

Marxist
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Submission

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www.anu.edu.au/polsci/mi

[marxistinterventions @ gmail.com](mailto:marxistinterventions@gmail.com)

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Contents

In this issue		5
Australian imperialism and East Timor	Sam Pietsch	7
'Rank and fileism' revisited: trade union bureaucracy and Australia's Great Strike	Robert Bollard	39
Australia's resilience during the global crisis, 2007-2009	Ben Hillier	59
Politics and meaning: Melbourne's Eight Hours Day and Anzac Day, 1928-1935	Kyla Cassells	79
'Right the wrong': the RMIT University Muslim Prayer Room Campaign 2008-2009	Liam Ward and Katie Wood	109

Contributors

Robert Bollard teaches history at Victoria University. He was a trade union delegate in the Commonwealth Employment Service, and has been involved in socialist politics and the labour movement for nearly thirty years.

Kyla Cassells Kyla Cassells is a student activist at La Trobe University in Melbourne. She recently completed an Honours thesis in History on the commemoration of public holidays in the Great Depression, and is currently undertaking a PhD. kcassells @ students.latrobe.edu.au

Ben Hillier is a regular contributor to www.sa.org.au and can be contacted at [bmh @ netspace.net.au](mailto:bmh@netspace.net.au)

Sam Pietsch is the author of a PhD on the Australian military intervention in East Timor. [sam.pietsch @ gmail.com](mailto:sam.pietsch@gmail.com)

Liam Ward is a Melbourne-based activist and a delegate in the RMIT Branch of the National Tertiary Education Union.

Katie Wood was the RMIT Student Union coordinator of the Business Campus in 2008, during the campaign to save the prayer room.

In this issue

The articles in this issue focus on major controversies within and beyond the Australian left.

Few issues have challenged the Australian left as much as the Howard Government's 1999 military intervention in East Timor. Contrary to the common view that the intervention was a humanitarian action forced on a reluctant government by popular pressure, Sam Pietsch analyses it as an imperialist use of military power to secure longstanding strategic interests of the Australian state. The intervention also enabled the Howard Government to increase military spending and act more aggressively to assert imperial power in the Southwest Pacific.

Marxist strategies for change often centre on the potential of organised labour struggles. Yet labour is divided in many ways, including between leaders and the rank and file. The tradition to which Marxist Interventions belongs has long argued that the union rank and file has different interests to those of the labour bureaucracy. Robert Bollard's essay on the Great Strike of 1917 is a defence of our position, in response to critics such as conservative historian Jonathan Zeitlin.

There is now an exhaustive literature about the global financial crisis. Australia's peculiar position remains a matter for somewhat puzzled debate. Ben Hillier looks closely at the effects of the crisis on the Australian economy. He considers how the relative stability of Chinese demand, the buoyancy of the housing market and the circumstances of the financial sector have so far insulated Australia from the carnage witnessed in Europe, Japan and the US. Since the article was completed, upheavals in Greece have showed how fragile the situation is.

In March and April 2010, a major debate broke out in the Australian media over Anzac Day, featuring such issues as militarism, race and gender. Class differences in society have received relatively little attention. Kyla Cassells presents a comparative study of Anzac Day and Labor Day in Victoria between the World Wars, which explores how these days were used by Trades Hall, the Australian Labor Party, and the RSL to perpetuate political agendas. She also considers the contestation of these agendas by such groups as the Communist Party, women, and the unemployed.

During 2008 and 2009, Muslims at RMIT University in Melbourne ran a successful and important campaign for the return of dedicated Muslim Prayer Rooms on campus. Because the campaign's central demand was for a religious space, much of the left dismissed the movement outright or even supported University management. This raises serious questions concerning the Australia left's clarity about racism. Katie Wood and Liam Ward consider the campaign and its lessons.

