

Report for Barcelona Conference February 2014

Comrades and Friends

I bring fraternal greetings from the MUA Veterans and the Fair Go For Pensioners, and the retired movement of Australia

I thank you all for the opportunity to be here to learn and understand your hardships which may be no different to ours in Australia

Australia is no different than any other developed country in the world, for the greed factor has taken control through the ideological influence of the National and International Corporates. The Federal and State Governments are implementing the corporates agenda under the guise of creating jobs while not addressing the needs of our people as a whole.

The manufacturing and all related industries have gone off shore, the blood and guts of our country has been torn out. There is some resistance and struggle taken by some unions, allied with the social movement and the community.

With automation taking a leading role and the loss of thousands of jobs, coupled with jobs going off shore, we are not alone, the same concerns are expressed right around the developed countries with governments having no regards for the welfare of their people.

The huge profits of the corporates have never been in question, only the hard won conditions of the workers and retirees. There is an ever increase of the working poor and homeless, the intention is to throw the burden on those that can least afford it, where will it leave the people of our Nations The MUA Veterans have been involved in the campaigns to resist and defeat the attacks on our people, whether it be workers, retirees or the underleveraged we cannot sit back and let the structure around us fall to pieces while our countries are being drained of the resources and wealth.

To much emphasis is placed on our opposition social democratic parties which compromise to often, instead of leading a grass root movement, and doing what

we have always done fought for the welfare and conditions that are needed in our societies.

In Australia we have three major retired groups that represent the retired pensioners of Australia, but we have great differences, two of the organizations do very little within the struggle, the first Organisation work only in the frame work of self- funded retirees and have no real political agenda other than looking after themselves.

The second organization of the retired community works only on its own agenda within the frame work of government policy but are not involved in a class struggle, they have the media outlets and employ personal but at the end of the day they compromise, for they receive funding from the government, which hinders their actives,

The third which is called a “Fair Go For Pensioners” which is made up of the Retired Trade Unionists along with community and social conscious groups and minor political party activists and State Pension organization which is partly funded by the State and the membership but is very active and distributes newspapers to the aged and raises issues which are class concessions and struggle based, and this organisation is the one that the retired trade unionist work with.

Out of the seven states of Australia “Fair Go For Pensioners” is active in five states and the last two are developing , we meet on a regular two month bases for State and National act ivies and do phone hookups and communicate on a regular bases to keep the struggle alive. One of our national objectives is for an increase of the pension from 27.7% to 35% of the average male wage, this would enable a better life style for pensioners who have no other support other than the pension Those who are living on their own or renting under this system are doing it hard, the pension is made up of the average male wage in Australia, those that don't have any income from union supers are living near the poverty line.

The States supplement concessions which differ in each state will no doubt come under attack, for the conservative governments are proceeding with this process right now with a Committee of Audit to advise the government where cuts can be made.

Workers and Pensioners have been under attack by both political parties with both in favor raising the pension age to 67 yrs. They both quote the ageing population as the excuse for the rise in eligibility for the pension in Australia blaming the cost, never the miss management of the people assets and the sell off all profit making assets, as late as just three weeks ago the disability pension was stopped to people under forty. The medical system is also under attack with some of the cost to be paid by the community, we pay already pay one and a half per cent in tax for the medical but nothing is said about the 5.4 billion that the peoples taxes subsidize the private health companies, its call public private partnership I call it public money for private profit, and this is only on a national level, we than have the states attacking the concessions which help make up the pensions, so we are battling on three fronts with the local government wanting to increase the rate cost and the developers sitting in the back ground directing what they want.

Comrades Australia has been under attack by mining companies, developers, political parties from both side of politics, the financial crash, plus the cost of the U.S. Bases in Australia without the people having the right to say no. Our manufacturing industries have gone off shore and unemployment, youth unemployment in some areas is 12% and our young people not developing skills, we have a lot to do.

Comrades the world is going through a change which leaves no corner of the world unturned, with a system of individualism as opposed to collectivism to the detriment of the Australian people, rather than the collective approach to life. We see our young people influenced by this ideological onslaught through the American alliances with its emphasis on individuality, not understanding that greed cannot sustain itself it dies by its own making. Our Island nation is captured by the American corporates myth which is dangerous, within that their agenda is

the move to do away with the union movement which is then an attack on the aged for there is no guiding position in place for the wage structure other than the push by the union movement for increase of wages, which the aged pension is made up of 27.5% of the average male wage, the cry by the conservatives is that wages are too high but never a word about their obscene salaries and share options not to mention the record profits, big business and the multi nationals are guaranteed less tax more profit at the expense of the workers pensioners and the underprivileged.

Comrades as you all can see since the collapse of the financial system the attacks on workers and the communities has been in the fore front of both side of the political parties in most of our countries. Australia is no different, an international united front is needed to send the message to our communities, we are in the process of starting the campaign with leaflets at shopping centers around the country, talk back radio and whatever means we have to address to get to the public, it is a big ask but we have done it before, we must try for our children's sake . We are of the opinion that it is imperative that we build up a mass movement for progressive change .