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Labor and Liberal, workers united in fear of the future

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THE STREETS, DAYS OF PROTEST

A thin blue line divided employers from employees when Sydney's **workplace** protests reached a rancorous climax with a rally of 30,000 boisterous people outside Boeing's Chifley Square office block.

A cordon of two dozen police blocked the entrance to the aerospace company, which has become, in the eyes of unions, a symbol of everything to be feared under the Federal Government's new **workplace** laws.

Boeing maintenance workers have been on strike for five months at the Williamstown air force base, demanding the right to collective negotiation. Unions suggest this could be a sign of things to come.

Those outside the building clutched purple balloons and cried: "**John Howard** is a jerk, tearing up your rights at work."

Gary Anseline, a GyMEA Bay construction worker, risked his employer's wrath to join the protest: "I've copped it from work for being here - I'll have to make up the time.

"I'm worried about the young guys. I'm in a fairly good position in my company but these young guys - they shouldn't be used as commodities."

Two processions, one from Martin Place and the other from Belmore Park, combined to meet in Chifley Square. They were led by fire engines and a team of Korean drummers.

Multicoloured flags fluttered in a light breeze as speakers queued to denounce the new laws, described by one protester as "deceitful rubbish".

Peter Bonsall-Boone said it was his first political protest for 35 years. "Retirees need to look after things for the generation to come," he explained. "I'm opposing the lack of special pay for Sundays and night-time and the possible loss of holidays."

Two call-centre workers, Martin Lester and Adam Brzozowski, said they

feared for the future of casual employees like themselves. "I've been a bread packer and a lollipop man," Mr Brzozowski said. "In my next job I want the same conditions I've got now."

Mr Lester said the only way to stop the changes was through the intervention of Queensland's maverick National Party senator: "Barnaby Joyce is the only one who can do anything now."

Alongside them was a rarity - a man prepared to admit to voting Liberal at the last election. Rob King, an information assistant, said: "They didn't tell us they were going to do this. They didn't go into any detail on this."

"I voted for him [Howard] at the last election. Had I known I would have voted Labor."

Office staff peered out of windows along the routes of the twin marches to watch events down at street level.

Peter Black, the state Labor MP for Murray-Darling, described the proceedings as class war: "It's the first time we've seen class war in Australia since the 1949 coal strikes. We're not going to yield on these issues."

By late morning the crowds had begun to disperse. All that was left were leaflets, red flags trodden under feet and the odd purple balloon floating past the skyscrapers.

Caption :TWO PHOTOS: On the cards ... protesters express their feelings in no uncertain terms at yesterday's march through Sydney's streets. Photos: by Jon Reid

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