

Fightback

October 2013

Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism

Free Chelsea Manning

**Gender diversity
is a working-class issue**

The dangers of
deep sea oil drilling

Colonisation, capitalism
and the housing crisis

Wobblies and Cossacks:
The 1913 Great Strike

\$2

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E d i t o r i a l

Welcome to the October 2013 issue of Fightback.

In September, Unite defeated an effort by fast food giant KFC to sack its disabled workers. This came after a more compromised win in the battle for improved pay and conditions at McDonald's.

There are some important observations to draw from these partial victories. The first observation is fundamental to what Fightback stands for; collective organisation, collective struggle, are needed to improve our conditions.

Secondly, workers and progressives must stand against all forms of oppression. Disabled workers are often portrayed as having basic mental or physical conditions, impairments that define them as people. In reality, capitalism disables bodies, by structuring society in such a way that only certain kinds of bodies can gain access, by ranking people, setting up a competition best summarised as a 'race to the bottom.'

Finally, these victories were partial. While unionised McDonald's workers gained in security of hours, the gain in wages was minimal. Both corporations continue to exploit workers and degrade the environment. This underlines the importance of having a long-term strategy, an aim to eventually out-manoeuvre and smash the McDonald's of the world, a collective memory of previous victories and losses. This is why socialist groups like Fightback exist.

About Fightback

Under our current system, democracy consists of a vote every 3 years. Most of our lives are lived under dictatorship, the dictatorship of bosses and WINZ case managers. Fightback stands for a system in which our workplaces, our schools, our universities are run democratically, for social need rather than private profit.

Fightback participates in the MANA Movement, whose stated mission is to bring "rangatiratanga to the poor, the powerless and the dispossessed." Capitalism was imposed in Aotearoa through colonisation, and the fight for indigenous self-determination is intimately connected with the fight for an egalitarian society. We also maintain an independent Marxist organisation outside of parliament, to offer a vision of a world beyond the parliamentary capitalist system.

Fightback stands against all forms of oppression. We believe working-class power, the struggle of the majority for self-determination, is the basis for ending all forms of oppression. However, we also recognise that daily inequities such as sexism must be addressed here and now, not just after the revolution.

Fightback is embedded in a range of struggles on the ground; including building a fighting trade union movement, movements for gender and sexual liberation, and anti-racism.

Fightback also publishes a monthly magazine, and a website, to offer a socialist perspective on ongoing struggles.

Fightback stands for struggle, solidarity and socialism.

Fightback
Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism

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by Daphne Lawless, *Fightback*

Anne Russell's article reprinted in this issue clearly shows how the left have dropped the ball on defence of Chelsea Manning. Her 35-year sentence for the crime of letting people know exactly what the global hegemony have been up to in their war zones is a shocking travesty of justice. But perhaps even more shocking is the way that her gender and her medical history have become a stick to beat her with. Even those on the left of politics couldn't resist the urge to use male names and pronouns with respect to Chelsea – or even worse, the dehumanising sneer of “he/she”.

Meanwhile, CeCe MacDonald, an African-American trans woman, is currently serving time for manslaughter in a male prison after fighting off a racist, homophobic attack. Paramedics in the United States have been known to simply leave

injured people to die once they find out that the person is trans. Trans people are used as a cheap punch-line by the likes of Hell Pizza and other “blokey” wits, while Germaine Greer spews out a “feminist” variation of the same hatred. Why are trans people still an acceptable punching bag?

Tradition

The common sense of “Western” society is that gender is binary, and that is that – as the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition would have it, humans were created “male and female”. Of course, even at a basic biological level this is an oversimplification. Intersex people – those with “ambiguous” genitals or other sexual features – account for 1 in every 500 live births according to some definitions, 1 in 60 according to others. Until recently, it was standard practice to simply surgically “adapt” these children

– with no consent or even acknowledgement – into one or other of the socially accepted genders.

But beyond that, many human cultures through time and space have had at least one “third option” of gender. An example close to home would of course be the Samoan culture, where *fa'afafine* – generally seen as being closer to a third gender than to the Western concept of “transgender” – who have been an accepted part of the culture from time immemorial. Kaupapa Māori has reclaimed *whakarwahine* and *tangata ira tane*. In many Indian cultures, a third gender known as *hijra* (sometimes called “eunuchs” by Western interpreters) have traditionally lived in their own communities, but have recently begun political activism for recognition and rights from the mainstream.

Gender-variant individuals were known as *two-spirits* in many Native American cultures, and often held important

social roles such as healers, orators or craftspeople. The great war leader Crazy Horse, for example, is said to have had at least one two-spirit wife. A good resource for knowledge on other historical alternatives to the two-gender system can be found in *Transgender Warriors* by the American communist trans activist Leslie Feinberg.

Identity

We can learn from this that gender is neither simply a matter of innate biology, nor a matter of social conditioning. The experience of intersex people, as well as the tragic outcomes of unethical experiments such as that performed by Dr John Money – who performed vaginoplasty on an infant boy and told his family to raise him as female – show that an inbuilt “sense” of gender is not simply social programming. New Zealand trans-feminist blogger Megan explains: “Gender identity is an intrinsic part of most people’s psyches, though like many things about their bodies, people don’t notice it unless something is wrong.”

As with homosexuality, a search for the “cause” of gender diversity (nature or nurture?) is not only futile but can lead to a reactionary interest in finding a “cure”. So why exactly is gender diversity still able, in the era of late capitalism, to unnerve and threaten mainstream society?

The 19th century socialist writer Friedrich Engels argued that nuclear family evolved as a way for men to control women’s fertility, and to enable the inheritance of property to the offspring of the male. It also means the privatisation of child-rearing and social reproduction – this becomes the unpaid labour of women, who survive on the income of a man participating in the labour market. Anything which is “off the books” is effectively free, as far as capitalist economics is concerned.

Families

In this sense, when religious and social reactionaries call for “defence of the family”, this is what they mean – defence of an institution founded on women’s sexual subservience to men. And this is clearly threatened, not only by feminism and by homosexuality but by anything that questions the very categories of “man” and “woman”. It is interesting to note that fa’afafine have always played an important role in the Samoan *sa* (extended family). Their persecution and marginalisation began with the Christian missionaries and their imported ideology of the nuclear family as divinely inspired.

But gender is also useful to the ruling classes as another way to divide and control oppressed groups – similar to ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Encouraging sexist attitudes in working-class men is a good way to split the workforce and thus lower wages and conditions of all workers – and, sadly, we see deeply ingrained sexist ideas asserting themselves even in radical social movements. Meanwhile, appealing to gender as something not only innate but as the “real” division in society is the modus operandi of bourgeois feminism which seeks to encourage women to climb the capitalist hierarchy, rather than confront it.

A third way in which gender is vitally important in modern society is that it is a commodity. Like any socially enforced division, gender is a taboo which it is impossible to avoid transgressing at all times. Consumer industries – magazines, clothing, personal hygiene, cosmetics, medications to prevent erectile dysfunction or delay menopause – make big money over gender insecurity. Buy this, we are told, to reassure yourself of your manhood, or your womanhood!

Gender police

These gender boundaries are rigorously policed, not so much through the formal apparatuses of state, but by culture and peer pressure. Parents are bombard-

ed with messages that by allowing their boys to be “feminised” – even if this only means wearing pink clothing – will either “turn them gay or trans” (as if this were possible!) or, at least, deprive them of the masculinity they need to survive and thrive in society. Children imbued with these messages can be relied on to bully other children – as can teachers, who often find a child’s gender-variance a useful “button” to repress and control their behaviour.

Rape is – for people of all genders – one of the ultimate weapons of gender policing. From effeminate or weaker young men in boarding schools or other male-dominated environments to lesbian women in South African townships, rape is the unspoken but very real threat of what can happen if you transgress your “proper” gender boundaries. Witness the threats of rape and other forms of violence routinely dumped upon women who complain about sexism in computing, science-fiction fandom or even the atheist community.

Socialist approach

It should be clear from what we’ve seen so far that gender diversity is a far greater issue than simply the plight of the transsexual or transgendered (those assigned as one of the two “primary” genders at birth, who live their lives as the other gender). Trans issues are everybody’s issues, in that social enforcement of a rigid two-gender system is a symptom of alienation from an individual’s own preferred self-presentation. Violence and shame are the social fate of intersex people, queer people, “feminine” men and “masculine” women for stepping over boundaries of social control. This weakens social solidarity and self-confidence, the basic building blocks for the working people to create a new world.

A socialist approach to gender diversity should, in one sense, come directly out of our commitment to socialist-feminism. If we support the rights of

Gender diversity/Labour party

women to control their own sexuality and fertility – no tolerance for rape, safe legal and free abortion and contraception on demand – it is only obvious to suggest that, for example, transgendered people should have the right to safe and free surgical and pharmaceutical therapy to alter their bodies' gendered

characteristics – as well as the right not to do so, with their identity still respected. Confronting and dismantling rape culture, too, is of vital interest to all gender-variant people.

Working-class and socialist solidarity must apply to everyone up at the

sharp end of capitalism's tricks of social division. In our own organisations, we must rigorously combat any patterns of behaviour which reinforce male or "cis-gender" privilege. This may be the most effective way we can show solidarity to Chelsea Manning and CeCe Macdonald.



The roots of Labour's leadership crisis

Labour party/Environment

This article, by Fightback member Jared Phillips, was originally written for The Socialist, the monthly magazine of The Socialist Party (Australia).

In late August David Shearer resigned as leader of the opposition New Zealand Labour Party. Labour has suffered from poor poll results since it lost the 2008 election. Since then Shearer has been the second opposition leader to resign.

Much of the commentary of late has referred to a leadership crisis in Labour and pointed to this as the main reason for the poor poll results. This is true enough but very few people have explained the roots of this crisis.

Labour's woes are deeply political. They have besieged the party since the 1980s when it began to carry out sweeping neo-liberal counter reforms. To this day Labour remains deeply wedded to maintaining the capitalist system. This forces the party to adopt policies that are at odds with its working class voter base.

During the post war boom this contradiction was somewhat papered over but now in the era of economic crisis it is much harder to hide.

The vote for a new leader is split between Labour's five affiliated unions (20%), Labour's MPs (40%) and the

party membership (40%). The affiliate unions are using this mechanism to encourage their members to vote for one of the three contenders. They hope that in mobilising members to vote for a candidate it will logically follow that these members will be more encouraged to vote Labour at the election.

The problem is that the pro-Labour trade union leaders are pushing a party that does not represent the interests of workers. This has been shown throughout its history as it has often betrayed working class people as well as the indigenous Maori.

Under the last Labour government there were attacks on Tuhoe, foreshore and seabed legislation which stripped Maori of customary rights, and participation in the 'war on terror'. The fact that the right-wing National Party was elected to power shows just how much people distrust Labour.

David Cunliffe is one of three Labour MPs contending for the leadership. He is trumpeted by some as the 'left' contender. However his actual record is very poor – even by Labour standards. For example in the last Labour-led government he was a vocal advocate of public-private partnerships.

He was also the Minister of Immigration when several Iranian men were unjustly detained in an Auckland prison. This had to be fought through a hunger-

strike inside the prison and via a protest campaign outside. Cunliffe also did not oppose the sending of troops to either Afghanistan or Iraq. It says a lot about the state of a party when this is the best 'left' Labour has to offer.

The truth is that since the 1980s Labour has been transformed into an out and out party of big business. It accepts neo-liberal ideology, it lacks any real internal democracy and it has been emptied out of its working class base. While people will sometimes vote for the party to punish National, they no longer participate in it with any enthusiasm.

The world economic situation is such that no matter which of the capitalist parties are elected next year they will be forced to carry out cuts in order to satisfy the needs of their big business backers.

Only a party that rejects a system based on profits before all else, can address the needs of ordinary people. Labour will never be this type of party. It will continue to be wracked by crisis especially as the world economic crisis gets worse and it is forced to alienate its voter base even more.

Far from sowing illusions in Labour the worker's movement needs to create a new party – one that is prepared to take on the big business profiteers and implement socialist policies that unashamedly benefit ordinary people.

The dangers of deep sea oil drilling

Byron Clark, Fightback

Last month the government announced that nearly 434,000 square kilometres of land and ocean floor in New Zealand's exclusive economic zone would be opened up for oil and gas exploration. The areas include onshore areas in Taranaki, the East Coast and West Coast, and five offshore areas - Northland, Taranaki, the Pegasus-East Coast Basin, the Great South-Canterbury

Basin, and the New Caledonia Basin northwest of New Zealand. This is in addition to many other areas already being explored.

"While exploration won't necessarily be undertaken in all the blocks on offer, it's important to find out what's there and use the information to develop New Zealand's untapped resource wealth," said Energy and Resources Minister Simon Bridges, launching the 2014 block offer process, an annual permitting round allocating petroleum exploration

permits.

The government is consulting with Iwi and local authorities but the ability of the general population to have an input on drilling permits has been restricted. Under an upcoming law change, drilling permits will be handled by the new Environmental Protection Agency, but are to be "non-notified", meaning members of the public would not get to have a say.

This change was introduced to the

Environment



A recent Oil Free Wellington protest.

Marine Legislation Bill by way of a Supplementary Order Paper; meaning like so many controversial bills passed by this government it was not subject to a parliamentary select committee, where the public could make submissions. This follows the legislation dubbed the 'Anadarko Amendment' by environmental groups, named after the Texas based oil company that plans to start drilling in New Zealand waters sometime in the next five years. The amendment criminalises protesting at sea, which arguably played a role in Brazilian firm Petrobras abandoning plans to drill in New Zealand waters back in 2010.

Submissions on the Marine Legislation Bill, prior to the addition of supplementary order paper, were not without concern either. The Environment and Conservation Organisations of NZ, an alliance comprising fifty-five environmental groups, believes the legislation doesn't go far enough in implementing international agreements around pollution.

New Zealand has not ratified the International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage, which was adopted to ensure that adequate, prompt, and effective compensation is available to persons who suffer damage caused by spills of oil. Or the International Convention Relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties which affirms the right of states to "take such measures on the high seas as may be necessary to prevent, mitigate or eliminate grave and imminent danger to

their coastline or related interests from pollution or threat of pollution of the sea by oil".

While local laws and other conventions that New Zealand has signed contain measures for environmental protection, this information certainly raises questions about the risks of deep sea oil drilling. Some of the possible drilling areas are deeper than the location of the site of the 2010 BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which saw the equivalent of 4.9 million barrels of oil polluting the ocean.

Technology to cap an oil well has improved since 2010, but Radio New Zealand reported back in June that the equipment needed to cap an oil rig in New Zealand waters in the event of a spill would have to be shipped from the UK, taking approximately two weeks. Frank Macskasy writing on the Daily Blog calculated that would be enough time for 788,500 barrels of oil to spill into the ocean. To put that number in perspective, imagine sixty-five Olympic sized swimming pools filled with crude oil.

Oil is New Zealand's fourth largest export (after dairy, meat and wool). Currently oil production last year was the lowest since 2008, though the general trend is toward increased production. "If you look at the figures over the last decade there's been exponential growth" Simon Bridges told The New Zealand Herald last month.

Offshore drilling has become an increasingly attractive source of oil as onshore wells start to run low and the price reaches the point where the extra

expenditure required can be justified. Declining conventional oil production means the world is seeing increasing exploration of deep sea reserves, as well as practices such as hydraulic fracturing, an incredibly resource intense method of extracting oil from rocks.

'Peak oil' is a term that has entered the public consciousness in the last decade, though it is often misunderstood as meaning the point at which the world's oil reserves run out. What it actually refers to is point where oil production peaks, and begins to decline. Eventually, market forces would mean oil use is eclipsed by other forms of energy.

Of course, free markets don't really exist outside of economics text-books. Global public subsidies for fossil fuels were \$523 billion in 2011 (compared to \$88 billion for renewable energy). According to the World Wildlife Fund the New Zealand government is subsidising the oil and gas industry to the tune of \$46 million per year (subsidies have doubled since National came to power).

Even if subsidies were to end, the market does not move fast enough for the climate. Earlier this year the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached 400 parts per million, making at least a two degree increase in average global temperature a likelihood by end of the century. Last summer New Zealand had its worst drought in seventy years, followed by the warmest winter since record keeping began in 1909.

Climate change happens much slower than an oil spill, but will ultimately

be more destructive. In the long term, the much touted economic gains from opening up New Zealand waters for oil drilling will pale in comparison to the costs of adapting to a warmer climate. But free market capitalism has never been a suitable system for long term economic planning. In the absence of a transition to a planned economy, capitalism, which has shown itself to be incredibly resilient, will likely survive climate change, but the world's poor—those least responsible for it—will disproportionately suffer the consequences. A transition needs to be made to a carbon neutral economy; the process that takes is a discussion beyond the scope of this article, but immediate goals would be the end of fossil fuel subsidies, and the divestment of funds supporting fossil fuels. The latter is a key campaign plank of NGO 350 Aotearoa who are “calling on the NZ Super Fund, our KiwiSaver providers, banks, churches, the Government and more to divest our money from the fossil fuel industry”. The campaign has already had some success with church organisations. The Super Fund has over \$440 million invested in fossil fuels.

As for the ships that are already beginning to arrive to explore for oil; the removal of public input into the permit process, and the criminalisation of protest at sea leaves civil disobedience as the only option. When the Greenpeace ship Arctic Sunrise was boarded by armed Coast Guard officials many—correctly—saw it as an overreaction by an authoritarian state.

350 Aotearoa asserts that “democracy in New Zealand is under threat,” and the sight of activists being arrested in the Taranaki basin would seem to demonstrate this. However for hapu such as te Whanau a Apanui, whose direct relationship to the land and water is undermined by oil-drilling, capitalism has never been democratic. We must struggle not only against environmental destruction, but for community ownership and planning.

Why you should get involved in Fightback

We have an internationalist perspective

Workers all over the world have far more in common with one another than with the bosses of “their own” country. To fight effectively, workers in every country must support the struggles of workers in every other country. This is what we mean by internationalism. We are for open borders as the best way to unite the

workers of the world. We have been involved in successful campaigns to prevent the deportation of refugees and we urge the union movement to be migrant-worker friendly. We oppose the reactionary nationalism of campaigns like “Buy NZ-made”, and instead advocate protecting jobs through militant unionism.

We oppose imperialism

The fight against imperialism is a vital part of the fight against capitalism. Imperialism is the system whereby rich countries dominate poor ones. New Zealand is a junior partner in the world imperialist system. The Workers Party opposes any involvement in imperialist wars such as those being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, even if the involvement is under the banner of so-called “peace-

keeping”. We demand an immediate end to the interference in the affairs of Pacific Island nations by New Zealand and its ally Australia. We want an end to all involvement in imperialist military alliances and the dismantling of their spy bases. We try to identify the most politically progressive anti-imperialist groups to offer them our active support.

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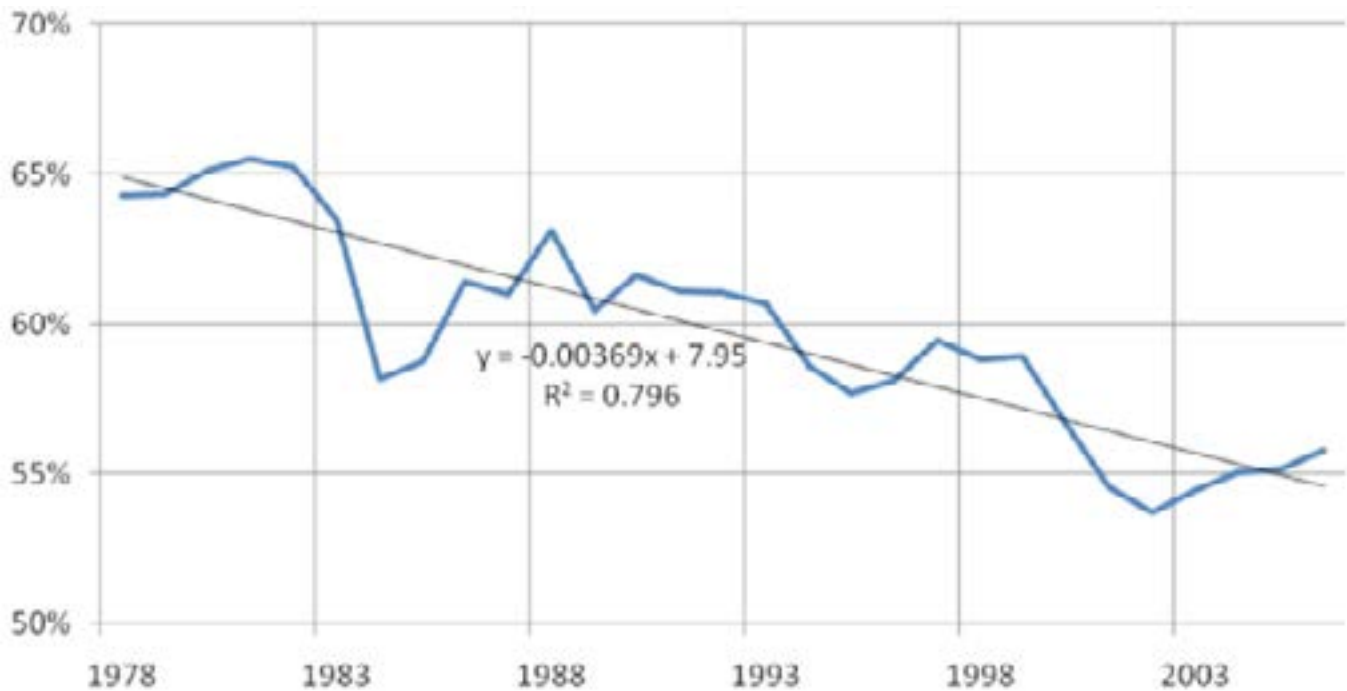
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Housing

Colonisation, capitalism and the housing crisis



Workers share of Gross Domestic Product. Source: Bill Rosenberg, CTU (2010)

Ben Ritchie, Fightback (Wellington).

Housing is in crisis. Decades of market-based policies have decimated the social housing stock, and the market is failing to provide affordable housing. After all, housing is a necessity, not a luxury good – letting the intersection of supply and demand determine prices serves only to deny housing to those who can't afford it.

Social attitudes to housing – and successive government policies – have roots in Aotearoa/New Zealand's colonial history. The value placed on land by the British Crown and its representatives is evidenced by the lengths they were prepared to go to in order to obtain it: aggressive deception, in the case of the Kemp purchase, or outright theft by means of punitive confiscation throughout the North Island. Such value was determined in part by the sales pitch that was made to colonials, that only in New Zealand would they have the opportunity to own their own property. This was the birth of the quarter-acre

dream.

The modern equivalent of this propaganda can be evidenced in the cornucopia of house and garden magazines, home development TV shows, and extensive media coverage given over to the concerns of the minority of New Zealanders that own their own home and can afford to invest in its beautification.

At the other end of the spectrum, discourse regarding homelessness has been blaming and paternalistic – in the case of Wellington's recent *Alternative Giving* scheme – and aggressive in the case of Auckland council's proposed *Nuisance Begging* bylaw and the deployment of security guards to move homeless people "along" during APEC and the Rugby World Cup.

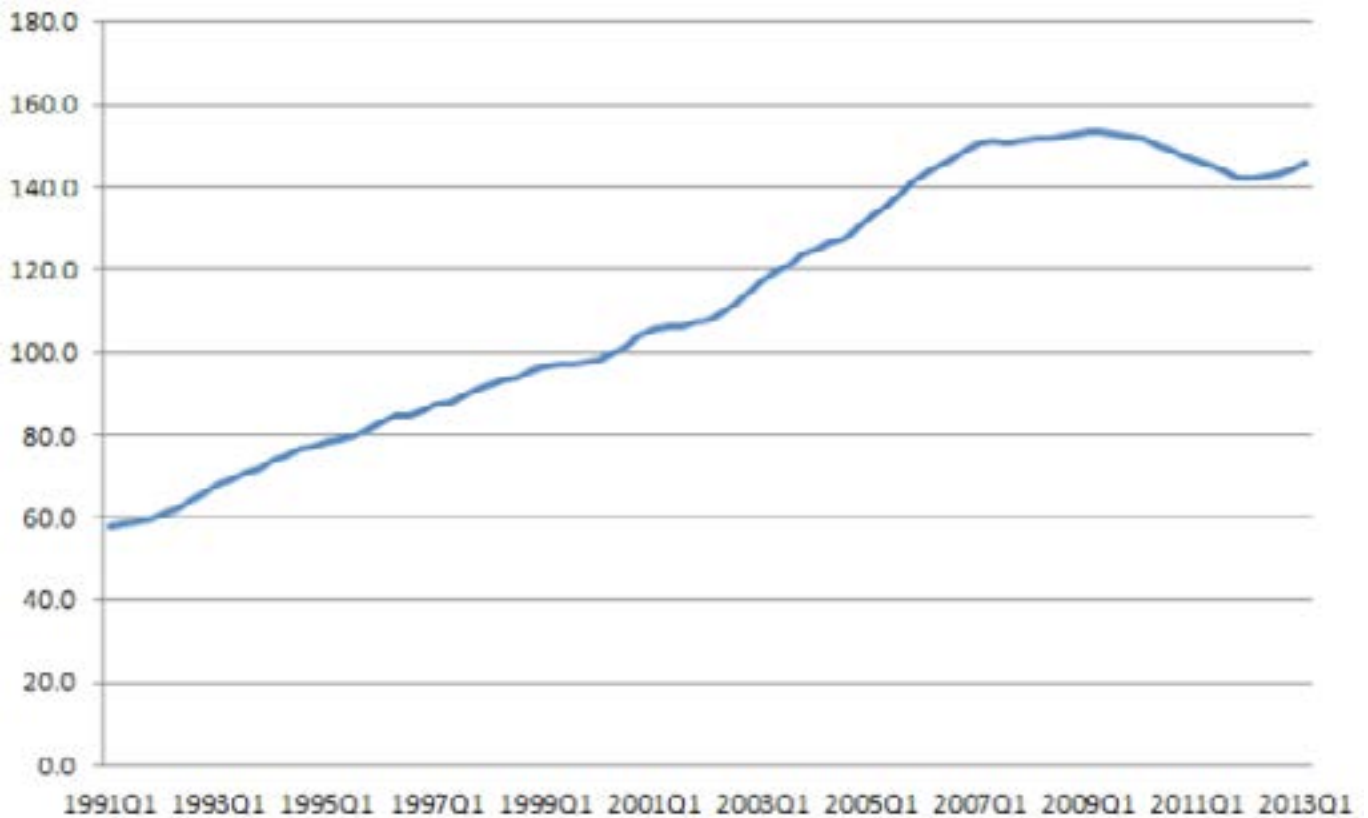
This capitalist propaganda comes against a background of declining real wages – workers' share of New Zealand's Gross Domestic Product has been steadily declining since the 1970s, forcing prospective home-owners to become increasingly indebted for life in order

to achieve their dream of home "ownership".

Credit from banks flows easily on the assumption that they can just claim back the house if the borrower can't meet the payments, and that house values won't drop. But based on the capitalist model of supply and demand, this effectively pushes house prices up, encouraging the development of more profitable, more luxurious housing in exclusive subdivisions.

These upward pressures on house prices flow on to rental accommodation, Statistics New Zealand recently released a report based on census data showing a doubling in real terms of the cost rental accommodation in two decades.

But it's not just market forces alone. Neoliberal policies introduced by the fourth labour Government in the 1980s – and carried on by National in the 90s – reduced the proportion of tenants who were renting from public sector landlords from 38% in 1986 to 18% by 2006. Further, public sector landlords, such as Housing Corp and city councils



Household debt (\$M). Source: Reserve Bank of New Zealand

increasingly acted like private sector property developers, introducing market rates and expecting to profit from their provision of social housing. Likewise, private landlords have become more profit-hungry. In the 1980s it was relatively common for employers to provide subsidised accommodation to employees, something that is almost unheard of today.

Rightly, much media comment is made of the situation in Auckland, where a fast growing working class population is confronted by a slower housing market that is increasingly expensive. But this pattern is evident in other centres too. This month, the Porirua community newspaper the *Kāpi Mana* led with a story State housing crisis, noting that 191 families were on the wait list for 11 available state houses in Porirua.

Opposition to the *Tamaki Transformation Project* in Glen Innes reached public consciousness in recent months, notably with the arrest of Mana leader Hone Harawira. After a period of false community consultation, where any intent to reduce the number of state

houses was strongly denied, the project was initiated in 2011 with a reduction in the number of state houses from 156 to 78, eviction of tenants and the sale of seaside land to property developers for private housing.

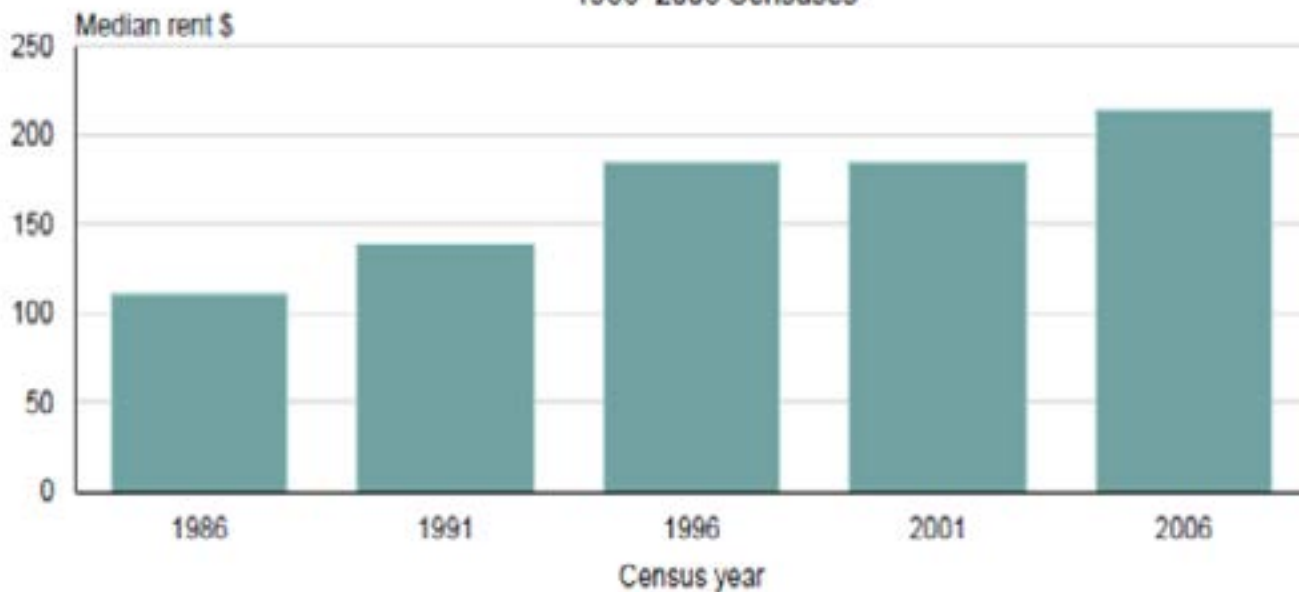
Mainstream political parties have responded to the crisis. Predictably, Labour and National ignore the economic and political reality. Labour recently announced plans to subsidise the development of a large number of “affordable” homes, initially costing \$300,000. This presents an excellent opportunity for speculators, as these will be houses for private sale. But it was their proposed policy of restricting investment in property to “New Zealanders” that got most attention, on the left anyway. Blaming “the foreigners” for the failings of their own market-friendly policies betrays Labour as a capitalist party that would rather introduce racist policies than dare to appear remotely socialist. Interestingly Australian investors would not be denied access under Labour’s proposed policy – apparently they are not the bad kind of foreigner.

National are predictably letting the provision of social housing deteriorate even further, and just as predictably, don’t seem to care. This year’s budget handed more responsibility for the provision of social housing to community organisations – not necessarily a bad thing in itself – but it is apparent that these organisations will be so poorly funded that the number of homes is expected to decrease as a result. National’s election promises in respect of social housing focussed more on “moving along” the unworthy poor from state homes and replacing them with more worthy tenants.

Mana’s housing policy priorities explicitly address some of the causes of the housing crisis, acknowledging the effects of colonialism on Maori home ownership, and seeking to address homelessness. Mana policy development seems to derive from the struggle for transformative reforms, and as such, demand the attention and qualified support of socialists. Unfortunately, these policies also attracted the attention of the founders and Facebook friends

Housing/History

Median weekly rents
Inflation adjusted
1986–2006 Censuses



Rent has doubled over the last 20 years. Source: Statistics New Zealand

of the so-called Pakeha Party, whose deliberate historical ignorance wilfully construed such policies as reverse racism. Of course the Pakeha Party has now become a bizarre parody of itself, but in

its heyday it did attract a large number of followers, emphasising that socialists have to struggle against not only demoralisation and alienation as a result of economic policies, but also widespread

confusion as to the causes of disenfranchisement (hint: it's not foreigners or Maori).



Wobblies and Cossacks: The 1913 Great Strike

By Ciaran Doolin, *Fightback* (Christchurch)

The industrial actions in New Zealand during 1913 marked one of the high

points of the militant labour movement. The 1912 Waihi miners' strike, which was violently repressed by the police and "free" unionists, was of the primary the catalysts for the events of 1913. The driving organisational force

behind the strike was the Federation of Labour, often referred to as the "Red Feds", who were greatly influenced by the US-based Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or "Wobblies". The strike was decisively defeated in the

end, and the majority within the labour movement turned their focus away from radical unionism and towards the ballot box. Despite the subsequent ascendance of political labour, there was a small but vigorous core of unionists who rejected this move and continued to employ the weapon of direct action. It was to this sector of the labour movement that the 1913 Great Strike offered inspiration and hope.

Rumblings and antecedents

The 1890 maritime strike was the first major industrial confrontation in New Zealand. While the workers were defeated, they emerged with a new understanding of the power they could wield by united action. It was on the crest of this wave of class consciousness that the first Liberal government took office in 1891. In 1894 the government introduced a raft of new laws to protect and improve workers' wages and living and working conditions. Among these was the historic Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1894 (IC&AA) which established an independent court to arbitrate industrial disputes. Unions were encouraged to register under the Act, which meant giving up the right to negotiate directly with employers or engage in direct action. With unions flocking to register under the IC&AA, a period of relative industrial peace was achieved between 1894 and 1905. Although the policies of the Liberals did deliver substantial improvements for the working class, as the new century dawned some unions were starting to complain that Arbitration Court decisions were failing to keep wages in line with rising living costs, as well as doing little to improve working conditions like hours and safety. In 1906 the court stated finally that it did not settle wages on a profit-sharing basis. "The onus of proving the necessity for any increase in the standard rates was thrown upon the union," wrote economist J. B. Condliffe. "It was recognised that the cost of liv-

ing must be allowed for, but the Court gradually drifted into the position of calculating nominal wages at the standard of the years about 1900 in terms of cost of living." Therefore real wages were not rising, in fact between 1901 and 1906 they declined. By contrast, during the first years of the Court wages had increased enough that they outdistanced the cost of living. An American industrial relations expert who visited the country in 1909 expressed surprise that wages had not risen, considering the worldwide increasing wage trend during this period. The stagnation of wages was occurring against a back drop of economic boom from which employers were making record profits. Conflict was inevitable. The utopian picture of harmony between capital and labour – the "workingman's paradise" – was punctured in 1905 by the brief but successful Auckland tramwaymen's strike. In 1908 the Trade Unions Act (TUA) was passed advancing more rights to unions that chose to remain outside of the IC&AA, including the right to strike. In quick response to the passage of the TUA and following on the heels of the success of the Blackball miners' strike earlier that year, a conference of West Coast miners met in Greymouth to form the New Zealand Federation of Miners. The purpose of the organisation was to present a clear alternative to arbitration (a system referred to pejoratively as "labour's leg-iron") based on class struggle and direct action. The objects and preamble of the conference borrowed closely from those of the American Western Federation of Miners and the IWW. In 1909 the name of the organisation was changed to the Federation of Labour to better represent the much larger and broader membership, which now included most unions of watersiders, general labourers and shearers. The Federation cut its teeth in the 1912 Auckland general labourers' dispute and later the same year in the Waihi miners' strike. Both actions resulted in defeats, with the Waihi strike ending in

a medieval-style drama when a strikers' meeting at the Trades Hall was invaded by a mob composed of a mix of police and some union members loyal to the company. A striker, Fred Evans, was severely beaten and mortally wounded, and the "Red Feds" along with their families were chased out of town.

While the actions themselves produced few material gains for the workers concerned, the spirit of struggle they engendered in workers across the country was electric and contagious. By the end of 1912 the Federation's membership totalled a quarter of all organised workers in New Zealand, and its journal *Maoriland Worker* was prolific in all centres with a circulation of about 10,000. In January 1913 a unity conference was held which brought together erstwhile opposed moderate and militant unions. This proposed the foundation of two new workers' organisations: the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the United Federation of Labour (UFL). The UFL, like its predecessor, was a revolutionary organisation taking the overthrow of capitalism to be its ultimate objective. The constitution declared the organisation's function would be "[t]o organise systematically and scientifically upon an industrial union basis, in order to assist the overthrow of the capitalist system, and thus bring about a cooperative commonwealth based upon industrial democracy." The scene was thus set for the Great Strike.

1913 – the year of tumult

The actions of 1913 began rather unobtrusively in March through a dispute between Wellington shipwrights and the Union Steam Ship Company (USS Co.) over the failure of the latter to pay workers for travelling time or provide transport to the company's new workshops. In May the shipwrights cancelled their registration under the IC&CA and joined the UFL-affiliated Wellington Waterside Workers' Union (WWWU). On October 17, after

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protracted negotiations, the employers rejected the shipwrights' claims, and the following day the shipwrights went on strike. On the 22nd the watersiders had a stop-work meeting to consider the grievances of the shipwrights. Their employers declared the stop-work meeting a strike and replaced the unionists with other workers. The watersiders then handed the control of the dispute to the UFL. The next day mass meetings and pickets began. On the 28th a conference of employers and unions chaired by Prime Minister William Massey concluded with an offer to the shipwrights to reinstate the old collective agreement, provided the union put up a £1,000 bond. While the UFL accepted the proposal the WWWU rejected it. The ship owners then handed the control of their side of the dispute to the Employers' Federation. At this point Massey decided to involve the military. Colonel Hewer, Chief of the General Staff, urged that the command structure of the territorials be used to recruit special constables from the civilian population, advice that was swiftly actioned. The specials were later to acquire the name "Massey's Cossacks" and became infamous for their baton-swinging horseback charges on demon-

strating strikers.

On October 29 Auckland and Westport watersiders went out on strike in sympathy. The next day the first contingents of mounted specials arrived in Wellington. Marines from the HMS Psyche were marched through the streets of Wellington, setting up barricades complete with machine-gun nests at strategic locations. By the end of October Otago, Greymouth and Oamaru watersiders had joined in the strike, and miners throughout the country began to join. On November 3 over 2,000 watersiders and supporters gathered at the intersection of Taranaki and Buckle Streets in Wellington and confronted the specials. The specials repeatedly charged the strikers causing numerous injuries, some serious. Following this confrontation negotiations between the UFL and employers were broken off, with the latter insisting that any agreement must be registered under the IC&AA. The employers then called on "free" labour to man the wharves, a call backed by Massey who said specials would be provided to protect those "lawfully carrying on their business". By this time there were 1,000 mounted specials and 500 foot specials patrolling Wellington. On November 6 a new

watersiders' union was formed in Wellington and its members started loading. Meanwhile, specials were flowing into Auckland, with 2,000 having set up camp in the Domain. Two days later the specials occupied the waterfront. This set off a general strike in Auckland; by noon 4,500 workers in 14 different unions had joined the watersiders on strike, including brewery workers, bricklayers, carpenters, drivers, labourers, painters, seamen, and timber, furniture and hotel workers. Within a few days 10,000 workers were on strike in Auckland, and a number of other unions refused to do any work for the specials and offered financial support to the strikers.

By mid-November strike action was starting to lose momentum. The UFL call for a general strike in Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin was met with a tepid response. The moderate United Labour Party leadership and the Christchurch Strike Committee spoke out publicly against it. Nelson reopened its ports with company unionists, goods were being trucked through Wellington by a new drivers' union without interference, and some Auckland unions returned to work. At the point of origin of the dispute, the Wellington docks, the new union membership had risen



Masseys' Cossacks march into Auckland



workers' rally in support of the strikers

to nearly 600. However, by this stage, the employers were concerned not with the resolution of the dispute through negotiations but instead with the destruction of the UFL. Indeed, their obstinacy was cause for consternation within their own ranks; on November 13, with business in Auckland paralysed, 300 shopkeepers and businessmen petitioned Massey pleading with him to bring pressure on the local Employers' Federation to "not allow their stubbornness to ruin our trade".

Nonetheless workers continued to struggle. On November 16 roughly 7,500 Auckland strikers marched to Victoria Park where they met thousands of others who swelled their numbers to 12,000. Clashes between specials and workers continued throughout the country, with the Wellington Employers' Committee brazenly declaring on November 21 that "until the funeral obsequies of the Federation are complete ... the time is not right for further negotiations". The following day the Auckland Strike Committee called off the general strike for all workers except watersiders, seamen, drivers and tramwaymen. With that, the strike in the main centres across the country had effectively been broken. However the miners on the West Coast and in the Waikato continued to strike. With company union membership continuing to grow, on November 26 the UFL proposed binding arbitration by the Arbitration Court, but the Employers' Federation rejected

this and continued to refuse to negotiate with the UFL.

In early December a ray of hope punctured the gloom when the Australian union conference resolved not to handle cargo to and from New Zealand. Unfortunately the trans-Tasman sympathy strikes were too late to halt the decline. On the 20th the UFL declared the strike over for all workers except the miners (whose strike ended nine days later). Some unions returned to work on versions of their pre-strike agreements, others through the new company unions, and an unfortunate few, like the Huntly miners, were blacklisted. In the immediate aftermath of the strike the UFL was a shadow of its former self and barely limped along during the war years. However, after the 1917 Russian Revolution radical unionism experienced resurgence. In 1919 the UFL became the Alliance of Labour and fought the Labour Party for the loyalty of the workers, arguing for industrial over political action. Falling export prices in the late 1920's followed by the Great Depression in 1929 intervened, bringing mass unemployment and contributing to the decline of radical unionism. The 1935 election of the First Labour Government symbolised the triumph of political Labour.

The significance of the Great Strike

There has been considerable debate among historians over the long-term impact of the Great Strike on the labour movement. While there remains much disagreement over the nuances of this legacy there is a clear consensus that key sections of both sides of the dispute concluded that the way forward was industrial peace through arbitrationism and political labour. As social historian Erik Olssen argues, on the one hand:

The labour movement, thanks to the strike, achieved a new level of unity and consensus about the path forward... The way forward required One Big Union (strongly decentralised) and, if not revolutionary political action, then certainly very, very radical political action. If one compares the platforms of the various labour parties within the empire, the New Zealand one was certainly vastly more radical than any of the others.

And on the other:

The extent of the government's education became apparent during the war. The private papers of people such as James Allen and Downie Stewart [prominent conservative politicians] show that they did not like unions – revolutionary unions particularly, but they certainly did not want to provoke them into open warfare. The cost

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was too high.

There were unions who clearly operated outside this consensus. The watersiders were one example, and they, for a fleeting moment, channelled directly the spirit of 1913 during the 1951 waterfront lockout, when they dropped out of the pro-arbitration Federation of Labour and founded their own radical Trade Unions Congress committed to direct negotiation and action, and challenged the employers to deliver their much overdue wage increases and reduction in overtime.

One question remains outstanding: Was 1913 a revolutionary moment in

New Zealand history? The capitalists at the time seemed to be convinced of it: the editor of the *New Zealand Times* asserted that the strike could lead to a “bloody civil war”; Charles Holdsworth, general manager of the Union Steam Ship Company saw it as “an incipient class war”; the Governor, Lord Liverpool, got so caught up in the events that he went so far as to suggest that the UFL had declared a provisional government. At the other polarity, as Olssen observes, “Many Australians had come to view New Zealand as the best chance for a socialist revolution. In Australia, Labour parties got in the way; in New Zealand the lines of class conflict were

crystal clear, thanks to the strength of the Federation of Labour and the virtual absence of a labour party.” Historian Miles Fairburn claims that “In 1912 and 1913 New Zealand came closer to class war than at any other time in its history”. However, the picture of revolutionary change was illusory. The working class and its leadership were divided in both strategic vision and tactical direction which led to a failure to act decisively at crucial moments, ultimately playing into the hands of the employers and the government “It seemed like a revolutionary moment”, Olssen concludes, although “nobody quite knew what a revolution would look like.”



Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Chelsea Manning's gender identity

By Anne Russell, reprinted from *Scoop.co.nz*.

For the most part, gender minorities operating in the public sphere are recognised by their gender first and the

content of their work second. This is why *Rolling Stone* articles on “Women Who Rock” kettle together artists as musically and lyrically diverse as Taylor Swift, Missy Elliott and Sleater-Kinney, as though ‘woman’ is a subgenre of music. Even at comparatively progressive

activist events, cisgender women and transgender people—particularly trans* women—rarely dominate the overall speaker line-up. Rather, they are given separate sessions to discuss sexism and/or transphobia, implying that these issues are only problems for the oppressed

parties in question.

In contrast, issues like mass surveillance and military crimes are framed as issues that everyone should be concerned about, evidenced recently by the scale of controversy around the NSA leaks and the recently-passed GCSB Bill. This is not to say that they are not important or damaging problems, merely that they receive much more cultural attention than the routine struggles of oppressed gender minorities. While the soldier formerly known as Bradley Manning was hitherto widely considered a hero in radical movements, figures like radical activist and trans* woman Sylvia Rivera are not widely known outside the trans* rights movement itself. It is arguable that the activist world, like everywhere else, is still somewhat divided into gendered categories, at least on a surface level: the cis men examine military documents while the cis women and trans* folk talk about unequal access to healthcare, cultural invisibility and sexual harassment.

Private Manning's recent announcement that she is a transgender woman—to be known as Chelsea Manning from here on—thus represents a stunning collision of different activist factions. Manning released a statement last week announcing that she identifies as female, and wishes to undergo hormone therapy as soon as possible. This is not entirely new or unexpected information, as Manning's chatlogs with informant Adrian Lamo in May 2010 read: "I wouldn't mind going to prison for the rest of my life, or being executed so much, if it wasn't for the possibility of having pictures of me... plastered all over the world press... as a boy." Moreover, her lawyers attempted to use gender identity disorder as a defence in her trial. However, many of Manning's supporters felt uncomfortable referring to her as female without the explicit go-ahead from her. That time has come, and yet many commentators remain confused or hostile (trigger warning: transphobia) to the announcement. Manning's

requests have been fairly straightforward—"I also request that, starting today, you refer to me by my new name and use the feminine pronoun"—but many media outlets, particularly Fox News and CNN, continue to use her historical name and masculine pronouns. Since swathes of information about transgenderism are merely a Google search away, this misgendering demonstrates how heavily entrenched transphobia and the gender binary remain in public discourse.

In the internet age, where everything is transformed into dialogue, much activism ends up primarily focusing on this discourse. *The Daily Caller* drew up a list of which media outlets used the correct name and pronoun, listing them as "Bigoted!" or "Not Bigoted!" The focus implies that getting Chelsea's pronouns and name right is the key marker of one's support for trans* rights. But Manning is about to go to jail for 35 years in the wrong gendered prison, where she will be denied necessary hormone treatment, and likely be targeted for assault and rape. Although respecting her identity linguistically is important, and a mark of how seriously one takes trans* identity overall, the material concerns of her already damaging imprisonment are much more pressing. At this stage, it would be good to hear anything from her prominent cisgender supporters at all. At the time of writing, we are yet to receive any public statement from Wikileaks, Julian Assange, Amnesty International, Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, Michael Moore, or Naomi Klein on Chelsea's gender identity—much less any pledge of funds or activism to help her with attaining hormone treatment. Many of these people may continue to fight for Manning purely on the grounds of her confinement, which they believe is unjust in itself. However, it is undeniable that the conditions of this confinement will be much worse now that transphobia and transmisogyny (misogyny that specifically targets trans* women) are added

to the mix. Given that the inability to access hormone therapy in military prisons, along with the increased likelihood of rape by other prisoners—a problem already rife within all jails—constitute serious risks to Manning's health and well-being, ignoring this transphobia is akin to turning a blind eye if they stopped feeding her.

Unfortunately, transphobia and sexism are forms of oppression that many cisgender—particularly cis male—people tend to ignore or dismiss. Many people, even those who otherwise consider themselves social justice activists, are indifferent or hostile to taking an active role in dismantling cisgender privilege and power. To expect a quick rallying cry in support of Chelsea is perhaps unrealistic, but the slowness and inertia at work here merely speaks to how gender issues are often at the back of the queue within otherwise progressive activism.

The intersection of trans* issues and military might has created dilemmas for activists of all sorts. While many anti-militarists are unwilling or unable to come to terms with Manning's somewhat unexpected gender identity, many conservative trans* people believe is a traitor to the US. An op-ed piece appeared on Slate on August 23 titled "Trans* treason: Why Chelsea Manning is no hero for trans* soldiers", expressing concern that Manning's activism would reflect badly on trans* service members. "People in our group can empathize with the strain that being transgender and closeted in the military causes, but we do not in any way, shape, or form think this excuses or mitigates what she did," said Brynn Tannehill, a former Navy helicopter pilot and trans* woman. Such people are unlikely to work to reduce Manning's sentence, even if they support her being transferred to a female prison.

The middle class and socially normative sector of the LGBT movement has also opposed Manning's cultural prominence in the past for similar reasons. She was selected to be a Grand Marshal of the

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San Francisco gay pride parade, but the decision was quickly vetoed by the Board of SF Pride president, on the grounds that “[Manning’s] actions... placed in harms way [sic] the lives of our men and women in uniform”. Moreover, some prominent gay pride groups are often virulently transphobic themselves. Earlier this year, the largest transgender pride march in the world was shut out of Toronto’s main streets... by Pride Toronto Inc. Unlike same-sex marriage, the bulk of trans* rights issues cannot yet be easily be profited from by Kraft Foods or Ellen Degeneres. And although some have hailed the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell as a victory for LGBT rights, the repeal did not actually include the trans* community.

Journalist Glenn Greenwald wrote scathingly of SF Pride’s treatment of Manning, but, like many of his cisgender colleagues, has thus far kept a cyber silence on Chelsea Manning’s most recent announcement (on social media as well as in articles). However, it’s possible that this could represent a crossover point for many involved in anti-war activism, where gender issues start to really matter. Transgender identity may no longer be an abstract issue for many Manning supporters, since now a person they know and respect is now openly transgender. Alan Burns wrote in his novel *The Angry Brigade* that: “The move from liberal to revolutionary is from a feeling of pity for others to pity for yourself because you find the system personally intolerable.” Will cisgender people who supported Manning from the beginning be moved by her gender struggles enough to try empathise with her, and fight for the struggles of trans* folk and trans* women everywhere? This time, will an injury to one truly be an injury to all?

Historically speaking, gender minorities have played significant parts in anti-war activism; for example, Women of Liberia Mass Action For Peace, a coalition of Christian and Muslim women, was largely responsible for ending the

Second Liberian Civil War in 2003 (as detailed in the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*). Gender minorities have also been badly sidelined within anti-war or revolutionary movements, often prompting them to form or join their own rights groups. Sylvia Rivera said of the 1969 Stonewall riots that: “Everyone was involved with the women’s movement, the peace movement, the civil-rights movement. We were all radicals. I believe that’s what brought it around. You get tired of being just pushed around.” A primary reason for Occupy’s collapse was the sexism and sexual violence that made gender and sexual minorities unwelcome onsite. Likewise, the rape charges against Julian Assange have made many feminists move away from Wikileaks as an organisation. Nothing slows down movement-building like the exercise of cis male power.

Trans* women are hit particularly hard by these sorts of oppression, getting driven out of feminist movements, queer rights movements and even being sidelined within trans* movements. It’s likely that they will need cisgender support now more than ever; much of the cisgender Right are already using Manning’s transgender identity to further discredit her and her military actions. Her struggles with gender identity may have played some part in her joining the military in the first place; studies show that transgender people in the US are proportionately twice as likely to enlist as their cisgender contemporaries. However, it is doubtful that her identity influenced her anti-war activism, since anti-militarism is not exclusive to trans* women. The implications of the right-wing backlash for the rest of the trans* community are frightening; as trans* woman Katherine Cross wrote eloquently on Facebook:

We will be tarred with the brush of a whispered misconception, with the anti-democratic gag reflex that sees Manning as a traitor; but now, she will be seen as a traitorous trans woman. For that, we

shall all pay a price.

Will you, cisgender liberals and radicals, stand with us? Will you see the connection between the networks that link the militaristic tendencies of our incipient police state, and the system that polices and murderously incarcerates trans women? Will you find it in your hearts to acknowledge that there is more in heaven and earth than a heroic white cisgender man, and that a trans woman might be the face of Liberty?

Some have argued that Manning’s coming out as a trans* woman in the public eye is just as courageous as her leaking of American war crimes. Even if she ever manages to receive the required medical treatment, she will remain forever distinct in the public eye. If her high status within the anti-militarist movement lasts, she will still be portrayed by many as a trans* female war hero, rather than a war hero who is a trans* woman. Moreover, her announcement has opened up further discussion about trans* identity and the transphobic prison-industrial complex. Chelsea Manning’s actions in the military were brave and principled, but the battle to have one’s gender identity recognised and respected is also fought and hard-won within one’s own activist communities.

A note about pronouns: *while Manning’s instruction to use feminine pronouns is quite straightforward, some have expressed confusion about how to refer to her in the past tense. The correct pronoun is still ‘she’; even when the public thought of her as Bradley and a man, it’s clear she knew otherwise, and has known since childhood. One would not say “back when [gay person] was a straight teenager” if they have known they were gay since they were age five. The same follows for Manning; she has been a closeted woman for a long time, certainly during the time she reached political prominence.*



Putting the care into aged care

Grant Brookes, Health First candidate for Capital & Coast District Health Board

Aged care is in crisis. It's headline news. In August, pay cuts of up to \$100 a week for staff at Ranfurly Rest Home and Hospital in Auckland were the lead story on Campbell Live (When your employer proposes a pay cut). In early September, an inquiry into shocking neglect of elderly residents at Wellington's Malvina Major Home was front page news in the Dominion Post (Rest Home failed all its residents, Ministry says)

Although the mainstream media reported these as isolated issues, in reality they are the tip of an iceberg.

The systemic crisis has been clear for at least the last three years. In 2010, op-

position MPs Sue Kedgley and Winnie Laban led an alternative inquiry into aged care, after National Party members of the health select committee blocked a formal parliamentary inquiry. (October 2010 Aged Care Report)

And it was confirmed last December by the Caring Counts report, published by the Human Rights Commission. This found that the predominantly female workforce in aged care – many of whom are new migrants – and the elderly people they look after are undervalued and discriminated against. (Report of the Inquiry into the Aged Care Workforce)

The situation for support workers, often working alone to help elderly people in their homes, is largely invisible. But it's probably even worse.

Aged care in New Zealand is suffering

the ravages of neoliberal capitalism. Today's crisis flows from the privatisation and deregulation of the sector over the last 25 years.

Up until the 1980s, rest homes were mainly run by charities. But by 2010, over two thirds of residential facilities were privately owned and run for profit. The industry is dominated by multinational corporations, banks and private equity firms. A third of the beds nationwide are provided by six large chains.

One of them is Ryman Healthcare. Ryman owns the Malvina Major Home, of Dominion Post fame, where a confused elderly woman was repeatedly left lying in her own faeces.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there were legal minimum staffing levels for homes like this. But in 2002, deregulation removed

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minimum staffing requirements.

Ryman Healthcare receives \$800 million a year from the taxpayer. How much of this goes straight into the pockets of investors is unknown, as the company is not obliged to account for this public money.

It is known, however, that on night shifts they employ just one or two nurses to look after the 200 residents at Malvina Major. Is it any wonder that residents are sometimes neglected?

The aged care crisis has been the focus of a decade of campaigning by the three unions representing in the sector – the Nurses Organisation, the Service & Food Workers Union Nga Ringa Tota and the PSA.

But the proportion of workers who belong to a union, while higher than

the private sector average, is much lower than in the public health system.

In 2006, union density across aged care averaged 20 percent. This has weakened the ability of workers use industrial action to press for change.

Despite this, aged care has featured prominently in strike statistics in recent years, winning modest improvements (or limiting the deterioration) for workers and residents in some places.

But given the relative industrial weakness, the unions have also turned to political campaigning. Because District Health Boards administer the funding contracts with aged care providers, elected members of the DHBs do have some influence.

The PSA is lobbying DHB candidates to commit to pay justice for contracted

out home support workers, including equal pay with those directly employed by the DHBs (Time to Care).

The SFWU is calling on DHB candidates to support its Living Wage campaign (www.livingwage.org.nz), and its minimum hourly rate of \$18.40.

And the Nurses Organisation is asking candidates to sign a pledge, including commitments to the Living Wage and equal pay for nurses and caregivers in aged care compared with their DHB counterparts (DHB Elections 2013, NZNO).

Standing as a candidate for Capital & Coast District Health Board, I am proud to continue my years of involvement in the battle for aged care by supporting these union campaigns.