

Defeat the Liberals with a General Strike

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

December 10, 2014

Contents

Touch One, Touch All	3
A General Strike	3
Rank & File Movement	3
Campaign for a General Strike to Stop Tony Abbott	4

The Liberal Government brought down a budget in May that outraged workers across Australia. It is a massive attack on the working class across the board, with cuts to pensions, Medicare, higher education, State funding for health and education, unemployment benefits and much more. There is hardly a sector of the working class that won't be dramatically affected.

Touch One, Touch All

We can't base our strategy on negotiations in the Senate. That would leave us at the mercy of capitalist politicians. Anybody who thinks we can rely on the Palmer United Party, the Motoring Enthusiasts Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, Family First and co needs their head read. These people, where they're not loose cannons, are hardened reactionaries.

Leaving the Budget to negotiations in the Senate also breaks the Budget up into single issues that may be wangled through piecemeal with dirty deals. We might be divided on this cut or that, on the basis of "Thank goodness it's not touching me". We must oppose the Budget root and branch, because an injury to one is an injury to all. Anyway, much of the Budget (like the cutting of funding to the States) doesn't need a specific Act of Parliament, having been included in a supply bill which has already passed. To win, we must defeat the Liberals.

A General Strike

The Liberals have nailed their colours to the mast and their credibility would be destroyed by backing down, so only the strongest possible working class mobilisation could defeat them – and a general strike is the strongest mobilisation we can perform. Three other considerations show that a general strike the best strategy. Thirty years ago, a single militant union could go out on its own and win disputes, but at the moment nobody wants to stick their head up. It is necessary to go all out at once to avoid martyring a single militant union. Secondly, a general strike would bust the anti-union laws up for good. They can't prosecute millions of workers, so they'll be forced to let us go. And thirdly, a general strike would give millions of currently non-organised workers a strong reason to join their union.

Rank & File Movement

Many might ask, "If a general strike is such a great idea, then, why aren't the ACTU organising one?" We all know the answer to that – the ACTU Executive is so committed to the ALP that it couldn't possibly initiate action that would go against the ALP leadership's wishes. The official representatives of 1.7 million workers are reduced to begging for crumbs.

What is required is a rank and file movement in the unions that can take them back from the craven collaborators who dominate them. We need to re-build the rank and file networks that were mostly wound up in the 1980s as the so-called "Communist" Party of Australia surrendered to neo-liberalism and became key supporters of the Accord between the ACTU and the Labor Government. The rank and file movement would operate on the basis first enunciated by the Clyde Workers Committee in 1915. Its motto would be "We will support the officials just so long as they rightly represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them". In this movement, all political currents within the working class would advance

their views and have them judged on their merits in the course of open debate and the benefit of experience.

Campaign for a General Strike to Stop Tony Abbott

In order to create this rank and file movement, the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group has taken the initiative to start up the Campaign for a General Strike to Stop Tony Abbott. Because only the ACTU can call a general strike at the moment (if anyone else did, the strike wouldn't happen), it takes the form of a petition to the ACTU Executive. In the course of building support for the petition, a rank and file movement will come into existence and it is that movement which can compel the ACTU to organise the strike – or can organise the strike itself if the ACTU refuses. And the rank and file movement will itself change the politics of the unions by challenging the union bureaucracy, who are wedded to capitalism, Parliament and neo-liberalism. The MACG would argue for the perspective of taking the unions out from under the officials and restructuring them along libertarian lines, with federal structures and autonomy for local initiative.

The Campaign is structured as a united front, where all currents within the working class can speak freely, advancing their views and having them tested on their merits. In addition, the demands have deliberately been couched in relatively vague terms, describing what we are against, because positive objectives and essential questions like the length of the strike will have to be determined in the course of the campaign. To set them out in advance would be either to limit the appeal of the campaign, to foreclose radical opportunities, or both.

The Campaign for a General Strike to Stop Tony Abbott meets fortnightly in Melbourne and can be contacted by E-mail at [generalstriketostopabbott \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:generalstriketostopabbott@gmail.com) or via Facebook: Campaign for a General Strike to Stop Tony Abbott.

You don't have to be an Anarchist to join. In fact, the campaign wouldn't work if it was restricted to Anarchists. All you need is to agree that Tony Abbott needs to be stopped and we should have a general strike to stop him. So let's get cracking.

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