA Times showing U.S. soldiers taking body parts as trophies.

When interviewed by Michael Moore for his film Bowling for Columbine Manson- at that time the center of a moral panic around heavy metal and school shootings - commented "the President was shooting bombs overseas, yet I'm a bad guy because I, well I sing some rock-and-roll songs, and who's a bigger influence, the President or Marilyn Manson? I'd like to think me, but I'm going to go with the President." Perhaps in 2012 people are pointing fingers in the right direction when it comes to the horrors of the world, and shock rock scapegoats

like Manson are not going to get the attention they once did.

Concurrently, the alienation and isolation that Manson tapped into the late the 1990s to create a fan base is not there to the same degree- while no doubt those phenomena still exist, especially with the uncertainty many young people face about their future, social movements like the Indignados and Occupy are giving people hope in a way that means there isn't a 'despair audience', to coin a phrase, so much as their once was. As such Born Villain is unlikely to bring in new fans, but if you are an existing fan it's definitely worthy of rotation among previous albums.



Commentary on Greece

The situation in Greece is electric. Resistance against the austerity measures imposed by the ruling parties in cahoots with the European Central bank and the International Monetary Fund is building. The radical SYRIZA coalition has become a focus of the world's attention,

from people under the pressure of sustained austerity to rulers and ruling parties, fearful of this organised opposition spreading to their countries.

As supporters of this growing resistance, *The Spark* editorial team has decided to reference a number of useful articles/

commentaries on the situation in Greece. The situation is changing rapidly ahead of the elections scheduled June 17 elections, we encourage all readers to keep an eye on our website workersparty.org.nz and to keep abreast of the situation as it unfolds.

Slavoj Zizek is a European Marxist philosopher and political commentator

“Critics of our current democratic arrangements complain that elections don't offer a true choice: what we get instead is the choice between a centre-right and a centre-left party whose programmes are almost indistinguishable. On 17 June, there will be a real choice: the establishment (New Democracy and Pasok) on one side, Syriza on the other. And, as is usually the case when a real choice is on offer, the

establishment is in a panic: chaos, poverty and violence will follow, they say, if the wrong choice is made. The mere possibility of a Syriza victory is said to have sent ripples of fear through global markets.

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/2012/05/28/slavoj-zizek/save-us-from-the-saviours>

The CWI has parties, groups and individuals in over 45 countries around the world.

Their group in Greece (Xekinima) has been in existence since 1974 and has played important roles in many struggles over the past few decades. They are members of SYRIZA.

“The crucial question now is: can this left advance be pushed further and

channelled into a bigger victory in the second election? Will the Greek working class and its organisations embrace a rounded out revolutionary socialist programme? Without this it will not be possible to resolve the crisis in Greece or begin to solve the devastating social consequences of the austerity packages thus far introduced.

<http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/5767>

Upsurge in Greece

The International Socialist Organisation is a US based group that focus' on a number of agitational campaigns

It is linked to the Socialist Workers Party of Greece, who are involved in the Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left (ANTARSYA), a coalition that advocates leaving the Eurozone amongst other policies.

“I think it's very possible that we'll face some major provocations in the coming weeks. The rulers of Greece are very frightened right now. Until last week, they were hoping that the bourgeois parties would find a solution and create a government. Now they know that hope is finished, and they are very afraid about what comes next. If

the elections happen and SYRIZA comes in first place, it will be more difficult for them to stop us--I don't mean it's impossible, but it will be more difficult.

<http://socialistworker.org/2012/05/23/new-stage-of-resistance-in-greece>

The Kasama Project is a United States-based network of people organized to support a communist project for the overthrow and transformation of all oppressive social conditions.

They have links to the Communist Organization of Greece (KOE), a group that works within SYRIZA currently.

“The main thing to note here is that the long-standing establishment political parties

of capitalism have been shattered, that the Greek parliament has become increasingly polarized between a hard left and a hard right. This is more what a society looks like before a revolution or a civil war than before some grand resurgence of social-democracy and rescue of capitalist stability.

<http://kasamaproject.org/2012/05/08/greece-actually-overthrowing-the-troika-or-merely-seeking-left-unity/>



Greek workers on strike against the austerity measures being imposed.