

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL WORKERS AND TRADESPERSONS IN AUSTRALIA

Dear Mr. or Mrs. or Ms. Average Worker (either in the private or public sector) and especially all those in the trade union movement,

Yesterday on March 20, the world observed an anniversary date of great shame, infamy, sorrow and despair, namely the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. In the light of events of the past three years, it is not too much to state that this date marked the beginning of the destruction of Iraq as a viable, functioning nation.

But 20 March 2006 will, I believe, in future years also come to be recalled as a day of great sorrow and agony for Australian workers and tradespersons. For on this date, the Howard Government revealed the details of its plan to completely neutralize and destroy the trade union movement which has been an important part of this country's social fabric for the last 70 years or so. Also revealed were its plans to sharply curtail, restrict, and limit the rights of average workers who are outside the trade union movement. "The Devil is in the Detail", so the old saying goes, and in this 400 page document there are hiding places for legions of devils. Kim Beazley, the Leader of the Opposition and head of the ALP, branded the document as "400 pages of infamy." I think that he was absolutely right.

The revelation about the details of these Industrial Relations (IR) changes was preceded by two quite incredible events, in my mind at least. The first was that during the 2004 election campaign of late August, September and October, NOT A SINGLE WORD was uttered by John Howard, any of his Ministers, or any Liberal candidate regarding the plans of the Liberal / National Coalition to completely rewrite the IR laws. That shows to me just how degenerate, twisted, distorted and non-relevant the election campaigns have become in this nation. A matter of such great national relevance and significance – which should have been discussed and debated for many months before the changes were introduced – was not even on the agenda during the October '04 election. But then, let's shoulder some of the blame ourselves, shall we? We – the majority of voters in Australia – were far too busy collecting the two \$600- family allowance bribes from the Howard Government, far too busy worrying about whether interest rates might rise if the ALP was elected, and far too busy wallowing in our usual apathy and indifference to the real social issues in this country, to demand from EITHER party that real issues be discussed in depth. No, the truth was, we (and that means you, my dear brothers and sisters in the workplace, in or out of the union movement) could not even be bothered to have a serious discussion on issues that lasted for more than 10 minutes. All we were really interested in was counting our dollars and wondering what we could buy next with the free handouts.

The second incredible event was the saturation campaign by the Howard Government last year (2005) in the newsprint and television media, to convince us that our nation

would be much better off if we adopted these extreme changes in the IR laws. If you haven't heard the figures, John Howard and his Liberal mates spent **19 MILLION DOLLARS** of ours, the taxpayers' money, on those full-page ads in newspapers and televisions across the nations. Did we, my friends; did you, dear worker and tradesperson, bother to even raise one single finger in protest at such a blatant misuse of public funds to smother us in propaganda and spin? Well, several hundred of you in the trade union movement did get out and march, that is true. And I sincerely congratulate each and every one of those individuals for daring to make a difference. But from the vast majority of workers, it was the same old story: ***we can't be bothered to protest!***

I wish that I could state that in the light of such a blatant misuse and perversion of both political and financial power, that you, dear workers, could at least figure out what was and is going on, and take the proper and necessary steps to protest and stop it. But the way I see it, most of you really DO NOT CARE to stand up and protect even your basic rights. You are simply standing by, idly and unengaged, while John Howard and Kevin Andrews (the Workplace Relations Minister) and other henchman are **PUTTING THE CHAINS ON YOUR HANDS**. Isn't that a sad thing to have to say, isn't that a sad sight to have to see, that you are so apathetic, so disinterested, and so brainwashed, that you are **REFUSING** to stand up for your basic right to earn a decent wage for an honest day's work, and to protect the workers rights and entitlements which your parents and grandparents fought so long and hard to achieve?!

But it gets even worse, in my humble opinion. It *has* to be stated, that **IN THE OCTOBER 2004 ELECTION, YOU ARE THE ONES WHO VOTED TO KEEP THIS LYING, GREEDY AND DISHONEST POLITICIAN AND HIS MATES IN POWER FOR ANOTHER THREE YEARS!!!** Wow, could you really have been THAT STUPID??!! Not only that, but **YOU GAVE CONTROL OF THE UPPER HOUSE, THE SENATE, TO JOHN HOWARD AS WELL!!!** How utterly stupid, idiotic, insane and moronic was THAT!!! It is a **FACT** that John Howard and his mates **COULD NOT** have won the October '04 election without your votes. There is absolutely no argument about that. You voted for John Howard and his henchmen mainly because **YOU WERE WORRIED THAT INTEREST RATES MIGHT GO UP IF THE ALP WON!** Is that really **THE MAIN REASON** that you voted for John Howard??!! It does appear so, from the post-election analysis! And if I were John Howard, I would be saying: ***THANKS FOR THE VOTES, SUCKERS!***

So my dear brainwashed and clueless workers and trades persons, when you see your wages going down, please don't complain! When you see conditions at your workplaces getting worse, not better, please don't complain! When you realize that you no longer really have the right to strike (read the legislation if you think I am making that one up!) for better wages or better conditions, please don't complain! In fact, **JUST KEEP ON SMILING THROUGH YOUR TEARS OF AGONY AND DESPAIR**. After all, **YOU WERE THE ONES WHO PUT JOHN HOWARD AND HIS MATES BACK IN POWER!!**

Now the question I have for you, all of you, is: are you ready at last to do something about these outrageous new powers given to the Minister for Workplace Relations? In fact, certain members of the labor movement have likened him to the new Commissar for Industry! That certainly evokes some interesting images, doesn't it?! Back to the bad old days of Russia in the 1920s and 30s, when workers certainly DID NOT DARE to discuss things with their employer, the all-powerful and autocratic state machine. Kevin Andrews has boyish good looks, but don't let that deceive you! The man was hand-picked by John Howard to act as his personal agent of destruction of the unions, and don't you ever forget that!!

If you are ready to stop acting like sheep being led to the slaughter, or like lemmings being led to mass suicide by jumping over the cliffs, then I suggest that you get together and start DISCUSSING REAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES in this nation. Stand up and start shouting TO HELL WITH APATHY! TO HELL WITH INDIFFERENCE! *WE* are the ones who are going to suffer through continued apathy and indifference, *WE* are the ones going to hell in a basket, no one else!! But dear workers, you will actually have to PROVE to onlookers like myself, that you are serious about reclaiming your rights! I am not sure that you really are, to speak the awful truth!! I am not sure that you aren't perfectly content to keep marching into slavery, into repression, and into the continued loss of your freedoms, liberties, and rights!

I only pray to God that I am wrong, that I have misjudged your intelligence, your moral fibre, and your desire to live as proud individuals who cherish the right to freedom, liberty, and true democracy. I pray to God that you will wake up, that you will stop acting like sleepwalkers and living like zombies.

Sincerely,
Yours in Truth,
Zachary Casper