

Australian Workers Union sued for strike actions

by *Jim H.*

The Australian Workers Union (AWU) is being prosecuted by the Rudd government's workplace watchdog for allegedly taking industrial action. Tacked onto this is the claim that strike pay was demanded from an employer.

The prosecution prompted the union's National Secretary, Paul Howes, to attack the Fair Work Ombudsman as an "employer patsy," which had dragged its feet when it came to investigating bosses.

More than anything else, this prosecution shows that Rudd's Fair Work laws are not designed to give workers a fair go. Their purpose is to favour the same corporations that benefited from Howard's WorkChoices. In this way Rudd's law continues much of what WorkChoices was designed to do.

Court documents allege AWU officials Andrew Gillespie and Andrew Gorman organised employees of Boral Resources (NSW) Pty. Ltd. to engage in unlawful industrial action at the company's Dunmore quarry site, 100 kilometres south of Sydney, on February 13 and 16 last year.

The industrial action was allegedly conducted in relation to an objection to Boral supervisors carrying out the work of Boral workers.

It was alleged that industrial action was unlawful because it was conducted before the Boral employees collective agreement expired.

It seems it is OK for management to breach agreements and a different matter entirely for the workers.

Ombudsman plays dirty games

Mr. Howes accused the Ombudsman

of deliberately leaking details of this prosecution to the media and delaying the implementation of a taskforce to investigate employer compliance in the horticultural sector.

This taskforce had been announced last year by Workplace Relations Minister Julia Gillard. Nothing has happened since. Mr. Howes said the taskforce has been a dismal failure.

The Ombudsman's Executive Director of Complex Investigations, Karsten Lehn, said the agency had launched the prosecution of the union, because laws regarding how industrial action could be lawfully conducted and how permit holders may lawfully enter workplaces had allegedly not been obeyed.

Why not employ the same zeal with the employers?

The answer is obvious. Fair work and the Ombudsman's Office have taken on the task of holding down the working

class and its organisations on behalf of the major employers. They are simply doing the bosses' dirty work. It is the reason why they have to go.

Mr Howes said the Ombudsman has also refused to investigate "huge evidence" of contract breaches by a large national employer. "Every step of the way they have frustrated us to the point of where we have just decided that we will not deal with that office..."

Gillard's Fair Work fines replace Howard's WorkChoices fines

The AWU and the AWU (NSW) face maximum fines of \$33,000 per breach, while Mr Gillespie and Mr Gorman face maximum fines of \$46,600 per breach.

The AWU deserves to be supported in this battle. Victory will thwart the prospect of other unions being attacked in the same way. To defend the AWU is to defend all.

Will capitalism destroy the goose that laid the Golden Egg?

by *Ned K.*

"Tradition, Heritage and Community" was the headline on the front page of The Advertiser newspaper in Adelaide on Thursday 11 February, 2010.

Vanguard readers may think such a headline was referring to some old building about to be demolished, or perhaps the destruction of a community through drought. Well, the headline was actually referring to a local football club, the Port Adelaide Magpies!

Two days before, on 9 February 2010, the governing body of the local football league and its 8 affiliated clubs voted unanimously to reject a Port Adelaide Magpies plan to prevent the closure of this club. Their plan involved sharing administration costs with the Port Adelaide Football Club, which plays in the Australian Football League.

The Port Adelaide Magpies were heavily in debt and feared that if their plan for financial survival was not supported by the league, they would have to close up at the end of season 2010.

How could a football club which had its origins in 1870, deep in the working class community of Port Adelaide, be on its knees financially?

It really is a case of "destroying the goose that laid the golden egg". The "golden egg" is the corporate business called the Australian Football League (AFL) which grew from "the egg" of local leagues in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.



When the AFL got into full swing in the 1990s, the corporate world, led by the major multinational companies sponsoring the AFL teams and driven by commercial TV advertising of the multinationals' products, made millions of dollars. Prices to see an AFL game went through the roof.

How much of the profits from the elite AFL league went to the local state leagues? Not much. How do we know? What has been made clear in the sad saga of the Port Adelaide Magpies' demise is that nearly the sole income source for the local league clubs is – wait for it – gaming machines!

The two local clubs in SA that are closest to financial ruin are the two

clubs with the *lowest* income from gaming machines! These two clubs, Port Adelaide Magpies and Sturt, have the highest club memberships of all nine clubs in the league!

The question is – where is all the money going that is accumulated at the elite corporate level of the AFL, the level where the CEOs talk about their clubs being "in the business of football"?

Community rallies to save their club

Port Magpies supporters, the Port community and football lovers in South Australia sense that something

is fundamentally wrong here. In just two weeks, Port Magpies membership jumped from 1800 to nearly 6,000 and the Mayor of Port Adelaide is leading a community campaign to save the club. One girl under 10 years old fronted the Magpies office with her entire savings in her piggy bank as a donation to the club, bringing the admin staff to tears.

Many questions are being asked. Why isn't the corporate world, which is making mega bucks out of elite sport, being forced to ensure the financial stability of local leagues and clubs, which truly are the goose that lays their golden eggs? Where do all these mega bucks go?