

# Commonwealth Bank raises interest rate

by Jim H.

The Commonwealth Bank's callous decision to raise its home loan interest rate by ten points has caused widespread condemnation. Feeling has been so strong that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and his deputy Julia Gillard and Treasurer Wayne Swan have gone on the public record to label the bank as greedy and not operating in the best interests of Australia.

Few would disagree with the description.

The point is what is actually being done about it? Well, nothing. The interest rate will be put up and the other banks are already following suit.

The reason given by the Commonwealth is that the money it has to borrow has gone up. Increased costs have to be passed on. This is not true. The Commonwealth is doing well enough to be able to absorb this.

The matter raises another just as important point. The biggest culprits are the international



banks that actually lend out the money and are passing on their own crisis, in the form of toxic funds, through their own higher interest charges. These they pass onto the Commonwealth and other banks operating in Australia. It should not be tolerated.

Australia's interests demand

a stand against the unfair practices of the mainly US owned international banks.

If they are not prepared to provide funds at a reasonable price, alternative funding sources need to be found. The Commonwealth Bank needs to be told to do this. The Australian government

can play an important role by making appropriate decisions about where it is going to borrow money from. It is the least that can be expected.

This is not being done because in truth the Rudd Labor government does not really want to take on the banks. Instead of exerting pressure

on them, there have been generous contracts and stepped up underpinning of reserves. Banks are being provided with lucrative financing deals in connection to government projects. New government bonds are being issued to the tune of \$300 billion. The banks stand to do well out of this too.

At the very least some conditions can be put as a price for the gravy train.

Chief amongst these is that the banks use their funds for the benefit of Australia and to ensure that their actions do not penalise working people.

But then the Rudd government would not be able to perform its service for the rich if it took such a course.

Still, there is recognition of just how many Australians feel angry about this.

Why else would there be a tilt against the banks in words, while doing nothing in deed, unless it is to try and dissipate the anger?

## Indian students stand up for their rights

by Jim H.

The recent attacks on Indian students in Australia are a blight that is soundly condemned by all decent Australians.

There has also been growing concern about the lack of police protection and action from politicians to put an end to this.

Angered by the situation that young Indian students have found themselves in, they have organised themselves to take collective action to make a difference. They have a right to do this. Again, most Australians have no problem with this, understanding the right of the underdog to stand up for a fair go.

But the police chiefs and politicians see it differently. For them the biggest crime is that the victims are fighting back. Police actions have concentrated much more on clearing out groups of young Indians than chasing down those who have orchestrated the attacks.

The actions taken by Indian

students come on the heels of the response of taxi drivers, who have also been the victims of violent attacks. Many of them are Indian. It is obvious that the actions of the taxi drivers have had an influence on the actions of the students.

There is a very good reason for the lack of genuine official support to date. The primary role of the police force and the political system is to maintain the power of the ruling class of monopoly owners. This ruling class is finding itself in economic difficulty and faces a population that expects a much better deal than it is getting. In this there is always the danger of rebellion. The ruling class seeks to protect itself and one means is to find ways to divide the people through the use of racism and setting up scapegoats. It is the method of divide and rule. In this respect it presents a serious danger to all Australians.

Young Indians are a visible target. Many young Indians are in a situation that is not of their own making. Many of them are compelled by poverty to work

in service stations, convenience stores, kitchens, and of course, drive taxis. These are some of the worst paid jobs with the worst conditions. It is not unusual to work all night for as little as \$9 an hour.

Young Indians are being used as a source of cheap labour. For students this is a double whammy. Many also face highway robbery in terms of course fees, sometimes for courses that are not worth the paper they are written on. Young foreign students are treated as a resource to exploit to the utmost, while delivering them as little as possible.

They are also falsely set up as taking away job opportunities from Australians. Certain elements are encouraged to stir the situation up. In this sense, it becomes a diversion from the failure of the system to provide. Those who are responsible are let off the hook.

Australians must demand action to ensure that all foreign students are provided with decent and affordable courses.

Students compelled to find work to support themselves

must be paid their full entitlements and enjoy working conditions that are appropriate for all Australians. By ensuring that this is the case, all jobs are protected against the use of cheap labour alternatives.

By organising themselves and taking action, young Indians in Australia have given

a lead. They have brought the situation to the attention of all and made it harder for reactionaries to maintain their racist campaign.

In this way they are contributing to the unity of the Australian people and opposing the divide and rule tactics of the ruling class.

