



Solidarity

Issue No. 15 / June 2009

\$3/\$5

**Rudd's market scheme
won't stop climate change**

**IT'S TIME TO
FIGHT FOR
RENEWABLES**

Inside The 1970s uranium movement, Leases homelands and the Intervention, Keynesianism

SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

Solidarity is a socialist group with branches across Australia. We are opposed to the madness of capitalism, which is plunging us into global recession and misery at the same time as wrecking the planet's future. We are taking the first steps towards building an organisation that can help lead the fight for an alternative system based on mass democratic planning.

As a crucial part of this, we are committed to building social movements and the wider left, through throwing ourselves into struggles for social justice, to overturn the legacy of the Howard government and to strengthen the confidence of rank and file unionists. Solidarity is a member of the International Socialist Tendency.

SOLIDARITY. NET.AU

full content from the magazine / online-only updates / up to date details of demonstrations and meetings

SUBSCRIBE

Solidarity is published monthly. Make sure you don't miss an issue—send in this form along with cheque or money order and we will mail you *Solidarity* each month.

- 5 issues—\$15
- One year (12 issues)—\$36
- Two years (24 issues)—\$65
- I would like ___ copies to sell

Name.....

Address

.....

.....

Phone

E-mail

Cheques/MOs payable to ISO Publishing.
Send to PO Box A338 Sydney South NSW 1235 or
phone 02 9211 2600 for credit card orders.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS

Sydney

7pm Thursday June 11
How the revolution was lost

7pm Thursday June 25
Unions and the fight for Aboriginal rights

Sydney Solidarity meets 7pm every Thursday at the Brown st Hall, above Newtown library on King Street, Newtown. For more information contact: Jean on 0449 646 593 sydney@solidarity.net.au

Melbourne

6.30pm Tuesday June 16
Debate: Is the government's emissions trading scheme worse than nothing? With Peter Christoff (Environmental Studies University of Melbourne & Vice-President Australian Conservation Foundation) Adam Bandt (National Convenor The Greens) Chris Breen (Solidarity) RMIT Function Room (entry via Swanston st, next to Commonwealth bank)

Melbourne Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Tuesday at the New International Bookshop, Trades Hall, corner of Victoria Parade and Lygon Street, Carlton. For more information contact: David on 0418 316 310 melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Brisbane

7pm Tuesday June 9
The NT Intervention and government alcohol prohibition

7pm Tuesday June 16
Capitalism Class and Oppression

Brisbane Solidarity meets 7pm every Tuesday, Level 2 of the Trades and Labour Council, 16 Peel Street, South Brisbane. For more information contact: Rob on 0424 265 730 brisbane@solidarity.net.au

Perth

For more information contact: Trish on 0405 597 598 or 08 9339 7128 or perth@solidarity.net.au

Magazine office

Phone 02 9211 2600 Fax 02 9211 6155
solidarity@solidarity.net.au

**Solidarity No.15
June 2009
ISSN 1835-6834
Responsibility for
election comment is
taken by James Supple,
410 Elizabeth St, Surry
Hills NSW 2010.
Printed by El Faro,
Newtown NSW.**

CONTENTS

ISSUE 15, JUNE 2009



16 KEYNES AND MARX

FEIYI ZHANG

19 HENRYK GROSSMAN AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

TOM BARNES

14 LESSONS FROM THE 1970s ANTI-URANIUM MOVEMENT

JAMES SUPPLE

NEWS AND REPORTS

Changes to the CPRS 4
Climate editorial 5
Defence white paper 6
Abortion in Qld 6
Federal budget 7
Labor for Refugees 8
NT Intervention 9
Rape and the NRL 10
Is Australia racist? 21

INTERNATIONAL

Genocide of the Tamils 11
Iceland shifts left 12
Fiji and democracy 13

UNION REPORTS

NTEU Melbourne 22
ABCC 23
Qld Teachers 23
Casino strike 24
NSW privatisation 24

REVIEWS

*The Baader-Meinhoff
Complex* 25
Samson and Delilah 26
*Global warming and
political ecology of health*
27

After changes: CPRS is still worse than nothing

THE CHANGES to the Rudd government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), announced in early May, have shown clearly where the government's priorities lie.

In an attempt to appease both the Liberals and major polluters, the government announced increases in the amount of direct cash handouts and free permits, along with a delay in the scheme's start date and a lowering of the carbon price to \$10 a tonne for the first year of the scheme.

"Emissions intensive trade exposed" companies will now receive 95 per cent of permits free, and a second tier will receive 66 per cent free. The misnamed "Climate Action Fund" for direct compensation to polluting industry was bolstered with another \$200 million, on top of an original \$2.25 billion.

The total compensation given to climate criminals through the scheme now amounts to \$16.4 billion. This is on top of an average \$9 billion dollars a year in government subsidies for coal and aluminium.

Disgracefully, three major "environmentalist" lobby groups—the Australian Conservation Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund and the Climate Institute—came out in support of the changes, calling for the legislation to be passed.

This is because of another change in the scheme announced by the government—a new provisional target of 25 per cent if all major economies agree to the same target and the establishment of a world market in carbon at the Copenhagen climate talks in December. But the government is on record saying this is "impossible".

The "target" is a carrot designed to buy off climate change concern.

Instead of looking to build a movement to challenge the government's business-as-usual approach, these NGOs have sought to maintain their seat at the table and negotiate incremental adjustments. They have called the CPRS a "step in the right direction". Their approach is a dead end.

From the beginning, the government has always sought to create an "emissions trading scheme" that makes carbon into a commodity tradable on the market. The EU scheme increased prices and profits—and emissions. The CPRS is designed to do exactly the same. It will allow businesses to buy their way out of action and delay the green jobs we need.

Wong has called the changes a "recession buffer"—but a real recession buffer would be direct investment in green infrastructure in energy and transportation systems and direct regulation of pollution.

This action is possible—but the government has shown us again that it's going to take a fight to get it.

Amy Thomas

Environment a loser in the budget

Much has been made of the government's commitment of \$1.5 billion to a 'Solar Flagships' program in the budget.

The project, spread over six years, will establish 1000 megawatts of solar electricity, the same as a single coal-fired power station.

The funding shows what is possible if the government was willing to seriously commit to a green transition.

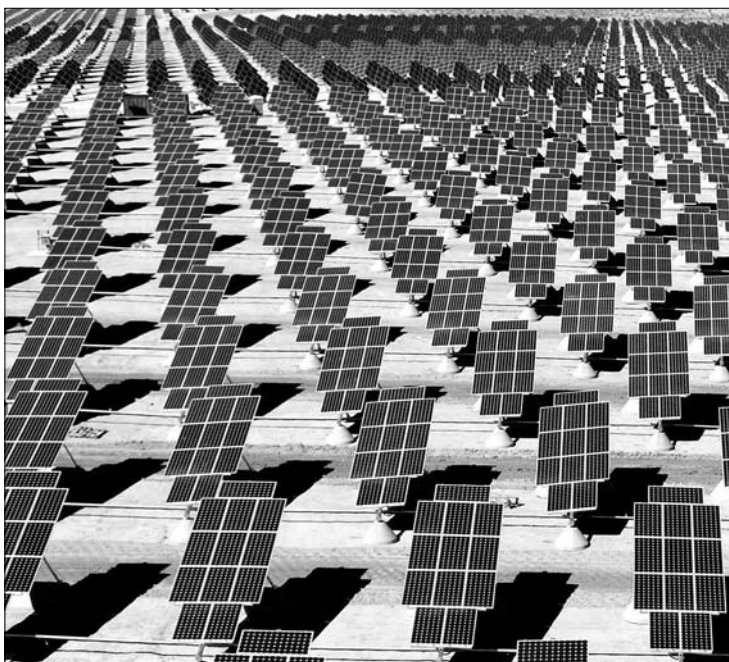
But a look at the rest of the environment funding in the budget shows that isn't the case.

In addition to the billions going to business through the CPRS, Rudd will throw \$2 billion directly to the coal industry for 'clean coal' or carbon capture and storage—a still unproven technology.

\$500 million was recently put towards a new coal line in the Hunter Valley, more than the entire funding for 'Renewables Australia'.

\$4 million was also allocated to pursue a nuclear waste dump in the NT.

Below: A solar power station in Portugal



CLIMATE CHANGE has moved to the centre of Australian politics, and Rudd Labor's climate opportunism is graphically on display. Having tried to lure Turnbull's Liberals into voting for his CPRS by cutting the carbon price and offering to postpone it for a year, the Environment Minister Penny Wong is back to wooing The Greens.

The ACF and Climate Institute along with the ACTU, who once posed as leaders of the climate movement but so willingly sold their climate credentials to endorse Rudd's amended scheme have been left with egg on their face as Rudd reopens negotiations with The Greens.

It remains to be seen whether The Greens will act on their climate principles this time. They are demanding that Rudd's minimum target be lifted to 25 per cent, but have indicated a willingness to accept a version of the scheme with handouts to polluters and other loopholes intact.

But the parliamentary tooting and fro-ing is a side show. The tragedy is that the climate movement is in danger of being dragged behind some version of the carbon trading scheme because it is unwilling to articulate and fight for an alternative.

There is an audience. When Rudd announced his watered-down policy it confirmed that the government's main concern is keeping big polluting industries happy. There was widespread anger. Around 200 people turned up to an emergency protest in Sydney.

Hesitancy to oppose CPRS
Yet there is an ongoing hesitancy to openly campaign against the scheme. In Sydney, for example, climate activists building for the national climate emergency rally accepted the idea that "broad" slogans would result in a larger rally. Although the central issue for the future of the campaign is the CPRS, it is not the focus of the rally.

The government describes its emissions trading scheme as "the heart of our climate policies" and

Climate movement must confront Rudd's carbon trading challenge



its key mechanism for meeting reduction targets. The CPRS will be used by Rudd to boost his government's green credentials.

But carbon trading is an ineffective mechanism for reducing emissions. It has failed in Europe. As we explain elsewhere, Rudd's carbon scheme is worse than useless. If the movement really believes that Rudd's draft CPRS scheme should not become law, it is going to have to push much harder, and to carry the argument for direct government action.

The movement was almost silent in response to Rudd's budget, where he thumbed his nose at the climate campaign. The government committed tens of billions to infrastructure projects—money that could have funded a serious move to renewable energy and created tens of thousands of jobs. But the government's priorities

are completely wrong—even as it announced \$1.5 billion for a single solar power station, it threw double that amount into “clean coal” research.

The movement needs to press for immediate government action to begin the transition from coal-fired to renewable power.

Copenhagen

After the national climate emergency rallies, the focus of most of the climate movement will be on the Copenhagen summit in December. Copenhagen is the final meeting to negotiate a global climate agreement to replace the Kyoto protocol, which expires in 2012.

Many people are hoping that the meeting will produce a serious plan to reduce global emissions. The summit will not deliver one. Our global leaders are too mired in the system, too concerned to main-

tain their own nation's competitive advantage to deliver any meaningful agreement. And any negotiations will be focused on greater international co-ordination of emissions trading, further consolidating the idea that market mechanisms can stop climate change.

The best Rudd's scheme is offering is a 25 per cent reduction if Copenhagen comes up with an agreement to keep atmospheric carbon below 450 ppm. The latest science says that this isn't anywhere near enough to stop the risk of runaway warming. Developing countries like China are asking rich nations to commit to at least 40 per cent reductions by 2020.

It is not what happens at Copenhagen that matters. We will only make a real difference when we have a climate movement in each individual country to fight for the change that is really needed. In Australia, this means targeting Rudd and his CPRS.

As long as the government's climate strategy hinges on carbon trading it will be irrelevant to delivering emissions cuts.

How to campaign

We need a movement with clear political demands, opposing the CPRS and for immediate action on renewables.

We need to counter the claim that the climate movement is anti-jobs by taking the movement

to the working class, linking the fight against climate change with the fight for green, safe jobs. While Rudd accepts that unemployment will rocket to 8 per cent and more in the coming year, the environment movement has an answer—new jobs in renewable energy industries. Opposing the billions being wasted on “clean coal” research does not mean dumping coal miners on the dole queue. Green energy does not have to mean increased power bills. The polluters can be forced to pay for the climate crisis.

The unions can also exert real power on the government. The sort of union bans that were put on exporting uranium in the past can be put on constructing new coal-fired power stations. We need to take the debate about the CPRS into the unions and set up union climate campaign groups. Union climate conferences, as has been suggested in Sydney, could help push this along.

We can learn from the experience of past environment movements. Just as the 1970s anti-uranium movement used direct action and built mass demonstrations to pressure the government, and win union bans, we can do the same.

The climate camps planned for later in the year can be one focus for direct action. But just as the campaign to stop uranium mining at Jabiluka targeted ERA (Rio Tinto) offices, action in the cities against the big polluters like BHP would enable larger numbers to be involved.

Over the next six months climate will remain at the centre of Rudd's agenda as he tries to get a deal before Copenhagen. A majority of people want real action on climate change but unless the movement takes up the challenge, Rudd will set the agenda and the movement will not make much impact.

Climate is too important to be left to the politicians.

Rudd's carbon scheme is worse than useless. The movement is going to have to carry the argument for direct government investment in renewables

'Defending Australia' in a time of economic crisis



A Tomahawk cruise missile is launched into Afghanistan

By Shannon Price

IN EARLY May the Rudd government released *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, a White Paper detailing their defence plans for the coming years. The paper argues for a further melding of Australian and US military forces and an extension of Australia's imperial reach in the Asia-Pacific region.

Upon their election, the Rudd government committed to continuing the astronomical defence spending that was core business

under the Howard government. This White Paper ups the ante, committing to three per cent real growth in defence spending every year until 2017/2018. \$72 billion in new military spending is flagged in the paper.

The navy is planning to use this money to double its submarine fleet and purchase three new destroyers and eight new frigates. All of these will be equipped with land-attack cruise missiles, making Australia "the first regional defence force to have this potent weapons system." *The Australian* newspaper celebrated the ability

to "strike at targets thousands of kilometres from Australia's shores."

The RAAF is going to spend its early Christmas present on 100 Joint Strike Fighters, capable of short and medium range bombing. The money it costs to buy these alone could convert the entire country to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2020.

The key policy rationales behind this seemingly obscene spending are the two most prominent planks of the Rudd's government defence policy: a continued relationship with the imperial giant the United States and a growing "awareness" of rising star China.

In the Defence White Paper, this "awareness" translates into building a domestic arsenal that would allow the Australian armed forces to compete with China in the event of a military conflict.

During the Talisman-Sabre war games set to begin across Northern Australia this July, 8000 Australian and 15,000 US troops will undertake joint training to strengthen their "inter-operability".

The Rudd government wants to maintain the foothold that the Howard government achieved in the Asia Pacific. In selling this focus Rudd said, "It follows very plainly that here in the Asia Pacific region there are uncertain

parts of the region. We simply need to take a calm, measured, responsible approach for the future to make sure that our Army, Navy and Air Force have the resources they need for the future."

Nothing says "calm and measured" like 100 Joint Strike Fighters and a new cruise missile system.

Literally millions of people across Australia grew sick and tired of the Howard government's militarism. From the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the adventures in the Asia Pacific, opposition to war mongering was part of what inspired a change of government in 2007.

The Defence White Paper illustrates that the Rudd government is offering little in the way of an alternative in the area of defence. Rudd is maintaining occupations in the Middle East, along with in East Timor and the Solomon Islands.

At a time when billions of dollars are so sorely needed to protect people's jobs and build renewable energy infrastructure, we have an increasing commitment to defence spending. We do not need a government that commits to backing the US's efforts to maintain its supremacy—we need it to tear up commitments and fund things that will improve lives, not destroy them.

Campaigners oppose Queensland charges and call for repeal of anti-

PRO-ABORTION ACTIVISTS are rallying in Queensland to defend a Cairns couple, Tegan Leach and Sergie Brennan, who have been charged under Queensland's Criminal Code with attempting to procure an abortion. The couple are due to appear in the Cairns Magistrates Court on June 11.

A rally on June 10 will call for the charges to be dropped and for the Bligh Labor government to immediately remove abortion from the Criminal Code.

Brennan, 22, is alleged to have returned from the Ukraine last December with the abortion drug Misoprostol. The pills were used successfully by Leach (19) to termi-

nate an unwanted 60-day pregnancy.

The couple were charged after police suspiciously raided their home on March 30, on a "tip-off", and found empty Misoprostol packets. It is unclear what led the couple to obtain the drug from overseas. Misoprostol has been a legal drug in Australia since RU-486 legislation was passed in 2006. In Cairns, it is prescribed by pro-choice gynaecologist Caroline De Costa.

The charges against the couple, rather than the doctor, are the first of their kind in Australia in more than 50 years. Sections 225 and 226 of the Criminal Code outlaw a woman from "attempting to pro-

cure an abortion", and any other person from assisting her. Section 282 of the Code, which allows a "surgical operation" for the preservation of the mother's life, was broadly interpreted in the 1986 "McGuire Judgement". Doctors performing abortions and administering Misoprostol have relied on this decision ever since. A conviction would be a serious setback for abortion rights in Queensland.

Children by Choice is already lobbying MPs and the Labor Party. On May 9, the Pro-Choice Action Collective held a successful rally outside parliament demanding the decriminalisation of abortion and that the charges be

dropped. A visible movement on the streets is essential to give confidence to the pro-choice majority in Queensland and to counter the anti-abortion bigots supporting the police action.

Cairns gynaecologist Caroline de Costa, who was the first doctor in Australia to legally dispense the controversial abortion drug RU-486 after years of lobbying to have its ban lifted, said Queensland needed to follow Victoria's lead and take abortion out of the criminal code. "Abortion should not be a crime; it should be controlled by the same health regulations that control things like removing an appendix or treating pneumonia,"

Rudd budget won't shield us from recession

By James Supple

RUDD TRIED to dress up his first recession budget by announcing a small increase in the aged pension and more money for building infrastructure. But underneath that plenty of the handouts for the rich were maintained, and the unemployed—who will suffer worst from the recession—were ignored.

The introduction of paid parental leave of up to 18 weeks was announced with much fanfare, but the government will not introduce it until 2011, after the next election.

The hardline economic rationalists in the Liberal party attacked the budget for the size of the deficit—\$57 billion this year. But for all the talk of the government's "big spending", the deficit is much smaller than many other developed economies. The budget forecasts a deficit of 4.9 per cent of GDP over the next year. The US deficit will be almost three times larger—12.9 per cent of GDP.

Given we face the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression, the government could be doing much more through spending to guarantee jobs. The budget papers estimate unemployment will reach 8.5 per



There was no boost to unemployment benefits in the budget, despite the fact a million people will be unemployed by next year

cent next year, or one million people, despite the government's spending measures.

The only new stimulus measures were \$22 billion for infrastructure spending, but less than \$2 billion over the next year. The government claims this is aimed at targeting jobs. But in total, this amounts to only 40,000 jobs. At a cost of over \$500,000 per job created, this is poorly directed. Too much of the spending will be creamed off in profits for construction companies.

The chance to use such a huge amount of money to seriously fund renewable energy power stations was missed—with the amount of spending on roads and clean coal combined over four times the money spent on solar energy.

Pensions

Positive moves included the increases to pensions for the elderly,

carers and those on disability support. But to pay for it the government will phase in an increase in the retirement age to 67. Anyone aged 52 or less will have to work an extra two years before they can access the aged pension.

Unions have condemned the increase in pension age. Construction union president John Sutton said, "Many of our members left school at age 15 or 16. By the time you reach 65 you've basically done about 50 years in hard physical labour."

Disgracefully, there was nothing for the unemployed or sole parents. With hundreds of thousands more people expected to join the dole queues by the end of next year, refusing to raise the unemployment Newstart allowance is a disgrace. Single people on unemployment benefits will continue to scrape by with just \$226 a week—well below the

poverty line.

At the same time as trying to stimulate the economy by increasing spending, the government—with one eye already on reducing future deficits—announced a raft of savings measures.

This has the effect of partially undoing the benefit of the stimulus measures. As Ross Gittins wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* "It's as though we're planning the clean-up after the cyclone, even before the cyclone's hit."

Surplus

Worryingly, the government is already marking out its strategy to get the budget back into surplus—which will likely mean serious cuts down the track.

It is relying on a rapid rebound from the recession within two years to replenish government coffers. When that happens it says it will keep real spending growth at just 2 per cent a year. According to *The Australian's* Paul Kelly this is "a feat no previous government has delivered on a sustained basis".

There are good reasons to believe that growth will not recover as quickly as Treasury predicts in which case future cuts will be even harsher.

Rudd tried to spin his budget savings as an attack on "middle class welfare"—the Howard-era handouts for the rich.

There were some cuts—the private health insurance rebate will now be means-tested, so that high-income earners get less or no rebate. But the government failed to do what is really necessary and scrap the rebate entirely to put the additional \$2 billion the rebate will still cost every year into the public hospital system.

The government also stuck with tax cuts promised at the election that favour those earning over \$120,000 a year. They will get an annual tax cut of \$950 compared to just \$300 for those earning between \$40,000 and \$60,000.

To protect the workers and the poor who will bear the brunt of the recession, Rudd will have to do a lot better than this.

abortion laws

Dr de Costa said.

"It is the only part of our health care that is in the criminal code."

Since 1988, it has been Queensland Labor policy to abolish "all legal distinctions between termination of pregnancy and other medical procedures," but despite huge majorities in Parliament, successive Labor governments have refused to act.

Emma Tovell

Rally: Drop the Charges, Repeal All Anti-Abortion Laws: June 10th, 5pm, Brisbane Square (opposite Treasury Casino on Queen Street). Speakers incl Children by Choice. Contact Kathy 0400 720 757, Emma 0422 763 225

Labor for Refugees: how campaigners shifted policy

By Ian Rintoul

AS BOATLOADS of asylum seekers began to arrive in Australian waters in 1999, John Howard cranked up the repression and the anti-refugee rhetoric.

Tragically, but perhaps predictably given their history, between 1996 and 2006, the Parliamentary Labor Party supported every move by the Liberal Party to toughen the laws against asylum seekers.

Labor's support gave legitimacy to the anti-refugee racism that it would not otherwise have had. Most importantly large sections of the working class that traditionally looked to Labor were left at Howard's mercy. There was a very real danger that racism would sink even deeper roots into Australian society.

It was not until 2006, when the Howard government moved to extend the Pacific Solution and impose off-shore processing on all asylum seekers, that Labor found the parliamentary gumption to stand up to Howard.

Behind this shift, and the shift that was to come in Labor's actual refugee policy, was an open revolt by rank and file Labor members and unions affiliated with Labor, who were appalled by the Labor leader's craven attitude.

In 2001, when Labor supported Howard stopping the MV Tampa landing in Australia, thousands of people attended rallies called by refugee campaign groups. Within a few days, hundreds of Labor Party members had torn up their party cards in disgust.

The rallies also heralded the formation of Labor For Refugees (L4R), just a few months later, in December 2001.

Unions and Labor

Refugee Action Collectives had been formed in all the capital cities in 1999-2000. From the beginning, socialists within them had recognised both the power of the unions and the political importance of the working class to



The formation of Labor for Refugees was encouraged by campaign groups relating to unions and Labor members at every opportunity

building a successful campaign.

All the RAC groups adopted a positive attitude to rank and file Labor members, and the unions. At the first national day of action for refugees in 2000, every rally had a prominent union speaker, including CFMEU NSW state secretary Andrew Ferguson in Sydney and Sharan Burrow in Melbourne.

Even before the formation of L4R, some union leaders including to their credit, the right wing secretaries of NSW Labor Council Michael Costa and later John Robertson, recognised the significance of countering the poison that Howard was spreading.

The unions also have a particular influence within Labor, maintaining 50 per cent of Labor's national conference. More importantly they have a much more direct connection with the political workers that look to Labor (and whom Howard was trying to influence.) If the parliamentary Labor leaders were ever going to be shifted, having unions with pro-refugee policies would be a huge advantage.

Driving a wedge between the Labor leaders and disgusted Labor members and supporters was the beginning of shifting Labor policy over refugees.

The RAC groups made sure that there were Labor and union speakers at our pickets and rallies. We held forums targeted at Labor and the unions that pulled together union officials and Labor politicians that were willing to be on pro-refugee platforms. We leafleted union events, with fact sheets linking the fight for union and refugee rights, such as "Why the Refugees are a Union Issue".

Labor policy

In the year following the formation of L4R, every state Labor conference had carried its policy platform. In NSW when then federal leader Kim Beazley spoke at the state Labor Conference, L4R members held their banner in protest on the stage.

Branches carried resolutions, L4R contingents marched in the rallies, union contingents with union flags showed both Labor leaders and Howard that anti-racist

workers were supporting refugees.

In 2002, L4R put its pro-refugee charter to the national Labor conference. It is worth noting that the three Labor Left shadow ministers who voted with the right wing against it were Julia Gillard, Jenny Macklin and Martin Ferguson.

While we lost that battle, the campaign was winning the war. The protests inside and outside the detention centres, the leaflets, the pickets and rallies were shifting public opinion. Even before Howard lost in 2007, there were changes in detention policies.

Although it did not go as far as refugee groups would have liked, and we still need to campaign, in the run up to the 2007 election Labor adopted a more pro-refugee policy.

Tragically Labor in government is now driving the racism of the Northern Territory Intervention. As they did with refugees, unions have been in the forefront of defending Aboriginal rights. The lessons of the refugee campaign can stand us in good stead as we build a new campaign to fight this new wave of racism.

Macklin unleashes Intervention's second wave



Protesters outside the office of pro-Intervention NT politician Alison Anderson in Alice Springs on May 28

By Paddy Gibson

ON THURSDAY 21 May Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin announced her intention to use Intervention powers to permanently acquire the Alice Springs town camps. Her move unleashed an avalanche of racism against Tangentyere Council and the residents of the camps.

Despite ongoing, criminal levels of government neglect, Minister Macklin posed the town camp take-over as “saving the children”—the same lie the Liberals used to justify the Intervention in the first place.

But Tangentyere Council is made up of representatives elected by the residents of each town camp. It was born out of the struggle of Aboriginal people, forced to squat on the fringes of Alice Springs.

The council won “special purposes leases in perpetuity” through the 1970s and 80s. They have built 200 houses and 70 tin sheds for the 2000-3000 people who live on the camps. Tangentyere provides the camps’ social services, including the delivery of water-drums to camps still refused access to running water.

Tangentyere is disgracefully under-funded, patching

together grants from more than 30 organisations each year. Recent, savage cuts include the defunding of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEPs), and an end to the “return to country” program, which had helped more than 1900 people get home from Alice Springs.

In the May budget, Jenny Macklin re-badged the Intervention “Closing the Gap NT”. But the core agenda—attacking Aboriginal rights—is unchanged. Communities have already been held to ransom with housing funding. A small minority have signed the 40 year leases demanded by the government. But no new housing has been built apart from the compounds for Government Business Managers and other public servants.

Jenny Macklin has promised \$100 million to build and upgrade housing and infrastructure in the town camps, but only if the residents represented by Tangentyere agree to sign away their land. The council would be stripped of any say over the use of the money and all housing stock would be handed to NT Housing, the distrusted, mainstream public housing agency.

William Tilmouth, director of Tangentyere, explained their re-

fusal to cede control to CAAMA Radio in Alice Springs:

“What will happen to people living in tin sheds? Those 70 tin sheds will be bulldozed and I don’t think they’ll be building 70 new houses.”

“NT Housing management create a lot of homelessness through failed tenancies in urban housing and the people always come and live on town camps, that’s their fallback position... if you get evicted from a town camp the only fallback position is back into the scrub, from whence you came.”

Homelands

In May, the NT government fell into line with Federal government policy, announcing it will only provide substantial services to communities deemed “economically viable”.

The new “Territory growth towns” model will starve funding from most of the 580 Aboriginal communities and homelands in the NT, forcing people into 20 “hub towns” controlled by government administrators.

These hubs will be forced to sign leases. Barbara Shaw from the Intervention Rollback Action Group in Alice Springs explained the logic, “It’s a return to the mission days where people were

herded into towns so the government could assimilate them”.

The Western Australia Liberal government is also set to introduce legislation which would allow compulsory acquisition if communities do not sign over control of community housing.

Macklin has announced that Labor intends to restore the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) in October. But like the apology to the Stolen Generation, this is all about appearances.

The substance of the Intervention will be left in place by classifying Intervention policies as “special measures” under the RDA—positive discrimination, in the interests of, and with the “informed consent” of the prescribed area peoples.

The “special measures” classification is an extreme act of political deceit. How many more times do Aboriginal people need to say no to the Intervention?

The Prescribed Area People’s Alliance have led demonstrations and issued countless statements over the last two years. Even the government’s own review reported widespread pain and anger, and recommended an end to compulsory income management.

The threat to Tangentyere and the push to “growth towns” have re-galvanised attention on the Intervention. Within four days, a statement supporting Tangentyere and the right to self-determination was signed by the national CFMEU, SA Unions, ANTaR, the NSW Reconciliation Council, Aboriginal leaders, all NSW Greens MPs, and hundreds of individuals.

Macklin’s has set June 29 as deadline for Tangentyere to sign over the town camps. If Tangentyere is forced to sign no Aboriginal organisation will be safe.

Mass rallies on June 20 will demand Hands off Tangentyere and No to the Intervention. Then the ALP National Conference in Sydney at the end of July will be an important focus as the campaign mobilises against Macklin’s Intervention offensive. Get involved in the campaign! www.stoptheintervention.org or rollbacktheintervention.wordpress.com

NRL scandal: why will no one call it rape?

by Paddy Gibson

ON MAY 11, the ABC's *Four Corners* ran a program exposing numerous cases of sexual abuse by National Rugby League (NRL) football players.

The ensuing media frenzy unleashed a barrage of sexism, reinforcing the legitimacy of sexual abuse against women and exposing the lie that we live in a "post-feminist society".

The trauma experienced by "Clare", a woman forced into group sex involving NRL superstar Matthew Johns and other Cronulla Sharks footballers, was at the center of the *Four Corners* program.

"There was always hands on me... and if one person had stopped, someone else was touching me and doing something else. There was never a point here I was not being handled... I had my eyes shut. When I opened my eyes there was just a long line at the end of the bed... I thought I was worthless".

Immediately, there was a fierce public backlash against "Clare". All the old sexist stereotypes used to justify rape were trotted out.

Johns argued on *A Current Affair* that "Clare" had been, "a willing participant in everything that went on". This, despite his acknowledgement that the other players had never been invited into the room and all thought of "Clare" as nothing but a sex-object.

The Hotel owner and "Clare's" former boss were quoted extensively in the media arguing that she had "told a whole bunch of lies" and had been heard "crowing" about group sex with footballers—implying that her sexual history somehow justified the attack.

Over 220,000 people joined a "support Matthew Johns" Facebook group, which was plastered with comments like "she is a slut" and "she loved it".

Matthew Johns may have been stood down from Channel Nine and other official positions amidst



The NRL scandal revealed how widely sexism still exists in our society

widespread reporting of a "crisis" in the NRL.

But overwhelmingly, criticism took the form of moralising about the "unsavoury culture of group sex" within the code, rather than being clear that what happened to Clare and many others who spoke out on *Four Corners* was rape.

A wider sexism

Most analysis of the incident argued that there was something particular about footballers that could explain the *Four Corners* revelations. The program itself claimed, "the relentless violence of the game creates an obvious problem, how do you create gladiators who don't take risks off the field?"

But sexism and sexual abuse of women takes place across society. One in five Australian women over the age of 15 report being subject to sexual violence at some stage in their life and 78.2 per cent of attacks come from men known to these women.

The fact that the wave of reporting on the NRL scandal served to shore up the idea that

sexual abuse is acceptable demonstrates how deep-seated it is.

Widespread sexual abuse is just one feature of the persistent oppression of women. This oppression results, not from football, or the supposed "natural urges" of men, but from the structural position of women under contemporary capitalism.

Its roots lie in the nuclear family, which forces women into unpaid domestic work and taking responsibility for reproducing the labour force. This unpaid domestic labour remains crucial for the system today, and relies on ideas of women's inferiority.

Throughout the NRL scandal, the virtues of the nuclear family were pushed as the alternative to "immoral" group sex. Matthew Johns sought public sympathy by presenting himself as a "family man", being interviewed with his wife and claiming that "infidelity" had been his only crime.

Economic changes in the 20th Century, and the emergence of the women's liberation movement from the 1960s, created possibilities for

far greater freedom for women.

But many of these advances have also opened new frontiers of inequality. Women's participation in the workforce has drastically accelerated. But many women are hyper-exploited, earning considerably less than men. The Sex Discrimination Commission says that women working full-time earn only 83 per cent of full-time male wages.

Women are also concentrated in part-time and casual work, where the figure is just 63 per cent of male earnings. Often, these positions are the first to go in times of economic slowdown—meaning the brunt of the current recession is being born by women.

The sexual freedom fought for over generations has been fiercely commodified. Images of women as sex-objects are plastered everywhere to sell anything from cars to watches.

"Clare's" rape and the disgraceful response are just the most shocking example of a wider sexism, created by our capitalist society which relies on the systematic oppression of women.

After war, brutality against Tamils not over

THE SRI Lankan army has now completed its brutal conquest of the areas of the island previously controlled by the Tamil Tigers.

In the process the military hemmed hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians into a strip of coastal land, the Jaffna Peninsula.

The Sri Lankan army has been responsible for more than 20,000 civilian casualties in Tamil areas in the last few months. Civilian hospitals have repeatedly been bombed by government troops, sometimes minutes after the Red Cross passed on their co-ordinates to prevent them being fired on, according to *The Times*.

Journalists were banned from the war zone by the government, making it difficult to find out what the army has really been up to.

Although the defeat of the Tigers has brought the fighting to an end, there is little prospect for ongoing peace.

The Tamil refugees recently seen "escaping" from Tiger controlled areas in news footage are now most likely to be in "resettlement camps" set up by the viciously anti-Tamil government.

There are reports of kidnappings and killings of Tamil civilians to ethnically cleanse areas, where the government is now encouraging ethnic Sinhalese to resettle.

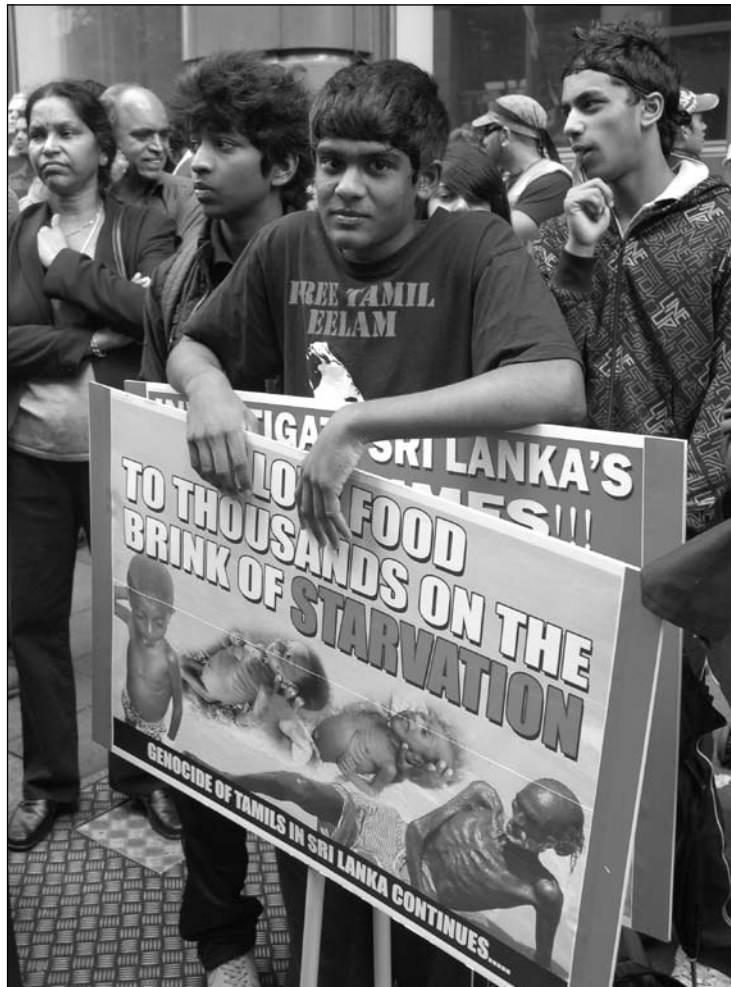
Shipped

The crushing of the Tigers brings to an end the conflict that began when they launched a military uprising in 1983. But Tamil separatism was a response to decades of discrimination and pogroms orchestrated by rulers from among the Sinhalese majority.

Sri Lankan Tamils, who make up around 14 per cent of the population, have lived on the island for more than 1000 years.

The British helped to lay the foundations for today's conflict by using divide and rule tactics to secure colonial control.

They favoured the Tamil minority in order to encourage



Thousands of Tamils protested across Australia against the brutal war waged by the Sri Lankan government

their loyalty giving them preferences for government jobs and university places.

But after Ceylon obtained its freedom from the British Empire in 1948 the new government began a series of attacks on Tamils.

It moved to replace English as the official language with Sinhalese in a covert attack on the Sri Lankan Tamil middle class, who generally spoke English and Tamil.

Hundreds of thousands of Indian Tamils, who had been brought to the country to work on tea plantations a century earlier back to India, were either deported or stripped of their right to vote.

There were widespread anti-Tamil riots in 1958. Three years

later, during a general strike by Tamils against discrimination, the government declared a state of emergency and sent troops into the Tamil heartlands in the central highlands and the north of the island.

The left in Sri Lanka should have been able to undercut the wave of ethnic tension unleashed by the government.

The strongest socialist party on the island, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), was a Trotskyist party with a mass membership among all linguistic groups. For a time it was the country's main opposition party.

But rather than appealing to working class unity, the LSSP, together with the Communist Party, joined the government and declared itself to be the authentic

voice of nationalism.

In the 1970s younger Tamils, angered by the lack of change and the compromises made by their mainstream parties, started to take up arms against the state.

They formed a variety of groups, the Tamil Tigers chief among them, to demand a separate state in the north of the island. Within a few years they controlled much of the territory.

Sri Lankan authorities launched a crackdown in which thousands of Tamils were jailed and tortured. The Tigers responded with kidnappings and bombings. So began a spiral of violence that engulfed much of the country.

Rebellion

Having neither mass support across the country nor enough firepower to defeat the state, the Tigers looked to India for backing. But the Indian state was to play a duplicitous role.

Having initially helped to arm the Tigers from bases in the Indian city of Madras, the Indian government later helped broker a peace deal that involved the sending of 75,000 "peacekeeping" troops to the island.

The military defeat of the Tigers, far from bringing a new era of peace and prosperity, looks certain to usher in a new era of attacks on the working class.

The government was recently forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund for a £1.3 billion loan, which is demanding austerity measures and privatisation in return.

We should demand that our government condemns the military action and pressures Sri Lanka to end its discrimination against Tamils.

But only a movement inside Sri Lanka that is prepared to challenge the discrimination of the state, and the culture of chauvinism that has been encouraged by it, is capable of winning this struggle.

Socialist Worker UK

After the saucepan revolution, Iceland steers left

By Mark Gillespie

IN JANUARY, the government of Iceland was the first to be brought down by the global recession. Now, Iceland has moved sharply to the left following its general election in late April. The conservative Independence Party was trounced receiving its lowest vote in 80 years.

A coalition of the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA) and the Left Green Party now governs, with the SDA's Johanna Siguroardottir becoming the world's first openly lesbian prime minister. Both parties increased their vote but the more left wing Left Green Party proportionately did best, increasing their representation from 9 to 14 in the 63 seat parliament. The SDA has 20 seats.

The sharp shift to the left is a direct result of Iceland's economic meltdown and the resulting political turmoil. Seven days of militant demonstrations in January—dubbed the “Saucepan revolution”—forced the government from office and new elections to be called.

For 18 years the Independence Party led Iceland down the path of neoliberal “reforms”. Taxes were cut, industry privatised, trade restrictions lowered and banks deregulated and privatised. The 2006 World Economic Freedom Index rated Iceland as the world's fifth freest economy.

At first these reforms seemed to deliver. Iceland with a population similar to Canberra's produced a number of billionaires and was rated number one on the United Nations' 2008 Human Development Index.

The prosperity, however, was an illusion based on massive foreign debt. Iceland's privatised banks borrowed cheaply on global markets and lent to entrepreneurs who went on a spending spree; buying everything from real estate, British soccer teams, shares, leading fashion brands, airlines, and banks. They bought



Protests in January made Iceland's government the first to fall as a result of the economic crisis

on the expectation that the value of these assets would keep rising rather than on the revenue they generated.

So long as the cheap credit remained on tap and investors around the world—like Iceland's entrepreneurs—kept scrambling to buy, values did keep rising. But once the global credit crunch hit, Iceland's highly geared economy was badly exposed.

Banking collapse

With a combined debt exceeding \$100 billion, Iceland's three major banks couldn't meet their repayments. The government stepped in, but the size of the debt—more than six times Iceland's annual GDP—threatened to bankrupt the government.

Money flooded out of the country and the stock market at one stage lost 90 per cent of its value and the currency a third.

This collapse has had a devastating effect on Iceland's highly indebted workers. Interest rates climbed to 18 per cent while inflation reached 18.6 per cent.

Unemployment trebled between August and November 2008, while 14 per cent of workers have seen their wages cut and 7 per cent their hours reduced.

While the “Saucepan revolution” successfully forced the government out, the struggle is far from over. Iceland's GDP is expected to fall by 10 per cent in

the coming period. The IMF has been invited in as a “lender of last resort”, but help will come with conditions attached. Iceland's nationalised health and education system could come under threat.

While most of the anger was directed at the Independence Party, the new government is not squeaky clean. The Social Democratic Alliance, formed in 1999 and inspired by Tony Blair's New Labour, in recent years was in coalition with the Independence Party.

It would be a mistake for Iceland's workers to put all their faith in the new government. The SDA is in favour of joining the European Union and has put the proposal to the Parliament. The Left Green Party is opposed.

Meanwhile, Iceland's annual unemployment rate, which was less than two per cent last October, rose from 8.9 per cent in March to 9.1 per cent in April.

If the high hopes in the election are going to be fulfilled, the people of Iceland need to be ready to hit the streets again.

The sharp shift to the left is a direct result of Iceland's economic meltdown and the resulting political turmoil

Fiji democracy not Rudd's real concern

by Tom Orsag

On May 2, Fiji was suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)—the first time ever for a member state. The PIF comprises leaders of 16 Pacific countries dominated by Australia and New Zealand.

The Australian government used its political and economic muscle to pressure the PIF to give Fiji an ultimatum to hold elections in 2009 or face expulsion. The leader of the Fiji Interim Government, Commodore Frank Bainimarama responded by announcing that general elections would not be held until 2014.

Kevin Rudd blustered that Fiji was now “virtually a military dictatorship.” But his real concerns are not about “restoring democracy”.

They are about maintaining Australia's economic interests in Fiji and its imperial role in the Pacific.

Since Bainimarama's 2006 coup deposed the pro-Australia and racially based government of Qarase, the Australian government has been concerned that Fiji is slipping out its sphere of influence.

Coup

The military coup by Commodore Frank Bainimarama in December 2006 was distinct from Fiji's previous three coups because it was bloodless and it was not led by Fijians in a racist direction against Indians, who make up 40 per cent of the population.

But Bainimarama's top-down attempt at restructuring Fiji's racial divide has run into a number of barriers—the hostility of Australian and New Zealand governments, the world financial crisis, a fall in tourism to the country and major flooding in January.

Bainimarama's coup, the fourth in 20 years, was organised to modernise the economy and



Rudd and New Zealand PM Helen Clarke push through Fiji's suspension from the Pacific Islands Forum

seek an accommodation between Indian and Fijian elites. The previous coups against the Labour Party and in favour of the Fijian chiefs severely divided Fijian society. Chiefs tried to dominate the economy, driving Fijian Indians and investment out of the country.

Bainimarama is an Indigenous Fijian who defends Indian rights. He is explicitly opposed the racism of the previous coups and the previous constitution.

But racism cannot be fought from the top down. The Fijian Labour Party was initially part of the interim government but withdrew in 2008.

Tensions grew with Bainimarama as he tried to balance between running the economy, maintaining military rule and the needs of Fiji's workers, both Indian and Fijian.

Australian hypocrisy

Australia's cry to “restore democracy” is hypocrisy. Fiji's former constitution was a racial gerrymander in favour of Fiji's chiefs. The electoral system saw ethnically-based electorates for “Fijians” and “Indians”, but Australia had

no problem with that as long as the chiefs protected Australian interests.

Bainimarama's coup however is changing the dynamic of both domestic and international politics in the region. Fiji is fast becoming a flashpoint for imperialist rivalry in the Pacific.

China, the rising Pacific star, has replaced Australia as Fiji's major aid donor, much to the consternation of the Australian government and think tanks such as the Lowy Institute.

In July 2007, Fiji's then Interim Finance Minister (and leader of the Labour Party) Mahendra Chaudhry outlined his country's “Look North” foreign policy, “Fiji has friends in China, it has friends in Korea, it has friends in...other Asian countries. We're no longer relying on Australia and New Zealand. And...the United States was not doing much for Fiji anyway.”

Chinese aid has increased sevenfold since 2006 from \$US 23 million to \$US160 million in 2007. Australia's aid in 2008-09 is \$A27 million.

Rudd Labor's approach is a carbon copy of Howard's. As the

Australian Strategic Policy Institute put it in 2003, “concern for the stability and security of the islands that surround our continent was the earliest—and has proved the most enduring—of Australia's national security concerns.”

But the real hope in Fiji lies with the moves through the unions and the Labour Party to unite the Fijian and Indian working class. In recent months, Bainimarama has flirted with the idea of privatising sections of Fiji's airports and wharves.

The Labour Party protested loudly when the Interim Government deferred a 20 per cent wage rise for low paid workers, leaving the wage rates of women garment workers and security guards 50 per cent below the poverty line. And the military has, at times, intimidated and harassed what it sees as troublesome union meetings.

While the Labour Party wants electoral reform to remove the racial gerrymander, it doesn't think Fiji should wait another five years for elections. Real racial unity will be forged in the fight for class interests across the racial divide.

THE 1970S ANTI-URANIUM CAMPAIGN: BUILDING A MOVEMENT THAT CAN WIN



By James Supple

IN THE face of Rudd’s failure to take serious action on climate change, we face the challenge of building the kind of movement that can force the government to shift.

The 1970s anti-uranium movement provides rich lessons in how to build one. It not only entrenched ongoing public hostility to uranium mining, but led to unions taking action that, for a time, made exporting uranium almost impossible.

In 1975 the Liberals came to power under Malcolm Fraser, determined to expand uranium mining across the country.

The anti-Vietnam war protests were still fresh in many people’s minds and unions were preparing to confront the government

over issues ranging from cuts to Medibank to wages.

The government launched a series of reviews into mining in the Northern Territory, where many of the potential sites for new mines were located. Although they recommended extensive conditions on any mining, the government simply took them as a green light to push ahead. As a result, most opponents of uranium mining concluded reviews and submissions would not stop the government and began to organise a more concerted grassroots campaign.

In Melbourne in early 1976, a small group of activists from a range of groups and organisations met and organised a public meeting. The meeting that launched the campaign decided on the name Movement Against Uranium Mining.

There was already widespread

Above: A street mural in Glebe, Sydney near where activists organised blockades to stop uranium convoys from reaching the wharf Photo: Nat Wasley

concern about nuclear power. But opposition to any mining or export of uranium from Australia was much weaker. A poll in the *Melbourne Age* in early 1977 put it at 34 per cent.

This meant the movement had to be very precise about its demands. At a national summit in Sydney in November 1976 the central demand of a “uranium moratorium”—a five-year ban on mining and export—was adopted.

From the outset campaigners aimed to win over majority public support for this demand.

Following the Sydney summit one of the movement’s first national initiatives was a signature drive. This was not simply seen as a way of pressuring politicians but was “designed to involve supporters in bringing the debate directly to the Australian people”. Activists used the petition to put their case to the public by distributing copies of a “Uranium Declaration”, which explained the movement’s key demands, to everyone who signed the petition.

In the major cities, activists built local groups deep into the suburbs. According to one estimate, in late 1977 there were over 100 local groups active in Victoria alone.

They built local rallies and events in the suburbs in the lead up to major demonstrations in the city centres.

The first major city-wide demonstration in Melbourne in April 1977 drew 10,000 people to the city square.

Later in the year a co-ordinated national protest saw 20,000 march in both Melbourne and Sydney. These rallies were actually much smaller than the later anti-nuclear marches of the 1980s. But their political impact was greater because their demands

were a clear challenge to the government policy.

The major rallies allowed the movement to come together in all its breadth, giving opponents of uranium mining a sense of the size of the opposition, building people's confidence to keep campaigning and recruiting new activists to the movement.

Direct action

The movement also organised direct actions aimed at stopping the export of uranium.

As one historian records: "In Sydney, for example, there were night-time convoys of uranium across the city, travelling fast up one-way streets the wrong way, guided by NSW and Commonwealth police escorts, opposed in the dark by small assemblies at the docks".

Some argued such actions would look bad in the media and put the public offside. But in fact the media was consistently hostile to the movement, no matter what sort of actions it organised. A journalism magazine at the time recorded that almost universally the print media stuck to a simplistic editorial line: "uranium good, demonstrators bad", and labelled uranium protesters "un-Australian", "vicious", and "anti-democratic".

The first major direct action took place near the docks at Glebe Island in Sydney, when the government tried to move the first shipment of uranium to leave the Lucas Heights reactor for ten years.

One hundred and fifty protesters attempted to blockade the road and stop the convoy, but failed. Dock workers grudgingly agreed to load the uranium, feeling bound by ACTU policy which allowed its export.

In July 1977 the *Colombus Australia* arrived at the Melbourne wharves carrying uranium. Wharfies in Melbourne voted to ban the ship, but were overruled by their conservative union leaders.

But when hundreds of demonstrators assembled on the docks, wharfies pointed out this violated safety rules and walked off the job. After police horses attacked

the protesters and began arresting people, the workers refused to load anything more and shut down the whole port for 24 hours. The *Colombus Australia* was forced to leave behind a million dollar cargo.

Unions and the movement

This victory showed that union action could put an end to the export of uranium for good. If workers responsible for transporting uranium exports on the railways and the docks were to ban shipments, and the mining unions to refuse to work uranium mines, no company would be able to continue mining.

In 1976 in the early days of the campaign, before the mass marches, the Australian Railways Union decided to ban operations associated with uranium mining.

The first test of this came when Jim Assenbruck, a worker in Townsville, refused to couple carriages carrying materials to the Mary Kathleen mine. He was immediately sacked. In response rail workers walked off the job across north Queensland. He won his job back—and the strike helped put the anti-uranium campaign on the map.

But the union action was isolated because the movement was only just starting to grow. The conservative ACTU leaders succeeded in brokering an agreement to allow transport of uranium from the Mary Kathleen mine, since it was an existing mine with union labour.

The victory in winning unions to ban uranium on the docks in 1977 was not simply a product of the direct action protesters took there. Many of the unionists working on the wharves had been on the mass marches. As Alan Thomson recalled:

"Back then everyone was aware of uranium mining. I was in the job delegates association and we used to invite speakers down at lunchtime. The anti-uranium demonstrations were some of the biggest since the Vietnam war and we were used as marshals on them. Then we had to get on the wharf and load the bloody

stuff—how do you think we felt?"

It was the mass marches that showed the workers that there was real public support for them if they were prepared to take a stand.

In August 1977 the Fraser government approved full-scale mining and export of uranium. The next day seven of Australia's biggest unions declared their opposition, and announced their intention to move for a total ban on the mining and export of uranium at the upcoming ACTU Congress.

After a heated debate, Bob Hawke and other right-wing union leaders voted this down, despite insisting they too opposed expanding the uranium industry.

But the transport union continued to ban shipments of uranium coming from the mines for export. And there continued to be support for banning uranium amongst rank-and-file union members.

Workplace groups were established at sites such as the Williamstown docklands and Adelaide's Islington railway workshops. At the docks in Willamstown

workers held a weekly "Keep it in the ground shop" at lunchtime and members were also involved in establishing local groups in nearby suburbs.

In Brisbane union members at Sargeants/ANI banned a contract for 4000 tonnes of steel for the Ranger uranium mine. When the company tried to subcontract the work out to smaller engineering shops, workers at another company voted to ban the work as well, despite the threat of losing 20 jobs at their workplace.

Despite the willingness shown by rank-and-file workers to support the movement, by 1981 the conservative leaders of the ACTU had managed to overturn the last union bans on uranium export.

But the movement had shown how it was possible to mobilise real power against the government in support of environmental demands.

Activists understood that they would face unrelenting hostility from big business, the media and government. So they looked to mobilising people outside these structures at a grassroots level. The organised working class, with its own traditions of grassroots organising and democratic discussion, provided not only a large base of support in numbers of people—it also had the power to make uranium mining unprofitable by stopping work and halting production and transport.

There are lessons here for today's climate movement. If unions banned work on construction of new coal fired power stations, and demanded the building of renewable energy infrastructure instead, the government would find it hard not to act.

Already there is sympathy for the movement from a number of unions—seen for instance in the support given for the national climate emergency rallies.

We need to build a movement which is oriented on mobilising mass grassroots protests, both street marches and direct actions. And from here we need to take the argument about the need to act on climate change into workplaces and into the unions.

This victory on the docks showed that union action could put an end to the export of uranium for good

KEYNES OR MARX?

Political leaders across the world are embracing Keynesian economic policies. But they are incapable of escaping capitalist crisis, writes Feiyi Zhang

“THE GHOST of John Maynard Keynes, the father of macroeconomics, has returned to haunt us,” stated Martin Wolf, economic commentator of the conservative *Financial Times*. With the spread of the sub-prime financial crisis triggering a global economic crisis, there has been constant comment on the return of Keynes. Wolf, once a hired gun for neo-liberalism, now declares that, “Keynes offers us the best way to think about the financial crisis.”

From conservative US Treasury secretary Ben Bernanke, to Barack Obama and Kevin Rudd—many are championing Keynesian solutions to the current global economic turmoil. These policies have been based on the hope that massive state intervention—bailing out banks and failing companies and stimulus packages—can prevent even larger scale economic collapse. These hopes ignore the reality that historically Keynes and Keynesian policies neither prevented nor solved economic crisis.

Keynes’s Ideas

Keynes asserted that an un-regulated capitalist economy tends towards crisis. He argued against two key propositions of conventional economists.

Firstly, he challenged the belief that supply always equals demand. Conventional economists argued that the total goods produced will always be sold, as supply creates its own demand. Keynes argued that rather than an equilibrium of supply and demand, there tended to be a gap between what is produced and what is consumed.

Keynes’s most well-known theoretical contribution *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* focused on explaining the different factors that determine this imbalance and how this can be overcome.

However Keynes ignored the fact that Karl Marx had made this point over 60 years before. Marx understood that all goods produced in the capitalist market can only be sold if capitalists spend all their profits and workers all their wages. Keynes thought this problem could be solved within capitalism, while Marx saw that this underpinned capitalism’s tendency towards crisis.

Secondly, Keynes argued against wage cuts and mass unemployment. He argued that the cutting of wages would simply mean that consumers would spend less and sales would decline. Cutting wages would cut consumption and the economy would simply spiral further down. While the majority of workers have to spend most of their wages just to survive, those with savings (in particular, this includes the personal wealth of capitalists as well as the profits accumulated by companies) can keep their money in the bank or spend it on themselves. Unless the rate of profit is high enough capitalists won’t re-invest.

Alongside maintaining consumer spending, Keynes argued that there was a need to stimulate business investment. This resulted in Keynes’s focus on the psychology of the business community, influencing his theoretical work and practical policy proposals. Robert Skidelsky, biographer of Keynes, notes how “every proposal Keynes made was tailored into taking into account the psychology of the business community”. In order to induce business investment and consumption, Keynes proposed two main mechanisms of state intervention.

First, governments should drive down the rate of interest to encourage investment rather than saving. Keynes argued that there is a psychological calculation by capitalists regarding whether it is more profitable to invest now or

later. If governments drive interest rates down it appears attractive to immediately borrow money and invest. This prevents the stoppage of investment and a resulting slump in the economy.

For consumers, reducing the rate of interest will also encourage spending. For example, low interest rates increase the attractiveness of taking out mortgages. Driving down interest rates would induce spending and investment with flow-on effects creating more markets for output, thereby renewing a cycle of business investment. However, Keynes was sceptical of simply driving down rates of interest to end a deep slump like the 1930s.

Secondly, governments could increase their own spending using budget deficits, financed by borrowing. As extra workers got jobs and spent their wages, this would increase the demand for goods. This, in turn would provide the basis for employing other workers. As the economy expanded towards full employment, government debt could be paid off with increased government revenue from taxes.

At some points in *the General Theory*, Keynes appears to argue for more drastic state control of society to implement the measures outlined above, as “a somewhat comprehensive socialisation of investment will prove the only means of securing an approximation to full employment”. However Keynes did not see this as a challenge to the system itself. For Keynes, “...this was to be alliance between the public and private sector and to be increased gradually and without a break in the general traditions of society”.

Keynes in Practice

Keynes is championed as a solution to the current crisis because the post-Second World War boom (1940s-1970s) is seen as an exam-

Despite his polemics against conventional economics, Keynes played a key role in maintaining British capitalist interests and the capitalist system



Above: A breadline during the 1930s depression feeds thousands of unemployed workers

ple of governments successfully putting Keynesian doctrines into practice. But in reality, Keynes's proposals were never actually implemented.

The level of state control needed to implement state financing at a scale sufficient to influence the economy following the Great Depression would have required taking economic control out of the hands of the capitalist class – something that neither Keynes nor capitalist governments were willing to contemplate.

Glynn and Howell estimate that three million jobs would have been needed in Britain to restore full employment at the deepest point of the 1930s slump, requiring an increase in government spending of some 56 per cent.

Carrying this through would have required the transformation of the British economy into a largely state controlled, if not planned, economic system.

Eichengreen estimates that when government expenditure did start to grow and reduce unemployment, it was “due more to Mr Hitler than Mr Keynes” with growth of 5 per cent in the proportion of GNP going into arms, creating some 1.5 million jobs by 1938. A successful post-war Keynes-type policy in the US, “...would have had to approach the size of government expenditures during the Second World War”.

When it came to putting ideas into practice Keynes was always limited by his focus on the

Marxist economics demonstrates that government intervention can not solve the tendency to crisis in the system

business community and worries about upsetting the psychology of business investment. Throughout his life, Keynes believed in the regulation and maintenance of the system, working for compromise with the government and business leaders. In *The End of Laissez Faire* Keynes stated that “capitalism wisely managed, can prob-

ably be made more efficient for attaining economic ends that any alternative system yet in sight.” Despite his polemics against conventional economics, Keynes played a key public role in maintaining British capitalist interests and the capitalist system.

Marx versus Keynes

The recovery from the Great Depression cannot be ascribed to Keynes. In the post-Second World War boom, far from running a large Keynesian deficit to stimulate the economy, governments persistently ran large surpluses. In fact, the main form of government intervention until the 1970s was to slow down the economy with credit squeezes, rather than increasing government spending to speed up the economy.

It was when the boom ended with a recession in advanced countries in 1974-76 that governments looked to Keynesian prescriptions for stimulating demand. But Keynesian policies did not work. The increases in government spending could not be matched by expanding production. Capitalists still uncertain about their profit returns refused to invest. So, government debt simply drove up interest rates and fuelled inflation. Governments quickly abandoned Keynesian policies. Keynesian economists were left in disarray. The failure of Keynes paved the way for neo-liberalism and the onslaught of Thatcherite policies that sought to boost profitability by attacking working class living standards and unions' right to organise.

Marxists from the International Socialist Tradition (of which Solidarity is a part) explain the recovery from the Great Depression as driven by imperialist competition between nation states that propelled state military spending in preparation for the Second World War.

The Falling Rate of Profit

The capitalist system is based on the drive to accumulate profit and government policy plays a crucial role in maintaining and cohering the system.

Marx outlined the way in which capitalism is based on competition between different capitalists for profit. It is this competition that ultimately produces the central element of crisis within the system—the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

Profit, the dynamic driving capitalist competition, is created through the exploitation of workers. Marx's labour theory of value demonstrates how profit is created through the surplus value that workers create in producing more value than they are paid in wages.

Yet competition pushes each individual capitalist to invest in capital intensive machinery and technology rather than labour, because it boosts their profitability in the short-term. In the long term this results in an increase in the proportion of investment in capital (machinery, etc), in comparison to a smaller proportion of investment into human labour (ie the capitalist employs fewer workers). As human labour is the source of surplus value this makes the general rate (not necessarily the absolute amounts) of profit lower. It is this declining profitability that leads to capitalists refusing to invest and thus to economic crisis.

The International Socialist Tradition outlines how Cold War arms spending acted as a counter-veiling factor to the tendency for the rate of profit to fall in the post-Second World War boom. Rather than re-investment into capital that would lead to the lowering of profit rates, the state and capital merged to invest vast quantities of surplus value into unproductive arms spending.

However because of the contradictions inherent in the system, the crisis could be postponed, but not prevented. The military and economic competition between rival nations eventually saw a fall in profit rates globally, plunging the world into crisis in the 1970s.

The historical use of Keynes to justify the capitalist system, and the failure of Keynes in practice, provides key lessons for understanding the economic and ideological flaws behind the recent



enthusiasm for a return to Keynes.

Are we all Keynesians now?

The most dominant current face of Keynes is US President Barack Obama. Recently, Obama presented a \$787 billion stimulus package as the solution to the current global financial crisis. Similarly Kevin Rudd enacted a A\$42 billion stimulus package.

Yet despite stimulus packages across the globe, the world's major economies have slumped into recession, if not outright depression. The IMF predicts that the global economy will shrink for the first time in 60 years. The unemployment rate hit 5.4 per cent in May and most economists believe Australia is already in recession along with most other major world economies.

The stimulus packages are an attempt to maintain spending in the short-term, yet thousands of people are already losing their jobs, homes

Top: Stock brokers on the New York Stock Exchange on October 25, 1929, one day after "Black Thursday," the first in a series of crashes which led to the Wall Street Crash of 1929

Bottom: traders work on the floor of the exchange September 30 2008, one day after the Dow Jones industrial average had its biggest single-day fall ever

and livelihoods. The stimulus packages are, at best, the sugar on the bitter pill of crisis being forced onto the working class and poor.

For the past two decades the global capitalist class has been able to rebuild profit rates. But even with globalisation's drastic neo-liberal attacks on working class living standards, profit levels were still only half the levels of the post-Second World War boom.

The difficulty of re-generating profit rates through productive investment fuelled financial

speculation and housing bubbles, as money sloshed around the world looking to make a quick buck. When the crash came, the financial contagion produced global instability.

A Marxist understanding that crisis is an inevitable consequence of competition and the drive for profit, explains why, if we are going to end the tendency to crisis, the system will have to be overturned. Government intervention can, at best, tinker with the system but cannot solve the crisis tendencies embedded in the system.

The demand for government action to defend working class jobs and living standards in the face of the recession is nonetheless politically important. The working class people who paid for the neo-liberal boom are now being expected to pay for the crisis with job losses and more wage restraint.

A fight for socialism

Yet so-called Keynesian intervention such as that taken by the Rudd government neither reflects genuine government responsibility for the economic crisis nor any ability to prevent its snowballing impact. Rudd has given almost everyone a \$900 cheque but far more is being taken away from the working class by raising the retirement age to 67. US President Obama is ready to spend more billions to save the bankrupt General Motors, but US auto workers are paying with savage cuts to their jobs and the conditions.

There is no Keynesian solution to the crisis in capitalism. Nor is it a crisis of regulation—the tendency to crisis cannot be regulated out of the system. It is Marx that explains that crisis is embedded in the system.

There will need to be a fight against every job cut and short time working. We will have to fight the government for action to defend workers rather than bail out big business. And we will need to fight for a socialist society. Only by over-turning capitalism can we build a society free from crisis, based on centralised rational planning and mass democratic workers' control.

RECOVERING MARX'S THEORY OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

**Henryk Grossman and
the Recovery of Marxism
by Rick Kuhn, University
of Illinois Press, 2008**

THE RECESSION has brought a renewed interest in Marxist explanations of economic crisis. Rick Kuhn's book is timely in this context.

Published last year, it is the product of many years of study into the life and ideas of Polish-German socialist Henryk Grossman. Kuhn, an Australian socialist who teaches Marxism at the ANU in Canberra, deservedly received the Deutscher Memorial Prize for his effort.

Why the *recovery* of Marxism? Kuhn is referring to the distortion of Marx's ideas within the international socialist movement following his death. A number of important socialist leaders in Europe attempted to transform Marxist theory into a justification for gradual, legislative change through broad social democratic parties, turning workers into passive bystanders.

This dilution of Marxism contributed to most of Europe's socialist parties supporting military efforts during World War I. Yet within four years, the crisis created by the war led to a new direction among socialists, epitomised by the success of the October revolution in Russia and a new belief in Marx's original idea of working class revolution.

Accompanying this shift was a corresponding "recovery" in Marxist theory. Key to this was Lenin's argument in 1917 that the capitalist state could not be controlled by working class parties—that it had to be replaced by a new form of workers democracy.



Henryk Grossman attempted to do for economics what Lenin had done for Marx's theory of politics before the Russian revolution

If Lenin's argument amounted to a recovery of Marx's political theory, Kuhn argues that this was followed by changes in Marxist philosophy, represented by the Hungarian socialist Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, and in economic theory.

Central to Kuhn's argument is his belief that Grossman was the key figure in the recovery of Marx's theory of economics. He makes a powerful case.

Grossman's audience

Grossman's work was never published in the former East Germany (where he died in 1950) and was ignored until the late 1960s. Unlike most of his academic peers,

Grossman's interest in radical politics began with an engagement in working class activism. The first third of the book describes his leading role agitating amongst Poland's Jewish workers before World War I.

But his most important arguments for socialists today come from his later academic work. Grossman followed Lenin and Lukács in recognising the core of Marx's method, something most socialist intellectuals could not do.

According to Grossman Marx's three-volume *Capital* "was far from being only a study of pure capitalism, whose conclusions did not apply to capitalism

as it really existed.

"Marx, Grossman explained, progressively lifted the simplifying assumptions he made early in this work in order to grasp fundamental processes, as he introduced complicating factors, step by step, and the analysis came closer and closer to empirical capitalism."

Grossman's main intervention was that the heart of Marx's economic theory was the tendency for the rate of profit to fall and for the system to eventually breakdown. His most influential work was *The Law of Accumulation and the Collapse of the Capitalist System* published on the eve of the 1929 Wall St crash.

Grossman targetted leading figures within European social democracy like the German SPD's Hilferding and Austria's Otto Bauer. Hilferding and Bauer led parties similar to the Labor Party today and believed that state intervention could eliminate economic crisis.

They followed an earlier tradition emptying Marxism of its revolutionary content, epitomised by Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky. Marx himself had argued that the development of capitalism would create larger centres of capitalist industry. This created a centralised working class capable of undermining the system—hence his comment in 1848 that capitalism “creates its own gravediggers”.

Marx's unfinished theoretical work—the three volumes of *Capital*—expanded this argument by showing how capitalism was inherently crisis-prone and would eventually create opportunities for workers to overthrow it.

It was not until 1872, after workers took power in Paris for two months, that Marx specified that this could only successfully happen if workers dismantled the state root and branch and replaced it with a new form of participatory democracy based on directly elected, recallable representatives from workplaces and local areas.

Workers' representatives could not take over the old capitalist state in their interests, since almost all of it was unelected and tied to the economic interests of industrial capital and other elites.

Following Marx's death, some of his disciples questioned both the tendency for capitalism toward terminal crisis and the need for socialist revolution. An influential thinker in the SPD from the 1890s until World War I, Bernstein argued that capitalist ownership was becoming *less* centralised.

He believed that workers were becoming accustomed to the system and, as they won reforms through trade union struggle and from parliamentarians delivering

on their behalf, revolution was less likely.

Kautsky, who from the death of Engels in 1895 to the Russian revolution, was the biggest authority in Marxism, disliked Bernstein's ideas but in practice encouraged a belief that socialism would emerge as a natural consequence of the development of capitalism.

In other words, as long as workers were organised in unions and had strong elected representation in parliament, socialism was inevitable.

Lenin recovered the arguments of Marx from 1872 (in *State and Revolution*), attacking the “reformist” version of Marxism. Over a decade later, Grossman concluded that the revolutionary tradition lacked the *economic* arguments against the revisionist case.

Grossman's *Law of Accumulation* received its share of attention amongst Marxists in the 1930s, but most of the reception was hostile.

This is mainly because, as Kuhn explains, economic theory was gradually evolving to fit the bureaucratic tendencies of the new ruling elite in Russia led by Stalin.

Marxist economics was shifted back to an emphasis, like Kautsky's, on the forces of production, as if socialism was somehow inevitable. But Grossman's arguments stirred debate even in this stultifying context.

Systemic breakdown

Grossman wrote that the system must eventually breakdown because the rate of profit across all capitalist industry will decline to a level when “the mass of surplus value is not great enough to sustain that rate of accumulation”.

This point comes from Marx's argument that capitalists accumulate physical capital much faster than they employ workers or exploit them.

Although only the collective labour of workers can create the real value necessary for profit (“surplus value”), the logic of

competition compelled each capitalist to accumulate capital more quickly and in greater quantities. In *Capital Volume 3* Marx writes that this leads to a constantly falling average rate of profit, i.e. the more capitalists compete with each other, the more investment they have to plough into production to reap the same profit. According to Grossman's interpretation, this would eventually lead to system-wide “breakdown”.

Grossman makes clear in later writing that he does not believe the system will collapse of its own accord: “Obviously as Lenin correctly remarks there are no absolutely hopeless situations. In the description I have proposed the breakdown does not necessarily have to work itself out directly. Its absolute realisation may be interrupted by counteracting tendencies.”

There are different ways of interpreting this point. Firstly, Marx identified countervailing factors to the tendency of the falling rate of profit.

Grossman agreed with this and pointed to a wide variety of measures taken by capitalists—cost cutting through cheaper raw materials, plundering poor countries by stealing their natural resources or manipulating international trade, or by increasing the exploitation of workers, decreasing the amount of surplus shared with other capitalists (e.g. interest to banks, rent to landlords), or rationalising production by sacking workers.

Secondly, Grossman argued that these factors might affect the length and depth of the crisis, but they could not indefinitely postpone it.

Here the key role was for revolutionary organisation: “Obviously the idea that capitalism must break down ‘of itself’ or ‘automatically’, which Hilferding and other socialists assert against my book, is far from being my position.

“It can only be overturned through the struggles of the working class. But I wanted to show that the... will to overturn capital-

ism is not enough... It would also be (in)effective *without* a revolutionary situation.”

“But *for the purpose* of the analysis [in the *Law of Accumulation*], I had to use the process of abstract isolation of individual elements in order to show the essential function of each element.

“Lenin often talks of the revolutionary situation which has to be objectively given, as the precondition for the active, victorious intervention of the proletariat. The purpose of my breakdown theory was not to exclude this active intervention, but rather to show when and under what circumstances such an objectively given revolutionary situation can and does arise.”

By grasping Marx's method—of moving step-by-step from theoretical abstraction to empirical reality—he concludes: “With the introduction of offsetting mechanisms, capitalism's tendency to breakdown will take the form of recurring crises, rather than an uninterrupted collapse.”

The only criticism I have of this book is that the author does not attempt to link Grossman's argument back to the various assessments of the rate of profit in the post-war period by figures like Robert Brenner, Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, Simon Mohun, Anwar Shaikh, etc.

This is surprising given Grossman's comment that the tendency for the rate of profit to fall is a question that “cannot be abstractly, deductively decided and has to be decided through *empirical observation*.”

Grossman himself did this by looking at trends in the US economy from 1849 to 1919. A variety of writers, although not always true to all of Marx's arguments, make similar conclusion for the modern economy.

But this is very minor criticism against a book that contributes to our understanding of Marxist crisis theory and emphasises its close link with revolutionary politics.

Tom Barnes

Is Australia a racist country?

RECENT COMMENTS by Sol Trujillo, former boss of Telstra, that Australia is a racist country have caused a storm. Most media commentators and politicians expressed outrage at the suggestion. But three recent events—the bashing of Indian students, Anthony Mundine’s denunciation of the culture of racism in NRL and the attempt to drive Aboriginal people off homelands settlements in the Northern Territory as part of the Intervention tell their own story.

This racism has been beaten up for years by governments for their own advantage, and to reinforce Australian nationalism. After years where Howard scapegoated Aboriginal people, pandered to Pauline Hanson’s anti-Asian diatribes and bashed refugees, we now have the spectre of Rudd promoting myths about Aboriginal people being unable to run their own lives.

Racism rife in NRL

DURING AN NRL match on 22 May, Cronulla Shark’s captain Paul Gallen abused St George Player Mickey Paea, a Pacific Islander, calling him a “black c***”.

Indigenous boxing star Anthony Mundine, who previously played league for St George, spoke out against the endemic culture of racism in the sport.

“It’s a disgrace if that did happen and nothing is done about it”

“(Racism) is like a cancer in the game and the NRL has to come down hard on it. That’s one of the reasons I left the game. People feel like the system is against them. The league isn’t run by islanders.”

“If they are serious about wanting to get racism out of the game, and a player said that, he should get fined big money and suspended for 10 matches. They’ve got to deal with it the way they have with other things like the judiciary and referees.”



Indian students rallying in Melbourne

Indian students rally against inaction over horrific bashings

INDIAN STUDENTS have been the victim of a series of horrific racially motivated attacks in Melbourne and Sydney. Around 1500 people joined a snap protest in Melbourne in late May, chanting against racism, “we want justice” and “Victoria police, shame, shame”.

One student, Sravan Kumar Theerthala, is still fighting for his life after being stabbed with a screwdriver.

As Raman, an international student, explained “In the past two weeks we’ve seen four or five students being a victim of such crimes and one is in a very serious condition in Royal Melbourne Hospital.

There’s been an increase in street crime against Indian students, mainly in Melbourne and there is no concrete action being taken by Victoria police.”

In one typical incident, a group of six young men attacked Indian student Sourabh Sharma after hurling racist abuse at him as he sat on a train coming home from work. He was taken to hospital with a fractured cheekbone

and a broken tooth.

In response to the attacks Police Inspector Scott Mahoney denied there was a racial motivation saying, “sometimes, it’s just a combination of timing and chance”.

Police have told Indian students to change their behaviour, not to display ipods, and not to speak loudly in Indian languages while in public, if they want to avoid being attacked.

This is a disgusting and racist response from the Victoria police, which blames the victim rather than tackle the racism of the attackers.

Many of the students at the Melbourne rally complained that police refused to do anything when they rang them to report being attacked. As Raman said, “A lot of students coming to us say ‘Police took an hour to come and then arrived and didn’t actually help us out and just started questioning us why we were here.’”

An Indian doctor in Sydney claimed over 20 students there had been attacked in the last month.

Aboriginal people to be forced from homelands

IN MAY, the NT government released its *Working Future* policy, which will severely restrict the resources available to remote Aboriginal communities in the NT and force migration into major townships (see page 9).

Yananyul Mununggurr, on behalf of the Laynhapuy Homelands Association, made the following statement on May 21, condemning the government’s racism:

“Just days after the release of a ground breaking report outlining the major health benefits to Yolngu living on country, the NT government announces a policy that relegates our homelands to third world conditions, if not extinction.

“We see this as a major betrayal of the trust of our people. We’ve been engaged in ‘consultation’ that has yet again proved meaningless.

“The decision not to fund new housing for our homelands condemns Yolngu to further overcrowding, declining living conditions and ultimately the extinguishment of our traditional culture.

“How does that fit with the recent Rudd Labor Government’s signing of the UN Rights of Indigenous Peoples?”

Below: Yananyul Mununggurr



University workers on the move in Melbourne

WORKERS AT five universities in Melbourne—Melbourne, Monash, Swinburne, RMIT and Deakin, plus a Hawthorn college—went out on strike on Thursday, May 21.

Staff at the University of Tasmania also walked out in what was said to be the first strike there in 20 years.

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) is currently campaigning for enterprise bargaining agreements that would ensure substantial pay increases, manageable workloads and re-establish the position of the union within university structures after years of Howard government attacks.

Support from members of the NTEU was high overall, with reports of half-empty carparks. Swinburne's Hawthorn campus, for instance, was apparently deserted.

There was plenty of solidarity. The best came from construction workers, who refused to cross picket lines on three sites at RMIT and one at Swinburne—where the action stopped a concrete pour!

The MUA had a delegation of officials at the city centre rally, and there were messages of support from other unions, such as the NUW and AEU. Students joined the picket lines, which were endorsed by the Victorian Trades Hall Council.

About 800 strikers rallied outside the State Library at lunchtime, including about 250 who marched down from Melbourne Uni.

The best speech came from Verity Burgmann, Politics Professor at Melbourne Uni. Verity painted a vivid picture of the way neoliberalism had white-anted higher education.

The talk from the NTEU state secretary was that the action wouldn't stop here. Ballot results at all universities were very good (including La Trobe, which balloted too late to join the action), which means there's a clear mandate.



Striking workers march from Melbourne University

About 60 per cent of members voted, with about 80 per cent support for striking. But now there will be an argument over how and when to turn that result into more action.

Momentum

Activists are now discussing how to maintain the momentum. There's a warning note from Victoria Uni, which late last year and early this year was leading the way with industrial action to stop a jobs massacre.

The branch there decided to suspend action (and didn't join the statewide strike) because negotiations were going well—but talks have dragged on, jobs are going and union meetings are shrinking.

At RMIT, NTEU members have followed up the strike with an indefinite ban on releasing exam results, a ban on general staff working more than agreed hours, and a protest outside the university's prestigious Founder's Day Dinner, with a guest list of politicians and "captains of industry".

At other unis, bans are likely

to be implemented soon. The Melbourne Uni branch will be protesting outside the launch of the university's high-profile Festival of Ideas.

RMIT's bans are already biting hard in Singapore, China and Malaysia (RMIT has some 15,000 students offshore in Asia) and a union media release to the Singapore media has put management in a spin.

The NTEU branches in Victoria face a particular problem with anti-union laws.

The effect of ballots for protected action will be wiped out on June 30, when the Liberals' Workplace Relations Act finally dies. Labor's new law requires new ballots after July 1.

To maintain bans, NTEU branches will need to be prepared to break the law to cover the gap between June 30 and coverage from a new ballot.

Sydney University has set the pay and conditions benchmark with 18 per cent over three years plus a tight limit on the number of academic casuals, despite losing tens of millions of dollars in a falling share market.

It's rumoured that Education Minister Julia Gillard has warned Vice-Chancellors elsewhere not to follow the Sydney path.

Meanwhile, Melbourne Uni is planning to buy a nearby Ford dealership for more than \$77 million. RMIT is spending more than \$500 million on new and revamped buildings.

The NTEU needs to continue to hammer home the message that universities must put their staff before expensive capital works programs and property acquisition. That in turn will benefit students, who lose out if classes are too big or lecturers too stressed.

We face arrogant and headstrong managements, who are turning universities more and more into heartless factories.

The NTEU's only weapon is its members' determination to win rights and respect, ongoing positions and job security. As we approach second semester, and branches in other states move into battle, we will need more coordinated strike action to win new, decent agreements.

By NTEU members

As new charges laid, time to scrap ABCC

ON APRIL 28, over 10,000 building workers in Melbourne and 3000 in Brisbane took illegal strike action against the Howard-era anti-union Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). The Rudd government still gives \$33 million to the ABCC to police union activities on building sites.

The Construction Division of the CFMEU, the Electricians Union (ETU), the Plumbers Union (CEPU), and the Construction Division of the Metalworkers Union (AMWU) have formed an alliance to campaign for “rights on site” and to abolish the ABCC.

Unions are angry that Rudd Labor originally promised to abolish the ABCC. But in the course of the 2007 election campaign Labor caved-in to the demands of the Master Builders’ Association (MBA) to keep it.

This time, the Melbourne rally marched to the MBA offices. In August 2008, MBA boss Wilhelm Harnisch happily wrote, “The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister [ie Rudd and Gillard] have got it right on the ABCC.”

Just days after the building workers rally, on May 7, MBA

boss Harnish claimed, “The exercise of the ABCC powers has delivered sustained productivity gains of around 10 per cent to the construction industry which we cannot afford to lose. This reinforces the need for the continuation of an industry watchdog, “the tough cop on the beat.” “The tough cop on the beat” is what Julia Gillard calls the ABCC!

The abolition of the ABCC is at the centre of the argument over how much of the Howard government’s anti-union laws are being kept under Labor’s Fair Work Australia legislation which comes into effect on July 1.

About 128 building workers and officials have been interrogated by the ABCC. But in 2008, a Victorian CFMEU official, Noel Washington, refused to attend an ABCC interrogation, and faced a penalty of a six-month jail sentence.

A national building unions’ strike on December 2 against Noel’s prosecution forced the charges to be dropped.

But the ABCC has now laid the same charges—failing to attend a compulsory ABCC interrogation—against Ark Tribe, a South Australian rank-and-file



CFMEU member. The national executive of the CFMEU Construction and General Division has pledged full support for Ark.

The ABCC was established by Howard, after the 2003 Cole Royal Commission. Its powers make building workers second-class industrial citizens, with even fewer rights than other workers.

The Wilcox review of the ABCC, set up by Julia Gillard, Minister for Industrial Relations, has recommended that the Rudd government keep the ABCC “as a

unit within the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman”.

Julia Gillard’s address to the ACTU in Brisbane on June 3 will be met with a protest on the floor of Congress. Ark Tribe will also be at the ACTU Congress to tell delegates that the fight for “your rights at work” is a fight we now have to take to Rudd and Gillard.

Rank and file union members should not just be “protesting” against the ABCC—we have the power to win.

By a CFMEU member

Queensland teachers push for pay claim

ON TUESDAY May 19, 30,000 Queensland teachers held a 24-hour strike over the measly 12.5 per cent pay rise over three years offered by the Queensland Government. The Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) convened 49 meetings across the state, the largest in Brisbane with over 4000 workers.

The lively meeting was brimming with confidence—support for the strike was overwhelming and over 1000 teachers joined the union in the week before the strike. The meeting voted unanimously for “further strike action, work bans, non-cooperation with new department initiatives, as well as public protests.”

In the days leading up to the

strike, Education Minister Geoff Wilson had been guaranteeing schools would be open, urging parents to send their children to school. But confronted with the massive support for the strike, the day before, the government asked parents to keep their children home.

Even with the pay deal offered by the Bligh Government, Queensland teachers would still be some of the lowest paid in the country, with beginning salaries almost \$4000 less than teachers in NSW and WA.

While pay was the issue at the forefront of the strike, many other issues are making teachers angry.

It is becoming increasingly clear that state and federal

governments are going to use the national curriculum and National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) to increase teacher workloads, publish school league tables and push performance pay.

The working conditions of contract teachers were also raised at the mass meeting. Contract teachers do not get paid for school holidays and a fourth year teacher told the meeting that she is currently on her sixteenth contract. There are also ongoing problems with class sizes and retention, with currently only 45 per cent of graduates still teaching by the time they are 35. The union also wants lesson observation, release

time and inductions for new teachers to increase retention.

The teachers’ dispute is looming as the first real test of unions in Queensland since the economic crisis hit. On the day of the strike Bligh announced a \$5.6 billion drop in expected GST revenue over the next four years and says the government is considering cutting public servants’ wages and selling-off assets like Energex and Queensland Rail to cover their budget black hole.

Bligh has got a fight on her hands. A win for the teachers will boost the confidence of other government workers to say no to pay cuts and privatisation.

Rob Nicholas

Brisbane Casino workers vote for strike action

By a Casino worker

AS *SOLIDARITY* went to press the results of the Brisbane Treasury Casino strike ballot were released.

The postal ballot, conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission, asked members of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union to vote for or against strikes of four, eight, twelve and twenty-four hours.

A massive 99 per cent of casino union members who returned their ballot papers voted for some kind of strike action, with 94 per cent voting for every action listed on the ballot paper.

The near-unanimous outcome came in spite of the difficulties of the postal balloting that appeared to deny many members the chance to cast their vote. Many members reported to their union delegates that they did not receive a ballot paper despite confirming their membership and voting eligibility with the union before hand.

The difficulties of postal balloting and the tight deadline for returning ballots resulted in only

60 per cent of ballot papers being returned by the required date. This is just one way that secret postal ballots favour the boss.

The bureaucratic process required to obtain permission from the court creates delays and puts legalistic hurdles in the way of workers taking industrial action. But battle lines have been drawn at the Casino.

From reports in the casino, support for the strike is more than the 60 per cent that got their ballots in.

Recent meetings between top Casino bosses and lower level management have heard Treasury Casino boss, Geoff Hogg, declare that he “doesn’t care” if Casino workers strike. Workers are more than willing to take

A massive 99 per cent of casino union members who returned their ballot papers voted for some kind of strike action



up his challenge, and there are strong calls for the maximum 24-hour strike to win our demand for a 5.5 per cent wage rise.

The weekend of June 12 will see Treasury Casino workers walk off the job for the first time in the Casino’s history. “The place will be shut down,” one Casino worker

said, “No-one’s going to be working. We will have a presence at the front of the Casino.

“We have handed out leaflets to patrons before. There’s been good support. Even if a few bosses try to keep the doors open, no-one’s going to be going in.”

Campaign saves Cessnock prison, but NSW privatisation drive goes on

By John Morris

WITH CESSNOCK jail off the privatisation list, union activists including prison guards (PSA), teachers (NSWTF), nurses, AMWU and NTEU are seeking to extend the campaign across the state.

“This was a great day for the Cessnock community—and a good result for all those in the community who do not believe that prisons should be run for profit by big corporations,” said PSA general secretary John Cahill.

Cahill says that the PSA will now target Labor MPs in

the western Sydney electorates surrounding the Parklea prison—still up for sale by Corrective Services Minister John Robertson.

“The arguments against a private prison at Cessnock are the same as the arguments against a private prison at Parklea—the justice system should not be run for profit,” said PSA general secretary John Cahill.

On May 31, stalls were held in about 20 electorates across NSW targeting Labor MPs who still support the government privatisation push—of prisons, power services and generators, ferries, lotteries and rail services. The Labor heartland seats of right wing

power brokers, Joseph Tripodi and Eddie Obeid, were among those targeted.

These are the same people who backed former treasurer Michel Costa’s 2008 attempt to privatise NSW power generators. Union opposition to this neo-liberal agenda saw both Premier Morris Iemma and Treasurer Michael Costa lose their government positions last year.

Current Premier Nathan Rees and other members of cabinet must ditch their privatisation plans once and for all. Polling shows that Labor faces a hiding in the next election.

Junking their Liberal-esque policies might be a start to turning

that around.

Around 800 party and union members rallied outside a meeting of the party’s administrative committee to demand that the committee uphold the NSW party’s position against privatisation.

The Labor government is trying to get the committee to re-interpret the meaning of ALP policy which states “Labor opposes the private contract management of prisons”.

Rather than imposing cuts, the NSW government should be boosting government spending for public sector employment such as green power jobs as well as metro and light rail extension.

The Red Army Faction—flawed product of 1960s radicalism

**The Baader
Meinhof Complex
Director: Uli Edel
In selected cinemas
now**

WHEN THE state uses violence to repress dissent, is it permissible to use violence in reply? When a mass movement is emerging, does violence drive it forward and, when it is in decline, can violence re-ignite it?

These are some of the questions posed, but not necessarily answered, by a fascinating German movie, *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, nominated earlier this year for an Oscar as best Foreign Language Film.

June 1967. The Shah of Persia, a US-backed dictator, visits West Germany. Student protesters are brutally beaten by pro-Shah Iranians and the German riot police. One student is shot dead.

April 1968. With the US war on Vietnam raging, four activists, including Andreas Baader, set fire to a department store in Frankfurt as an act of anti-imperialist solidarity.

It is a time of rapidly escalating radicalism, captured in a collage of original news footage and in some faithfully recreated scenes. In one of the most exciting, student leader Rudi Dutschke addresses hundreds of activists, hammering home the need to fight imperialism. A sea of fists goes up to the chant of “Ho Chi Minh”.

It is in this intersection between bloody state violence and the rising revolutionary movement that left wing journalist Ulrike Meinhof decides that words are no longer



Rudi Dutschke's speech in the film signifies the scale and the radicalism of the movement in West Germany at the time the Red Army Faction emerged

enough and joins Baader's group, known as the Red Army Faction (RAF).

After undergoing training at a Palestinian camp in Jordan in 1970, they carry out bank robberies, assassination attempts, and bomb attacks on the police, on US military camps, and on the Springer media empire (the German equivalent of Rupert Murdoch).

It ends in capture in 1972 and the second half of the film deals with their imprisonment and unsuccessful attempts by supporters to win their freedom through kidnappings and a plane hijacking.

How are we to interpret the Baader Meinhof experience? One thing cannot be doubted—the RAF saw themselves as anti-capitalist revolutionaries, prepared to make enormous sacrifices to overthrow a corrupt and violent system.

Even in jail, they organise to be treated as political prisoners, and use their trial to put the Ger-

man state metaphorically in the dock.

Revolution

But what kind of revolution were they seeking? The film gives two pointers to an answer.

The first is the priority accorded to the armed struggle in the colonial world, especially Vietnam and Palestine (with Che Guevara's image making a cameo appearance). For the RAF, their actions constituted the local arm of a global armed struggle against imperialism.

The problem is that even in the Third World, armed struggle is far from a winning formula. The Vietnamese broke the US military machine with jungle guerilla warfare, but the Palestinians never mounted more than a token military effort.

The camp in which the Baader Meinhof group trained in mid-1970 would have been closed within months of the Germans' departure, as Jordan expelled the Palestinian movement

in what became known as Black September. The plane hijacking that was meant to free the RAF from jail ended in failure, the jet stormed on the tarmac at Mogadishu, Somalia.

In a country like Germany, armed struggle meant operating underground in small groups. The RAF was popular with millions—but those millions could not possibly participate.

By putting armed struggle at the centre of their strategy, Baader and Meinhof cut themselves off from the rising movement, and could do no more than express frustration against “apathy” when the movement began to ebb.

The RAF could kill capitalists but they couldn't kill capitalism.

The alternative to this Third Worldism was the classical Marxist tradition and its focus on the power of the working class and the potential for mass insurrection.

The film makes the briefest of nods in that direction, giving a few frames to the events of May 1968 in France. But even here, there is no focus on the 10 million-strong general strike. It is student radicalism that remains centre stage.

Many of the '68 generation abandoned revolutionary politics as the movement declined, gravitating to academia and postmodernism. Dutschke joined the Greens.

The RAF stuck to their revolutionary principles. But by framing revolution as the act of a brave minority, they found themselves in a literal dead end.

David Glanz

Cannes winner an indictment of Australian racism

Samson and Delilah
Directed by
Warwick Thornton
In selected cinemas
now

SAMSON AND Delilah, written, directed and shot by Aboriginal film maker Warwick Thornton, tells the story of two young teenagers' lives amidst extreme poverty, substance abuse and violence. Set in remote Central Australia and Alice Springs, it is a disturbing indictment of the racism of successive federal governments and their refusal to adequately fund remote Aboriginal communities.

While social problems in Aboriginal communities are often presented by politicians like Mal Brough and mainstream newspapers like *The Australian* as some kind of problem within Aboriginal culture or Aboriginal people's failure to integrate, *Samson and Delilah* manages to humanise the people facing these problems.

For Samson there is no work, no money, no food—nothing. When he opens the fridge there is only a lonely slab of butter. He goes from the empty fridge straight for the can of petrol. Community social workers often report that people sniff petrol to make the hunger go away. So, Samson spends most of his time getting high on petrol and following Delilah around the camp.

Delilah lives with her grandmother, looking after her and working together on their traditional paintings. The paintings they spend days producing are collected by an art dealer



Samson and Delilah humanises Aboriginal people so often scapegoated for the problems facing their communities

every so often for which they receive a miserly couple of a hundred dollars.

Samson and Delilah are forced to leave the community when Delilah's grandmother dies and Samson has a violent outburst. The two travel to Alice Springs where their plight worsens. They are forced to live under a road

overpass and getting by is a daily struggle. Tragedy follows tragedy and the resolute Delilah comes to a point where even she feels the need to escape into petrol sniffing.

Thornton portrays the hyper exploitation of Aboriginal culture and the racism in Alice Springs that sustains it. Whilst walking through the city centre, Delilah sees one of the artworks she and her grandmother created in an art dealership's shopfront. Its price tag is \$22,000.

Delilah sees the extent to which she has been ripped off and is spurred to produce an artwork she can sell. She steals some paint and a canvas and paints an artwork to take to the same art dealer. The art dealer won't even look at her work. She tries to sell it on the street but most people barely notice she's there or if they do she is not much more than a nuisance. We are

confronted with the reality that Aboriginal people are an under class in this country.

One criticism to be made about Thornton's film is that the narrative, for the most part, is removed from a historical or political context. Thornton had an opportunity in this film to go beyond simply representing the dysfunction within remote Aboriginal communities. Audiences across Australia and the world may walk into the cinema with prejudices and walk out with their prejudices unchallenged.

The MT Theo program at Yuendumu for example, was a community initiative that kicked the scourge of petrol sniffing and helped many young people get training and into jobs.

Now the elders who established the program are having their pensions quarantined by the

Intervention. And Labor is pushing ahead to all but abolish the Community Development Employment Projects that provided the funds for many successful community organisations. This will make thousands more Aboriginal people unemployed.

But when dysfunction enters these communities it is the people that are blamed. The film does show that the basic services and infrastructure like schools, health clinics, housing and jobs that are rights for mainstream Australia simply do not exist in Aboriginal Australia. If Aboriginal people want some kind of access to these rights the Australian government wants them to move off their land into what they deem to be "viable communities".

This tragic film is beautifully shot and gives a very intimate portrayal of poverty and social dysfunction facing Aboriginal Australia. With an overwhelmingly Aboriginal cast and crew, the success of the film is a great source of pride for many.

But the same night that *Samson and Delilah* was receiving accolades in Cannes, the federal government announced another chapter of assimilationist policy, with plans to "compulsorily acquire" the town camps in Alice Springs. (see page 9).

This will bring the imposition of harsh new tenancy rules, pushing many more people into the river bed where Samson and Delilah were forced to camp
Matt Meagher

Climate change—it's enough to make you sick

Global Warming and the Political Ecology of Health
By Hans Baer and Merrill Singer
Left coast press,
\$49.95

THIS BOOK traces the likely effects of climate change on human health—from extreme weather events, to pressures on food and water supplies, to heat stress, to the spread of disease and infection.

It is a thorough if gloomy snapshot of what humanity faces if we fail to prevent runaway climate change.

The introduction squarely puts the blame for climate change and the failure to cut emissions on capitalism as a system of production for profit. The authors recognise that “global capitalism has been around for about 500 years, but has come to embody so many inherent contradictions that it must be transcended to ensure the survival of humanity and animal and plant life on a sustained basis”.

There is a useful section on the connection between war and global warming, which points out that “global warming and war are ... mutually reinforcing, with war and war production fuelling global warming and global warming pushing countries to war”.

The middle section on human health is very detailed—maybe even tediously so for non-experts. It discusses the many diseases and pathogens that are likely to be increased by global warming,



Diseases like dengue fever will become more widespread due to climate change

including the pathogen *Cryptosporidium*, spread by storms, and dengue fever, spread by *A. aegypti* mosquitoes.

The authors usefully point out that the spread of disease is also influenced by how society is organised—so the risk of dengue fever increases where there is lack of infrastructure such as piped water and adequate waste disposal, and decreases where there are enclosed spaces and air-conditioning.

In other words, the poor will suffer most.

Solutions

The last section, where the authors look at solutions to global warming, is the least clear. It contains a useful review of proposed neo-liberal solutions and their weaknesses, including carbon trading and international agreements.

But it is less effective when proposing alternatives. The authors seem to support a carbon tax, which would suffer

from many of the same problems as carbon trading, because both rely on price signals and the market to achieve change. It is sometimes difficult to tell which solutions the authors support and which they are merely listing, giving the overall impression that the authors aren't confident to point a real way forward.

They write, “there is no escaping the difficult fact that the majority of people in developed countries will need to scale back their consumption”. They also confusingly refer to renewable energy at one point as a neo-liberal technological fix (though elsewhere they support renewable energy).

But after years of workers sacrificing their wages for bosses' profits, many will be rightly frightened or angry about the call for more sacrifice, especially in a time of economic crisis.

Changing energy resources and means of transportation through renewables could pro-

The introduction squarely puts the blame for climate change and the failure to cut emissions on capitalism as a system

vide both solutions and jobs—without sacrifice. To get these solutions we will have to fight the neo-liberals who see them as “interference in the market”.

The authors raise the concept from Andre Gorz of “non-reformist reforms”, a clumsy phrase that seems to be pointing at what the revolution-

ary Leon Trotsky called transitional demands—that is immediate demands that show the need for, and have the potential to develop into, struggle against the system itself.

However, they then mention that “non-reformist reforms” could mean amongst other things “lobbying ... governments to... implement strong mitigation plans; [and] voluntary personal lifestyle changes”. But personal lifestyle changes have been pushed by government and corporations precisely because they avoid challenging the powers that be. So this isn't exactly a demand that “seek[s] to pave the way for transcending [the system]”.

In spite of calling for democratic ecosocialism to replace capitalism, behind the book's failure to grapple with the real solutions is their failure to recognise the working class as a force for change in society. It is the proud history of political strikes—from the green bans in the 1970s to the movement against uranium mining—that we need to look to in building a movement against climate change.

Despite this problem, it is refreshing to have academics that clearly see themselves not simply as analysts but as part of the movement against climate change.

As they write: “some would even argue that environmentally engaged anthropologists need to be passionate and even boldly outrageous given that we live in outrageous times”.

Chris Breen

RUDD'S NEW WAVE OF DISPOSSESSION

HANDS OFF TANGENTYERE

ON SUNDAY May 24 Jenny Macklin, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs put a gun to the head of the Tangentyere council, which represents town camp residents in Alice Springs.

The Rudd government is currently denying funding for badly needed housing in Aboriginal communities across Australia, until control of the land and housing is signed over to the government.

The Tangentyere Council had refused to sign a 40-year lease that would transfer camp management from Aboriginal housing associations to NT Housing, the mainstream public housing agency.

Macklin responded by announcing her government's intention to compulsorily acquire the town camps in Alice Springs, using NT Intervention powers.

The following speeches were made at a protest rally of town camp residents and supporters a few days after the announcement.

Walter Shaw, President of Tangentyere Council, Mt Nancy town camp

‘We rejected an offer that was put on the table that was drawn out with arduous processes.

We always expected that compulsory acquisition was on the table from the federal government.

We didn't believe that the federal minister would be driving a freight train towards acquiring Aboriginal land so quickly.

Aboriginal people in Alice Springs know all too well



Myra Hayes from White Gate speaks out against the government's compulsory acquisition of Alice Springs at a demonstration in Alice Springs on 28 May Photo: Pru Gell

that NT housing has failed us immensely. The town campers have had to bear the brunt of Aboriginal people going through the rotating door system of public housing.

The moves made by the Minister and the Rudd government goes against the grain of closing the gap. They should work in true consultation and true partnership with Aboriginal people.

The move from the Minister to compulsorily acquire Aboriginal land will totally and completely dispossess Aboriginal people, it will dispossess Aboriginal people yet again in this country. What the government is trying to achieve is assimilation and mainstreaming of Aboriginal people.

I think that the Aboriginal

community at a national level should show some form of cohesiveness and solidarity right across Australia. Aboriginal people have fought long and hard over the last 40 odd years towards self-determination. This is undermining the fight and struggle.

When self-determination was established back in 1972 it clearly stated that self-determination was about self-management, self-sufficiency and the choice for Aboriginal people not to assimilate.

The entirety of the Intervention is a rollback to the assimilation policy days.

I've always had a strong belief in politics. That politics can bring some strong forthcoming change for Aboriginal people.

But I've also had a stronger belief in the power of the people. And the Aboriginal people need to stand up. We are being given ultimatums and being backed into the wall. Its time for us to push back with the government.'

Myra Hayes, traditional owner of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), supports Tangentyere's stand against the takeover. She is from Whitegate town camp, where there is no running water and people are forced to live in tin sheds.

‘Tangentyere is the only one taking the water out there for us.

Every time when we have no water out there I'll ask Tangentyere to fill our water for us. No other organisation does it, only Tangentyere. I'm not lazy, when somebody asks me to come work with them I go with them.

I need my pension, all of it. Not Income Management (under the Intervention, 50 per cent of pension payments are quarantined). We've got to talk up. It's disgusting. Old tin sheds we have for our homes, even in the rain. Nobody in Alice Springs helps us.

My grandfather lived here, born in Alice Springs. I brought some blankets for him, he was real sick. I didn't know what to do. I came to Congress (Aboriginal Health) and I got some medicine for him but he was still a bit weak. I got him up, little boys carried him, little grandsons and took him home.

Only Tangentyere help us with wood for fire and with water. And food for the old people and all of that.'