

VIGILANCE

**maritime
workers
bulletin**

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

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John Howard - after 11 years, it's time to go!

Here are just some of the crimes that John Howard and his Liberal / National Coalition government have committed against us in their eleven years in office:

1996 - Howard's anti-union Workplace Relations Act (WRA) establishes Australian Workplace Agreements, strips awards to only 20 matters, limits the right to strike and makes it easier for bosses to sack people.

1997 - The privatisation of Telstra begins. The native title "10-point plan" all but wipes out Aboriginal land rights to the benefit of mining and pastoral interests.

1998 - Howard and Peter Reith conspire with Patrick's Chris Corrigan to sack 2000 wharfies and cripple the MUA. The Goods and Services Tax is introduced, shifting the tax burden away from the rich and onto working people. Electoral bribes get the Coalition re-elected.

1999 - A "second wave" of anti-union laws (amendments to the WRA) is blocked in the Senate. Troops are sent to East Timor in the guise of "humanitarian intervention", while keeping one eye on the vast oil reserves in the Timor Sea.

2000 - Howard refuses to take part in the massive "walks for reconciliation" and refuses to say sorry to the stolen generation of Aboriginal people.

2001 - The Coalition lies about asylum seekers throwing "children overboard" and the Tampa's rescue of refugees. A scare campaign about "boat people" sees Howard again win re-election.

Vote for a Rudd Labor government . . . what choice have we got?

The cold hard fact is that these elections will either see the Coalition re-elected or the Labor Party win office.

We can vote for left-wing candidates ahead of Labor, *but we must vote for Labor ahead of the Coalition.*

2002 - Howard refuses to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions. East Timor is pressured to sign the Timor Sea Treaty that robs the newly independent nation of vast oil and gas royalties.

2003 - Howard sends Australian troops to Iraq to back Bush's "war on terror" and lies about weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein's "links" to Al-Qaeda and the war having nothing to do with oil.

WANTED



**For crimes
against the
working class**

2004 - Howard scraps the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, then scares home owners with the spectre of interest rate hikes under Mark Latham to get re-elected.

2005 - The Anti-Terrorism Bill with sentences for "sedition" of up to seven years jail, detention without charge for 14 days and other draconian attacks on civil liberties becomes law.

2006 - With control of the Senate, the anti-union "WorkChoices" legislation becomes law. The AWB Iraqi wheat bribe scandal is exposed. "Welfare to Work" laws force many disabled people and single mothers to work.

2007 - Howard begins a push for nuclear power and launches his "emergency intervention" against the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory.

Eleven years of Howard and his Liberal / National Coalition government is eleven years too long. It is time to go, John Howard - and you can take your rotten anti-union WorkChoices laws with you.

Kevin Rudd says he will abolish WorkChoices and act in our interests. So let's put him to the test.

The reality of a Labor Party in power is the only way to demonstrate the real anti-worker nature of this party.

No matter who you vote for, the government always gets in

Amidst all the election hype, just how democratic the parliamentary system is and whose interests it serves is never questioned. It is about time we questioned it.

Parliament - not as democratic as you think

The democracy of the parliamentary system - despite what we are told - is actually very limited.

Aside from casting a vote every three or four years, most of us are simply excluded from any involvement in this "democracy". We have no control over vital issues like budget spending or sending troops to Iraq.

Tens of thousands of us in one area vote for the one "representative". This person is then free to vote whichever way they like, without ever having to take our views into account. Not very representative, is it?

Legal equality and real inequality

We all have the same legal right to run as candidates and put forward our ideas at election time. Billionaires and the unemployed have the same formal "right" to spend millions of dollars buying their own newspaper or costly TV and radio election advertising.

Of course, this democratic "right" can only be fully exercised by the rich - or parties supported by them. Besides, companies are not going to donate to parties that are anti-big business (which explains the huge donations Liberal and Labor get from business).

Parliament - a corrupting influence

Some say that the only person to enter parliament with honest intentions was Guy Fawkes (who tried to blow up the English Parliament in 1605).

Honest intentions or not, parliaments generally corrupt those that serve in them. MPs are given large salaries (3 to 6 times the average wage), generous pensions, first class travel and other perks. They start mingling with the big end of town and get salaries large enough to start their own businesses.

MPs quickly lose all identity and connection with the working class (assuming they ever had it in the first place) as they move closer to thinking, acting and voting like business people.

Real power resides outside of parliament

The real power in today's society is not found in parliament - but in the company boardrooms, the army, police, legal system and the state bureaucracy.

Business leaders and Boards of Directors - with higher profits their only consideration - are the ones that make the major economic decisions.

The unelected heads of the different parts of the state apparatus - state bureaucracy, the army, the police and the legal system - also wield considerable power.

These power brokers will begin to flex their muscles whenever the interests of big business are under serious threat. Investment strikes, legal challenges, constitutional coups and military takeovers are just some of the weapons they use to defend the system.



Defending the property and interests of the rich

Workers in the 19th century understood how the first parliaments defended the wealthy. Business and property owners were the only people entitled to vote.

This only changed around 100 years ago after mass political strikes eventually won the right to vote for workers.

The reformist workers parties (Labor, Social-Democratic and Socialist) soon won seats and formed governments.

The corrupting influence of parliament was soon reflected in the ideas of these parties. They no longer saw parliament as defending the interests of the capitalist class.

These parties instead peddled the illusion that parliament is a "neutral umpire" that equally serves workers and bosses alike - an idea that the Labor Party and unions under its sway continue to promote today.

Parliament will not give us real democracy

Real, participatory democracy - with power over the economy, the right to recall elected representatives and pay them no more than an average wage - will not come through parliament. It will only come when the working class challenges the economic and military might of the real power brokers in society.