

Stop the scams: scrap Howard's IR laws

Tame the Beast

To stare down this attack, we need to continue to be smart and disciplined. We will have to understand how the laws work, and decide where and when they can be challenged.

Know your rights - as we have said, it will be harder to take industrial action, but that doesn't mean we don't stand up for our rights and do what is possible within the existing laws.

Stay United - Solidarity will be more important than ever. We can't afford to stand back and allow workmates, or their unions, to be victimised. Unions are building a network to support workers under attack; when a fight is on, you will be emailed or sms-ed and ask to help. To join up go to <http://www.rightsatwork.com.au>

Be strong - these laws are repressive and union officials and rank and file members will face fines and even jail for going about their business. This should not stop us making a stand for what is right

Name and Shame - where employers attack workers under these laws, we need to punish them as consumer; stay informed and use your dollars as a political tool.

Toss Them Out - this is a radical political attack that requires a political response. Our immediate challenge is to toss out every Coalition Member and Senator who supports it and to elect replacements, from whatever Party, who still believe in a Fair Go.

Join Blue Mountains Unions Council

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Tristar: Howard's law in operation

It is cheaper for the company to pay its workforce to do nothing until next year when their collective agreement will expire, leaving the workers, some with more than 40 years service, with redundancy packages as low as \$8 000 under the new laws.

The company has insisted that it must remain open and has new work on the way, despite the fact that most of its machinery has been removed and the Marrickville factory has stood idle for months.

Julia Gillard said that Labor would rip up John Howard's IR laws and ensure this situation never occurred again.

Voter penalty rates: Howard Out!

The Christmas press was full of examples of people forced to work over Christmas without any extra payment because of Scrooge Howard's industrial relations laws. There are warnings too, that Howard's days as PM are numbered as this excerpt from a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald reveals:

"justice will be delivered at the next election. This is not dog-eat-dog America and we are not going your way, Mr Howard. It's Australia and the workforce is sick of overpaid chief executives shoving decent, ordinary working people around. Retribution is just months away now - it's going to be sweet. There are more of us than there are of you. You should have done the maths before you decided to treat us with contempt.

And mate, I voted for your party last time and the time before that. Without the industrial relations laws I would have voted for you again. You are screwing hard-working people and we are not going to take it".

457 Visa scams

BHP and 457 Visas

BHP has started talks with the Federal Government to recruit more than 200 overseas workers for its \$2 billion Pilbara iron-ore expansion operation.

BHP Billiton needs 2500 workers ahead of an expected 2010 start-up date.

The company is likely to target trades such as welders, mechanical fitters and electricians from overseas.

The plan reflects the growing popularity of the controversial section 457 visas in the mining industry.

The Federal Government last year granted almost 40,000 temporary work visas, 3000 of which were in the mining sector.

Filipino Workers forced to sign illegal AWAs

Filipino guest workers who were sacked from Dartbridge Welding after they joined the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union have lodged complaints

with the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission.

AMWU Queensland Secretary Andrew Dettmer said not only had the three men been discriminated against, their case was an example of regular intimidation of guest workers not to join unions.

“The AMWU has now seen a number of cases where guest workers have been forced to sign contracts containing anti-union clauses, or they have been threatened with deportation if they contact a union over their pay and conditions.”

“This is illegal, yet the Federal Government does not seem to care.”

“Like other guest workers, these men have been exploited. They were brought here as casual workers who could be laid off at a days notice, forced to pay inflated costs for their accommodation and transport, they were paid less than Australian workers and they were threatened with deportation when they questioned their employer.”

Unions and Democracy: CPSU National Sec. Stephen Jones

The trade union movement is important because unions are one of the only community organisations that have the resources, the representative voice and the mobilising networks to both listen to, and then speak out on behalf of working Australians, and to provide a credible voice that may challenge governments - of any political flavour.

The Howard Government's industrial relations legislation has a far more ambitious reach than just the individualization of employment arrangements and the removal of "fairness" as the arbiter of work standards,

alarming and retrograde though this is.

These draconian industrial relations laws sit alongside the emasculation of the Senate as a house of review, the politicisation of the Australian Public Service, the attempted concentration of the media through the dismantling of the cross-media ownership laws, the political assault on the ABC and the attempts to silence scientists who dare to bring scientific and ecological facts to bear on economic, environmental and social debates and the assault on our Universities and higher education.

Birgitte Hansen Trades Hall Mural

Blue Mountains artist Birgitte Hansen, Unions NSW's artist-in-residence since September 2005, is working on a mural in Sydney's Trades Hall.

The 20-metre-high mural was commissioned by Unions NSW's Neale Towart and Secretary John Robertson to celebrate the achievements of the union movement and show the human face of the long struggle for fair pay and conditions.

Birgitte calls the mural a "time wall" as it chronicles milestones in the history of the union

movement such as the 888 campaign for 8 hours work, rest and sleep.

The people included are a cross section of the millions of workers who have taken up tools or served their community over the last few hundred years. Towards the rear of the time wall is a woman holding her teachers certificate and represents the liberation of women, Birgitte says.



Qantas “fry the flag” sell off - sell out

After years of trying to outsource every skilled job from maintenance work to pilots, while still claiming to be Australian, Qantas management shows it's true flag: flag of convenience, the surrender to global asset strippers for assets the taxpayer and employees built up over generations.

One striking aspect of this latest craze for “debt financed” takeover is that the \$11 billion buyout will increase the Qantas debt from \$4 billion to \$18 billion! Tax dodging writ large, yet Howard says his government “will not take sides”.

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union Acting National Secretary Dave Oliver said the take-over bid by Macquarie Bank and Texas Pacific Group was not in the national interest and would make the loss of jobs and a decrease in safety standards more likely.

“Qantas is an Australian icon and the service,

safety and standards that it is famous for are all down to the Australian workers who make up the Spirit of Australia.”

“It is against the national interest for the Prime Minister and Treasurer to sign-off on this take-over bid.”

“We are extremely concerned of the likely approach Texas Pacific will take going from their previous willingness to sack workers and send the jobs overseas.”

“For example their take-over of airline catering company Gate Gourmet in the UK led to the sacking of 3000 workers, and when they took over German Grohe Water Technology they commissioned a study that recommended sending production to China and then sacked around a fifth of the workforce.”

Thiess sack first aid officer 16 February 2007

Thiess have sacked the first aid officer working on the Marcus Clarke Street site after he gave permission to a worker to leave the site and seek medical help after being involved in a potentially fatal workplace accident.

A worker fell through a void on the fifth storey of a Thiess construction site on Marcus Clarke Street at approximately 1:00 pm on 8 February 2007. The worker fell onto ducting that was being installed. The ducting broke his fall, saving him from falling a further 6-9 metres. Had this ducting not been there, the fall could have been fatal.

Thiess did not lodge an incident report with ACT WorkCover straight away. Instead they issued a formal warning to the first aid officer on site after the officer allowed the injured worker to leave the site the following morning before notifying the foreman to seek formal medical treatment. The

formal warning was later withdrawn after Thiess management came under pressure from workers on the site.

Join a Union Now

Unions Australia is a “one stop shop” to quickly and easily join a union with just one phone call to

1300 486 466

Howard's IR reforms mean more people are turning to unions than ever before - Unions Australia makes joining easy!



NT: Workers outraged at AWA pay cuts (19 Feb 2007)

A Northern Territory business has offered staff \$1000 if they sign away workplace conditions.

The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union organiser Mr Hall said that under the AWA, workers would surrender a raft of conditions; including cuts to their redundancy and severance pay, the axing of flexitime and travel allowances and reduced annual leave, maternity leave and higher duties allowance.

Staff at the hostels and at the company's four new indigenous apprentice-housing facilities were not happy with the lack of consultation.

One worker, who did not want to be named, said he thought WorkChoices was about taking away people's rights.

"There was no consultation with employees, we were just told the AWA was going to happen."

Mr Hall said it was difficult to find staff members willing to talk in public.

"If workers stick their head up in the media, they get shot very quickly," he said.

Mr Hall said the AWAs had come at the expense of jobs, with reduced staffing levels forcing workers not to take breaks.

"The workload will pick up and chances for our members to have those breaks will disappear," Mr Hall said.

"And there's no form of redress to be had in the AWA."

More 2007 election issues

David Hicks

On the fifth anniversary of the incarceration of David Hicks at Guantanamo Bay, the NSW Teachers Federation calls on the Australian government to take immediate action to repatriate David Hicks.

Maree O'Halloran, Teachers Federation President, said:

"The British government intervened to ensure that all British nationals were released from Guantanamo Bay and returned to Britain. These people now live in the community under British law. Similar action has also been taken by other governments on behalf of their citizens. It is time to end the cruelty and to acknowledge that there has been a fundamental breach in the rule of law with respect to the incarceration of David Hicks.

A former Chief Justice of the Australian High Court, Sir Gerard Brennan, has said that Australia has shown itself to be "morally impoverished" by its acceptance of the way the USA has treated David Hicks.

It is important that all people are afforded their civil and human rights in a democracy."

2007 Things going overboard

The real fizzers of 2006 have been the electoral losses of the Libs and Nationals at the state level. In three elections Howard's IR laws have cost the coalition votes (over the 10 years of the Howard government the coalition of Liberals and Nationals have lost 20 State elections!). How can Howard keep his IR laws out of this years Federal election? Watch out for things going overboard!



Workers' Hotline

Free telephone advice and help for workplace issues

1300 362 223

