



The SPARK

For workers power and international socialism
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November 2012

**Return of youth rates
to be challenged**

**Queensland construction workers
fight and win despite anti-union laws**

Why privacy breaches matter

**Child
Poverty &
Philanthropy**

Fight the attacks on beneficiaries

**The 'domestic purposes' benefit
& labour force participation**

**Women,
class,
& revolution**

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'The women on wall st try to predict how much they'll be worth tomorrow.' tinyurl.com/a35hrb4

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Editorial

By now a number of readers may have seen a letter that originally appeared in Northern Outlook, a small North Canterbury paper. In the letter Jasmine H, a 14 year old home-schooler, articulates her view that the legalisation of equal marriage, and with it a greater acceptance of homosexuality, will lead to ducks overtaking humans on the evolutionary ladder- not that she believes in evolution. The letter, humorous in its absurdity ended up on New Zealand blogs Kiwiblog and Bipolar Bear and then spread to US based blogs including IO9 and The Huffington Post. Coming full circle the letters international notoriety was then covered in The Press.

Unfortunately for the parents of home schooled children, the letter hardly paints the practice in a positive light, what good is home schooling if children learn to believe things that are demonstrably false? Of course, not all home schooled children are taught creationism and homophobia. Besides, whatever one's views on home schooling, welfare reforms that will require beneficiaries to have their children in school and early childhood education should be opposed on the basis that they unfairly target one section of society- these education requirements are not being placed on parents who obtain income through any other means. Barbra Smith of the Home

Education Foundation examines this in more depth in an article we have printed in this issue of The Spark.

We also look at the colossal failure of computer security at the ministry of social development, examining what went wrong and why it matters, as well as how one beneficiary activist has reacted to the news. We print a talk given in Wellington by Kassie Hartendorp on the topic 'Women Class and Revolution' and ask the question, do we need a rethink on how we view domestic labour? On top of all this, we bring you an article critiquing charity as a solution to child poverty.

Same work, same pay. Youth rates, slave rates!

By Joel Cosgrove, Wellington branch of the Workers Party.

The Government has recently announced the introduction of a new pay rate for 16 to 19 year-olds of a \$10.80 minimum wage set to take effect on April 1st 2013. The new youth rates will be set at 80% of the adult minimum wage (currently \$13.50) which will apply for the first six months of a job. It is not limited to a first job, so conceivably a young person could be on this wage multiple times.

While the government claims that it is voluntary, the reality in the workplace is that in this environment of high unemployment. Workers get no choice. The areas of work that this would apply i.e. fast food, supermarkets, retail etc. have an excess of people looking for work, demonstrated by the queues of thousands who line up to apply for a job every time a new supermarket is opened. It is estimated that 40,000 young people will be "eligible"/effectuated.

According to the spokesperson of the

New Zealand Retailers Association Louise Evans McDonald 71% of their members supported the reintroduction of youth rates when they were surveyed in 2011. Something which is unsurprising considering that for retail in particular wage costs are a large part of their operating costs. However when reading through the associations own 2011-12 Retail Market Summary they list a 31% increase in sales volume since 2004 compared to inflation of 22%, so retail isn't exactly suffering in the current financial climate, any decrease in workers' pay is purely going towards increasing profits.

Gilbert Peterson, Communications Manager for the Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA) was more honest with his appraisal of the new rates, acknowledging that they are "not a very high rate of pay" yet counterpoising that with the view that "most young people were not supporting children or spouses", (notably the Prime Ministers chief advisor recently pointed out in a speech to the EMA national conference that New Zealand has one of the highest

rates of teenage pregnancy in the developed world.)

Putting those points aside Sue Bradford, whose private members bill abolished youth rates six years ago, has pointed out that "This is not about new jobs. It is about pressing labour costs down as far as possible to maximise business profits." It is no coincidence that we are seeing welfare attacks being rolled out in tandem with attacks on work conditions. As much as the attacks are about making life on the various benefits as difficult as possible, it is also about sending a message out to the wider population, that this is what is in store if you lose your job, whether for standing up for your work rights or not putting up with harassment/bullying in the workplace.

The signal that the youth rate sends is that there are unemployed young people able to be employed at a lower cost than currently employed adults. Because the reality is that there is no discussion of young people taking over skilled engineering jobs or airline pilots roles. It is the low-skilled,

Youth rates

service sector of the economy that this is aimed at, where the differentiation between younger and older workers is now, primarily, that the younger workers can be (and will be) paid less. Within a wider perspective this is all part of a package of attacks that came to a head in the 1980's. As a result of these attacks Mike Treen, National Director of UNITE Union has estimated from official statistics that the difference in real pay in 2008 compared to 1982 was \$18 billion dollars a year. That's \$18 billion less that we're being paid and \$18 billion more that the employers are making compared to then. Youth rates are not an isolated attack.

In a move that appears to be a straight forward subsidy of employers, Kay Brereton, a spokesperson of the Beneficiary Advocacy Federation has outlined that if an 18 year old worker is paid \$10.80 for 20 hours as opposed to \$13.50 they would be eligible for a partial benefit of \$75.60, a difference of \$37.60. The employer saves \$55 and the worker is \$6.64 worse off. That's if they know they are eligible for a partial benefit at all.

Worryingly the current policy rollout goes all the way up to 19 year olds (who

have come off a benefit or are on an apprenticeship scheme). Redefining the concept of a teenager and of 'youth'. The youth wings of both the ACT and National parties came out strongly against the proposal to raise the drinking age with Sean Wallis NZ Vice-President of the Young Nationals stating:

"At its most simplest form, if we deem 18 and 19 year olds old enough to move away from home, take a student loan out or start to learn a trade, manage their power, rent, internet, groceries and so on, surely they're old enough to manage their own drinking habits?"

And yet this responsibility doesn't come back to being treated with the basic respect and dignity involved in paying the same for working the same job. The same arguments were raised at the time when it was being argued that women should be paid less than men. The logic is still the same.

Labour have come out strongly against this change arguing for the idea of 'same work, same pay' and yet their legislation, which was a watered down version of Sue

Bradford's anti-youth rates bill, brought in a requirement that young workers would have to work 200 hours in a role before being paid full rates. The reality being that in an un-unionised workplace where there is often little oversight or information for young people in these situations, the abuse can go on unchecked. Employers like McDonalds and KFC don't pay youth rates, even though they employ a large number of young people. But that is no act of generosity. The campaign to smash youth rates was a leading part of the Super Size My Pay campaign run by UNITE Union in 2005 involving thousands of young workers and students. Right now the difference for young people over whether they will be paid youth or adult rates is whether they are part of a union. The campaign to end youth rates was fought in and outside the workplace, not in parliament.

Recently as reported in the Kapiti Observer, John Key visited a WelTec training construction site in Otaki. He was challenged by carpentry student Brozon Richards about youth rates "He said it's only six months," Brozon said. "I don't want to work for \$10.80, I won't work for \$10.80."



A KFC member talking to the media during the supersizemypay.com campaign.

Why the MSD security breach matters

By Polly Peek

Last month scandal erupted as news broke that confidential client information, and financial records were freely available to anyone using self-service kiosks in Work and Income offices around the country.

The complete lack of security in the system has been the subject of much criticism, with systems administrators revealing just how simple it would have been to create a secure network or fix the security issues when they first became apparent.

Another aspect of the privacy issues which has sparked public outrage has been the confidential nature of the information available, and the ability for those viewing the information to identify the clients concerned, and in some cases locate them, as names and addresses (as well as other identifying information) had all been easily accessible.

On October 14th, independent journalist Keith Ng published an article detailing (without exposing the personal details of Ministry of Social Development clients) the information available at WINZ kiosks to anyone who had time and basic computer skills.

Amongst the information available were invoices for client medical appointments, staff pay, fraud investigations and debt collecting agency work, most of which contained the names of clients concerned.

Names of people involved in legal cases, including sensitive matters such as historic abuse cases against CYF were available, as were the name of a family supported by a community agency funded by MSD after a suicide attempt by their whanau member.

More concerning still were personal details for young people in Child Youth and Family care, including High and Complex Needs youth, contained the invoices.

Young people labelled as “High and Complex” needs are identified by social service agencies as the most at risk, or vulnerable.

They are children and teenagers in the care of Child Youth and Family, but who also very often have a numerous other difficulties related to mental illness, substance use issues, intellectual disability, behavioural issues, past trauma or abuse, physical health problems and educational needs.

Hypothetically, an HCN young person might be a 16 year old with the mental age of a 12 year old who has a history

“ We need a system that upholds people’s dignity, and the safety of those already vulnerable and ‘at risk’. A radical reflection on how state support should be organised must take into account, not only the structure of social welfare, but the culture of services providing support, in order to ensure personal information is handled respectfully.

of physical and sexual abuse, ADHD, expulsion from mainstream schools and

issues with absconding (running away) self-harm and drug use.

The attachment issues that can result from young people being moved from dysfunctional family situations to CYF residential and foster home placements mean that HCN young people can experience issues with family relationships, and can seek out inappropriate connections with other adults.

For young people with High and Complex needs, the availability of personal information to the general public places them in a more vulnerable situation than already exists.

Had the security flaw been found by someone other than IT workers and more recently Ng, CYF and community residential services for HCN youth, as well as the schools they attended, could have experienced a range of challenging situations, from the arrival of disgruntled family members at residential homes, to predatory men contacting young people in care.

People who work in HCN services know how these risks to young people’s safety occur already, without serious privacy breaches enabling them, and the extent to which the availability of this information puts young people at risk is very clear.

Since news broke of the security and privacy issues at the MSD, the political response has varied. Prime Minister John Key described the system flaw as a failure, however also publicly stated that the information accessed by Ng was not readily available to the public and could only be accessed with deliberate searching.

Labour and Green party spokespeople have argued against this, highlighting the ease with which the information could be found and drawing attention to the systemic privacy issues within government departments including recent issues with ACC and IRD client infor-

MSD privacy breach

mation.

It is this systemic nature of privacy and security issues which should be of concern. It is hard to believe that client confidentiality is a priority of the Government, when simple system flaws lead to the accessibility of highly confidential information.

The possibility of deliberate ignorance of the issue is also becoming apparent as advocacy groups and others reveal knowledge of the security issues, which MSD was made aware of soon after the development of the kiosk system.

In the context of the unintentional ACC



Freelance journalist Keith Ng broke the story

information leaks, and purposeful breach of beneficiaries' privacy by Social Development Minister Paula Bennett, the lack of consideration for people's confidential information is clear.

We need a system that upholds people's dignity, and the safety of those already vulnerable and 'at risk'. A radical reflection on how state support should be organised must take into account, not only the structure of social welfare, but the culture of services providing support, in order to ensure personal information is handled respectfully.

MSD Security failure: The technical side

The revelation last month that screeds of personal information were available for anyone to download (or edit) simply by walking into a WINZ office and using a public kiosk was a shock to everyone. Perhaps most shocked though are those who work in the field of computer networking and security. Neither Keith Ng, the blogger who broke the story, or Ira Bailey, the system administrator who tipped off Ng, 'hacked' into the computer network of the Ministry of Social Development. 'Hacking' would require some kind of circumvention of security. This was not a case of weak security; it was a case of no security.

As Ng pointed out in his Public Address blog post, the kiosks shouldn't even have been on the same network as client information. There was really no reason for it, but even if there was a reason for the kiosks being on the same network a very basic principle of network security was ignored. The 'principle of least privilege' dictates that if a user doesn't need to access a file or service on a network, they shouldn't have permission to. The user account for the public kiosks should not have had the permissions required to access client information and invoices.

Computer security can be broken, just as

a lock can be picked, but this case wasn't a lock being picked, it was the digital equivalent of leaving a filing cabinet unlocked with a door to the street wide open. The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) had been warned about their security hole. Kay Brereton, from Beneficiary Advocacy Federation, told Radio New Zealand that she had tested the kiosks not long after they were introduced and found people could get into the ministry's system.

"I went with my collectors and we had a little play on the kiosks to see what they can do, and one of the guys who was with us found out that you can get back into the MSD system," she said.

"We went far enough to know that there was a problem, and we let Work and Income and MSD national office know that that problem existed. It was important that they did something about it before someone with skills and time found their way back into Work and Incomes files."

MSD was also warned in April 2011 by Dimension Data, the firm contracted to check the kiosks security. In a presentation to hacker convention Defcon, Paul Craig, a Dimension Data employee, gave a presentation about kiosk security.

Twelve minutes in, he talked about using Open File dialogues as mini-Explorer windows, and discussed how they could be exploited. "This was what we used (albeit in a really unsophisticated way)" wrote Ng in a follow up to his original blog post. "This was Item #2 on Craig's list. It's just not plausible that he would have failed to warn MSD about it."

As well as the concerns raised by Brereton and Dimension Data systems administrator, Ira Bailey had discovered the hole while trying to access his USB flash drive on a WINZ kiosk. He had contacted the ministry and asked if there was a vulnerability report reward like that offered by some private companies such as Google. Some media have falsely reported this as Bailey demanding money for his information. Ng has written that all Bailey received from him was "a cup of coffee".

The fault here it would seem lies not with those IT professionals working on the computer network, but higher up in the ministry. Computer World quoted Ministry of Social Development CEO Brendan Boyle as saying "I am not confident that we took the right actions in response to Dimension Data's recommendations on security."

Activist cancels benefit to protest lax security

A beneficiary rights activist has cancelled her benefit to draw attention to the vulnerability of beneficiaries' private information following the revelation that thousands of private files were accessible through public internet kiosks at WINZ offices.

Olive McRae, a domestic purposes beneficiary and spokesperson for Welfare Justice Dunedin, said she believed the incident was the largest breach of privacy of a government organisation in New Zealand history.

"I have been raising concerns about the systemic institutional disregard for privacy within MSD for the past two years," Ms McRae said. "This large scale privacy breach is shocking but not surprising. What's worse is that these issues have been raised time and time again by clients and advocacy groups across the country."

"In 2009 the Minister accessed client's personal information and leaked it to the media for political point scoring. The Human Rights Commission and the Privacy Commission raised concerns and ruled that her actions constituted a breach of privacy."

"The Minister refused to accept their findings, and threatened to do it again. Earlier this year we had ten WINZ staff fired for accessing client's private information. And now we find that the entire

IT infrastructure is in jeopardy."

"Although the Ministry of Social Development had advised they would investigate the kiosk privacy issue they had no plans to deal with the broader issue of privacy in WINZ" she said. "The MSD refused to accept there was any issue with privacy of client's files."

"I went to WINZ on seeking some assurances about my privacy, and requested my information be taken off the database and stored in hard copy until I could have

an assurance from an independent auditor that my information was protected. I was assured the IT specialists were working until late at night trying to action my request. However I later found out that's not the case."

"My information isn't secure, so I see no option but to forfeit my benefit until they address my concern. I hope that my landlord won't kick me out too fast, and the electricity company doesn't cut the power right away"



Activist Olive McRae has cancelled her benefit in protest.

Olive McRae's letter to WINZ

To Work & Income Dunedin Central Office,

I am formally requesting all documentation on my file that is held within your computer system to be immediately removed from your data base. I formally request and give consent for all such information to be manually copied and held in hard copy only. Given the systemic privacy issues that MSD continue to experience, I no longer authorise any of the documentation that relates to me or my children to be held on your insecure system.

I have a right to protected privacy, which is something MSD cannot assure any clients of at this time. I expect this done immediately and without delay as my privacy and the privacy and safety of my children may currently be at risk. I will wait for this to be done in the waiting area, and I would like a statement from a manager that this task has been completed for verification purposes.

Donations to support Olive and her children during her time without other income can be deposited into the account 38 9010 0754683 00

Beneficiary attacks

‘Vulnerable Children’ not benefited by compulsory ECE

Barbara Smith, National Director of the Home Education Foundation (HEF) of New Zealand believes that the new Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill will not benefit New Zealand’s vulnerable children. The foundation is opposing the reforms which will see ‘social obligations’ placed on beneficiaries to send children aged 3-5 to an approved Early Childhood Education (ECE) provider for at least 15 hours per week, ensure that their children attend school from age 5/6, as well as registering their children with a general practitioner, and attend all the government-approved Well Child checks.

The government should not be coming into families like this and forcing our children to be separated from us.

In my book there are three kinds of children: vulnerable children, poor children, and other children,” According to Paula Bennett, vulnerable children are “the thousands of children who are hurt, neglected, abused, and killed in New Zealand”

Ms Bennett quotes the government’s White Paper for Vulnerable Children, with some disturbing statistics. Between 7 and 10 children per year are killed by a carer. In 2010, 209 children under 15 were treated in hospital for assault-related injuries.

In the 2011-2012 financial year, Child Youth and Family services (CYFS) received 152,800 care and protection notifications. After investigations, CYF found 4,766 cases of neglect, 3,249 cases of physical abuse, and 12,114 cases of emotional abuse. As of 30 June 2012, there were 3,884 children in out-of-home state care.

With figures as high as this, why is Paula Bennett only looking for a 5% reduction in assaults on children by 2017? According to the Ministry of Social Develop-

ment website, the Ministry is working on three results that will support vulnerable children. These are a 98% early childhood education attendance rate, a 95% immunisation rate, but only a 5% decrease in assaults on children!

Contrasted with vulnerable children are poor children, who come from families on a benefit or a very low wage. These children’s parents don’t have a lot of money to spend on the children but they are loved, clean, well fed, and often educated at home, these children are not vulnerable! Their parents sacrifice for them and the government’s White Paper describes them just the same way as the vast majority of children.

“ Learning at home is a legitimate choice which every parent, even a beneficiary, should have the right to choose, and no child should be forced to part from his or her parent for 15 hours per week.

According to the White Paper, “The vast majority of children enjoy loving and supportive homes and families. Most parents put their children first, second, and third in their order of priorities. Most of all, they want their children to be happy and fulfilled.

So why does Paula Bennett want to use the Social Security Bill to compel all children of beneficiaries to attend ECE and school, enrol with a GP, and attend

the Well Child/Tamariki Ora checks? Clearly this will have an effect on the thousands of children of beneficiaries whose parents are neither neglecting nor abusing them.

My question now is, Who are the vulnerable children? I have several young children whom I home educate. In my case Paula Bennett would say that my children are vulnerable because they don’t attend ECE or school and they are not immunised.

So now every child who doesn’t attend ECE or is not immunised is defined as vulnerable, and the government is trying to impose its health and educational goals on everyone while they ignore the truly vulnerable children who are being assaulted or killed.

According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Standards (E/C.12/1999/10, Article 13.29), parents have a right to choose what kind of education they will give their children. Over the years there has been a lot of research that children do much better at home than in Early Childhood centres.

Dr Sarah Farquhar, a New Zealand academic, says that the family has a much greater impact on a child’s achievements than Early Childhood Education. Papers published in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry have shown that more cognitive demands are placed on four-year-olds at home by mothers than at preschool by teachers, and that significantly more complex language is used at home by parents and children than at school by teachers and children.

Learning at home is a legitimate choice which every parent, even a beneficiary, should have the right to choose, and no child should be forced to part from his or her parent for 15 hours per week.

Construction workers strike in Queensland

by Mike Kay, Auckland branch of the Workers Party

Many Kiwis see Australia as a land of high wages and great opportunities. But as the Australian economy has slowed down, workers there have had to struggle to maintain their relatively good terms and conditions, even in well-unionised industries. Employers have put up increased resistance over the renewal of Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs), the main form of collective agreements in Australia.

To get a result, workers took a 21-day strike at Laing O'Rourke, 18 days at Thiess, and two weeks at Lend Lease. In response to the strong resistance from employers there has been a lot of worker determination to secure agreements, particularly ones which include a subcontractor clause and job security benefits.

In early October, construction workers won an eight-week strike at Queensland Children's Hospital in Brisbane. Early in the dispute, union officials had been served with injunctions by Abigroup (part of Lend Lease), and prevented from accessing the site, so they called in Bob Carnegie, a community organiser and a former Builders Labourers Federation stalwart. The strikers had to work

around the anti-union laws and build new forms of organisational support for their struggle.

Bob observed that: "The more we increased the democracy of the organisation, the more determined the workers became. It was an interesting study in the importance of democracy in a dispute. We had full site meetings at least once a week in the Serbian Hall in South Brisbane. We ran those meetings as democratically as possible and made sure everyone was given a say. It created the feeling that people were actually part of something, instead of being hectored, which is what can happen at certain union meetings."

Socialist groups rallied to support the workers. Socialist Alternative and others helped raise money for the strikers as hardship set in after several weeks on the picket line. Workers' Liberty produced leaflets to keep people informed of the dispute, and their British comrades organised a picket of Lend Lease's plush London office.

Bob recalls: "we made sure the dispute didn't become static by keeping everyone informed about what was going on. We'd have at least one meeting every day on the protest line at Graham Street where we'd give a run-down of what was go-

ing on, and we'd have guest speakers in, like Brian Boyd from the Trades and Labour Council in Victoria. We had guys in from the Transport Workers Union and the Maritime Union, and other working-class organisations. It helped the guys feel like they weren't completely alone.

"We also found the international messages very helpful. A lot of the men and women were gobsmacked and really impressed that workers in Turkey, Iran, and elsewhere had heard about and were supporting their struggle.

"We worked to make links with workers on other construction sites. We protested against attacks on Grocon workers [in Melbourne], and marched to the big Grocon site at Elizabeth Street in Brisbane, and helped organise a community protest there which shut down the site twice. Since the return to work, the workers are feeling strong and they're determined that things will work better than they did before."

The result of this campaign was that Abigroup conceded the workers' two central demands. The existing non-union EBA will be cancelled and replaced by a union EBA. And the new EBA will contain a subcontractors' clause ensuring the rate for the job for every worker on the site whatever subcontractor employs them.

However, the battle is not over yet, because Bob Carnegie is now being sued on 54 separate counts by Abigroup. The company is seeking damages on the grounds that Bob defied a court order which they got, instructing him to stay away from the community protest. The right wing Queensland government is supporting Abigroup in their witch hunt. This is an attempt to intimidate not only an individual, but every organiser in every workers' struggle in future. A defence campaign, the Trade Union Defence Committee, has been set up in Brisbane, and messages of support can be made at: <http://bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com>



Bob Carnegie faces fines of \$400,000 and potential time in prison for supporting striking workers.

Women's liberation

Women, class, and revolution

Talk given by Wellington Branch Member, Kassie Hartendorp on October 9th, 2012.

The general view circulating the Western world is that women have it all. Women's oppression is a relic of the past; we have independence, freedom and lions (see picture) We forged our way out of the kitchen, paved our path up the career ladder and scaled the ivory tower. There's no doubt that we've made tremendous gains, on the shoulders of our courageous forebears, yet something still doesn't seem quite right. Maybe it's that glass ceiling that we find ourselves bumping our heads on in the workplace, it could be the harassment we encounter as we walk through our supposedly reclaimed streets, or the double shift we bear when

we come home from work just to start our second unpaid job in the home. Maybe, your life seems pretty swell as an identified, independent woman; free of all of these pesky problems - I can't speak for each of us individually. But I can point to a wider system of oppression, which continues to exist on a structural level despite our gains, our wins, our slow, but significant triumphs.

What does women's oppression look like?

So what does the oppression of women look like in 2012? How does it manifest itself? Let me give a bit of background into the larger picture.

While women in the Western world are entering higher education in their droves, education is still an issue for a

large number of women worldwide. On a global level, women account for two thirds of the world's 774 million adult illiterates, with this being unchanged over the past two decades. Women have historically been actively barred from education, with major changes only happening within the past half a century. Even among those in higher education, women are still underrepresented in disciplines that offer the highest paying and highest status jobs.

In terms of work, women now make up a large percentage of the paid labour force in most countries. However, they are notably overrepresented in the lowest paying jobs, with men holding the most wealth, status, power and authority in their occupations. Horizontal and vertical job segregation has contributed to a global gender pay gap, which while



A 21st century women's liberation movement needs to learn from those that came before it.

is closing in some countries, still remains the same if not worse in others.

While women have increased in their participation in the paid workforce, they are still doing twice the amount of unpaid work as men are in all regions in the United Nations; resulting in a double burden of both paid work and family responsibilities.

According to UN gender reports women perform 66% of the world's work, produce 50% of its food and earn a whopping 10% of its income. And they own just 1 percent of the world's property.

Women still have little official influence and power when it comes to decision-making. In national parliaments, women make up only 17 percent of the total seats; only 7 of 150 elected Heads of State in the world are women, and 11 of the 192 Heads of Government.

In the private sector, women are beginning to make gains, but still, of the 500 largest corporations in the world, only 13 have a female CEO with many experiencing the glass ceiling that acts as a barrier to women wanting to rise through the ranks.

Statistics also indicate that universally, women are still subjected to violence, on a physical, sexual, psychological, and economic level. Many regions of the world still adhere to customs that beat, mutilate and kill women in ways that are dissimilar to how men are treated. Women are subjected to intimate violence in every single region of the world. In Aotearoa, 1 in 3 women experience physical or sexual violence at the hand of a partner in their lifetime, while the Government continues to provide a lack of funding to offer support to survivors. Rape culture is still a rampant force that acts to blame the victim, rather than the perpetrator, thus refusing to acknowledge the true issue of sexual violence.

According to the UN, "Poor infrastructure and housing conditions as well as natural hazards disproportionately affect women from the less developed regions in terms of unpaid work, health

and survival." More than half of rural households and about a quarter of urban households in sub-Saharan Africa lack easy access to drinking water, with women taking on this burden. In these cases, as Angela Davis says, clean water is literally a feminist issue.

In less developed regions, poverty is often a burden that affects women and girls the hardest, with women having lower proportions of cash income than men. Existing laws still restrict women's access to land and other types of property in most countries in Africa and about half the countries in Asia.

While Beyonce's singing that we all run the world, women have next to no control in terms of economic resources. In fact, we don't even have control over our own bodies most of the time. Access to quality healthcare, abortion and contraception are still a major issue in many regions of the world. The right to abortion on request only exists in 29 percent of the world's countries, and even among those, there are still rigid requirements for what a woman chooses to do with her body

This is just a snapshot of women's status in the world today. This probably isn't news to most of you here, but when we lay it out like this, we can stop thinking of our problems, however 'first world' they may seem, as isolated and individual phenomena, but rather underlying threads of a wider structural issue that permeates the far reaches of the globe, albeit in different ways.

Patriarchy and the historic development of capitalism

The oppression of women on a global level is not a new phenomenon. Women have been subjected to violence, degradation and discrimination for centuries spanning across different civilisations, countries and cultures. This system has been understood by feminists as a result of the patriarchy; the set of ideas that asserts and maintains the dominance of

men over women. It is largely attributed to the disproportionate and sometimes exclusive, passing down of leadership and power to men, creating with it, a complex web of beliefs that form expectations of women, leaving them confined in their choices and opportunities. You might have also heard the term; kyriarchy, which encompasses the wider system of oppression and domination, taking into account the intersectionality of different identities, as well as the class division. This means that, for instance, a black, disabled man is not seen to have the same privilege or tools to exert dominance over woman as a white, able-bodied man. This adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of how power works.

Marxism to an extent accepts the feminist critique that patriarchy or kyriarchy exists as a set of ideas of male domination over women, but takes this further by placing these ideas within a specific historical context and by analysing how capitalism utilises these ideas to enforce the material relations of domination of one class over another. Through this process, socialist feminists show how the fulfilment of the needs of women has become secondary and dependent to the needs of capital to return a profit.

Historically, Engels traced the real 'defeat of the female sex' to pre-capitalist societies, when monogamy became the norm, and wealth and property were passed down through the male members of the family. Although the ideology of patriarchy has existed since pre-capitalist times, the modern form of patriarchy with its capitalist class basis only developed alongside the industrial revolution in Britain in the 18th Century.

The industrial revolution was not only a revolution of economics, but a revolution of social relationships, including how patriarchy became a tool of class domination. Prior to the revolution, people across the world survived largely as a peasantry cultivating small plots of land and producing other commodities in their home, largely for personal use.

Women's liberation

A key part of the industrial revolution involved the creation of a working class ready able and ready to work in factories at wages below the level needed for subsistence. This required a process of forced removals from the lands. From 1760 to 1820 the enclosures in England did exactly that, village to village, often through force and bloodshed.

Once removed from the land and the modicum of security that it provided, the newly forming proletariat found itself possessing nothing but its ability to labour. Once dispossessed of their own means of production, women and women's existences became dependent first and foremost on their labour power being immediately able to be turned into a commodity and to produce a profit.

Angela Davis explains that in North America in the early 18th century, colonial women were not known as 'house keepers' but rather, qualified workers within a home-based economy. Industrialisation meant that this work started moving from the home to the factory and as this shift took place, women were left without a significant role in the economy. The new goods made in factories were known for their exchange value, meaning that were produced specifically to trade on the market and make a profit – rather than, say, butter made at home to eat at the next meal. As Davis writes, "this difference in production revealed a fundamental structural separation between the domestic home economy and the profit-oriented economy of capitalism. Because housework does not generate a profit, domestic labor was naturally defined as an inferior form of work as compared to capitalist wage labor."

Domestic labour

Of course there is no easy solution in creating gender equality on a global level; however, the struggle of women is intrinsically linked to the struggle of the working class in general. Our current system, capitalism, is one based on production for profit rather than social need. I think

this here is the crux of the issue. I'm going to use the example of unpaid work to illustrate my point:

Women are currently very active in the paid workforce, this we know. However, they often have the 'double burden' of working a full time or part time job, then coming home to shoulder the majority of domestic labour. As Lindsey German writes, under capitalism, women's work is divided into two parts – domestic role as wives, mothers and carers; and the economic role as wage earners outside the home. These roles are bound up with the expectations of where a woman belongs in society, and have been linked back to the notion that their natural place is in the caregiving, nurturing space of the home.

What many people don't realise, is that unpaid work makes up the majority of labour in Aotearoa. I'm talking about caregiving, grocery shopping, childcare and what Angela Davis refers to as the "invisible, repetitive, exhausting and uncreative" labour of housework. Over the course of a year, we do over 4.2 billion hours of unpaid work. If this is converted into full-time jobs of 40 hours a week, it equates to over two million jobs. Of the total hours spent on unpaid work, 2.7 billion are done by women and 1.5 billion by men. In NZ, women spend nearly twice the amount of time on unpaid work per day on average as men do, with the majority of women's productive activities being unpaid. Women have been shown to do the majority of household care, childcare and the purchasing of goods and services. They are also more likely than men to care for others outside their own household with a large percentage of particularly Maori women performing this role. Women also spend more of their time in unpaid work such as formal volunteering. All of this is not just a national phenomenon; across all the countries in the OECD, women are recorded as doing more unpaid work than men.

For all the unwaged labour that women spend time doing, they rarely get acknowledged or valued for it. You don't

get paid to raise your children, rather you pay for it. If you scrub the grime from the shower, you don't get a raise in your next performance review. Domestic labour is seen as 'unproductive' by capitalism, in that it doesn't directly make a profit, and is therefore not valued. Of course, workers see this labour as highly productive as we need it to maintain our families' and our individual lives. Buying our groceries, cooking our meals and raising our children is socially necessary work whether or not it produces a profit for the capitalist class.

As such, the responsibility of this work has been pushed onto individual families, with women bearing the full brunt. Women do not have an eight hour work day, they have 12 hours of work, of which 4 is unpaid. Imagine if every employer had to pay to nurse, raise, cook and clean for every employee. It would bust the economy, hence why it is necessary to outsource these costs and duties to households, family and whanau and sometimes communities, hapu and iwi.

It isn't just the immediate care of households that gets left to women, but also wider social needs, such as the care of family members who are ageing, have a disability, injury, illness or mental health experience. And anyone who has been a carer in this form knows that it can be a lot harder, sometimes physically and especially emotionally, than your average nine-to-five job. While we want to be able to care for our loved ones, we need to have the support structures in place that allow us to both perform these tasks and not have to worry about taking unpaid leave or having our other duties sacrificed.

Society has the means to be able to create solutions to most of these gaps, but capitalism is actually getting in the way of social progress. At the same time, these solutions are of course, not accessible to everyone. Most families can't afford proper daycare, let alone maids or support services, or some weeks, even proper groceries. So, it is in fact, the poorest women who bear the full brunt

of domestic labour, making this not just a feminist issue, but a class issue.

Under capitalism, advances in technology have already meant that the time we take to perform unpaid work has decreased. We have microwave ovens and convenience meals, express check outs and faster forms of transport. We have daycare centres, house cleaners, nannies and home help services. However, they have only been developed to the point to which they generate a profit.

The UN website talks about the crisis of water in less developed countries. They say it affects women and children the most, because they bear the burden of collecting water. "In some places, women have to walk nearly 10 kilometers to reach a water source. Girls drop out of school either because they have to help fetch water or because there aren't adequate sanitary facilities in school toilets. Millions of school days are lost as a result." We hear this all the time on emotionally manipulative UNICEF ads, but whenever I see them, I can't help but wonder why we have to resort to band-aid fixes rather than deeper solutions. The technology to build the infrastructure to provide sanitary running water to these villages exists, it just is not a priority for capitalists. To this end, the independence, freedom and sometimes mere survival of women is at the behest of capital.

Even if production under capitalism has provided us with the technology to be able to create solutions to problems such as unpaid work, the control of that technology is still outside of the hands of the majority of people. It is not until we can properly control the means of production – our workplaces, our communities, our wider systems – in a democratic way that is for fulfilling social need, that we can fully tackle the gaps in society that are left to women's responsibility.

So what is the real solution?

In 1896, socialist thinker, Clara Zetkin pointed out:

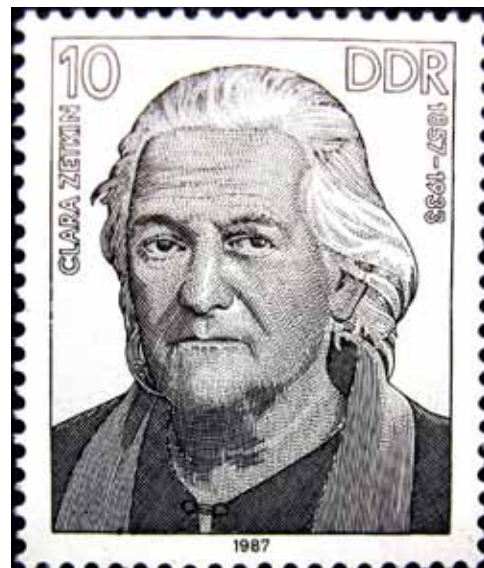
"Bourgeois society is not fundamentally opposed to the bourgeois women's movement ... the granting of political equality to women does not change the actual balance of power. The proletarian woman ends up in the proletarian camp, the bourgeois woman in the bourgeois camp."

Merely allowing some women the means to control capital as individuals, will not achieve the equality of all women, or all people. Socialist feminists believe that a complete transformation of our society is needed in order to fully address women's oppression. This means linking up with other oppressed groups and mobilising to bring about real social change, that isn't just voting for Labour or National every few years. It means addressing the economic and social relations that maintain women's lesser status in society.

The feminist movement has played a huge part in changing the roles and expectations of women, but it cannot address the broader material underpinnings. This requires a move away from a programme exclusively focused on the domination of women by men, towards a programme based on the system of the production and fulfilment of social need. History since Otto von Bismark in the 1880s has shown that we cannot incrementally move piece-by-piece towards the fulfilment of the socialist program,

but what is required is a complete break with capitalism.

German writes that the great disadvantage working class housewives in particular suffer, is that they are "atomised and cut off from participation in the collective action that can give the confidence to fight back against the system." I think we need to be moving away from a model that upholds individual change over collective transformation. Women need to be linked up with other social movements to be heading towards the goal of creating a new system built on the basis of the production for the fulfilment of social need. Although this is, of course, easier said than done. Movements such as Occupy have had marginalising and alienating effects on those who do not fit within the majority identity, and there's no doubt that it is a difficult fight just to be included within a left that often does not grasp many issues affecting minority groups. This means we need to form a strong socialist organisation that can stand with women and the oppressed within these broader struggles and movements, and form a framework to create change that works towards real liberation.



Clara Zetkin

Domestic work

Rethinking 'domestic purposes': Do we need a new approach?

by Byron Clark

As the government ramps up attacks on welfare recipients defensive actions have happened across the country as those on welfare and their supporters advocate for their right to dignity and a living income (not that benefits can really be called that). The status quo we are defending, however, is a much less than ideal situation, what we need is to change the way our society defines and values 'work'.

The Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB), which is one of several to be merged into a new 'job seeker benefit', was formed through the Social Security Amendment Act in 1973 with the first payments starting in May of 1974. It was originally set at a level that would enable single mothers to care for their children as a full time job without having to enter the work-force. A year before the Social Security Amendment Act, American feminist Selma James launched the wages for house work campaign, arguing that the work done in the home should be financially compensated.

While the DPB only applies to single parents, New Zealand must have looked somewhat progressive in the early 70s. Several decades later however, there is an enormous stigma in being a 'DPB mum'. Back in 2002, six years before he would become prime minister, John Key described women receiving the DPB as "breeding for a business". Work done outside of the wage-labour system- and being a parent is a huge amount of work- is not recognised by the likes of Key as having value. Even from a purely economic perspective, the reproduction of the next generation of the workforce is a service capitalism is getting on the cheap. One nation has taken steps to ensure that this work is valued. In 2006 Venezuela began paying the nation's poorest housewives 80% of the minimum wage

for work done in the home. "The world is beginning to recognise and value women's hidden contribution to society but Venezuela goes further" wrote James at the time. "This is finally a wage for housework, something we have demanded since 1972!"

If a country in Latin America can achieve this then surely New Zealand could, if a social movement was demanding it. While a wages for housework/par-

“Business New Zealand believed extending leave would lead to “human capital depreciation”- workers losing skills by taking time off for child rearing.

enting scheme would be funded by “the taxpayer” all taxes ultimately come from wealth produced by workers. If it wasn't for workers producing goods and services of a greater value than they are paid in wages, there would be no profits to tax.

A changing society

Promoting the campaign in the 1970s, James wrote “When capital pays husbands they get two workers, not one.” Society- at least in countries such as the US and New Zealand- has changed substantially since then; women are no longer expected to be “housewives” but to join the workforce. While the expanded amount of career choices for women is no doubt a positive, alongside this wages have fallen so much that few families can live on one parent's income.

Wages for housework could allow one parent (of whatever gender) to forgo par-

ticipating in the traditional wage-labour workforce, or could allow two parents to work part-time instead of full time. But another social change that has happened in recent decades is the rise in single parent families. According to the most recently available census data single parent families make up close to a third of families with children (32%) and the percentage is higher for Maori and Pasifika (44% and 38% respectively).

According to the June 2012 National Benefit Fact Sheet, 88% of people receiving the DPB are female. While wages for housework doesn't have to be a 'woman's issue' as the statistics indicate this is a policy that will benefit women. In the workforce women are still paid less than men, former Employers and Manufacturers Association boss Alasdair Thompson justified this as a result of women having “monthly sick problems” and while comments ultimately lost him his job, similar attitudes persist among the employing class; In their submission on paid parental leave, Business New Zealand believed extending leave would lead to “human capital depreciation”- workers losing skills by taking time off for child rearing.

With these barriers to women participating in the workforce as equals of men, it could be argued that paying wages for domestic work could further entrench the situation, as most recipients of domestic-work wages would be female. This is a valid concern. Redressing issues like gender pay equality, and the division of labour within the family would need to be addressed concurrently, though this fails to address the issues of deprivation presently effecting single mothers. If we can change the paradigm which sees those on the DPB as being bludgers, “breeding for a business” to one which recognises them as an integral part of the working class, we could potentially make some progress.

Child poverty and lunchbox day: Philanthropy in New Zealand

By Anne Russell

Originally published on Scoop.co.nz

A spate of charitable giving related to food insecurity has sprung up recently. Several people –regular citizens, celebrities and politicians– took part in Live Below The Line, where participants had to spend only \$2.25 on food every day. Sponsorship from the event could go to the following charities: Oxfam NZ, TEAR Fund, World Vision, UNICEF, P3 Foundation, VSA, The Global Poverty Project, and Christian World Service. More recently, Campbell Live has started up a charity called Lunchbox Day, where people can either txt to automatically donate \$3, or contribute to other fundraising activities to ensure that children from decile 1-4 schools can have lunch. The operation is run through the estab-

lished charity KidsCan.

It can be quite difficult to discuss and critique such charities in a way that doesn't challenge the intentions of the participants. Sometimes insisting on criticising structural problems before anything else can be used as an excuse to not donate, and indeed to do little else but pontificate. Alexander Cockburn pointed out that while Christopher Hitchens would gladly rage against Mother Teresa, he was always tight with beggars himself. As such, the defensive response to charity criticism is usually that it's all for a good cause, or that at least people are trying to make a difference. I have little doubt that Live Below The Line and Lunchbox Day were formed and participated in by people with good intentions. But the focus on emotions rather than structures throughout the whole debate

is problematic. The point is not whether charity contributions are good or evil, but whether they are done consciously or unconsciously, with awareness of an issue's causes and possible remedies.

Consciousness of other humans' realities is unimaginably difficult to sustain and develop day in day out, but these charities are making it look like it's easy. An unfortunate theme runs through charitable projects of loudly congratulating the benefactors for being so thoughtful and aware. The 3 News website wrote that some Labour Party MPs were doing Live Below The Line "to see what it's like to live in poverty", as though going hungry for a week"while retaining adequate housing, electricity, transport, clothing, employment etc"could give one a prayer of even glimpsing the nuanced ongoing despair, anxiety and shame of



Eating \$2.25 a day for a week gives as much insight into poverty as only looking at pictures gives an insight into illiteracy.

Child poverty

poverty. The Campbell Live special on Lunchbox Day dedicated about ten seconds to mentioning children from decile 2 schools; the rest was about the middle class fundraisers, including businessmen in Auckland and private schools like Scots College. How fantastic of them to contribute! Right? But it won't play well on TV if people from developing communities express any emotion but sheer gratitude to the middle class for committing what is in fact little more than basic human decency.

This is part of a wider problem with our societal relationship with rich people. Trade union leader Helen Kelly pointed out at a public meeting how the relationship between New Zealand employers and employees has changed and worsened in recent years. Deregulation and union-busting has brought the workforce to a point where a) jobs are scarce due to bad economic policies and a skimpy public sector and so b) employees are supposed to be grateful for any job they get. Such obligatory servility makes it very hard to agitate for better conditions.

Perhaps, in an ideal world, citizens would be able to self-regulate enough to run their society entirely by charity in a gift economy, and no one would be deprived. But it has been clear for a long time that the wealthiest in our society tend to hang on to their money; poor people are in general more likely to give to charity than their rich counterparts. The areas of the brain which respond to winning and losing money are the same as those that respond to cocaine, explaining why gambling or the stock market is addictive. There are two sides to ending poverty; poor people need to be drawn out of it, and the rich need immediate intervention and rehabilitation.

While Lunchbox Day is careful to skirt around outright accusations (whoever is to blame, it certainly isn't the children), child poverty is not something that was always as inevitable as the slow crawling passage of time. However, the pertinent question is not so much who, but what is to blame for the emergence of child pov-

erty. John Key The Individual is neutral in the effect he can have on the world; he's just an affable guy, as he might like to put it. However, John Key The Prime Minister is a different case. Likewise it's National Party The Government that allows big business to wreak havoc on the economy, worsening unemployment and welfare dependency, not National Party The Morris Dancers. Institutions are to blame for child poverty; the people who fill the respective roles be it John Key or Helen Clark can be blamed for their complicity in perpetuating them, but many if not most of the institutions in question will outlive their careers.

Unfortunately, systematic analysis doesn't make for good prime-time television. A picture may speak a thousand words, but it takes more than that to fully explain how life under capital affects us all, and how it has severe ramifications for child poverty. The process by which child poverty happens is best captured not by an explosion, but more like a minimalist film of drying paint. Finding the balance between these to create watchable television on the issue is difficult, but the upbeat applause for Lunchbox Day donors in the Campbell Live piece seems oddly out of place. Live Below The Line is even worse in this regard, with links telling potential donors "how to be awesome" although "being awesome probably comes naturally to you". Mirroring attitudes found in consumer culture, such charity starts to seem more and more like a vanity project.

Although having one's personal heartstrings pulled may make one notice an issue more, it doesn't guarantee an adequate response. In *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, Oscar Wilde wrote "The emotions of man are stirred more quickly than man's intelligence, it is much more easy to have sympathy with suffering than it is to have sympathy with thought. But [charitable] remedies do not cure the disease: they merely prolong it."

Justice is called for here, not emotional identification. To enable justice may involve accepting emotions that are much

less pleasant than the helplessness and gratitude expected from those to whom we donate. It may mean understanding why many poor people are bored, resentful and ungrateful for the meagre scraps from the wealthy. Again from Wilde: "Why should [the poor] be grateful for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table? They should be seated at the board." Moreover, some poor people may have personal values "like anyone else" that some of us find abhorrent and do not need or want to identify with; racist or sexist attitudes, for example. But the onus on us is not to like every underprivileged individual, or to personally identify with their experiences, but to help make the playing field even.

We use our imagination all the time for activism; this is why the anti-war movement doesn't require that people get killed before joining it. But charities such as Live Below The Line seem to want to discourage this imagination by desperately attempting to present poverty as something relatable to the middle class. Lunchbox Day doesn't have such attitudes built into it, but so far the presentation of it sure does. According to Campbell Live, Lunchbox Day was "a day for Kiwis to show just how generous they can be" and "reminded us that kindness makes you happy". I thought it was a day to start balancing scales of inequality and stop children from starving, but perhaps there should be a few more shots of white people buying charity coffee.

These charities are primarily dealing in two emotions: Isn't It Sad, and It's Fun To Make A Difference. But come now, it's not really that moving to see a man in a suit saying how terrible child poverty is. Presenting the distressing stories of poverty lets them speak for themselves; the initial Campbell Live piece about lunchbox differences in decile 1 and decile 10 schools, although flawed in its inconsistencies of the experiment, was dramatic journalism that hurt to watch.

That piece got closer to the truth; learning about poverty is anything but fun. It is important, and can be interesting and

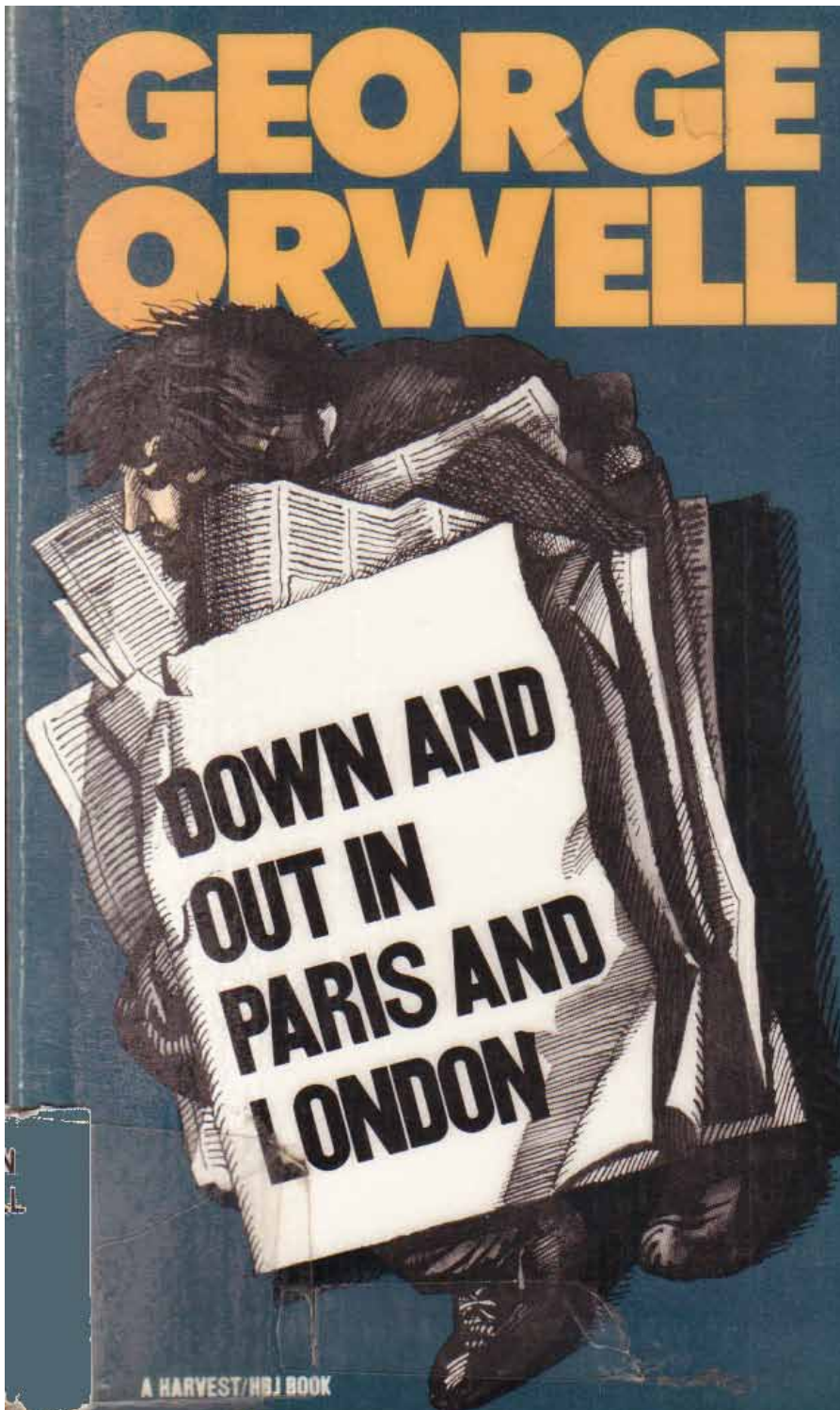
meaningful, but mostly it's just painful. Living in poverty in itself is grinding, relentless and deeply boring. The reason to make a difference is not because it's fun, but because the alternative is too awful to contemplate. Both 'Isn't It Sad' and 'It's Fun To Make A Difference' express certain truths, but ultimately shy away from the gritty, unglamorous work of uncovering the causes of poverty.

Although this is sometimes mere negligence, many charities, including Lunchbox Day, seem to be actively anti-political. Riffing off a widespread sentiment that politics is just vindictive, petty arguing that accomplishes nothing" confusing politics with Parliament, in other words; many of the Campbell Live segments seem to advocate mucking in immediately without stopping for analysis.

On some level this has a point; there is no good in sitting around arguing while the world burns. To his credit, John Campbell did say that "we know we're not solving whatever causes us to need this" (though one wonders why, with such extensive resources at his disposal, his programme did not focus on further investigation rather than fundraising events.) I draw the line, though, at agreeing with a fundraising woman who said, among other things, that "we can't blame the government".

Two important ways of thinking are missing from the Lunchbox Day and Live Below The Line dialogue: contemplation and systematic analysis of inequality, and absolute fury. As far as my personal emotions are relevant to this article, 'sad' doesn't feel like the right word. Child poverty makes me extremely angry, and then upset. I am furious that this society hems and haws over spending \$4 million to ensure children aren't half-starved, while defence spending clocks in at a whopping \$3.4 billion a year and one-off sports events receive \$300 million. I am angry that cuts to both rich taxes and the public sector go on unchecked, and that banks who fail get \$1.7 billion bailouts, while mass unemployment drives parents into deeper poverty yet shames them for taking the benefit rather than starving their children. I am angry that New Zealand builds non-insulated houses to match a Western form of family, causing overcrowding and poor health among minorities, and then uses racism to explain the poor outcomes. And I am angry that privileged people are using the media to air their own stories of Poverty Lite, rather than working out ways to bring the poor forward to speak for themselves.

One of few examples of well-done poverty tourism is that undertaken by Eric Blair. In 1928, after giving up his post with the police in Burma, Blair decided to go explore the slums; first as a kitchen hand in Paris, and then on the road and in the workhouses with the tramps in London. His experiences were



Down and Out in Paris and London is a searing account of poverty in the Great Depression

Child poverty

chronicled in his first published essay, *The Spike*, and later in the book *Down and Out in Paris and London*. It was at that point when, not wanting to publish his experiences under his own name, he adopted the pseudonym George Orwell.

Although Orwell, who eventually wrote home asking for money and moved to better lodgings, was still ultimately only visiting Poverty Town rather than living in it, the attitude could not be more different from the presentation of charitable donors on Campbell Live. (Admittedly, if Orwell had grown up in a TV and internet culture the book would probably be different.) After getting as close to poverty as possible without living its cardinal tenet “that there is no quick way out” Orwell concluded that:

My story ends here. It is a fairly trivial story, and I can only hope that it has been interesting in the same way as a travel diary is interesting. I can at least say, here is the world that awaits you if you are ever penniless. Some days I want to explore that world more thoroughly... At present I do not feel that I have seen more than the fringe of poverty.

Still I can point to one or two things I have definitely learned by being hard up. I shall never again think that all tramps

are drunken scoundrels, nor expect a beggar to be grateful when I give him a penny, nor be surprised if men out of work lack energy, nor subscribe to the Salvation Army, nor pawn my clothes, nor refuse a handbill, nor enjoy a meal at a smart restaurant. That is a beginning.

There is little sentimentality in the book; it is a fairly straightforward and effective portrayal of poverty. It runs counter to the rather irritating idea propagated by much of mainstream media: that New Zealanders don't want to hear about depressing things, and so bad news must be couched in feel-good lightness. Giving the people what they supposedly want in this manner is used as an excuse to not broadcast news that might make people deeply contemplative or even angry. This excludes a whole demographic of people who would love to see earnest and intellectual news shows that spoke furious truths to power. Although they have their own limitations, there is a reason that *The Daily Show* and the *Colbert Report* have become so popular. Even better, arguably, is *The Rachel Maddow Show*, which, unlike many talk shows, steps back and allows viewers to draw their own emotional conclusions after calmly presenting them with statistics and analysis. Anger is not always a negative, destructive emotion; when exercised intelligently with a focus on justice, inequality and oppression, it can be abso-

lutely vital and exhilarating. Take for example Britpop band Pulp's best-known hit, the glorious *Common People*, where frontman Jarvis Cocker snarls the following at a rich girl slumming it for fun:

*Still you'll never get it right
Cos when you're laying in bed at night
Watching roaches climb the wall
If you called your dad he could stop it all, yeah
You'll never live like common people
You'll never do whatever common people do
Never fail like common people
Never watch your life slide out of view
And dance, and drink, and screw
Because there's nothing else to do.*

I may yet donate to Lunchbox Day, although I have not yet found out how Kids Can operates (do they do developmental work so that recipients can be self-sustaining? Do they lobby the government for better conditions and employment? Do they sponsor individual children or communities as a whole? These are questions that I wish Campbell Live had answered, and which I may undertake to investigate in further research.) However, I take issue with the idea that ending poverty can or must be cheery and simplistic to ensure that people pitch in. Give me righteous anger at the rich, in-depth analysis of class, and Jarvis Cocker any day.



Pulp's hit '*Common People*' indites the sort of paternalism involved in much of the discourse involved in the Live Below the Line campaign.

continued from p.20

We need to elect socialist councillors, but they have to be backed up with a movement of people from below.”

Socialist Party member Simon explained to *The Spark* that the party and councillor Stephen Jolly first gained a public profile in the area through their lead role in saving Richmond Secondary College in the 1990s. For almost a year, community activists occupied the school to stop its demolition. Volunteer qualified teachers kept the school open for students after it was “closed”, until the state government relented and re-opened it.

“If you want people to support you, you have to get wins on the board”, said Simon. “Another socialist group came along, but they just sold papers and argued for the most militant tactics. They had no understanding that many of these people were taking action for the first time. That group was told to leave after two weeks.”

Since then, the small Socialist Party has concentrated much of its activity in Yarra neighbourhoods. Represented on council since 2004, the SP has recently organised successful community campaigns to save two community centres, to defend green space in public housing estates from private developers and to reverse a decision to close council-run childcare services.

It has led community protests against a proposed new motorway tunnel into Yarra and won support for a council-funded public transport campaign. It has also worked to unionise the staff in the many small bars and cafes in the suburb of Fitzroy and supported other union struggles.

The SP has built a mighty reputation and huge networks locally, so that it was able to mobilise over 150 members and supporters for its council election campaign. 90,000 leaflets were distributed to homes. 15,000 doors – around a third of the electorate – were visited. Socialist Party posters were everywhere.

As well as proposing policies like plan-

ning which puts residents before developers, real action on climate change, defending and extending council services, support for public housing and understanding cost of living pressures, the party was also able to campaign on its long record of successfully defending residents at neighbourhood level.

As Jolly tweeted after his re-election, “A red-blooded socialist party has now entrenched itself electorally in parts of Melbourne. This is very significant from many levels.”

The Socialist Alliance took a different approach in Moreland City. As a party which campaigns more around national and international issues and which stands in general elections across Australia, its local knowledge and links were not as strong.

As a prominent social movement campaigner in Victoria, candidate Sue Bolton did have a profile in parts of the Moreland community. She was known to local union activists through her role in the Northern Communities Union Solidarity Group, while work in solidarity with Palestine and the Arab Spring uprisings had forged connections with Muslim community members.

Refugee rights campaigning centred on the detention centre in Broadmeadows brought her contacts in new migrant communities, adding to long-standing links with the Kurdish and Turkish groups. 40 percent of Moreland City’s population were born outside Australia.

The Socialist Alliance had also stood in previous elections for council and for state and federal government. “But it wasn’t just me, or the party”, Sue told *The Spark*. “Our election leaflet hit the mark. The extra vote we got from beyond the ‘lefties’ was from our message – against developers’ greed, people before profit, and highlighting the cost of living. People are feeling more insecure.”

The Socialist Alliance letterboxed every house in the ward with their first leaflet, and around 25% received a second “how to vote” leaflet. There were weekly

stalls in two shopping areas and a small amount of door-knocking. Train stations were leafleted at morning rush hour.

“There was also a backlash against Labor and the Greens”, explained Sue. “The sitting Green councillor, who didn’t seek re-election, was responsible for a string of pro-development decisions against the wishes of the community”.

A veteran Labor Party councillor in the ward lost his seat. The first preference vote for the lead Green candidate dropped from 18 to 14 percent, mirroring falls across Moreland.

“We criticised some Green policies, but we didn’t attack the Green Party”, Sue added. “Some greens have a lot of sympathy for us. Attacking the Greens cuts you off from dialogue with left greens and get people’s backs up. It makes them feel they have to defend the party, even if they have misgivings.”

On election day, there were Greens and Socialist Alliance supporters cooperating at some polling booths, jointly handing out both parties’ “how to vote” cards.

“This result lifts the morale of people who identify with socialist and left progressive politics”, said Sue. “The capitalist class socks it to people relentlessly. They can lose confidence in struggle. They don’t see the potential for a left alternative to Labor and the Greens.

“We now expect SA to grow, but we regard this council position as something not just for us, but for the wider left. We are determined to use it to instigate campaigns around issues important to local people, and bring new working class people into political activity so they’re part of changing things themselves.” Sue’s first act as elected councillor was to call on supporters to join her at a successful protest against the deportation of a Tamil asylum seeker back to probable torture in Sri Lanka.

Socialist electoral success

Socialists gain in Melbourne Elections

by Grant Brookes, Wellington Branch of the Workers Party

Elections for local councils across the Australian state of Victoria took place on October 27. Socialist candidates scored major gains.

The Socialist Party, standing in all three wards in the inner-Melbourne City of Yarra, won its highest ever vote – up 58 percent on 2008. SP councillor Stephen Jolly was re-elected under the Single-Transferrable Vote (STV) system, topping the poll with more first preference votes than any other candidate.

Socialist Alliance candidates, running in the northern Melbourne suburbs of Moreland and in the regional city of Geelong, scored the party's best results in Victoria. Sue Bolton came third highest in the tally of first preference votes, out of 24 candidates. And under STV she was elected to Moreland City Council as the most preferred candidate overall for her ward. In Geelong, Sue Bull won over 10,000 first preference votes (8 percent of the total) in the mayoral election.

Yet in a country where voting is compulsory, around a quarter of registered electors didn't cast a vote. Commenting on the low turnout, Monash senior politics lecturer Nick Economou observed, "If people do not believe the system is relevant to them, they won't turn up, even if there is a threat of a fine".

Institute of Public Affairs spokesperson James Paterson called for voluntary voting, adding, "We don't believe people should be compelled to cast a vote for a party they don't agree with".

The largest socialist group in Melbourne maintains that elections shouldn't be a focus for activists, and may even be a distraction from the "real" struggle. Sadly, their abstention meant that voters only had the option of supporting socialist candidates, campaigning to radically transform the system, in three out of Victoria's 79 council areas.

But the strong results for the SP and SA show the opportunity – and the need – for activists to connect with community members through elections. The Australian Greens were hoping for major gains to flow from voter disillusionment with the two-party system, dominated by Labor and Liberal Party members standing as "independents".

But the Green Party failed to connect with working class voters and fill the political vacuum. Coupled with growing experience of Greens in office, and their patchy record at providing an alternative to "business as usual", the party came out of the Victorian elections with 20 councillors – up by just one on 2008.

Sitting Green councillors were dumped in areas ranging from inner-city Port Phillip to outer suburban Casey City. In Yarra, the former Green Party mayor was

not returned to council, after repeatedly bowing to developers, leaning on protesters to abandon an offshoot from Occupy Melbourne, and supporting above-inflation rate rises for residents while cutting services and trumpeting Yarra's debt-free balance sheet.

By contrast, both the Socialist Party and Socialist Alliance stood on a platforms of turning city councils into "campaigning councils". Their vision was not to administer in accordance with the neo-liberal framework set by state and federal governments, but to challenge higher authorities to give residents more control over issues – like transport – which impact on them.

"We pledge to offer people the type of fighting representation that they need to take on a hostile State Government, cashed up developers and an unhelpful bureaucracy", said the SP election leaflet. "We need a council that stands up for residents against greedy developers and the anti-people policies of the state and federal governments", said the Socialist Alliance.

And both parties were clear that voting was not enough. As SP candidate Mel Gregson told an election fundraiser on October 21, "We don't say one thing at election time, and another thing after.

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Anthony Main introducing Steve Jolly.