

VIGILANCE

maritime
workers
newsletter

■ For rank & file control of the MUA ■ Nationalise the maritime industry under workers' control

No. 30, October 23, 2006

Botany Community Picket for sacked CFMEU delegate

On October 16 around 250 community members blockaded the entrance to Botany Cranes in Banksmeadow in protest against the company's recent sacking of CFMEU delegate Barry Hemsworth. Many of them returned the next day to blockade the site for a second time.

Hemsworth was sacked for "insubordination" when he raised concerns about the company shifting its safety responsibilities onto workers.

Since his dismissal, Hemsworth has remained in a shed in front of the company's site every week day and says he will not leave until he is reinstated.

Howard's IR laws have denied Hemsworth "unfair dismissal" action and its construction industry laws (with possible huge fines) have quashed any chance of industrial action from his workmates.



The pickets were organised by Worker Solidarity NSW, a new activist group of community members that actively opposes "WorkChoices".

Worker Solidarity NSW aims to mobilise community members in defence of unions and workers, especially when organised trade union action is difficult or illegal and when union officials face heavy fines or jail terms.

The group aims to defend workers who are unfairly sacked and use non-violent direct action such as blockades and boycotts to take action.

[Visit Barry Hemsworth outside Botany Cranes (5 Exell St, Banksmeadow) every Monday to Friday - 6am to 4pm .

Worker Solidarity NSW are planning future activities, including more blockades for Barry Hemsworth. Email <workersolidaritynsw@gmail.com>].

US-led occupation kills over 655,000 Iraqis

A recent study in the British medical journal *The Lancet* estimates that the US-led occupation of Iraq has cost the lives of 655,000 Iraqis.

In the three years since the US-led invasion in March 2003, Iraq's mortality rate has jumped from 5.5 deaths per 1000 to 13.3 deaths per 1000.

Two days after the report was published, General Sir Richard Dannatt - the head of the British army - said the continuing military presence in Iraq jeopardised British security and interests around the world.

This comes at a time when increasing evidence comes to light that US forces are sponsoring death squads that fuel sectarian hatred between Iraq's Sunnis, Shiites and Kurdish peoples.

Opinion polls in the US and Iraq point to the increasing unpopularity of the US-led occupation of Iraq.

There is only one way to end the bloodshed in Iraq.

Immediately withdraw all foreign troops - US, British, Australian and all others - from Iraq. Troops out now!

generalstrikeaction

Check out the new website:
www.generalstrikeaction.org

Who's afraid of a 24-hour general strike?

The latest Sydney MUA *Maritime Unity* (No. 6) editorial takes aim at those who advocate 24-hour strikes against Howard's "WorkChoices".

While the *Maritime Unity* will not admit it, *Vigilance* is the only publication in the Sydney maritime industry that has called for the use of 24-hour strikes. It is fair to assume that it is *Vigilance* that is in the editorial's sights.

The editorial begins, "If we could stop WorkChoices with a 24-hour stoppage we would have already done it. The reality is a short stoppage will not beat this latest attack on the working class".

It continues with statements that no one could dispute. "We need to embrace all forms of struggle", "this struggle is broader than a single workplace", "it is a battle with the government and the ruling class", "winning takes well thought out strategy and tactics" - all an attempt to contrast the 'strategic' *Maritime Unity* with the 'hot-headed' *Vigilance*.

Problem is, the editorial either genuinely doesn't understand - or deliberately misses the point - of what *Vigilance* argues for.

Vigilance does not simply call for a 24-hour maritime industry-wide stoppage. Neither does it call for a one-off 24-hour general strike.

What *Vigilance* calls for is a) turning the various ACTU national days of action into 24-hour general strikes, and b) using these ACTU days of action to kickstart a *campaign of general strike action and frequent mass protests* that would force Howard to repeal "WorkChoices".

Maritime Unity refers to the "eventual necessity to undertake industrial action" but only "when it will work for us". And when will that be?

Howard was re-elected in October 2004. He won control of the Senate in July 2005. "WorkChoices" has passed both houses of parliament. "WorkChoices" became law in March 2006. If unions have not undertaken industrial action by now - when will they undertake industrial action?

Maritime Unity's answer - when we "build our forces and build the movement". How? "The most important form of struggle is the continued mobilisation of masses of people".

Of course we need to build the movement and continually mobilise people. But how often will these mobilisations take place - and for what purpose?

The editorial continues, "June 28 [the last ACTU day of action] and the actions in November this year and in April next year cannot be underestimated".

Huge protest rallies against "WorkChoices" are vital. But are one-off ACTU days of action designed to bolster Labor's electoral hopes the best way to "build the movement"?

The fact that the numbers that took part in June 28 rallies (300,000 people) are close to half that of November 15, 2005 (up to 600,000) should give us all cause for concern.

French workers and students built the movement that defeated the anti-worker First Employment Contract (CPE) laws differently. Their frequent days of strike action and massive protests did the trick.

The movement quickly spread from the first student rally in early March and the partial sympathy strike of teachers.

Large student rallies held days apart won the support of working people and forced the divided union movement to call united days of demonstrations and strike action.

Millions took part. Militant unions demanded 24-hour general strike action. When this did not occur they struck for 24 hours anyway. The movement quickly grew to such an extent that the government had no choice. On April 10 the CPE laws were withdrawn.

A movement based on one-off ACTU days of action held 5, 6 and 7 months apart will not defeat "WorkChoices". A movement similar to the French anti-CPE campaign will.

**ACTU day of action
November 30, 8am**
■ **Belmore Park (nr. Central Station)**
■ **Tumbalong Park, Darling Hrb. (Entry via Liverpool Street)**



French anti-CPE rally (2006)