

# Don't get angry, get even: How privatisation can be stopped

In what sort of 'democracy' can the clear wishes of the public be repeatedly ignored as they have by the Queensland 'Labor' Government since 1998?

Since Labor won office the following assets have been sold:

- The SGIO (1998);
- The Totalisator Agency Board (TAB) (1999);
- The Dalrymple Bay coal loader (2001);
- The retail arms of the Energex and Ergon electricity companies (2006);
- The Golden Casket state lottery agency (2007);
- Cairns, Mackay and Brisbane airports(2008);

Except where Peter Beattie *broke* his election promise to retain half ownership of the the SGIO (State Government Insurance Office, now known as SunCorp) the public were never consulted.

In the 2009 state elections, Queenslanders were once again denied their democratic right to decide the issue of privatisation by Anna Bligh's silence.

## Public outcry against privatisation ignored

In recent weeks, the Queensland public has resoundingly rejected privatisation in letters to the editor, on talkback radio and online forums. 91% of respondents to a poll run by the *Courier Mail* answered 'no' the question "Should public assets be sold to balance the budget?". Workers, threatened by privatisation, have protested, some even going on strike.

Anna Bligh has disregarded this outcry and, instead, obstinately pushed ahead, stating her intention to ignore the State Labor Party Conference should the vote go against privatisation.

## Why privatisation can be stopped

Anna Bligh is not (yet) the ruler of a police state and can be stopped. However, for this to happen, we must be every bit as determined as she is. Many unionists and ordinary members of that public have shown that they have that determination:

"It is clear that successive Labor governments since Goss have grossly mismanaged this State's finances. It has no mandate to sell State Assets, The Government holds these as trustees for the people of Qld. It is time for The People; nearly 50% of whom did NOT vote for Labor to take to the streets and, dare I say it, support the Unions in their fight against this corrupt Labor Government."

"I hope you can sleep at night Ms Bligh and Co. as people that will be effected by this won't. And if the unions don't oppose this they will be doomed as well."

"... these assets belong to the QLD public and she has no right to sell any of them. Money hungry private sector companies will snap up our assets and then make us pay dearly. The unions need to try everything in their powers to stop these sales and as a GOC worker I will be more than happy to strike over this." (from comments posted to a *Courier Mail* online [reader's comments page](#).)

"I'm not a union man, but if they are seriously planning to stop privatisation, they have my support."

(over)

## **A prolonged campaign ...**

Clearly many are looking to the unions to act decisively against the privatisation threat, yet, instead, some union officials are talking of a drawn out industrial campaign that could last up to two years.

This is insane!

If the union movement cannot win public support now, then when can we ever hope to win?

If decisive action is not taken early and, instead, the industrial campaign is drawn out, this will surely only make our fight harder.

If the privatisation legislation is carried by Parliament and the the Government has entered contracts with private companies, financial advisers, investment brokers, banks, etc, are we more or less likely to change the Government's mind with industrial action?

And how are we expected to maintain our drive and enthusiasm for two years?

## **... or decisive action now?**

In fact, it should be possible to win the fight against privatisation without a single union member needing to down a tool for even an hour.

The Queensland Union movement could deliver to the Government a simple ultimatum:

Either (A) withdraw completely the privatisation legislation or (B) agree to put the privatisation legislation to the people of Queensland through a referendum, or else face an immediate sustained campaign of industrial action and public protest until the legislation is withdrawn.

The union movement should also demand that Fraser and Bligh justify privatisation in a televised debate before the Queensland public.

Could any Government other than, possibly, the Burmese military junta dare proceed in the face of such an ultimatum?

## **What you can do**

- Protest at the opening of Parliament on 16 June;
- Contact every member of state Parliament, Labor, LNP or independent and ask him/her to vote on the floor of Parliament for a bill requiring that the privatisation be put to a referendum;
- If you are a member of the Labor Party, demand the disendorsement of each and every MP who votes against the Labor Party's anti-privatisation policy;
- At election time vote for candidates *opposed* to privatisation;
- Attend union meetings and support any industrial action against privatisation
- Write letters to the newspapers, phone talkback radio and state your support for this campaign on online forums.
- Stay in touch with others opposed to privatisation, including the author of this leaflet.

## **About James Sinnamon, the author of this leaflet**

I am a community activist, concerned about democracy, workers' rights, economic justice and, above all, the parlous state of the world's environment.

I stood as an independent candidate in the state elections in order to give voters an opportunity to oppose privatisation at the ballot box, but was ignored by Queensland's pro-privatisation newsmedia, including even the ABC.

I administer web sites and write articles for those web sites about my concerns. These include <http://candobetter.org> and <http://citizensagainstsellingtelstra.com>. I encourage others, who share my concerns, to also contribute to those web sites.

I can be reached by e-mailing [james@candobetter.org](mailto:james@candobetter.org) or by phoning 0412 319669.