

WE STOPPED ABBOTT, NOW **TURN BACK TURNBULL**



REFUGEES

Nauru's war on women

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Poverty and the family feed crisis

SYRIA

Russian bombing props us dictator Assad



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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, in the interests of human need not profit.

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, against racism and to strengthen the confidence of rank and file unionists.

Solidarity is a member of the International Socialist Tendency. Visit our web site at www.solidarity.net.au/about-us for more information on what we stand for.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

Sydney

Fortress Australia and the case for open borders
6.30pm Thursday 23 April

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Things they say

Here's the rule in the Liberal Party—if you win, you did the right thing. They're the rules of the Liberal Party.

Former Liberal Treasurer, Peter Costello, in a moment of honesty, reflecting on the deep principles of the party

For people on \$40,000 and \$50,000 and \$60,000 dollars a year, penalty rates are the difference as to whether or not they can afford to send their kids to a private school.

Bill Shorten tries to wrap his head around why workers are so attached to penalty rates—and fails

I was grateful for the support my government's reforms got from sections of the media, including *The Australian*.

Tony Abbott stating the obvious - behind every failed conservative PM, there is a right-wing rag.

I'm a former journalist for *The Australian* and an avid reader of *The Australian*, and *The Australian* is one of the world's great newspapers. ex Prime Minister Tony Abbott, making overtures to Rupert Murdoch for a new job?

They have got a nerve to ridicule people like me who tried to actually get things done. And they have always ridiculed and sneered. They have never actually given any benefit of the doubt or been prepared to see the big picture.

Former Qld Premier Campbell Newman talking about the media in an authorised biography and sounding just like Tony Abbott

The Medicare co-payment was necessary to end the 'something-for-nothing mindset'.

ex Prime Minister Tony Abbott, revealing everything about his own mindset. In many ways he seemed too moral for the job.

It's actually work that we're very proud of because it's all about care and welfare.

Diane Smith-Gander Chair of Transfield Services talking about running detention on Manus and Nauru

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INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

CSIRO ship rented out to Chevron and BP

A HIGH-TECH CSIRO marine research ship has been rented out to multinational energy giants Chevron and BP. The vessel, called the Investigator, will spend two months mapping the Southern Ocean to enable exploration for petroleum resources. The Investigator would otherwise have been out of action due to government under-funding.

Much of the ship's state of the art technology would normally be used to study the effects of climate change. Now, Chevron will be the first to charter the vessel from 22 October, followed by BP, which already has well developed plans to drill in the Bight. To top it all off, the areas to be surveyed by the mega polluters actually overlap with a Marine Reserve.

The work will even be done by 35 CSIRO scientists and staff from associated institutions. CSIRO director of strategy Toni Moate has celebrated the deal, saying "This will ensure Australia remains attractive as a frontier exploration area whilst maintaining Australian scientific expertise and capability".

Trucking magnate invites MPs on luxury cruise

TRUCKING BILLIONAIRE Lindsay Fox, owner of Linfox, has embarrassed government and opposition front-benchers by inviting them on his "once in a lifetime" luxury birthday cruise for his 80th birthday.

The all-expenses-paid ten day jaunt through the Mediterranean is purported to cost around \$1400 per person per day.

According to a source speaking to *The Australian*, Fox, a BRW rich-lister worth over \$2 billion, has chartered a 294 passenger cruise ship for the occasion.

Travel industry sources enthused over the benefits of the top-end cruise ships previously used by Fox, saying, "It's the intimate, relaxed setting and the alcohol is all-inclusive". The cruise will pass through Venice and the Greek port of Piraeus. Thoroughbred horse owner and property developer Lloyd Williams has confirmed his attendance.

NT Prison guards torment Aboriginal kids



A 15-YEAR-OLD Aboriginal boy told a youth forum in September that staff at a juvenile detention centre had made young people fight each other, and rewarded the winner with food.

Travis said, "you get Coke and a chocolate once a week. So, boys, they wanted that a bit more than once a week, so workers would make them fight and stuff and do stuff that kids usually wouldn't do just so they could get it." NT Attorney-General John Elferink has confirmed police are investigating allegations in regards to Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre.

Travis also said staff used food to pressure another teenager into eating faeces, filmed it and shared it on social media: "There was [bird] poo sitting on the ground one time and a young fella got dared to eat its shit and they [the guards] videoed it and put it on Snapchat to all their friends and they gave him a Coke and a chocolate."

A review into an alleged riot at the centre last year found staff had placed young people in solitary confinement for periods of between six and 17 days and unnecessarily used tear gas and restraints including hand-cuffs and spit hoods.

Volkswagen busted for greenwashing

VOLKSWAGEN (VW) has lost its "Green Car of the Year" prize after a massive pollution-cheating scandal. On 18 September US environmental regulators announced the company had violated air-quality rules, by installing software that enabled 500,000 diesel cars to evade emissions limits for nitrogen oxide and other harmful pollutants.

The software was used to falsely present diesel cars as just as clean as petrol alternatives. But VW diesel cars were spewing out 40 times the legally permissible level of nitrogen oxides.

Green Car Journal announced it was rescinding VW's 2009 prize for the Jetta TDI after VW admitted it intentionally deceived the government about emissions levels.

Ron Cogan of the *Green Car Journal* said, "These models were selected as Green Car of the Year above others for compelling reasons, including high fuel efficiency, reduced carbon emissions, a fun-to-drive nature, and the ability to meet 50 state emissions requirements with advanced diesel technology." VW said they agreed with the decision.

Research and writing by
Adam Adelpour

Send suggestions for INSIDE
THE SYSTEM to solidarity@solidarity.net.au

One in five big companies pay no tax

THE AUSTRALIAN Tax Office has revealed shocking statistics showing more than one in five private companies with revenue over \$100 million pay zero tax. When questioned by Senators the ATO's deputy commissioner, Michael Cranston, admitted that the figure was partly a product of large-scale tax evasion, or as he calls it "aggressive tax planning".

The revelations come as the Coalition presses ahead with plans to allow private companies to avoid public disclosure of their tax payments, or lack thereof.

A successful campaign by private business pushing the changes actually argued that public disclosure increases the risk of company owners being targeted for kidnapping.

A UNSW expert on financial disclosure, Jeffrey Knapp, responded by saying it was "the stupidest excuse for non-disclosure I've ever heard".

Productivity Commission says cut wages during natural disasters

A REVIEW initiated by the Abbott Government has recommended that wages be cut during droughts and cyclones.

According to the report, "The Fair Work Commission has considered submissions from several industry groups seeking exceptional circumstances deferrals or exemptions in relation to a range of natural disasters, including droughts, floods and cyclones".

The Chairman of the Productivity Commission, Peter Harris, said he thought Fair Work already had the power to cut wages in such "exceptional circumstances" but Fair Work said it was a "legal grey area".

EDITORIAL

Abbott's fate shows Turnbull can be beaten

THE END of Tony Abbott is a victory for all those who have demonstrated and campaigned against his cuts, racism and homophobia. The scale of the protests and opposition to his first budget crippled his government.

New Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull wants to re-start the “economic reform” that Abbott could not deliver. Turnbull is a multi-millionaire committed to delivering policies in the interests of big business.

He believes “sweet talk” can drive the budget cuts and attacks on workers and the poor that stalled under Abbott and Hockey.

Turnbull has dropped the plan for university fee deregulation—a significant win for students and staff, for now. But he made it clear that it is not off the table completely.

Turnbull and a succession of Ministers have already flagged attacking penalty rates. Minister Josh Frydenberg says, “This is an area we need to look at,” while Michaelia Cash repeats the bosses’ line that they “deter weekend work”.

New Treasurer Scott Morrison has declared that his priority is to “get spending under control”—read budget cuts. Morrison dismissed the idea increasing taxes could address the deficit, despite even establishment figures like former Treasury Secretary Ken Henry saying “a bit more than half” of the budget deterioration in the last ten years is explained by a lower tax take.

Morrison’s mantra on tax is that there must be change “that rewards people to work, save and invest”—he means the rich.

It looks more and more likely that Turnbull will take a proposal to increase to the GST to the next election as his preferred way of squeezing even more from workers.

The fact that the Business Council of Australia, representing the CEOs of the country’s largest companies, described early discussions with Turnbull as “outstanding” should set alarm bells ringing.

Pathetically the ACTU’s Dave Oliver tagged along at Turnbull’s national summit, tamely declaring, “We all have one thing in common and that is it is all about growth”.

Nor can we expect change from Turnbull on issues like refugees, same-sex marriage or climate change. He has made it clear he thinks Abbott’s policies are working, and sees



Above: Protests against Abbott's horror budget last year helped to destroy his standing in the polls

no reason to change them.

Turnbull is captive to the extreme right-wing elements, the climate deniers and outright racists, in the Liberal Party parliamentary caucus. And this is not going to change, even after another election.

Comments from Turnbull that he had “concerns” about the situation for asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru have circulated widely. But on the same day, he clarified that, as far as he was concerned, “There will be no resettlement of the people on Manus and Nauru in Australia. They will never come to Australia”. The only solution to their plight, according to Malcolm was “to encourage them to return from whence they came”. In other words: go back where you came from.

This means forcing Syrian asylum seekers in detention back to Syria—at the same time as even the government acknowledges the scale of the humanitarian crisis there.

Protest works

But if there is one lesson from two years of Abbott, it is that struggle works. There were 30 straight polls against Abbott because of the protests and demonstrations.

Medicare rallies, Bust the Budget protests, student protests, refugee protests, rallies against climate change,

and against the plans to close remote Aboriginal communities—this is what made Abbott unelectable.

The end of Abbott has given the Liberals a boost in the polls. But Turnbull can be beaten.

The 11 October mass refugee rallies are a good start. Union rallies in support of penalty rates can put Turnbull on the back foot. Rallies against Aboriginal community closures have been called for November. Turnbull’s foot-dragging over same-sex marriage can help expose his supposedly progressive credentials. There will be climate change rallies in November to coincide with the global Climate Change Summit in Paris—an ideal time to take on Turnbull over the Coalition’s pay-the-polluters Direct Action policy.

Public service strikes can be stepped up to break the Liberals’ wage-cut policy.

Tragically, Shorten’s rhetoric about the need to restore business “confidence” echoes the kind of pro-business language used by Turnbull.

Labor’s whole strategy rested on Shorten not being Tony Abbott. The ACTU electoral strategy of making Abbott “One Term Tony” has been left stranded.

It was protest and struggle that beat Abbott. The fight against Turnbull needs to start now.

.....
Turnbull and a succession of Ministers have already flagged attacking penalty rates

Opposition to the Abbott agenda brought down PM

By James Supple

TONY ABBOTT'S demise was cause for celebration for everyone opposed to his cuts, racism and bigotry.

Abbott was never a popular figure. His extreme right-wing actions in opposing same-sex marriage, reintroducing royal titles, open attacks on Muslim leaders and pandering to climate denial were all deeply out of step with popular attitudes.

Bumbling outbursts and bizarre acts like onion eating made him an object of ridicule. Facing annihilation at the next election, his own party decided he had to go.

But it was the sweeping cuts in his first budget that sealed his fate.

Abbott came to power on the back of disillusionment with a Labor government that had talked of change but delivered cuts and neo-liberalism. He only managed to win election by promising "no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions, and no cuts to the ABC or SBS". All these promises were broken in his first budget.

The minute Abbott was elected the Liberal Party's big business backers began pressing their demands. The blueprint for the budget was effectively outsourced to the Business Council of Australia through the Commission of Audit. This called for pushing down government spending so that taxes on corporations and the rich could be kept low.

There was a storm of protest at the scale of Abbott's budget assault. The weekend after its release 10,000 joined the "March in May" in Sydney and 15,000 rallied in Melbourne at just four days' notice. The unions organised further demonstrations, the largest of them June's 20,000-strong strike rally in Melbourne. Construction workers shut down city building sites in defiance of threats from the building and construction commission. The AMWU brought 20 busloads of members.

Such was the anger that 47 per cent in one poll said they would support Labor and The Greens blocking the whole budget to force a fresh election. But neither party was prepared to do this, putting concerns to be "responsible" economic managers ahead of the chance to stop Abbott in his tracks. Some cuts, including to the ABC and SBS, the CSIRO, Aboriginal health and legal services and the sacking of 16,500 public servants, were



Above: Bust the budget protests helped seal Abbott's fate

allowed through.

In the end the Senate did block most of Abbott's cuts, from the \$7 GP fee to university fee deregulation and the attack on the unemployed. But it was the extent of public opposition and the wave of protests that pushed the cross-bench Senators to take a stand.

The unions, Labor and The Greens let the budget protests wind down. But Abbott's hardline conservatism kept giving fresh fuel to protest. His dismissal of life on Aboriginal communities as a "lifestyle choice" earlier this year led to large protests led by Aboriginal activists around the country.

The week before his sacking, Get-Up and the refugee rights movement called demonstrations of thousands as he refused to raise the refugee intake to allow in more Syrian refugees, and continued to point score by claiming that the death of three-year-old Alan Kurdi justified his "stop the boats" policies. Abbott was forced to retreat and accept 12,000 additional Syrians.

Political crisis

Abbott's first budget was a breathtaking act of over-reach, attacking pensioners, the unemployed, students and the sick all at once. There was a complete failure to convince the population that there was any "budget emergency" justifying these measures.

But Abbott's deeper problem was the mood of disgust with mainstream

politics and neo-liberalism. After more than three decades of attacks on workers' living standards, even the word "reform" has become hated.

Public attitudes are a long way to the left of the major parties on economic issues. According to Essential polling, 80 per cent support penalty rates, 63 per cent support higher taxes on the wealthy and 64 per cent on big business. There is support for higher levels of spending on public services, not cuts.

Every recent government that has attempted "economic reform" has seen its popularity crumble. Julia Gillard's carbon tax, designed as a pro-business mechanism for tackling climate change, was widely seen as an attack on the cost of living. Kevin Rudd saw his popularity tumble in 2010 after his promises of change and a break with John Howard's policies were exposed as hot air.

The same problem now confronts Turnbull. Already he has indicated his desire to advance "economic reform", toying with attacking penalty rates, increasing the GST and cutting spending. Abbott's failed sales pitch was not the problem—it was his commitment to the neo-liberal program.

Abbott's downfall after just two years in office shows that the turmoil in Australian politics is far from over. We have now had five Prime Ministers in just over five years. There is every reason to believe we can give Turnbull the same treatment.

It was the extent of public opposition and protest that pushed the cross-bench Senators to take a stand

Malcolm Turnbull—Prime Minister for the millionaires

By Tom Orsag

IN HIS first speech after becoming Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull reiterated that he is very much a Liberal, despite his differences with Abbott's inept leadership style.

He promised, "A thoroughly Liberal Government committed to freedom, the individual and the market."

Turnbull is fully committed to delivering policies that benefit big business and the rich through cutting spending and delivering "economic reform". His multi-million dollar fortune means he is one of them himself.

His criticism of Abbott was not over his policies, but that he was unable to make "the Australian people understand" the need for savage budget cutbacks.

As an example Turnbull held up New Zealand Prime Minister John Key, who, he said, "has been able to achieve very significant economic reforms in New Zealand by...explaining complex issues and then making the case for them." Key has succeeded in increasing the GST, cutting income tax for the wealthy and made it easier to sack workers.

Turnbull's views on social issues are not as left-wing as some make out. He has pledged to maintain Abbott's plan for a popular vote on same-sex marriage, designed to delay it as long as possible. And his personal support for same-sex marriage is in line with Conservative Prime Ministers David Cameron in Britain and John Key in New Zealand.

On climate change, while he was prepared to negotiate with Labor in 2009 over an emissions trading scheme, Turnbull demanded large increases in compensation for carbon-intensive industries. Now he has committed to maintaining Abbott's pro-business "direct action" policy, which has no chance of meeting the government's 2030 targets.

Turnbull's own record shows his willingness to force through cuts and sackings. As Communications Minister selling Abbott's cuts in November 2014 he bluntly stated, "The savings that the Government is requiring of the ABC will result in a number of job losses."

This involved cutting \$254 million and 400 jobs. When the Friends of the ABC criticised the cuts he sneered, "Haven't they read Mr Hockey's speech? The age of entitle-



Above: Turnbull's personal wealth is estimated at up to \$180 million

ment is over. Cuts have to be made to the ABC in the Budget."

He also informed us that, "I support unreservedly and wholeheartedly every element in the Budget."

Turnbull, not surprisingly, thinks that government should play a minimal role in a capitalist economy. When he was leader of the Liberal Party in 2008, he criticised then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd for his spending to counter the Global Financial Crisis.

Turnbull wrote in May 2009, "the proposition that the global financial crisis was caused by wicked neo-liberal governments deregulating their financial markets and 'letting the free market rip' is nonsense." Instead he lauded moves, "towards more open markets and greater economic freedom, including greater free trade."

Making millions

Turnbull's father, Bruce, was a hotel broker, selling hotels and liquor licences in the Hunter Valley, NSW.

Despite being raised by a single dad, Malcolm was still able to go to private schools. At university Turnbull was far from struggling with student poverty. He bought his first investment property, sold three years later for a tidy profit, while living in an apartment owned by his father in the exclusive suburb he still calls home, Point Piper.

Turnbull has decided to keep living in his current \$50 million mansion, rather than move into the Prime Minister's residence at Kirribilli House just across the harbour.

He became a lawyer but left the bar in 1983 to work for Kerry Packer, owner of the Packer media empire.

Then he set up his own law firm, followed by an investment banking firm and later became a managing director and partner at Goldman Sachs Australia.

Goldman Sachs was mired in controversy during the Global Financial Crisis for its dealings in subprime mortgage loans and its influence on government. When Greg Smith, executive director of Goldman Sachs of New York, resigned in March 2012 he wrote that, "I can honestly say the environment now is as toxic and destructive as I have ever seen."

Much of Turnbull's fortune was made from the sale of internet company Ozemail. Another of his companies, Axiom Forest Resources, conducted clear-fell logging in the Solomon Islands in the early 1990s. The Solomons' PM Malaloni threatened to close it down for "constant breaches of logging practices." One report said his company had forest practices "amongst the worst in the world".

When Turnbull wanted a seat in Parliament in 2003 he was able to spend \$600,000 on his campaign to "win" the seat of Wentworth.

By 2010 he and wife Lucy, a businesswoman in her own right, were worth \$186 million, with Malcolm the only politician in the Business Review Weekly's Rich 200 list. He was the richest man in Parliament until Clive Palmer was elected in 2013.

Malcolm's market-driven agenda will have to be fought every bit as hard as we fought Abbott.

Nauru's horrific war on refugee women



By Ian Rintoul

TWO DAYS before the High Court case looking at the legality of maintaining offshore detention facilities, Nauru dramatically announced that detention will end on the island.

From Monday 5 October, detained asylum seekers are supposedly able to freely roam Nauru, 24/7.

But wait, there's more. Around 600 asylum seekers, who have been waiting for refugee decisions for almost two years, will get their determinations within a week.

Sound good? The only thing missing is the steak knives.

Although the Nauru government denies it, the announcement is clearly driven by concerns about the Australian High Court case, which will consider whether detaining people offshore is unlawful. So, they are declared "un-detained".

The reality is the announcement means little for those incarcerated on Nauru.

People may be found to be refugees but there is nowhere in the community for them to live. Nothing is prepared. So, they will physically remain in the same intolerably stifling tents because the accommodation blocks being built inside the detention centre are unfinished.

Freedom to roam Nauru is not freedom at all, when there is no security in the community, and no future. The island itself is a prison.

Refugees cannot leave Nauru; they cannot travel; they cannot bring

their families and they have only a temporary residence visa that now may last ten years. But ten years without a job, and children and teenagers deprived of an education, is a lifelong loss.

There are no jobs; no prospects for education. The unaccompanied minors released from detention in October last year are not allowed to enrol in Nauruan schools.

Single refugees are expected to survive on an allowance of just \$100 a week; \$180 for a couple. But this doesn't cover the basic cost of living on Nauru. Eggs are \$1 each; rice is \$18 for 4 kilos; drinking water has to be bought and costs \$12 for 19 litres.

Some conditions out of detention are a lot worse than in detention. The medical facilities at the Republic of Nauru hospital, for example, are much worse than those available inside the detention centre.

Only four months ago, the Australian government was forced to send an expert orthopaedic surgical team to Nauru to save a boy's arm, because setting the 11-year-old's broken arm had been botched at the hospital. And that wasn't the first time.

Until now, asylum seeker women were being brought to Australia to give birth. But as refugees, women will be forced to give birth in Port Moresby or on Nauru itself.

On Nauru, infant mortality in 2012 was 30 deaths per 1000 live births, compared with 4.43 per 1000 live births in Australia (2014).

The combined efforts of the Australian and Nauruan governments have

Above: Protesters occupy the Department of Immigration in Sydney to demand the government end violence against refugees on Nauru by bringing them to Australia

resulted in refugees being actively discriminated against and systematically deprived of their rights. Facebook is blocked; assemblies and protests are effectively banned. The medical facilities are sub-standard, and many refugees suffer debilitating, untreated health problems.

Only three days before the open centre announcement, two 18-year-olds were ambushed, bashed and robbed by a gang of up to 12 local Nauruans. This wasn't the first time.

In October and November 2014, there were nine assaults on under-age refugees. The house where they live was broken into six times in less than 12 months; the last time as recently as August.

The war on women

But it is the unbelievable war on refugee women on Nauru that particularly shames and damns offshore processing and the Australian government.

Single refugee women living in the relatively remote refugee camps dotted around the island have been left isolated, vulnerable and subject to repeated break-ins, harassment and sexual assaults.

The brutal rapes of refugee women on Nauru reveal the systemic abuse and sexual assault of women living outside the detention centre.

The shocking ABC 7.30 story highlighted just two rapes of Somali women. There are many more. Women freed to live in the community are now the victims of a reign of terror supported by the policies of the Australian and Nauruan governments.

There were serious illusions that new Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull would at least modify offshore processing—but the gloss is quickly wearing off.

The day he appointed a few more female Cabinet Ministers, he declared that he wanted Australia to be known for respecting women. A few days later, it was a different story. The reports of rapes of refugee women on Nauru were alarming, but, he added, "these tough, harsh policies of offshore processing actually work".

Similarly, Turnbull turned a deaf ear to the requests for a termination from a 23-year-old Somali woman who became pregnant after being raped in August.

Nauru is not even a gilded cage—it is a house of horrors. Both Manus and Nauru must be closed.

The brutal rapes on Nauru reveal the systemic abuse of women living outside the detention centre

By Amy Thomas

THE TURNBULL led-Coalition claims to be “resetting” the relationship between the government and the Muslim community. Turnbull has junked reference to “Team Australia”, as well as Abbott’s favoured term for Islamic State, “death cult”. But changing the rhetoric hasn’t changed the substance.

Following the shooting outside Parramatta police headquarters by a 15-year-old, Farhad Khalil Mohamad Jabar, Sydney was once again the scene of dramatic terror raids in early October. Many of the same homes that were raided in a pre-dawn operation last year were subject again to a paramilitary-style home invasion by dozens of police with semi-automatic weapons. Last year’s raids in Sydney resulted in only one terrorism charge; this time all those arrested bar one were swiftly released.

While Turnbull has been praised for saying only a “very, very small minority” of Muslims engage in terrorism, at the same time he talked up the “threat” of radicalisation. He called on Muslim leaders to “come out” and condemn the attack in Parramatta, creating an association between the Muslim community as a whole and the shooting. Minister Steven Ciobo beat the drums harder, saying, “There are radicalised people out there in the community who are looking to inflict harm, looking to murder people”.

According to *The Australian*, the government fears that Abbott’s rhetoric “undermined the ability of agencies to win their trust to help combat radicalisation.” So Turnbull has changed his language to try and recruit Muslim leaders into willing partners in policing their community. Turnbull supported Abbott’s changes to citizenship laws and the Foreign Fighters Bills that have seen Muslims stopped from travelling to the Middle East and have placed the community under a cloud of suspicion.

The government, the police and the media have all crafted an image of the Parramatta shooting as an attack linked to an organised terrorist group, before there is any evidence of this. The police say they have a “suspicion” that the teenager “did not act alone”—but no proof. Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione made clear that it is all speculation with his statement that police believed “his actions were politically motivated and therefore linked to terrorism”.

The police and the media drew

Turnbull stirs Islamophobia over raids and radicalisation



Above: Police arrested five men during terror raids after the Parramatta shooting, four of them were released the same day

connections between the shooter and the raided homes, but none has been uncovered so far. There are reports Jabar’s gun was obtained via a “Middle Eastern crime gang”, yet police admit this is still just a line of enquiry. Channel Nine even suggested that the football grand finals were endangered by terrorism.

The Parramatta mosque, attended by Jabar on the day of the shooting, offered their full cooperation to a police search and decried the act of violence. Yet dramatic news footage of the mosque presented it as the scene of an evil crime plot. The mosque has faced harassment, with journalist Mohammed Taha tweeting that, “Parramatta Mosque told me they’ve received online threats after #ParramattaShooting, one threat to ‘blow up’ the mosque”.

‘Deradicalisation’

The fact that Jabar was a school student has allowed the government to bolster their talk of “deradicalisation” in schools. NSW Premier Mike Baird says he has written to the Education Department asking them to “accelerate deradicalisation in schools.”

Yet the federal government’s 32-page “Radicalisation awareness information kit” was released to astonishment and ridicule less than a week before the shooting. One case study in the booklet, Karen, presented “the alternative music scene, student politics and left-wing activism” as a gateway

to “terror”—which in this case consisted of forest sit-ins and protests.

Making a link between terrorism and protest is not just accidental. The Howard government did the same with their crackdown on the APEC protests against George W Bush in Sydney in 2007.

But the kit’s main aim is to encourage teachers to single out Muslim students. It will be distributed in schools around the country. Justice Minister Michael Keenan said, “We wanted to explain to teachers...we know that school children are being radicalised...look out for certain signs.”

The kit, mirroring the discussion around radicalisation, contains no suggestion of why a small minority of people may be attracted to terrorism. The “signs” are listed as “significant behavioural changes” in “close personal relationships”, use of the internet, and increased criminal activity.

There is nothing in the booklet about Western occupation and bombing of Muslim countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria or about the West’s support for Israeli aggression against Palestine. Nor is there anything about the alienation, the racism or police harassment that creates seething resentment among those who are the victims.

Overwhelmingly, it is the Islamophobia at home and abroad that drives radicalisation. But a government that is so keen to bomb Syria and beat up the terror threat at home is incapable of understanding that.

.....
The government’s ‘Radicalisation awareness information kit’ was released to ridicule less than a week before the shooting

Greens' leader Richard di Natale charting rightward course

By Amy Thomas

LAST MONTH, The Greens' leader Richard Di Natale sparked internal strife with his "captain's pick" decision to take away the Tertiary, Technical and Further education portfolios from the more left-wing NSW Senator, Lee Rhiannon.

There have been danger signs about Di Natale since his takeover of the leadership four months ago, such as his deal with Abbott in June to cut \$2.5 billion from pensions, and his insistence upon his election on working "across party lines to get things done".

Many activists in the party see the snub of Rhiannon as the latest move to undermine the party's Left in the NSW branch.

The left in NSW has been less willing to deal with the Liberals, and much more enthusiastic about the role of social movements, than most other sections of the party. Lee Rhiannon has been involved with demonstrations against university deregulation, the gutting of TAFE, and a myriad of other issues.

Di Natale made the decision unilaterally, without the expected proper consultation either with the full party room or the Greens' National Council. And it was made on the first day of Malcolm Turnbull's Prime Ministership, raising suspicions the timing was intentionally chosen to avoid headlines.

He also took the LGBTI portfolio from Senator Janet Rice. Both portfolios, tied to two high-profile campaigns, the fight against fee deregulation and for same-sex marriage, have been given to South Australian Senator Robert Simms.

An early statement from the NSW Young Greens expressed widespread anger in that section of the party, saying "By making this call, the Australian Greens have created a devastating blow to the activists, students, staff and union members who have been fighting fee deregulation, and for free education for many years."

As well as the demotion of Rhiannon, Senator Nick McKim—who oversaw the closure of schools in Tasmania when he was a Minister in a coalition government with Labor—has been handed the Schools portfolio, as well as small business and attorney general. He used his first media release to praise small business:



Above: Lee Rhiannon, who has lost the Higher Education portfolio, speaking at a staff strike at Sydney University

"The Greens will present an alternative vision for the economy that looks to the innovators, small businesses and entrepreneurs to generate sustainable wealth and prosperity in the 21st Century."

Greens' future

Di Natale sees the future for The Greens in exclusively parliamentary terms—using their numbers in parliament to do deals with the major parties in an effort to extract concessions.

But it has been The Greens' willingness to reject such right-wing politics as usual and stand up on issues like war and refugees that has seen them gain prominence as a left alternative to Labor's aping of the Liberals.

Di Natale's politics-as-usual will lead The Greens to the right, limiting their horizons to what is acceptable to the major parties.

The experience of The Greens during their alliance with the Gillard Labor government was a case in point—rather than standing as an alternative to the major parties The Greens were drawn into defending the government and accepting Labor's useless and unpopular carbon tax.

There is evidence of significant disquiet in The Greens. Behind the scenes, the NSW party is threatening

to withhold \$100,000 in funds for the federal election campaign if Rhiannon is not reinstated in the Higher Education portfolio. The move will be debated at the next NSW state delegates' Council.

After a meeting of the party's National Council discussed the decision, Di Natale offered to split the portfolio to give Rhiannon responsibility for TAFE alone—an offer she declined.

The strategy of the Left inside the party has been to fight the issues out behind closed doors in national decision making forums, and present a unified party to the public. The right has not shown the same consideration, with some using the Murdoch press to anonymously attack the Left in the past.

There is much at stake for The Greens in this. Will The Greens go the way of the Australian Democrats? Or will they seek to be a left alternative to Labor, and win away those disillusioned working class Labor supporters with nowhere to go?

Will The Greens focus on doing whatever it takes to get elected, compromising themselves and undermining the grassroots activism that created the party in the first place? Or will they use their positions in parliament to build the social movements and strikes that we need—and that hold the genuine possibility of transforming politics?

Di Natale's politics will lead The Greens to the right, limiting their horizons to what is acceptable to the major parties

Domestic violence a product of poverty and class oppression

By Lucy Honan

MALCOLM TURNBULL and new Minister for Women Michaelia Cash have made a great show of confronting domestic violence.

They threw \$100 million at GPS trackers for perpetrators, safe phones for victims, phone lines, agency training and support, and boosting the existing campaign to teach kids about respectful relationships. Turnbull spoke solemnly about a “culture shift” of men respecting women. US R&B star Chris Brown was denied a visa on the grounds of his infamous bashing of Rhianna.

The announcements should have been met with derision. Some frontline domestic violence services pointed out that the new phone apps and well trained doctors will not be able to direct women to crisis services, as so many have been cut.

There was no extra funding for women’s refuges despite the 2800 women turned away last year. Only three community legal centres will receive extra funding, but this will be offset by Federal funding decreases of \$8 million by 2017-18.

Family violence services in Victoria are still funded for only 7000 referrals a year when they receive over 70,000.

But there was near universal support for another campaign to shift sexist attitudes among boys and men. Turnbull’s declaration that “violence against women begins with disrespecting women” is the common sense feminist position, so changing sexist attitudes appears to be the prevention solution.

But politicians, celebrities, media outlets and sporting codes have already thrown their weight behind the massive White Ribbon awareness campaign, with no reduction in violence.

John Howard’s media campaign “Australia says no to violence against women” in the 2000s did nothing to shift rates of domestic violence or rape.

Victorian government reviews into school programs revealed the creation of posters, DVDs, handbooks and resources had no impact on attitudes or behaviour.

The problem is that violence against women *doesn’t* begin with boys and men disrespecting women—this is the result of a wider social



Above: The large number of existing campaigns to educate men out of violent abuse have not worked

system of oppression, inequality and alienation.

The family

Violence and masculinity researcher Michael Flood acknowledges the correlation between sexist attitudes and acts of violence against women. But violence, he argues, “is part of ‘normal’ sexual, intimate and family relations...male aggression is expected and normalised, there is constant pressure among boys to behave in sexually aggressive ways, girls are routinely objectified, a sexual double standard polices girls’ sexual and intimate involvements”.

The oppressive roles are reinforced through media and advertising, but these are elaborations of the basic roles built into the nuclear family, where women do the invisible, unpaid childcare (and usually paid work as well) and men do the protecting and providing.

These roles are difficult to escape. Childcare is unavailable and unaffordable and the disparity between men and women’s wages means control over family finances is almost always

skewed. Lower living standards for single parents, and cuts to single parent payments, increase the incentive for women to remain in nuclear families.

Domestic violence is far more likely when families are under increased stress. Pregnant women are at greater risk, as are women during or after a separation. The less control women have over the family income, the more likely family violence is.

The fact that rates of domestic violence are as high in same-sex couples makes it clear that the pressures of family life rather than simply sexism drives domestic violence.

Poverty

Right wing columnist Miranda Devine has denounced welfare recipients as the source of domestic violence. Though her conclusions are repulsive (“end the welfare incentive for unsuitable women to keep having children to a string of feckless men”) she is right that domestic violence is concentrated in areas of poverty—it is between 28 and 36 times more prevalent in Bourke than in Manly or Mosman.

It’s not Centrelink payments but unemployment and low incomes that create “crowding, hopelessness, conflict, stress, or a sense of inadequacy in some men” according to Flood. Financial stress breaks people.

The lack of control over our working lives leaves us distressed and frustrated. Casualisation, performance targets and competition keep us anxious and insecure. It’s impossible to leave the scars of alienation at the office.

But there are solutions. We could immediately and drastically decrease rates of domestic violence by lifting all households to the standard of living in Mosman and Manly.

A fight for jobs, transport, housing and social services will do more to alleviate violence against women than covering every low income suburb with posters about how “real men don’t bash”.

We also need to fight for measures that would loosen women’s reliance on the family: parental leave, accessible childcare, equal pay and single parent payments are needed to make sure women are not left with unpaid and underpaid work.

Ultimately, we need to end the routine alienation and inequality that is a product of capitalism itself.

Violence against women is the result of a wider social system of oppression, inequality and alienation

Mass protests in Lebanon and Iraq show hope for Middle East

By Mark Goudkamp

THE ARAB Spring, four years ago a source of inspiration and hope across the Middle East, has given way to a wave of counter revolution, sectarianism and war.

General Al Sisi has drowned Egypt in blood; there is complete dysfunction in Libya and sectarian civil war across Yemen, Iraq and Syria.

But in recent months, new upsurges in struggle have taken place in Iraq and Lebanon—two of the countries most wracked by sectarianism. They are showing that the sectarian politics can be challenged—and point to a way out of the impasse.

In Iraq, the US occupation left behind a sectarian state under Nouri Al-Maliki between 2006 and 2014. This fuelled the rise of Islamic State (IS) in the Sunni west of the country.

Now amidst a blistering heatwave, massive popular demonstrations uniting people across religious and sectarian divides have taken place in Baghdad's Tahrir Square and in several cities in central and southern Iraq.

The protests, which have attracted hundreds of thousands of people, were triggered in mid-July when the security services and Shia militia linked to the government put down a protest north of Basra over a lack of electricity and water, shooting dead Muntazar al-Hilfi, a young student, and leaving another four protesters wounded.

The movement has condemned continuing power outages, deteriorating public services and increasing inequality. Over 35 per cent of Iraqis live below the poverty line.

In addition, they have denounced corruption and the bankruptcy of the ruling sectarian political parties. The protests have been young, with the involvement of many women, and also many of Iraq's large community of people with disabilities.

The movement has already forced significant political concessions from Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, including a pledge to reform Iraq's sectarian quota system.

Other promised reforms include reducing the size of his government by a third, reduced security for government officials and MPs, as well as reducing their salaries.

Meanwhile, since mid-August, Lebanon has seen mass demonstrations against the government's market-based approach to waste disposal and



Above: Tens of thousands have come onto the streets of Lebanon as part of the #youstink protests

treatment. The movement, mobilising under the hashtag #Youstink, has condemned this environmental disaster, and its disproportional impact on the poorest regions of the country.

The closure of the open-air landfill site in Na'ameh following local protests meant that tons of rubbish were left on the streets of the country's major cities. The regime proposed to open another landfill site in the impoverished region of Akkar. It also transported some of the garbage heap to poor areas as a temporary solution, while gentrified neighbourhoods were unaffected.

Tens of thousands of people have repeatedly come onto the streets in protests and sit-ins, sometimes braving tear gas, water cannon and police batons. Hundreds of people have been injured or arrested.

Against sectarianism

The protests quickly generalised to criticise everything from the lack of basic infrastructure to the corruption and nepotism of the political class, calling for the resignation of the ministers of the interior and environment.

The protests have also demanded an end to the sectarian religion-based power sharing arrangement. Seats in parliament and the offices of speaker, prime minister and president are parcelled up among the various Christian and Muslim sects according to a quota.

Youstink organisers rejected a plan for a supposedly sustainable solution that would temporarily reopen existing

landfills until new ones can be built elsewhere, by protesting alongside residents in areas where landfills exist or are earmarked for construction.

They have similarly condemned the national dialogue initiative aimed at ending the political vacuum of the past 16 months. They have denounced its participants as "feudal patriarchs" and "self-appointed mafia leaders," demonstrating outside all three sessions held so far. The dominant sectarian political groupings—the Saudi-backed March 14 coalition and the March 8 coalition supported by Iran and Syria—continue to squabble over who will be president.

While some moderate Youstink leaders have sought to prevent the radicalisation of the movement, a new left, progressive front called "The People Want" has been established under the slogan "secularism, equality and social justice".

The uprisings in Iraq and Lebanon may not be on the scale of the Arab Spring revolutions. Yet they both show that mass movements against corruption, for decent public services and better wages can unite working class people across sectarian divides. They point a way forward, and have the potential to rejuvenate popular struggle across the whole of the Middle East and North Africa.

Moreover, they also show that the same economic and political demands that sparked the 2011 uprisings—for democracy, freedom and social justice—remain as relevant as ever.

They have denounced corruption and the bankruptcy of the ruling sectarian political parties

Russia forces the West to embrace Syria's dictator Assad

By James Supple

RUSSIA'S INTERVENTION to shore up the Assad regime and begin bombing in Syria has decisively turned the tables on the US and its regional allies.

Russia has made clear that it will not allow the Assad regime to fall, and shown its willingness to bomb even US-backed rebels.

The US's focus in Syria has been on bombing Islamic State, after it took over wide areas of Syria and Iraq last year. This puts it in effective alliance with Assad, who is also fighting IS.

The Australian government began bombing in support of the US in September.

The US, and other regional powers including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have also been arming groups among the opposition rebels, in the hope of installing a government in Syria more sympathetic to their interests.

But the US has had little success finding reliable allies, with US weapons turned over to Al Qaeda affiliates and just 100 fighters in the Pentagon's year-old training program compared to hopes of 5000.

So a number of US allies are now moving to embrace Assad. Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has gone as far as to say that, in any transition, "the only conceivable option would be a national unity government involving President Assad".

The US's public position is still that Assad should step down, but Obama now says he is willing to negotiate with Russia and Iran to end the conflict through a "managed transition".

US Secretary of State John Kerry has refused to put a time limit on how long Assad should remain in place, simply saying he could stay for "a reasonable period of time".

All of the outside powers in Syria have their own geopolitical and economic interests at heart.

Hundreds more Iranian troops have also poured in recently, to join Assad's Lebanese Hezbollah allies and Russia in defending the regime.

We should oppose Russian, US and Australian bombing as well as all forms of foreign imperialist intervention.

Russia's partnership with Syria is the last remnant of Russian influence in the Middle East, and it is deter-



mined to hold onto it. Assad has been a Russian ally since well before the civil war began. Syria hosts Russia's only naval base in the Mediterranean, at Tartus, established in 1971. And Russia has remained Syria's major arms supplier since the Cold War, continuing to sell the regime arms all through the civil war.

Revolution to civil war

The conflict in Syria began in 2011 with a democratic uprising against Assad's dictatorship. The government shot down protesters and tried to drown the revolution in blood, triggering an armed revolt.

Assad's ruthlessness has allowed groups like Islamic State to grow and carve out their own areas of control. The scale of the regime's atrocities and sectarian killings has helped drive recruitment to the most savage and sectarian of its opponents. Over time they have become a larger and larger force in opposition controlled areas.

In the first six months of this year the Assad regime was responsible for at least 75 per cent of the civilian deaths in Syria. It is the only group in Syria with an airforce, and has relentlessly bombed civilian areas, dropping 10,000 deadly barrel bombs this year alone.

Almost 13,000 Syrians have been tortured to death in the regime's

Above: Children injured by one of Assad's barrel bombs on the outskirts of Aleppo

prisons since the start of the conflict. The regime has made use of sectarian militias from early on, massacring civilians in an effort to spread terror.

Syria's war has devastated the country, with 200,000 dead and four million now driven out of the country as refugees.

Assad is no lesser evil to Islamic State and similar rebel groups like the Al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al Nusra. Like IS, the Assad regime also ruthlessly represses any political dissent, has targeted ethnic minorities and is waging sectarian war.

The solution to the nightmare in Syria can only come through a revival of the democratic movement that erupted in 2011.

Despite the desperate situation, protests and popular organisation continues. In August and July there were demonstration in towns and rural areas around Aleppo, Damascus and elsewhere, against the authoritarianism of Jabhat al Nusra and the Army of Islam group. They included a march of thousands in rural Damascus, according to Syrian revolutionary Joseph Daher.

As we are seeing in the new round of protests in Iraq and Lebanon, popular movements that unite working class people across ethnic and sectarian divides can point a way out of the horror.

All of the outside powers in Syria have their own geopolitical and economic interests at heart

Massive corruption scandal fuels Bersih 4 in Malaysia

By Jason Wong

AT THE end of August as many as half a million Malaysians joined the Bersih 4 protests on the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

Political discontent is on the rise in Malaysia. In July the *Wall Street Journal* published a paper trail linking Prime Minister Najib Razak to an embezzlement scandal worth over 2.6 billion Malaysian Ringgit (\$850 million) via Malaysia's strategic development fund, 1MDB. The funds were allegedly siphoned to Najib's personal accounts.

1MDB was established from a state sovereign wealth fund soon after Najib became prime minister in 2009, at which point he named himself chairman of the advisory board. The government-owned company has been mired in controversy ever since, with the opposition questioning the transparency of 1MDB's accounts and the numerous stalled developments funded by the company. It is currently under investigation by Malaysian anti-corruption authorities as well as foreign law enforcement agencies. Najib has personally attempted to obstruct investigations by purging critics, including the Deputy Prime Minister and the Attorney-General. Several news outlets were censored after the revelations.

The sheer scale and complexity of the 1MDB operation was unprecedented, featuring Cayman Island bank accounts and large Middle Eastern multinationals and governments. The 4th iteration of the Bersih protests for free and fair elections was spurred by this evidence of the long-suspected corruption that permeates the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition.

Bersih 4 was unusually peaceful with police opting not to repeat their use of water cannon and tear gas against the last Bersih rally in 2012. Bersih reiterated its founding demands for transparent government and free and fair elections, with additional demands this year to save the economy, protect the right to dissent and "uphold the rule of law".

Organisers in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, called the protests a "vote of no-confidence" in Najib, and while the protests were officially non-partisan, many attendees came with demands to end racism, abolish the recently-implemented GST and for Najib to step down.

The government responded by



Above: The Bersih 4 demonstration in Malaysia at the end of August against corruption and for fair elections

playing the race card, blaming the protests on greedy Chinese Malaysians not knowing their place. The rallies were largely Chinese Malaysian, but participation by other races was not insignificant. Anti-Chinese rhetoric has long been a crucial political device for the Malay-based UMNO party which leads BN, and the affiliated Malay supremacist organisation, PERKASA. Malaysia's racial divisions and policies which preference Malays over ethnic Chinese and Indians are a legacy of British colonialism and attempts to stem the influence of Communist rebels in the post-war era.

Anti-Chinese rally

On Malaysia Day, 16 September, Malay supremacists organised a 30,000 strong rally in a Chinese enclave in Kuala Lumpur in support of the government. Organisers threatened to "spill the blood" of Chinese and called for the defense of Bumiputera rights, which offer privileges to ethnic Malays such as housing discounts and pension bonuses. Najib and UMNO provided tacit support for these protests. The last mass anti-Chinese protests in Malaysia were the 13 May riots in 1969.

It is clear that Najib's sway over his support base is dwindling. This has caused two major shakeups in the opposition. Progressive members of PAS, a conservative Islamic opposition party, have split to form Gerakan Harapan Baru (New Hope Movement), which has taken PAS's place in the old opposition bloc Pakatan

Rakyat (People's Coalition) to form Pakatan Harapan (PH, Coalition of Hope). While the departure of the conservative PAS is not a serious blow to opposition politics, it has raised doubts about the ability of the new PH to represent Malays.

The government is clearly hoping to stir up racial tensions and hang onto power by posing as the champion of Malays and other indigenous groups who make up 60 per cent of the population. Previous anti-Chinese protests have tended to coincide with losses in UMNO's electoral prospects.

However, Bersih limits itself to demands against official corruption. While socialists must support Bersih's struggles against corruption, the opposition risks being marginalised unless it takes up class issues that are capable of winning the support of working class Malays. The official Bersih movement offers no leadership for those seeking to fight the GST, abolish quasi-apartheid policies, accept Rohingya refugee boats or end exploitation from the likes of mining company LYNAS and other foreign corporations.

As Malaysia's economy falters, class divisions grow clearer by the day. Discriminatory policies favouring Malays must be understood as an attempt by the Malay ruling class to secure its interests against Chinese merchants and businesspeople.

Without an explicit orientation towards raising the living standards of ordinary Malaysians across all ethnic groups, the movement can be too easily isolated and UMNO's bag of tricks will keep it in power for years to come.

The government responded by blaming the protests on greedy Chinese Malaysians not knowing their place

Can Jeremy Corbyn shift British Labour?

By Jean Parker

JEREMY CORBYN'S phenomenal victory in the British Labour leadership race, with 60 per cent of the vote and support from UNITE and eight other unions, has created irreconcilable tensions in British politics.

There are rich lessons for socialists, in Australia and Britain.

The media and the political establishment are horrified by Corbyn's popularity. It is a dramatic demonstration that the "social democratic" beliefs that they worked to banish from mainstream politics over the last 40 years are alive and well.

Corbyn's victory is a clear indication that a majority of people reject neo-liberal policies.

His push to increase the top tax rate to 75 per cent is backed by 56 per cent of people. In Australia, 64 per cent (and 72 per cent of ALP voters) say big business should pay more tax.

Corbyn's platform includes renationalising the railways. In Australia 70 per cent of people think privatisation mainly benefits the corporate sector.

It is the fact that social democratic parties like British Labour and the ALP have abandoned Corbyn-style policies that explains their decline and collapse in membership since the 1980s. Corbyn's win is a full-frontal assault on Blairism (and its Australian variant)—and all power to it!

Reformism

Since the 1980s, successive leaderships of Labor-style parties have driven through privatisations, competition policy, productivity-based pay and restrictions on the right to strike. The only "reforms" they have implemented are ones that actually worsen workers' lives.

Many on the left assume that decades of Labor betrayals have killed off workers' hopes for progress through parliament. But social democratic parties like the ALP did not create reformism. It continues to be nourished by the conditions of alienated work under capitalism, even when reformism's official representatives have embraced neo-liberalism.

An Essential poll last year showed that while 45 per cent of people believe that Labor represents



Above: Jeremy Corbyn's first action as Labour leader was to speak at a 50,000-strong rally for refugees

the working class; only 4 per cent think the Liberals represent workers. Labor's connection to the unions means that it remains a potential vehicle for reformist hopes *despite* the history of Labor governments attacking their supporters and the tiny policy differences between Liberal and Labor since the 1980s.

Corbyn isolated

So far Corbyn's rise seems to be spurring activism, with 50,000 on the streets for refugees, doctors rallying against NHS cuts and 100,000 demonstrating at the Tory convention in Manchester in the first week of October.

There is a window of opportunity for the enthusiasm surrounding Corbyn to be translated into the anti-austerity struggle.

But the logic of Corbyn's role as Labour leader is already drawing energy away from the public meetings and union support that got him elected, towards parliamentary battles and internal party struggles.

Labour's Blairite majority of MPs (210 of the 230 elected Labour MPs are hostile to Corbyn) have begun waging a campaign to destabilise him.

The immediate focus of the fight is war. The Labour majority is determined to assert the party's support for British imperialism against Corbyn's long-running anti-war stance. Half of Corbyn's cabinet support bombing Syria and Labour MPs have already met with Tory PM David Cameron to pledge support for British airstrikes.

Less than 1 per cent of the union delegates at Labour's conference

supported his attempts to overturn support for Trident, Britain's \$200 billion nuclear missile program. This included unions central to Corbyn's leadership victory.

Corbyn's isolation inside Labour is leading him to increasingly talk of party unity and party democratic processes. But the compromises needed to maintain unity with the Blairites poison the hopes millions hold in Corbyn.

The politics matters. Corbyn's supporters are not getting the tools they need to build the case against Trident, bombing Syria, or British imperialism itself.

Corbyn glossed over his defeat on Trident as a victory for "party democracy", fudged why he didn't sing "God Save the Queen" and back-tracked when he was pressed on the rights of Iraqis to resist British occupation during the Iraq war.

Corbyn's party and establishment opponents will seize on any fudges and press even harder for concessions.

Corbyn needs to fight the right inside the Labour Party, but crucially that fight needs to be taken outside Parliament. It was hundreds of thousands outside the sclerotic structures of the Labour Party that got Corbyn elected. Sixty thousand new members have joined Labour since he was elected leader.

For socialists, the task is to turn the Corbyn supporters into activists in the unions, the anti-war movement and anti-austerity battles. That is the only way Corbyn will win the fight inside Labour. It is the only way to win the fight against the Tories.

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The compromises needed to maintain unity with the Blairites poison the hopes millions hold in Corbyn

NO CHOICE FOR SYRIANS BUT TO RISK DANGEROUS VOYAGE

Syrian refugees face hellish conditions in neighbouring countries, and aid money is running out, forcing larger numbers to use people smugglers to escape writes **Clare Fester**

HUNDREDS OF thousands of Syrian refugees have defied border guards and razor wire to force their way into Europe. Large numbers have risked death on boat journeys across the Mediterranean to find safety.

Turnbull has condemned those that cross borders and oceans, saying, “we will not tolerate people smuggling”.

But the abhorrent conditions for refugees waiting in the region and the severely limited possibilities for resettlement through official channels mean asylum seekers have little choice. All those that come should be welcomed.

The brutal civil war waged by Bashar al-Assad, the rise of Islamic State and both western and Russian bombs now falling on Syria are sure to force even greater numbers to flee. Already there are over seven million people internally displaced within Syria, and more than four million refugees in neighbouring countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

Despite the focus on Europe it is these countries worst hit by the crisis. One in five people living in Lebanon are now refugees after an influx of over one million people.

Refugees are living in cramped and makeshift conditions in camps that will only get worse as winter starts. Imane lives in a tent with five others in a Jordanian refugee camp.

“They gave us three pieces of bread for the children,” Imane says. “Is this enough for them to grow? We don’t have money to buy in the little shops of the camp. They have not given us diapers for 20 days now...I tried to get some milk for my baby but nobody helped me and when I went to the doctor she reprimanded me and said that I have to feed him better... but how?”

She spends hours waiting in line for basic necessities like blankets and milk for her baby, often to be sent away when supplies run out.

The camps are similarly stretched in Lebanon. Reports from Shatila, originally established for Palestinian refugees in 1949, say the camp only



Above: Syrian refugees in a makeshift camp in Turkey

has electricity two hours a day and the tap water is full of salt.

But the vast majority of displaced Syrians, in Jordan some 70 per cent, cannot fit in the camps and live in urban centers.

The UNHCR and International Relief and Development found that two thirds of refugees in Jordan live below the poverty line and one in six live in abject poverty on less than \$40 a month.

Most refugees cannot work legally, leaving them open to extreme exploitation through illegal work. In Jordan they can be detained and deported for working without a permit.

A 2012 study of Syrian refugees living in Jordan found that 80 per cent did not want to go to travel to any other country.

Its proximity to Syria, family ties, shared history and culture, and the possibility to return home all contributed to this.

It is the living conditions in these places that force refugees to use people smugglers to find safety somewhere else.

Aid funding is running out. At the

end of May the UNHCR said it had received promises for only 23 per cent of its anticipated budget for this year. This meant a funding gap of a staggering \$4.53 billion. The World Food Program, which supports 1.3 million Syrians outside camps, has had to halve its assistance.

World Food Program worker Diana El-Kassaby said the under-resourcing was so severe that Syrians talked of returning to the warzone.

The situation is similar in Turkey, where 85 per cent of refugees live outside the camps and only 15 per cent of those receive any humanitarian aid support.

Most Syrians cannot obtain permanent resettlement in surrounding countries. In Turkey asylum seekers can get temporary protection, but without the right to work.

Politicians claim refugees should wait their turn for resettlement elsewhere. But as of August there were only 100,000 places available for third country resettlement—enough for less than 3 per cent of Syrian refugees.

Abbott and now Turnbull have pointed to their “humanitarianism”

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The World Food Program, which supports 1.3 million Syrians outside camps, has had to halve its assistance.

in accepting 12,000 Syrians from refugee camps.

They have used this to separate supposedly legitimate refugees waiting in the Middle East, from those that cross borders and oceans with people smugglers who are coming “illegally.”

But with the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees still denied the chance of any third country resettlement, large numbers will still need to find their way to Europe, and even to Australia, to find safety.

People smuggling

Abeer, living in Jordan says, “every country is closed in front of you.” Her brothers went to Algeria, where she says most visas are rejected.

One Syrian family had lived in Egypt for nearly three years as refugees. The father explained to Amnesty International, “my family is registered with UNHCR here. Life in Egypt is unbearable...I cannot afford to live in Egypt with almost no employment and limited access to education and health care. So I paid smugglers to take me and my family to Europe.”

The family joined a group of 96 refugees attempting to cross the sea to Italy in August. When they reached the shore they were stopped by the Egyptian army, where the soldiers shot at the refugees and hit one of the man’s daughters. The soldiers refused to call an ambulance, left her to bleed, and she died in the early hours of the morning.

The father was detained for over a week. After questioning he was released to bury his daughter. “My children tremble whenever they see soldiers,” the father explains.

“My two-year-old daughter screams and trembles if she sees a soldier. She cannot forget the incident and is traumatised. My children do not even want to go to school. I cannot describe how we feel. Now I only want one thing from this world: to get out of this country. Life is unbearable.”

If countries like Australia, Europe and the US continue to refuse to assist the millions of refugees stranded in countries around Syria, more will attempt boat journeys across the Mediterranean using people smugglers. Instead of locking them in detention and throwing up more and more border controls, we need to demand they are welcomed, no matter which way they come.

Refugee activist Dominique Sherab has produced a radio documentary on conditions for refugees in Jordan. You can listen to it at bit.ly/JordanRefugees

As of August there were 100,000 places for third country resettlement—enough for less than 3 per cent of Syrian refugees

‘Germany can cope with refugee influx, it’s a question of priority’

Christine Buchholz, socialist MP for die Linke (the Left Party) reports on the refugee “crisis” in Germany.

AS NEW refugees have reached Germany over the past few weeks there has been a very positive response from many ordinary people. The government did not provide the support refugees needed, so people mobilised to fill the gap.

Members of die Linke have been part of this—greeting refugees, supporting the initiatives in different cities to give them a proper welcome, decent housing and a supply of food.

I am impressed by the courage of refugees—they physically broke down the walls keeping them out. We demanded the government should open the borders, provide homes and a future in Germany. There should be an immediate house-building plan so that refugees can move near to their relatives and communities.

In Saxony in the east of Germany there have been fierce protests by Nazis and racists attacking refugee homes and the police. So it was very important that die Linke demanded the government take action.

Putting pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel worked: more people were allowed in. It was an important blow against Fortress Europe.

The minister of the interior announced the re-establishment of border controls between Austria and Germany on 13 September, arguing that this was necessary for security reasons. This feeds into the racist narrative that the refugees are not victims of war but the aggressors.

I accompanied a convoy from Austria to the German border. At the main station in Vienna many refugees were assembling, often confused, angry and afraid. We offered to take them with us to the German border so they could register and access help.

It is not the case that Germany can’t cope with an influx of people. Finland, for example, introduced an extra tax on the rich to pay for it. Germany has a huge budget for the military. The rich are getting richer. It’s not a question of money or capacity; it’s a question of priority.

One part of the ruling class is arguing that there is a demand for highly qualified workers and young



people and that they can benefit from refugees, especially if they can also drive wages down. Another part of the ruling class is playing the race card, saying refugees are a security risk.

They are trying to set workers against each other. Crèche workers have been taking strike action over wages. Now the representatives of regional governments are saying, “I’m afraid we won’t have more money for the crèche workers because we need it for the refugees.”

It’s important that we assert that we don’t judge people by how “useful” they are to the economy. People have the right to come to our country because they are fleeing from war and injustice.

While German capital is benefitting from the European crisis the working class in Germany faces a lot of problems—for example, low wages and precarity. The problems now with registering the refugees and building homes are partly due to job cuts in the public sector: the refugee “crisis” is partly caused by austerity.

Last year Pegida, an anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant organisation, mobilised thousands on the streets—but also triggered counter-demonstrations.

Now Pegida has begun to march again. In early October it had 5000 on the streets of Dresden. And the far right Alternative for Germany, even though it is in an internal crisis, is rising in the polls in Saxony.

If we don’t fight racism and challenge the unequal distribution of wealth, the right wing will provide their own answer.

THE US'S DEPUTY SHERIFF WHY AUSTRALIA WANTED WAR IN VIETNAM

Australia has been an enthusiastic partner of US imperialism in an effort to advance its own interests in the region, argues **Vivian Honan**

IT IS an oft-quoted myth that Australia is the lapdog of America, only going to war at the request of the super power. Australia has fought alongside the US in every major conflict since the Second World War, from the Korean War to Iraq and Afghanistan. But far from being a reluctant ally dragged into war, the Australian ruling class has pushed to be involved in American wars in order to secure their own interests.

The extension of Australian bombing raids into Syria is the latest example.

Senior Government sources have leaked that the driving force behind the US request for Australian air forces actually came from the Australian Prime Minister's office, not from Washington. This is strikingly similar to the story of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Australia's interests in supporting US wars were clearly demonstrated in the case of Vietnam. Australia, led by Menzies at the time, wanted to ensure America's on-going presence in Southeast Asia in order to protect its own growing political, economic and strategic interests in the region.

Imperialist sponsors

Before developing its relationship with America, Australia was economically and militarily dependant on Britain.

But a distinct Australian capitalist class emerged in the latter part of the 1800s, growing rich through the export of wool and raw materials including gold, sugar and zinc to Britain. This class had its own distinct interests that it saw as necessary to amass and maintain its wealth.

Australia developed into a small imperialist power throwing its weight around in the region. During the First World War Australia's rulers took the opportunity to seize German colonies including New Guinea, Samoa and Nauru.

While Australia was a giant in the local region, it was only a minor power on the world stage. It saw its interests as best served through an alliance with one of the major imperialist powers. The shift towards the US began during the Second World War, after British forces in South-East Asia were defeated by the Japanese at Singapore.

By the end of the war, Australia was looking to expand its commercial interests into Asia. As Foreign Minister at the time, Evatt, told Parliament in 1947, "Present indications are that there should be a spectacular growth in the exchange of Australian processed products for the raw materials of the intensely rich areas of South East Asia."

In the political context of the Cold War, and in order to ensure stability for its growing local trade, the Australian government was also eager to prevent the rise of communist governments in the region. For this reason the Liberal Party Government in Australia saw the anti-colonial movement in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in Malaya, as a threat.

After the war, labour unrest in British-controlled Malaya grew, in protest at unemployment and low wages. The British administration responded with repression, to which the Malayan Communist Party responding by beginning a guerrilla struggle.

Australian troops were sent to fight on the side of Britain to crush the movement and the Communist Party.

Australia was also concerned about a newly independent Indonesia that was looking to take over the area now known as West Papua from the Dutch. Australia had its own eyes on West Papua. It asked Washington to encourage Dutch resistance to Indonesia's claims on the area. But the US adopted a position of neutrality and then eventually supported Indonesia. America was more concerned

Australia saw its interests as best served through an alliance with one of the major imperialist powers

about its own political influence with Indonesia than Australia's desire for the land.

In the "confrontation" between Malaya and Indonesia over territory in the 1960s, Australia again joined with British forces, this time against Indonesia. The US was far more accommodating of the Left-leaning Indonesian President, Sukarno, and refused to intervene with ground troops.

These conflicts showed that Australia had its own imperialist interests in the region, quite separate, and at times even conflicting, with American interests.

However, Australia did look to and hope for American support. With Britain's declining economic and military strength, Australia began to seek closer relations with America to bolster its own military strength.

This history shows why the calls sometimes heard on the left for Australia to adopt an "independent foreign policy" are misplaced. Australia's backing for first Britain and then the US has been a policy serving the "independent" aims of Australia's ruling class.

Two treaties in particular showed Australia's changing orientation towards the US. The Australia, New Zealand and United States (ANZUS) Treaty was signed in 1951. The treaty was a vaguely worded agreement to provide mutual assistance in the event of an attack. In 1954, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was formed between several countries with interests in the region, including Australia and America. It had similarly vague notions of mutual assistance.

For America, these two agreements were part of building an anti-communist defence. But the agreements specifically did not guarantee American support for Australia in conflicts over territory and security. Australia would need to find other ways of ensuring American commitment to the region.

The Vietnam War was seen as such an opportunity.

Australia's interest in Vietnam

Vietnam became part of the Government's scare campaign against the spread of Communism. External Affairs Minister in the Menzies Government, Percy Spender, told parliament in 1950, "Should the forces of communism prevail and Vietnam come under the heel of Communist China, Malaya is in danger of being out-flanked and it, together with Thailand, Burma and Indonesia, will become the next direct object of further communist activities."

Menzies continued to talk up the threat of Communism claiming in 1965, "the takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia".

But the Australian government's main interest was in using Vietnam to lock America into the region. As Harold Holt put it, "we will win there and get protection in the South Pacific for a very small insurance premium."

Australia's involvement

US military advisers were present in Vietnam throughout the 1950s. But the major escalation, which eventually saw the sending of ground troops, only began in 1964 and 1965.

Far from following them into the war, the Australian government was more hawkish than the US administration, and attempted to push the US to escalate the conflict. Diplomat Malcolm Booker wrote that, "It was the Australian government which in the early part of 1965 pressed on the American government the need for strong military action in Vietnam".

American Foreign Affairs Adviser William Bundy wrote of Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Paul Hasluck's visit to Washington in November 1964 that: "Mr Hasluck continues to expound the primacy of victory in Vietnam over other South-east Asian problems... He will probably reiterate his desire to increase Australian efforts in South Vietnam and to hope that the increased Australian military budget will permit this."

Another Australian Minister, Peter Howson, also used his visit to America that November to push for a harder American line, "I broached the subject of greater defensive action in South Vietnam with possible further operations against the North Vietnamese."

Australia began to expand its army combat units in early 1964. However, the Americans were not requesting



Above: The war in Vietnam cost over one million Vietnamese deaths

Australian combat troops even by the end of 1964.

President Johnson sent communication to Menzies in December 1964 acknowledging "Hasluck's statements on the strategic importance of Southeast Asia", but requesting only more advisers and technical experts. He added, as if in response to the Australian pressure, "down the road in the future, if the situation in Saigon should require and justify it, there may be a need for combat units, but that is not the immediate problem."

Menzies replied that, "...military aid of the present type will not remedy the situation in South Vietnam. Something different must be done." While not willing to commit greater numbers of advisers, Menzies outlined that Australia was willing to take part in military discussions that would see the use of Australian ground forces.

In late February 1965, when America did begin bombing and increased troops, there was an international backlash. By April, the Canadian Prime Minister was calling publicly for a pause in the bombing.

The Australia government however, was so eager to become involved in the war they could hardly wait any longer for an American request, let alone a request from the South Vietnamese government, to send troops.

On 13 April 1965, the Australian ambassador in Washington, Waller, reported to Hasluck, "Rusk said that he

presumed that Australia would want to have a formal request from the South Vietnamese Government. I replied that as a first step we would want a firm request from the United States."

During these discussions with Waller, it was confirmed, after several months of pressure from Australia, that America would request an Australian battalion.

A request from the South Vietnamese government had still not been made.

On 28 April 1965 Menzies went ahead with an announcement that an Australian battalion of 800 soldiers would be dispatched to Vietnam. In a hurried push, they were eventually able to secure a formal letter of request from Vietnam, dated 29 April 1965.

Over 500 Australian soldiers and over one million Vietnamese died in the war. Australia's participation was not a result of pressure from America. Australia had its own interests for encouraging and participating in the war. It was an attempt to secure American support for its own imperialist aims in the Asia Pacific.

Australia is an imperialist power, willing to throw its military weight around to bully and boost corporate profits. As our government takes us into more wars in Syria and Iraq, and stokes conflict with China in the region, opposing the adventures of the Australian government abroad is as important as ever.

‘THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT IS RUNNING THE BUSINESS’ QUEENSLAND’S 1935 CANECUTTERS STRIKE

Communist Party activists on the sugar cane fields managed to unite workers across racial divisions, defying union officials and a Labor state government, writes **Tom Orsag**

IN AUGUST 1935, 2000 sugar cane cutters and mill hands in North Queensland struck for nine weeks. They demanded that cane be burnt before cutting to prevent the outbreak of Weil’s disease. The strike was immortalised in Jean Devanny’s novel *Sugar Heaven*.

A form of plague spread by rats, the disease had stricken hundreds of cane cutters working in the canefields of North Queensland. Some died as a result.

The workers had to take on the Colonial Sugar Refinery (today’s CSR), a hostile state Labor government and their own Australian Workers Union (AWU) officials.

The strike was led by socialists who were members of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). They had built up a network of militants in the union as part of the Militant Minority Movement (MM) that could defy the AWU leaders.

The CPA’s politics were deeply flawed by its support for Stalin. But in Depression-era Australia it attracted workers who want to fight the ravages of capitalism.

The AWU was one of the most conservative and bureaucratic unions and the backbone of the right of the Labor Party. It was tied to the state Labor government and a strong supporter of the White Australia Policy.

In the sugar industry of the 1930s, the victims of the White Australia Policy were Italians and other non-English speaking migrants.

Between 1921 and 1930 around 24,000 Italians arrived in Queensland, most of whom settled in the North. The sugar industry bosses consciously brought in migrant labour with the aim of dividing the workforce using racism and thereby undermining trade unions.

During the 1911 sugar strike, a CSR national general manager wrote

to one Queensland mill manager that the presence of Italian migrant workers was, “undoubtedly the stumbling block with the unions in preventing them from forcing their demands on the farmers.”

The AWU officials played along with the racism opposing Italian migration and called on the State government to exclude Italian migrants from the cane fields. A “gentleman’s agreement” was made between the AWU and the sugar employers to ensure 75 per cent of workers were “British”. This was known as the “British preference”.

The CPA argued that the union’s commitment to the White Australia Policy made the position of sugar workers worse and it denounced the ‘British preference’ as racist.

Migrant workers were being “blamed for the capitalists’ attacks,” it argued, “but our [union] leaders make no attempt to organise us for struggle against our common enemy - the capitalists.”

There was a graphic example of this during the strike in Ayr in the 1932 and 1933 crushing seasons.

AWU officials told canecutters that it was the foreign-born workers who were responsible for the worsening conditions.

But as *Red Leader*, the paper of the Militant Minority Movement (MM) pointed out, “Whilst our ranks were divided by racial prejudice, the Arbitration Court was sitting, and in one of their customary bursts of fair pay reduced the wages of all workers, British and foreign-born alike.”

The anti-racism of CPA was crucial to building its credibility among both Italian and Australian workers.

CP activists also took up workplace issues and revitalised the union.

The MM branch at Mourlyan mill

In the sugar industry, the victims of the White Australia Policy were Italians and other non-English speaking migrants

was started by mill hand Carl King.

One of the first strikes King led was over the seemingly trivial demand that management supply soap for the workers to wash their hands.

The MM there soon became big enough to produce a monthly bulletin in English and Italian.

In Ayr, the MM, led by communist Doug Olive, got the union functioning again.

At the same time, the CP built support in the wider community. A Mourlyan widow, threatened with eviction by the Labor-controlled council, sought King’s support.

After tearing down the notice on her house, which stated it would be sold for back rates, he called a public meeting over the issue. The council was forced to grant the woman free rates for the rest of her life.

The MM network grew. From 1934, it organised a number of small successful strikes.

That year it called its first annual conference in Innisfail. There were 34 delegates, “from practically every sugar area in North Queensland, including representatives of an Italian and two Yugoslav worker’s clubs.”

Burning the cane

In the summers of 1933 and 1934, rat plagues hit Ingham. With them came Weil’s disease.

A local doctor and the Commonwealth Health Laboratory recommended burning cane to stop the disease spreading.

The cane bosses opposed burning because it reduced the sugar content, reducing their profits.

After 18 years without any union meetings, CP activists in Ingham called meetings on the issue. The result was a strike of 1500 men from the Ingham canefields.

The Queensland Labor govern-

ment reacted immediately, sending armed police to force them back to work. Strikers were arrested and fired upon by police.

The AWU officials tried to end the strike. But the dispute was controlled by the rank and file committees set up to cover the different mill areas.

The strikers forced the Arbitration Court to order cane in the Ingham area be burnt. Strike action then led to cane being burnt in the Mourilyan, South Johnstone and Goondi mill areas.

AWU leaders tried to claim the credit. But a letter from Goondi mill management to CSR head office stated the AWU, “were completely flouted in this strike and were altogether incapable of controlling their members.”

The CP’s anti-racist work bore fruit. At strike meetings there were always two chairs, one English and one Italian.

At Mourilyan nearly all the cane-cutters were non-English speaking migrants, while the majority of mill hands were Anglo-Saxon. Yet the mill workers immediately ceased work in support of the cutters.

By the end of 1934, though, the employers had managed to get the burning order revoked in all areas except Ingham.

A week before the start of the Mourilyan season, Carl King called a meeting of all sugar workers over Weil’s disease.

Three hundred cutters and mill hands elected a committee to organise a campaign for a burning order.

They approached the AWU leaders who refused to defy the Arbitration Court.

The rank and file went ahead and organised a strike themselves.

On 4 August, 300 cutters at Mourilyan struck, followed a week later by 800 cutters and mill hands at Tully.

By mid-August, Goodni and South Johnstone were out and the four mills lay idle.

The AWU officials’ stance cost them the support of many workers.

Goodni mill management wrote, “What is known as the ‘Rank and File Movement’ is running the whole business and as usual the AWU officials are just ignored.”

CP members made sure the workers themselves were involved in running the dispute. Strike committees called a public meeting in Innisfail, which elected a Relief Committee to raise funds.

Collinsville miners sent £100 and Mossman cane cutters donated £75



Above: Workers on the sugar cane fields of Queensland

every fortnight during the dispute.

The Relief Committee established kitchens to serve meals to striking workers.

Women were also drawn into supporting the strike, organising sports days and dances to raise funds and keep morale high.

AWU members crewing sugar ships passed resolutions supporting the striking sugar workers.

The AWU was unable to call the strike off. It had to resort to dirty tricks to undermine it with secret ballots and scabbing.

It fostered divisions between cutters and mill workers, and between workers in different areas. Official Clarrie Fallon said the AWU did not sanction the strikes.

This was a green light to the Queensland Labor government to aid the sugar bosses. In late August 1935, the Townsville Chamber of Commerce asked Labor Premier William Forgan Smith to intervene. He sent up to 150 armed police from Brisbane. They were used to evict cutters from their barracks and escort scabs into the sugar mills.

In September, Premier Smith rushed through a law to make it an offence to “induce” or “incite” anyone to take part in an “illegal” strike and imposed a £100 fine for doing so.

After nine weeks on strike, the combined scheming of the AWU and the Labor government began to work.

The Labor government ordered a secret ballot, held simultaneously in

different mill areas to keep the strikers separated. The AWU got their desired result.

The strike began to crumble. The strike committee leaders felt they had to recommend a return to work to limit victimisation.

Although the strike was defeated, in the long run it succeeded in getting cane burnt before cutting.

In June 1936, Weil’s disease broke out again. In July, a general order for the burning of cane was handed down by the Arbitration Court.

The sugar bosses feared that the enduring rank and file organisation built by the CP would lead to a repeat of the 1935 strike.

The CP grew dramatically in north Queensland as a result of the strike. In 1931, there were about 40 members in the region.

By 1938, the CP had 600 members with a branch in almost every town from Mackay to Cooktown to Mt Isa.

In that year 7500 copies of the CP paper, *Workers Weekly*, were sold and the local *North Queensland Guardian* was going into one in every eight homes.

The work of Communist Party activists on the sugar cane fields shows how opposition to racism is necessary to strengthen workers’ struggles against bosses’ efforts to divide and rule. Their success showed the potential to build rank-and-file workers’ organisation and to stand up to conservative union officials, police and even Labor governments.

Inmate's account of US torture hell in Guantanamo

Guantanamo Diary
By Mohamedou Ould
Slahi, edited by Larry
Siems
Published by Canon-
gate, \$29.99

THE US and Australian ruling classes pose as democrats and liberators. They claim their actions stand in stark contrast, for example, to the horrors perpetrated by the Islamic State (IS). Western methods are, it is suggested, those of pure fighters with clean hands.

Anyone who still needs convincing that this is nauseous hypocrisy should read this book.

Guantánamo Diary is an extraordinary document. It chronicles a decade and a half of imprisonment and torture suffered by an innocent man. Slahi wrote it in 2005 from a Guantanamo Bay “segregation cell” in English, his fourth language. It took many years of legal wrangles before it could be released and the text is disfigured by more than 2500 black bars through words—redactions by the US government.

Slahi was born in Mauritania, west Africa, in 1970. He did well at school and travelled on a scholarship to study engineering in Germany when he was 18. Fired by a deep sense of injustice, he went to Afghanistan in 1991 to be part of the mujahedin who were fighting against the Russians. At the time he allegedly swore allegiance to Al Qaeda. Of course, at this time the mujahedin were also supported by the US government.

After the Russian-backed Afghan government collapsed, Slahi returned to his previous life, working as an engineer in Canada. There is



Above: The US detention camp at Guantanamo Bay

no evidence that he had any further engagement with Al Qaeda or similar groups. But this counted for nothing once the US decided he was connected to the “Millennium Plot”, a plan to bomb Los Angeles airport in 2000. Slahi was held and interrogated in Canada, Mauritania, the US and Senegal. No evidence could be found against him and on each occasion he was released.

Rendition

A few months after 9/11 he was asked to report to a police station in Nouakchott, Mauritania, for questioning. He complied with the request and disappeared into the US-run gulag. Secretly, and completely illegally, the CIA organised his “extraordinary rendition” to Jordan. His family had no idea where he had been sent.

After a fearsome tour through a number of other torture sites, Slahi arrived at Guantanamo Bay camp. He is still there today.

Guantánamo is a place of horror, of beatings and constant stress and sleep deprivation and endless suffering. “William the

“You’ll insult my country if you pray during my national anthem. We’re the greatest country in the free world and we have the smartest president in the world.”

None of this was accidental or the result of a few crazed rogue operatives. It was ordered from above. In what became known as the “torture memo” created by top administration officials after 9/11, pain only amounts to torture when it is equivalent, “to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death.”

Slahi’s torture was the result of a minutely detailed plan approved at the highest level. It was Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld who authorised the “Special Interrogation Plans” for specific detainees held at Guantanamo Bay. It was former Vice-President Dick Cheney who said, “I’d do it again in a minute,” after the Senate Intelligence Committee had revealed systematic and disgusting torture. As Slahi writes, “President

Torturer” threatens to have Slahi’s entire family sexually assaulted and to send him to an American prison where “terrorists like you get raped by multiple men at the same time”. On another occasion Slahi was subjected to a whole night in a freezing room with The Star-Spangled Banner played at full volume.

Meanwhile his torturer warned him not to try to find refuge in Islam:

Bush described his holy war against the so-called terrorism as a war between the civilized and barbaric world. But his government committed more barbaric acts than the terrorists themselves.”

For the US authorities, to be in Guantanamo meant you were guilty. A trial was not simply something to be denied; it was unnecessary. There were no suspects, only terrorists who must be made to talk. As one interrogator put it to Slahi, “In the eyes of the Americans, you’re doomed. Just looking at you in an orange suit, chains, and being Muslim and Arabic is enough to convict you.”

Five years ago Slahi’s lawyers filed a petition challenging his detention. A US judge looked at the case, concluded that Slahi was not guilty of the government’s charges and ordered his immediate release. The Obama administration appealed against this ruling and denied Slahi his freedom.

But the book is not just a record of torture. It also has moments of humour, moments when Slahi laughs at his interrogators, and of Slahi’s extraordinary forgiveness and humanity. In a recent conversation with his lawyer he disclaimed any hatred for his torturers; he dreams of talking to them over a cup of tea, “having learned so much from one another”.

Abu Ghraib, Bagram airbase, the black sites of rendition and torture, the million dead in Iraq, the tens of thousands murdered elsewhere in the world. And Guantanamo. This is the bestial face of imperialism. Not individual terrorism, instead a terror state.

Charlie Kimber
Socialist Review UK

Holding the Man: Life Beyond Homophobia

Holding the Man
Directed by Neil
Armfield
In cinemas now

THOUGH *HOLDING the Man* is a tragic tale, it's also a story of hope and pride. The film is based on the play adaptation of Timothy Conigrave's 1994 memoir of the same name. *Holding the Man* is not only beautifully filmed, it is incredibly moving.

It's a love story between two men, Timothy Conigrave and John Caleo, during the 1970s and subsequent AIDS crisis of the 1980s.

The boys meet during high school, where they begin to fall in love, and we follow them over the duration of their 15-year-long relationship.

Sexuality and love

True to the original memoir, the film doesn't shy away from Timothy's desire for sexual openness. Instead of moralising about sexual liberty—as many did in response to AIDS—the film attempts to honestly depict the characters as they move through their relationship and negotiate their different desires.

In this way *Holding the Man* does not diminish the experience of gay sexuality to stereotypes of promiscuity, but neither does it attempt to reduce gay culture to merely a safe monogamous love story.

Though *Holding the Man* ultimately focuses on the issue of AIDS and its effects on gay men during the 1980s, their tragic ends do not define the characters, and the film is not just about AIDS and illness. The film moves between different time periods so that we are left with a sense of life rather than death. It shows us



the raw reality of two men in love, negotiating the difficulties of sex, longing, recognition and loss.

The AIDS crisis

It's through Timothy and John's lives that we experience the struggle of AIDS. We are confronted with the fearful unknown of the new disease as it emerges, and we watch as the characters painfully discover their illness.

The backdrop to the film is the stigma around AIDS that was rife at the time. Even Timothy (before being diagnosed himself) reluctantly shakes hands with a man with AIDS that he encounters.

The film hints at the lack of concern shown for gay men in the early days of the disease. In Australia at the time, the healthcare system did work with the gay organisations and drug users to respond to AIDS in Australia. However, the rhetorical response "bordered on incitement to homophobic violence", according to historian Graham Willett.

Above: Timothy Conigrave and John Caleo in the film

stigma of AIDS and the gay men with which it was being associated, and we see this clearly reflected in the film.

Homophobia and the family

Coming out at school in the late 1970s, the boys find almost immediate tolerance with their friends at school. Common bonds quickly break down initial homophobic sentiments. However, the two men struggle for acceptance within their families.

Here the film shows the difficulty and pain of finding acceptance within the structure of the nuclear family. Across society, the nuclear family model of "normality" is at the centre of an extremely limited vision of what counts as natural and appropriate sexuality.

When Timothy's mother finds out that her son is gay, she expresses concern that this will mean, "living a lonely life...A very sad life". Here homophobic ideas about gay men that are circulating in society

are tangled up with her genuine concern about the prejudice he will face.

But as she sees her son thrive, and become happier than ever before, she begins to understand that rather than condemning Timothy to desolation, being proud of one's sexuality is absolutely vital to his fulfilment in life.

John's family offers no such reprieve. In one of the most shocking and devastating scenes, Timothy must sit as a "friend" in the crowd at John's funeral. As Timothy is dispossessed of his partner and their belongings in the wake of death, we see the stark injustice of unequal recognition that gay relationships face.

Hope for the future

Timothy Conigrave died of AIDS just ten days after his memoir was completed. But through *Holding the Man* the memories of the two lovers live on.

Despite the difficulties of homophobia and living through the AIDS backlash, Timothy and John show us that love can endure.

At the same time their story highlights the deep injustice in the continuing legal discrimination against LGBT partnerships in Australia.

Watching *Holding the Man* in a context where same sex marriage remains illegal and where films like *Gayby Baby* are banned from schools, we are reminded that some relationships are still not equally valued.

As we shed tears for their heartbreaking deaths, we are also reminded of the importance of pride and hope, and fighting for a world where gay sexuality is neither policed nor delegitimated, but is instead celebrated.

Hannah McCann

SYRIZA SURVIVES BUT NOW MUST IMPLEMENT AUSTERITY

By Mark Gillespie

IN SPITE of its massive U-turn on opposing austerity, the left-wing Greek party Syriza managed to win elections on 20 September and renew its governing coalition with the far right party Independent Greeks.

Syriza was first elected in January railing against the austerity demanded by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (the “Institutions”) and imposed by Greece’s mainstream parties.

Syriza claimed it would boost government spending and renegotiate Greece’s crippling debt. To strengthen its negotiating hand it organised a referendum in June that resulted in a massive 61 per cent rejection of austerity. But this was simply a negotiating ploy, not part of a fundamental challenge to austerity and the EU. Syriza wanted to “change Europe, not dismantle it”. The Institutions understood that Syriza’s leader Alexis Tsipras was committed to remaining within the Euro and used this to impose their will ruthlessly.

Ten days after the referendum Syriza capitulated. Tsipras accepted a package that means huge tax increases for workers, substantial privatisations and more cuts to pensions and government spending. Most of \$135 billion lent to Greece will immediately be sucked up paying off debt.

This created a deep rift inside Syriza with over 40 of its MPs voting against it, forcing Tsipras to rely on votes of the discredited pro-austerity parties in the Greek parliament. Rather than face a hostile party conference Tsipras called a snap election. Unlike previous elections this one was welcomed by the Institutions with Angela Merkel saying it was “part of the solution and not a part of the crisis”.

The anti-austerity struggle

The left-wing anti-austerity parties did poorly. Popular Unity, formed by 25 former Syriza MPs, lost all of their seats after failing to reach the 3 per cent threshold. The Greek Communist Party got 5.5 per cent of the vote and 15 seats, but lost almost 40,000 votes



compared to January. Antarsya, an alliance of far left groups, increased its vote from 39,497 to 46,096 but also failed to win any seats.

While the anti-austerity voice in the parliament has been reduced it would be wrong to conclude the struggle against austerity is over. Syriza’s vote hardly counts as a ringing endorsement. Only 56.6 per cent of the electorate voted, the lowest since the restoration of democracy in 1974.

Tsipras appealed for a tactical vote to keep the conservative New Democracy out, arguing that somehow austerity in his hands would be softer. The election was also held before the austerity package was actually implemented and its effects felt.

There were also problems with Popular Unity’s campaign. They correctly argued that refusing the austerity deal would require Greece to break from the Eurozone and go back to its own currency, the drachma. But this alone would not prevent huge costs for workers, since companies would hike up the price of necessities.

There also should have been an argument about the need for anti-capitalist measures, through control of the banks and other parts of the economy, to ensure the return to a Greek currency took place on workers’ terms. As it was Tsipras could paint Popular Unity as offering another version of austerity, only with the drachma.

Above: The re-election of Syriza means it will have to impose further austerity, and face resistance from workers and trade unions

Popular Unity criticised Tsipras but not his strategy of trying to use parliament to reform capitalism. Syriza had the numbers in parliament but the capitalist class had the economic power outside and they used it ruthlessly to shred Syriza’s social democratic program.

While Antarsya did make these arguments they didn’t have the same national platform from which to be heard. The Communist Party ran a very sectarian campaign, spending most of their energy attacking Popular Unity because they wanted to be the primary beneficiary of any left break from Syriza.

Where now?

There was fear that the failure of Syriza would lead to a massive swing to the fascist Golden Dawn. This didn’t materialise though they still maintained their 7 per cent support and remain a threat.

Rocky days are still ahead for Greece. The idea that austerity imposed by Syriza will be different will soon evaporate when people see their hospitals closed and taxes increased.

The grip of the Institutions over the Greek economy is as tight as ever. Margaritis Schinas from the European Commission has already warned, “there is a lot of work ahead and no time to lose”. The continued attacks will again generate resistance.

Syriza's vote hardly counts as a ringing endorsement —only 56.6 per cent voted

Solidarity