

Solidarity

Issue No. 80 / July-August 2015

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WHISTLEBLOWERS THREATENED WITH JAIL



MEDICAL WORKERS
TELL ABBOTT:
WE DARE YOU

REFUGEES

New book on Australia's immigration history

GREECE

Syriza, austerity and workers' resistance

AWU

Bill Shorten and the Royal Commission



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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

Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown
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Things they say

To have very powerful figures look at you in the eye and say "You're right in what you're saying, but we're going to crunch you anyway."

Former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis explains his experience of trying to negotiate with the EU

Other countries make all these airy, fairy promises that never come to anything.

Tony Abbott explains why he's aiming low on his efforts to tackle climate change

May God bless you, may God bless your work, may God bless the country you are helping to protect and prosper.

Tony Abbott to Border Force Commissioner Roman Quaedvlieg, at the launch of the Border Force—channelling US presidents or just appealing for divine intervention to push up his polling figures?

We find ourselves in a position where everything is seen through a prism of fairness, where the notion of fairness is vague.

Dr Martin Parkinson, former Treasury official, laments the fact that the public wants policies that are fair

You don't know, I don't know either
Cambodian Council of Ministers spokesperson Phay Siphon explaining to a Cambodian public forum what the Cambodian government is going to do with the \$40 million given by the Australian government to accept four refugees from Nauru

Cory gave me a lovely compliment once which was that I reminded him of Margaret Thatcher

Sinead Bernardi, Cory's Bernadi's wife...just as right wing as her Tory husband it seems

I don't need anybody's money, I'm using my own money...I don't care. I'm really rich.

Businessman Donald Trump on his bid for the Republican nomination for President

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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

WA Department turns hoses on homeless

THE WA “Department of Culture” installed a timer activated sprinkler system to deter homeless people from sleeping in a lane next to King Street Art Centre in Perth. The “30 second-spray system” blasted water onto the area that homeless people were using for shelter.

A homeless man Ted, who has been sleeping rough for 15 years, told Fairfax media, “We don’t bother anyone but they’ve put sprinklers here to get rid of us.” The Department removed the sprinkler system in July after coverage on Nine News caused public outrage. However, it still defended the degrading and cruel installation, saying it was removed because it wasn’t “to specification”. The Department’s deputy director-general David Ansell defended the dystopian device by saying it was installed to “curb anti-social behaviour”.

Abbott bureaucrat parades in Confederate flag

ACROSS THE US, Confederate flags have been taken down from state capitol buildings, and off the shelves at stores including Walmart, Amazon and eBay.

But Mark Coffey, the Northern Territory manager in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, didn’t see a problem with turning up to a Central Australian Beef Breeders dinner in July wearing a Confederate flag jacket. Coffey, a former police officer, has held senior roles administering Indigenous Affairs for many years, including overseeing the NT Intervention.

The flag was flown by the armies of Southern States in the American Civil War as they fought to defend slavery. Racist mass murderer Dylann Roof notoriously posed with the flag before he massacred nine people at a black church in South Carolina in June.

Coffey’s hosts responded to his choice of a racism and slavery themed outfit by awarding him the prize for “best dressed” at the dinner in Alice Springs. His wife accompanied him wearing the “butcher’s apron”—the Union Jack.

Lawyers make a killing from anti-union witch hunt



ABBOTT’S ROYAL Commission into trade unions is costing the public \$60 million, with overpaid lawyers taking home a fortune to do a hatchet job on the unions. Council Assisting Jeremy Stoljar is taking home \$3.3 million. Other barristers contracted for the Commission are also doing well—Fiona Roughley will pocket \$831,000, Richard Scruby \$960,000, Sarah McNaughton \$866,000 and Michael Elliott \$1.3 million. Law firm Minter Ellison, the former employer of Attorney-General George Brandis, has a contract worth a whopping \$17 million.

Abbott claims he’s spent all this money out of the kindness of his heart, for the sake of workers themselves. He says workers deserve “good unions”, and that an exemplary union is one “where members’ money is honestly administered and which is out there trying to ensure its members aren’t oppressed.”

Yet, the CFMEU is facing financial warfare from bosses and the wrath of the Commission in response to their attempts to do just that—defend their members. And no one has heard any complaints from Abbott.

In June the Victorian branch of the CFMEU was forced to pay construction giant Grocon \$3.55 million as a result of a series of blockades at Melbourne construction sites in 2012. The blockades were a necessary and legitimate tactic to ensure basic union rights and safety for workers in an often dangerous industry. Unfair laws deem them “illegal”.

Grocon was found guilty of negligent safety practices that resulted in the deaths of three people on building sites in 2014. Ye they were only fined \$250,000.

The culprit, Grocon CEO Daniel Grollo, sits on Abbott’s Business Advisory Council. Abbott’s rank hypocrisy, double standards and his cosy relationships with criminal employers all make it clear that the costly Commission is about defending profits, not workers.

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

Pollies rot entitlements to watch sport

ANALYSIS OF politicians’ expense claims by the *Guardian* has found that Australian MPs claimed in excess of \$27,000 in parliamentary expenses while travelling to watch sporting matches in 2014. The guilty include Deputy PM Warren Truss, Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce and Finance Minister Mathias Cormann.

They claimed expenses to go and watch the AFL Grand Final, the Australian Open, the Bledisloe Cup and the Ashes. Truss was the worst offender, attending the Ashes, the Australian Open, the State of Origin and the Australia v France rugby union Test. He claimed \$8962 in travel expenses in the period where he was watching the matches.

The Liberal appointed Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson has used his expense account to indulge his taste for fine dining. In the 12 months Wilson claimed \$77,763, including a \$17,800 tab for “meals and other expenses”.

The spending spree comes on top of his \$40,000 accommodation allowance and \$332,000 salary package.

Politicians spend over \$500,000 on flags

IN THE second half of 2014 Federal politicians spent over half a million dollars spreading the Australian flag around. John Alexander, Liberal MP for Bennelong, topped the spending. He made short work of \$17,949 adorning his North Sydney electorate with the symbol of genocide and racism.

Coalition MPs were responsible for the bulk of the \$502,000 flag spending. Over the period, which coincided with Abbott’s attempts to ramp up his “terror scare”, each MP was permitted to dole out an unlimited quantity of flags to RSLs, schools and other organisations as well as up to 900 desktop and hand-waver flags, and 50 large flags could be given to individuals as well.

EDITORIAL

Unpopularity contest as Labor embraces Abbott's policies

THE MORGAN Poll in early July, taken during ALP leader Bill Shorten's appearance at the Royal Commission into Trade Unions, showed the lowest two-party preferred rating for Labor in a year—51 to 49. Still ahead of the Liberals, but only just.

Even more telling perhaps is the Ipsos poll which shows over half of voters disapprove of both Tony Abbott and Bill Shorten, 59 and 55 per cent, respectively.

The Morgan Poll also shows that almost half the population (45.5 per cent) believes that Australia is "heading in the wrong direction".

Abbott is on the nose. His ban on Q&A, part of his culture wars against the ABC, and his deeply conservative opposition to same-sex marriage have aggravated even his own side of politics.

Amazingly, in the wake of Abbott's direction to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) to avoid wind and small-scale solar investments, the Australian Solar Council, the peak body of the solar industry, has declared it will campaign against Abbott. The Council's boss, John Grimes, told *Guardian Australia*, "If the Abbott government is returned and has control of the Senate, our industry is finished."

Shorten has clearly been damaged by revelations emerging from the union Royal Commission. It was designed as a \$60 million political attack on the unions and the Labor Party, and Shorten is a particular target given his history as leader of the AWU.

But there are no excuses for Shorten running a union that was more interested in sweetheart deals with the bosses than with fighting for workers' conditions.

Shorten looks likely to ride out the fallout. But the evidence at the Royal Commission was a reminder of how much the Labor leadership is committed to running the system and how much it is part of the political elite.

Labor should be far ahead in the polls. But as much as Abbott is hated, there is no enthusiasm for a Labor leadership that is unwilling to stand up to him.

Now NSW Premier Luke Foley is proposing to use the national conference in July to ditch Labor's so-called "socialist objective". In practice any commitment Labor had "socialist objectives" were given up long ago. But Foley wants the party to surrender any remaining commitment to redistribute the wealth of society. He wants the



Above: Bill Shorten in another show of bipartisan support for Abbott, at the constitutional recognition summit

party to openly embrace competitive markets as "the best way to deliver economic growth". He must have forgotten the Global Financial Crisis and what open markets are doing to Greece.

The result is that Labor looks more and more like the Liberals. After furiously opposing increases to the petrol tax a year ago, last month Labor agreed to pass them. Shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen sounded like Joe Hockey as he explained that, "difficult decisions are necessary" in order to make, "a contribution to the long-term health of the budget".

With one eye on returning to government, Labor showed its willingness to make its own cuts to maintain a budget surplus.

Labor has gone along with Abbott over national security and his terrorism scaremongering, as with his laws targeting Muslims over citizenship. Twice in the last month, Labor has

backed anti-refugee legislation introduced by the Liberals (see p6).

The push by Welcome to Australia director Brad Chilcott and climate campaigner Clive Hamilton to accept offshore processing, or what Hamilton calls Labor's "ruthless treatment of asylum seekers", as the necessary price of getting Labor elected is a disaster (see p7).

In early July hundreds of doctors and medical workers organised protests against Abbott's Border Force Act. That is the kind of defiance we need to push back against Abbott.

Union demonstrations could put a halt to Abbott's attack on union rights and penalty rates.

The only way to ensure we get rid of Abbott is to step up the fight from below—by building the campaigns and protests against his Islamophobia, racism against refugees and his union bashing.

Class struggle the key in Greek crisis

THE EVENTS in Greece are of major significance. The country has suffered mass unemployment and recession for five years, made drastically worse by EU-imposed austerity measures.

The level of workers' struggle against austerity has been the highest in Europe, with 32 general strikes since the crisis began.

Some said the election of Syriza, a radical left party, was a model of how the left could break through. Syriza's election represented Greek workers' hope that a radical government could solve the crisis. But under pressure from the EU, Syriza has capitulated and is implementing

the same hated austerity measures as its predecessors.

Revolutionary socialists have always insisted that fundamental change cannot come through parliament and the existing structures of capitalism, such as the EU. The Greek experience has again revealed the limits of reformism.

The stakes have been raised. All the conditions exist for struggle, based on the workplaces and the streets to develop further. It is that class struggle that now holds the hope and potential to lead towards workers taking power into their own hands and challenging capitalism itself.

.....
**Labor looks
more and
more like the
Liberals**

Workers stand up to bipartisan Border Force disgrace

By Ian Rintoul

ON A cold July Saturday morning, almost 300 medical professionals (doctors, nurses, social workers, physiotherapists) gathered on the steps of Sydney's Town Hall to demonstrate their defiance of the Border Force Act.

Other rallies were held in Melbourne, Adelaide, Broome, Faulconbridge, Coffs Harbour and at a number of individual hospitals.

The protests followed the publication of a letter signed by 40 doctors, teachers, psychiatrists and other workers, all potentially "entrusted persons" subject to the Act, that openly challenged the government to prosecute them for defying the Act.

The Act came into force on 1 July, with the complete support of parliamentary Labor. Besides creating a new para-military department (an extension of Operation Sovereign Borders), it also carries the threat of two-year jail sentences for any workers who blow the whistle on conditions in detention.

The law is wide-reaching, covering any workers associated with detention and extending to any State, Territory or foreign government employees that provide a service to the Department of Immigration. It outlaws workers making any recordings or even notes of any kind.

The new Border Force Commissioner, Roman Quaedvlieg, was quick to commit himself to maintaining the government secrecy associated with Operation Sovereign Borders saying, "Operational security is paramount to conducting effective strategic and tactical operations."

The law gives extraordinary powers to the government to cover up the abuses inside the detention regime.

The World Medical Association condemned the law as "unethical" and has called on the government to repeal the legislation.

Bipartisan support

It is appalling that Labor supported a law so obviously designed to silence detention workers and prevent media scrutiny of anything to do with immigration detention or Operation Sovereign Borders. Journalists obtaining information from an "entrusted person" are also guilty of an offence.

Tony Abbott may have banned government Ministers from Q&A, but it didn't matter, because Labor's shadow Immigration Minister, Richard



Above: Doctors at a Sydney protest against the Border Force laws Photo: Siobhan Marren

Marles appeared and did the government's job for them, vigorously defending the Border Force Act.

The Act means that those who have passed on the information about the mouldy tents and the feeding difficulties of baby Asha, returned to Nauru a few weeks ago, could get two years' jail.

Astonishingly, at the same time, Marles is saying that Labor stands for greater scrutiny and transparency of the detention regime.

It is the second time in a month that Labor has disgraced itself by supporting government anti-refugee legislation. In late June, in the face of a High Court challenge to detention on Nauru, Labor supported legislation that the Liberals rushed through Parliament to try to thwart the challenge.

To cap off a month of Labor farce, there was the fiasco that engulfed the government and then the Labor party, when it was revealed that the government had paid an asylum boat crew around \$5000 each to return the boat to Indonesia.

For days Labor tried to make political mileage by tagging the government for paying "people smugglers" using the same demonising rhetoric as the Liberals to describe the boat crew.

A boat of 54 asylum seekers had been illegally intercepted (they were on their way to New Zealand), and held on a Customs boat on the high seas. The government then supplied two boats that looked like Indonesian

fishing boats, gave them limited fuel, then bribed the crew to take the boats back to Indonesia.

Labor didn't care that the boat had been turned back. They said nothing about the fact that one of the returning boats ran out of fuel and the other crashed onto a reef near Landut Island risking the lives of the asylum seekers. They said nothing about ending Abbott's ban on resettling any UNHCR refugees from Indonesia.

But all the outrage over paying the crew suddenly disappeared when it was revealed that Labor hands weren't clean; previous Labor governments had also made payments to disrupt boat journeys.

The truth is that "stopping the boats" has quietly become Labor policy. While Abbott says the Liberals will stop the boats by hook or by crook, Richard Marles now says, "Labor will not reopen the journey between Java and Christmas Island."

Yet the incident revealed that despite the Liberals' claims, even after almost two years of Operation Sovereign Borders, the boats haven't stopped. They are intercepted; turned around, and if necessary even transported to Vietnam or Sri Lanka.

That's another reason for the rally at Labor's national conference. The Labor leaders need to know that whether it's a Labor or Liberal government, the refugee movement will fight to stop turnbacks and to end offshore processing.

Turn back Labor's slide to the right on refugees

By Mark Goudkamp

In the run-up to the ALP national conference, the question of whether there will be a push for Labor to support the turnback of asylum boats looms large.

Labor's Immigration spokesperson, Richard Marles, is now more-or-less openly advocating turnbacks. His constant refrain that "Labor will not allow boat journeys between Java and Christmas Island to recommence", is code for turnbacks.

Right-wing Labor frontbencher, Joel Fitzgibbon, has openly proposed that Labor embrace Abbott's turnback policy, and has told SkyNews, "Personally I believe turnbacks will remain part of Labor policy."

Both the ACTU and Labor for Refugees have taken a clear stand against both turnbacks and offshore processing. But sections of the refugee movement have begun arguing for Labor to pragmatically accept that offshore processing and turnbacks are part of the new paradigm now irrevocably established by the Liberals.

While the rot started with the publication of the Centre for Policy Development's "Beyond the Boats" report in November last year, "Welcome to Australia" director and ALP "Left" conference delegate Brad Chilcott has been leading the charge recently, saying the issue of boats must be "neutralised" if Labor is to win the next election.

On 3 July, after a backlash from across the refugee sector, including the Refugee Council of Australia, Chilcott had to admit that turnbacks were not Welcome to Australia policy. Yet, he still defensively peddled his argument to Welcome to Australia members, "It is clear that neither major political party will allow the re-opening of the boat journey from Java to Christmas Island...History, polling and other research show us that the public will not tolerate the perception of uncontrolled borders."

Chilcott argues that by accepting turnbacks and offshore detention, Labor will be open to other "achievable" demands, such as "transparent, independent oversight of all detention centres operated or funded by Australia". It is a joke.

The director of GetUp, Sam Mclean had indicated his support for Chilcott but he abruptly resigned a few days later.

The Australian National Church



Above: Labor for Refugees are demanding an end to turnbacks and offshore processing

Task Force seems set to reject the Chilcott proposal in its vote in late July.

But Clive Hamilton, academic and former Greens candidate, has bought the argument hook, line and sinker. He says that refugees will have to be sacrificed for climate change: "...if Labor is to win the next election and put Australia back on the path towards a sensible climate policy, then it must match the Coalition in promising to maintain the ruthless treatment of asylum seekers".

No concessions

The argument is toxic and self-defeating. Every concession simply consolidates the xenophobic refugee bashing that underpins Abbott's policies.

The way is open for a major debate at the Labor conference.

The national Left delegates are meeting on 23 July, the day before the conference starts, to finalise the Left's position.

But breaking the bi-partisan support for offshore processing and mandatory detention remains a strategic goal of the refugee movement. Some reports indicate the numbers are closer at this year's conference than in other years. It would be fantastic if the Labor for Refugees resolution won on the floor of conference; but that might be too much to expect.

Major Left MPs like Julia Gillard, Jenny Macklin and Martin Ferguson voted with the Right in 2004. And the parliamentary party has been willing to ignore party policy against offshore processing in the past.

But pushing the debate into the floor of the Labor conference is one part of the refugee movement driving the refugee issue onto the mainstream political agenda. That would not have been possible without the rallies and protests and an orientation on winning the unions.

Chilcott says that Labor must ditch refugees to be electable. That is not true—despite John Howard's Tampa victory, between 2001 and 2004, support for asylum boats being allowed to land rose from 47 per cent to 61 per cent. Rudd was elected in 2007 on a policy of ending the Pacific Solution. Even recent focus group studies of two marginal Queensland seats (Bonner and Longman) have shown that a pro-asylum policy would not effect whether people voted Labor.

But more and more refugee supporters recognise that it is far better to have a Labor Party with a pro-refugee policy than to have Labor elected with an anti-refugee policy.

Most importantly, holding the rally outside the conference is part of winning Labor members and Labor voters to the need to actively campaign for refugees in spite of the electoral opportunism of the Labor leaders.

Every concession simply consolidates the xenophobic refugee bashing that underpins Abbott's policies

Abbott's cuts threaten Aboriginal medical service and community control



THE ABORIGINAL Medical Service Western Sydney (AMSWS) is fighting closure due to government funding cuts. Chairperson Brad Delaney spoke at the rally against Aboriginal community closures in Sydney in June.

"Our service has been in operation for almost 30 years", he told the protest. "The AMS as far as episodes of care goes is the largest Aboriginal medical service in the country, with over 11,000 active patient files."

"We're being shut down, our funding has been cut, because of the little bit of trouble that we're in."

The government points to the service's debts of around \$4 million to justify its closure. But AMSWS says its problems began when the government reneged on a promise to refund \$500,000 spent on capital works. It has also faced increasing costs from community demand for services.

As Brad explained, "They wouldn't allow us to negotiate to try and trade out [of this]. We've had three forensic audits done over the last six years, they tried and they tried to find evidence of misappropriation but there was no evidence.

"The services we provide go above and beyond what we get funded for. The people that work in the place all take that little bit of extra effort to make sure Aboriginal people in our community are looked after.

The AMSWS provides not only

Above: Medical Service Chairperson Brad Delaney speaks out about the cuts

GP services but also specialist services like mental health and support when family members pass away.

It has built up specialist knowledge of medical problems faced by the local Aboriginal community like diabetes that will be lost if the service closes.

"I'm proud to say that over the last couple of years we have seen an increase in the number of Aboriginal elders in our community. There are now almost 100 elders, and I think that can be put down to the service they receive from the AMS," said Brad.

Patients will be transitioned to a new medical service which does not yet exist. But as Brad said, "We don't know who this new service is, it could be a non-Aboriginal organisation that's got no idea about Aboriginal community control.

"Our organisation is based on Aboriginal people meeting to discuss how the service needs to be run, and to look for Aboriginal people who can provide the services."

"They've thrown us a three month lifeline until 30 September which gives us time to get the word out there that this is happening. If they're starting to do this to big organisations like ours and the communities in Western Australia they can do it to anyone. We need to stand up and we need to fight."

The real Zaky Mallah

MALLAH IS a victim of a society that encourages Islamophobia and the isolation of young Muslims.

Journalist Michael Koziol explained in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Growing up in the south-western Sydney suburb of Punchbowl...he struggled with reading and writing, and felt racially vilified and isolated. The Australia-born son of Lebanese parents, his mother died when he was 13."

Mallah applied for a passport to fly to the Middle East in the early 2000s, but was rejected after an ASIO interrogation, and, "having received a death threat, he purchased a gun and was charged with possession of an illegal firearm."

In 2003, *The Australian*—who are now championing Abbott's crusade against Q&A—paid him \$500 for a front cover photo.

Mallah was monitored and potentially entrapped by ASIO. He was charged with threatening a suicide attack in Sydney.

But the evidence rested on a video making this pledge. Mallah made the video for someone he thought was a journalist, but who turned out to be an undercover spy.

Mallah himself wrote recently in *The Guardian*, "A jury heard that I had been set up by the New South Wales police, aided and abetted by an undercover operative who paid me money to hear a good terrorism story.

"They decided I was not guilty of the most serious offences and no threat. I was dumb and naive at the time. I was only 20."

So Mallah became the first person to be charged under Australia's anti-terrorism laws—and the first acquitted. He pled guilty to another charge of threatening to kill ASIO officers, and spent two years behind bars.

A *Sydney Morning Herald* article at the time summed up the jury's assessment: "a jury in the NSW Supreme Court accepted the 21-year-old never intended to kill anyone and was just an angry loner who resented the Government for denying him a passport and allegedly oppressing Muslims in Australia."

Amy Thomas

Q&A debate: The real scandal is Abbott's citizenship laws

By Amy Thomas

TONY ABBOTT has dragged out his unhinged attack on the ABC's Q&A. He is aiming to bolster the case for the government's attack on citizenship rights and push Islamophobia—and it all comes with the added benefit of maligning a traditional enemy, the ABC.

Zaky Mallah's appearance wasn't the real scandal of that now infamous Q&A episode. It was the comments directed at him from Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Steve Ciobo.

Ciobo lashed out at Mallah, saying he'd be, "pleased to be part of a government that would say you're out of the country". He wrongly declared Mallah was found not guilty of terrorism charges on a technicality, despite admitting he didn't know the details of his case!

As Curtin University academic Ann Azza Aly asked in the *Sydney Morning Herald* afterwards, "Who the hell is he [Ciobo] to say Zaky Mallah should be out of the country?"

Mallah simply dared to make the correct point that government policies that attack and demonise Muslims could encourage young people considering fighting for the Islamic State.

Ciobo's comments and the subsequent hysteria indicate the government aims to proceed with continually ramping up those attacks.

Abbott issued multiple, progressively madder, tirades, first asking the ABC "whose side are you on?", then declaring the episode a "betrayal of our country", urging that "heads should roll" and labelling Q&A a "lefty lynch mob".

The front bench is boycotting Q&A, and now Abbott is demanding that the ABC Board commit to moving the program from their Television department into News and Current Affairs, the latest in a long history of Coalition attempts to politically control the ABC.

The idea that Q&A (or the ABC) is "biased" to the left is nonsense. The show allows some political debate, but within the strict limits of all capitalist media. Only the week before Mallah's appearance, Fred Nile was given a panel seat to spout his homophobic views in the name of a debate on marriage equality.

There are now not one but two inquiries into the program—one led



Above: Zaky Mallah appears on Q&A

by the ABC and chaired by journalist Ray Martin, and another by the government. Government ministers have even attempted to discredit the ABC inquiry after Martin said some of the "rants and raves" following Mallah's appearance had been "crazy".

For their part, the Labor opposition have gone along with it, with Bill Shorten saying the ABC "did make a big mistake...in allowing that person to be in the audience".

But it's Shorten's going along with Abbott's Islamophobia, and cravenly supporting Abbott's new citizenship laws, that is the real mistake.

Citizenship offensive

The government finally introduced a bill in late June. Allegedly, the Immigration Minister will not have carte blanche to strip dual nationals of citizenship, as many feared. Yet ultimate power still rests with his department and ASIO spooks.

Under the legislation, those considered guilty of a wide range of activities—based not on trial and conviction, but secret advice from security agencies—will "automatically" have their citizenship cancelled by the Minister.

Activities prompting citizenship cancellation include things such as engaging in a terrorist act and fighting with a foreign military, as well as potentially very broad categories of providing support, training, financing or recruiting for terrorists, and "urging violence" or "advocating terrorism".

That could mean those merely suspected by ASIO of supporting political groups the government considers terrorists—like Palestinian organisation Hamas or the Kurdish PKK—could become victims of the law.

Another nasty inclusion is a host of non-terrorism related offences such as treason and destroying or damaging Commonwealth property. That could mean citizenship cancellation and deportation for crimes such as graffitiing a government building! Children of those whose citizenship is revoked may have theirs revoked, too.

And the government wants to go even further. One review will now consider whether laws could be retrospective, while another considers Abbott's favoured option (dropped after Cabinet disquiet) of extending the legislation to those who are sole nationals.

Australian Bar Association President Fiona McLeod expressed the concern about the laws amongst the legal profession, saying, "We know that intelligence about weapons of mass destruction led us to war in Iraq. We know that courts are suspicious of intelligence because ... often it's obtained under duress or coerced or obtained from a source motivated by who-knows-what. But we're trusting the ability of a public servant to assess the credibility of that information without even a full intelligence assessment."

Neither ASIO nor the government have ever let facts get in the way of a good terror scare.

Zaky Mallah's appearance wasn't the real scandal. It was the comments directed at him from Steve Ciobo

UNIONS

Industrial action winning gains in public service

INDUSTRIAL ACTION in the federal public service has already forced concessions, as endless negotiations, which have rolled on in slow motion, continue. Early this year, the government backed away from removing the 15.4 per cent superannuation guarantee. Then they agreed to change the basis for calculating productivity improvements required to get pay rises.

No wonder more than 16 agencies are now in the process of taking action. The vast bulk of Australia's 160,000 public servants remain opposed to the government's attacks and EBA policy. Most, particularly the large agencies, held one hour and four hour stoppages in June and July with well-attended mass meetings.

It is more than a year since most agreements expired and the government is saving its Budget partly through the wage freeze – members have not had a wage rise for about two years.

Happening more quickly have been 11,000 job cuts in the last 18 months, combined with a recruitment freeze and structural changes, like the merger of Customs and Immigration (forming the "Australian Border Force") with attempts to reduce conditions.

As CPSU national secretary, Nadine Flood put it: "We've just seen Immigration and Border Force take strike action twice in a week, and hundreds of Centrelink and Medicare offices virtually seize up through strike action."

The new Border Force was disrupted on its first day, 1 July, by effective industrial action causing senior managers to be flown in to assist at Sydney Airport and in Adelaide.

As a direct result there has been a "temporary" reprieve for staff who would have lost around \$8000 in annual allowances due to the merger. Instead, the allowance issue will be negotiated during bargaining.

About 69 per cent of staff in the Attorney General's Department recently voted NO to a deal which included a pay offer of 1.5 per cent per year, a real pay cut, offset by significant cuts to conditions.

The Minister for Employment, Eric Abetz, is attempting to undermine the union's resolve in a handful of smaller agencies.

About nine small agencies have accepted deals, like the Communications Department (391 staff) and the



Above: Customs workers take part in their strike on 1 July

Australian Transport Safety Bureau (100 employees), Treasury and the Australian Public Service Commission.

The Prime Minister's department has thrown another \$8 million in pay rises on to the table in a second attempt to reach a wages deal.

Most staff continue to hold out for a better agreement because they learnt from experience last time that if they hold out, the government may agree to better terms. With 110 agreements still unresolved, only three of the large agencies have faced a draft agreement vote, and they all delivered large "No" votes.

The union's strategy is to use

The new Border Force was disrupted on its first day, 1 July, by effective industrial action

industrial disruption to force the government's hand, and if necessary change the government at the next federal election.

APS workers would wield serious political and social power if they take united industrial action – a strike across all departments, even for a day, could send a crippling message to the government.

Meanwhile action is developing and membership has grown. By increasing momentum, we have a chance to smash government policy before any election, which is necessary, as we can't rely on the ALP to treat us any better.

By CPSU delegates, Melbourne

Construction threatened with strike action

AROUND 400 metal workers are set to strike on construction sites across New South Wales following an overwhelming vote for industrial action.

An initial four-hour stoppage is planned for the last week of July.

Sheet metal workers install the air-conditioning systems, so any industrial action would stop fit-out, plastering and all internal building work, and effectively stop work on some construction sites, including some in the heart of Sydney.

The workers are demanding an hourly site allowance that matches the building industry scale (i.e. the rate won by construction workers), the incorporation of the award into the new agreement and a pay in-

crease of 5 per cent over three years.

NSW sheet metal workers are angry at being paid almost a quarter less than workers doing the same job in Victoria. For three months already, the AMWU has been trying to negotiate a new agreement with the Australian Mechanical Contractors Association, which represents seven large sheet metal companies.

With the Abbott government's Royal Commission into Trade Unions has been targeting the main building union, the CFMEU for enforcing union conditions on all contractors on building sites, the strike is the best way to defend both conditions and union rights on the job.

The new Border Force was disrupted on its first day, 1 July, by effective industrial action

Union support grows for Aboriginal housing on The Block

By Danny Hardiman

FOR FOURTEEN months, the Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy (RATE) has held up a commercial development on The Block, an historic patch of Aboriginal land in the heart of Sydney. As the possibility of eviction and development looms, activists are working on winning critical union support.

Aboriginal housing on the Block was won through the struggles of the 1970s, but the Aboriginal Housing Corporation (AHC) is now working hand-in-glove with developers on a major commercial housing project. The AHC claims they plan to rebuild Aboriginal housing, demolished nearly a decade ago as part of their commercialisation plans—but there is no funding and no evidence of any plan to build it.

Aboriginal people already represent one third of the total homeless population and the situation is getting worse. Last year, an investment company shamelessly advertised Deicorp's flats, claiming that “all the Aboriginals have already moved out of Redfern”.

On Thursday 10 July supporters of RATE rallied outside the NSW Supreme Court in Sydney against continuing attempts by the developers' legal team to evict the Embassy from its occupation of the Block in Redfern.

Union power

Support for RATE is growing in the union movement. The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) have passed motions, spoken at rallies and are encouraging members to do shifts at the Embassy itself.

RATE spokesperson Jenny Munro appealed for support at a meeting of Unions NSW affiliates in June, pointing out the importance of union support in winning gains for the Aboriginal movement (including the initial struggle for the Block): “It’s something that both groups can be proud of, the struggle for equality over a wide range of areas”.

As a result of this appeal, Unions NSW passed a motion declaring that “Unions NSW supports the call of the Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy (RATE) for assurances from state and federal governments to secure



affordable housing guaranteed for the ongoing use of Aboriginal people, including at the Block in Redfern.”

This important call for public funding should be matched by union opposition to the plans for commercial development that currently include no plans or funding for Aboriginal housing.

The CFMEU (Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union) in particular has the capacity to put a ban on its members working with Deicorp to redevelop the Block. A ban would make it much more difficult for the company to go ahead, and deal a huge blow to the legitimacy of the project.

As Felon Mason from RATE told a recent rally of MUA supporters at the Embassy: “We want black bans on the Block. They can’t do anything without transport, plumbing or workers, so if those unions pull out Deicorp’s stuffed”.

While the CFMEU have provided some practical support to the Embassy, the union leadership has ruled out bans, offering instead to “mediate” between RATE, Deicorp and the AHC. Appealing to CFMEU rank-and-file members to shift this position will be an important part of the broader community campaign for Aboriginal housing on the Block.

On August 11, RATE is planning

Above: The Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy standing on The Block

a demonstration outside the NSW Parliament to demand funding for housing. This parliament helped to plan and fund the demolition of the Block on the promise of “renewal”, but have thus far refused to commit any funds to Aboriginal housing.

Indeed, under current assimilation policies, Commonwealth and state governments are refusing to fund Aboriginal community controlled housing projects anywhere. Aboriginal people are being forced to sign over control of their land to receive any housing or being denied resources and told to relocate or, as with the AHC, being told to sell existing lands and assets to fund what should be a basic right.

The fight at the Block comes at a time when remote communities are facing closure, particularly in WA, as well as through the ongoing Northern Territory Intervention. Thousands have demonstrated around the country as part of national actions against community closures.

In July, RATE also initiated a picket of a meeting between Tony Abbott, Bill Shorten and hand-picked Aboriginal leaders discussing the farce of “constitutional recognition”, which offers no rights to Aboriginal people—and provides cover while destructive and racist policies continue around the country.

Join the 11 August demonstration demanding funding for housing

Meet 12:30pm at the NSW State Parliament, Macquarie st Sydney.

Pension changes force workers to pay for retirement

By James Supple

THE ABBOTT government has been pushing for cuts to the pension since its horror budget last year. The Commission of Audit that drew up Abbott's attacks declared the pension had to become "a social safety net", with less people accessing it. Their aim is to force workers to save more during their working lives and then wind back pension access.

The changes to the pension that passed parliament recently—sadly, with the support of The Greens—are a step in this direction.

The government tried to sell the changes as fair by increasing payments to pensioners with fewer assets. But its claim that 170,000 pensioners would benefit has been questioned by the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, because pension payments are means tested on income as well as assets. It says that most of these people, "won't see any increase in their pension."

The overall effect of the changes is a substantial cut to total pensions spending of \$2.5 billion over four years. The Greens say this simply reverses a change made by the Howard government in 2007 that was overgenerous.

The changes sharpen the means testing of the pension, pitting better off workers against others. The immediate impact will see 330,000 people either lose pension payments or get a reduced payment. This will hit people who were well-paid workers, or the top 14 per cent of people on some pension. The very wealthiest 20 per cent already receive no pension payment at all.

Single homeowners with over \$290,000 of superannuation savings and couples with over \$451,500 will lose money. This sounds like a lot, but the average superannuation payout at retirement for men is now \$200,000.

Younger workers lose

The most severe impact will be on those retiring in future decades. Modelling has found the changes will hit workers on modest incomes in today's workforce when they retire. The changes mean an extra 30 per cent of single women and 20 per cent of single men set to retire in 2055, aged 27 today, would fail to get income sufficient for a comfortable retirement.

This is a product of the introduc-



Above: Pensioners protest Abbott's attacks from last year's budget

tion of compulsory superannuation since 1992. This will increase from 9.5 per cent of wages currently to 12 per cent over the next ten years. The result is that younger workers will have greater savings when they reach retirement. This was designed to force the burden of paying for retirement onto workers.

As Paul Keating, who designed the scheme, has explained, introducing compulsory superannuation cost workers, not business, because employers compensated for the superannuation contributions by not giving workers pay rises.

As he has put it, "In every year the super guarantee charge rose, from 4 per cent in 1991 to 9 per cent in 2002, unit labour costs fell sharply...Super was a cost only to the employees, not the employers."

Or as Tony Abbott said in 1995, "Compulsory superannuation is one of the biggest con jobs ever foisted by government on the Australian people...The basic objective of compulsory superannuation is that the government is taking our money now so that it does not have to pay us a pension when we retire."

Instead of tightening the means test on the pension, the government should be providing a universal pension set at a high enough standard to live comfortably in retirement. A single pensioner is currently living on just \$22,365 a year.

One way to pay for this is properly taxing the superannuation and assets of the wealthy. The cost of superannuation concessions is an enormous \$29.7 billion this year. They will cost more than total aged pension spending within three years. They are hugely inequitable with 60 per cent of the benefits, \$18 billion a year, going to the top 20 per cent of income earners.

Instead of saving the government money they are just welfare for the rich. According to research by the Australia Institute, "the total cost of the pension and the tax concessions, at some \$76 billion, far exceeds the \$55 billion it would cost to simply pay the pension to everyone over 65".

Paying a pension for everyone instead would enable the government to increase pensions across the board by 25 per cent. The Australia Institute estimates that 80 per cent of people would be better off.

But the Liberals are determined not to touch these handouts to the wealthy, with Abbott declaring there will be "no changes to super". The Greens have secured a greater focus on superannuation concessions in government's Tax Review. But there is no commitment to do anything about them.

Taking back some of the handouts from the rich would be a step in the right direction. The Greens' support for stricter means testing to wind back the pension is not.

The changes will hit workers on modest incomes in today's workforce when they retire

No end to profiteering and rorts at the top end of town

By John Passant

LAST YEAR, Treasurer Joe Hockey famously declared that Australia needed to be a nation of “lifters, not leaners”.

The Coalition wants us to believe workers and the poor have it easy—and that the funds for their coveted budget surplus should be taken from our pockets. Labor leaders, for their part, largely agree.

But a look at the facts demonstrates that it’s the big end of town that’s doing the leaning—and while they tax evade and profiteer, for those of us doing the lifting, inequality and poverty is on the increase.

Recent revelations have exposed the extent of tax evasion by the big corporates.

Neil Chenoweth in the *Australian Financial Review* tells us that Apple, “has shifted an estimated \$8.9 billion in untaxed profits from its Australian operations to a tax haven structure in Ireland in the last decade.” It’s not just one bad Apple.

As The Tax Justice Network and United Voice report, *Who pays for our common wealth?* says:

Overall, the effective tax rate of ASX 200 companies over the last decade is only 23 per cent.

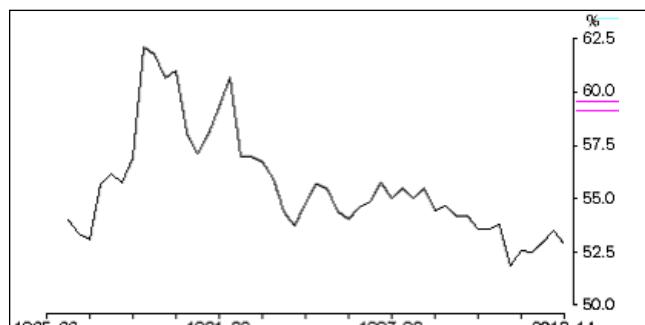
If the largest Australian listed companies paid taxes at the statutory corporate tax rate of 30 per cent, it would produce an additional \$8.4 billion in annual revenues.

Within the ASX 200 companies nearly one-third have an average effective tax rate (ETR) of 10 per cent or less and 57 per cent disclose subsidiaries in secrecy jurisdictions (tax havens).

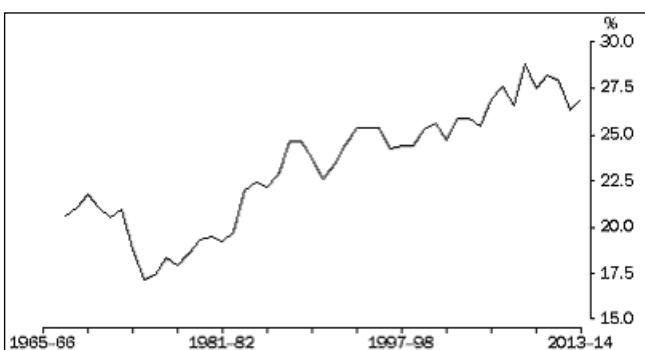
According to the Senate Inquiry into Big Business Tax Avoidance multinational pharmaceutical companies extracted \$8 billion in revenue from Australia.

That includes \$3.5 billion from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. They paid just \$80 million in Australian tax, or 1 per cent of revenue.

Laura Tingle said in 2011 in the *Australian Financial Review* that mining magnate Andrew “Twiggy” Forrest, “has never signed a corporate income tax cheque for any of



Compensation of Employee share of total factor income



Profits share of total factor income

the listed companies he has run in the past 16 years. And FMG has another \$700 million in tax losses still to bring to account before he will have to do so.”

According to Sarah Kimmorley in *Business Insider*, Clive Palmer’s companies, Mineralogy Group, QNI Resources and QNI Metals, have not paid income tax for the last 6 years.

The Australia Institute has told us that mining companies also receive \$4.5 billion in taxpayer funded subsidies.

Google has arranged its affairs so that in 2013 it paid just \$470,000 tax in Australia on revenues from Australia of more than \$2 billion. One estimate is that it should be paying around \$136 million in tax Australia.

In 2013 Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp group got back \$882 million in tax, a refund which was a big contributor to the increase in the budget deficit Hockey announced in December 2013.

Hockey then used that deficit increase to justify the brutal 2014 budget attacks on the poor and working class.

And while business has been paying so little tax, they have been increasing their share of profits. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics the share of total factor income going to labour has fallen dramatically over time while that going to capital has exploded. The share of national factor income going to capital increased markedly over the same time.

Inequality growing

Bosses haven’t been working harder for the last three decades—we have. They have pocketed the gains from increasing exploitation through productivity “gains” and longer working hours.

And while their bank balances grow, the gap between rich and poor is growing. As the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) puts it in its June 2015 report *Inequality in Australia: A Nation Divided*:

A person in the top 20 per cent income group receives around five times as much income as a person in the bottom 20 per cent. A person in the top 20 per cent wealth group has a staggering 70 times as much wealth as a person in the bottom 20 per cent.

The report also found that over the last 20 years the share of income going to those at the top has risen, while the share flowing to those in the middle and at the bottom has declined.

The same is true for wealth, with the bottom and middle having lost ground to those at the top.

The wealth of the top 20 per cent wealth group increased by 28 per cent over the period from 2004 to 2012, while by comparison the wealth of the bottom increased by just 3 per cent.

In its *Poverty in Australia Report 2014* ACOSS revealed that “poverty is growing in Australia with an estimated 2.5 million people or 13.9 per cent of all people living below the internationally accepted poverty line.”

Tell me again who the real leaners are?

Alternative to austerity requires challenging capitalism

SCRAPPING AUSTERITY in Greece would mean withdrawing from the EU. This would allow Greece to default and cancel its €340 billion debts.

Greece's debt is an enormous burden on the government. Government spending has averaged €100 billion in recent years, but this year it must pay back around €25 billion to its creditors, equal to one quarter of total spending.

Around 90 per cent of the new bailout loans it received from the EU and the IMF between 2010 and 2012 were handed straight back to the same bodies as interest payments.

There is no doubt that Greece faces a difficult choice: between accepting austerity as the price of remaining in the Eurozone or deciding to exit the EU.

A "Grexit" would not be easy. Going off the Euro would mean there would need to be a new Greek currency. It would be worth far less than the Euro, possibly 50 per cent. Loans in Euros would have to be renominated to stop their cost exploding.

This would mean nationalising the banks and imposing currency controls to stop bank collapses as depositors withdrew their money.

The price of imports would shoot up, threatening living standards due to the increase in price of imported food and medicines. Businesses would try to force these costs onto workers through wage cuts and sackings resulting from factory closures.

But workers could fight for anti-capitalist measures to force the costs onto the rich. Workers could fight to demand pay rises to keep up with price inflation. Where bosses declared companies unprofitable, the workers could take them over and run them under workers' control. Those who faced sacking or business closures could occupy and demand that the government nationalise them to guarantee jobs.

The assets of the wealthy could be seized to pay for increased pensions and social welfare programs. Despite the crisis Greece remains a rich country with strong shipping, tourism and agriculture industries.

The wealthy would resist with all the means at their disposal, including the police and the armed forces. Such a challenge to the power of the ruling class would eventually require workers to take power into their own hands, forming a government based on control of the workplaces. This



Above: A rally for "Oxi"—no—outside the Greek parliament during the referendum campaign

would mean a revolution.

Greece, the country with the strongest radical left and workers' movement in Europe, has experienced a high level of class struggle since 2009. There have already been experiments with workers' control at a major news-

paper, in the public broadcaster ERT and in hospitals as a result of closures and sackings by management.

In conditions of such crisis, a radical anti-capitalist struggle becomes possible.

James Supple

Class divide on show in austerity referendum

THE REFERENDUM revealed the stark class divide in Greece and a deepening radicalisation of the population.

Virtually the entire Greek ruling class lined up behind a "yes" vote. Former Prime Ministers, a former prince and figures not heard from for years were wheeled out to try to spook voters. Three Independent Greek MPs, part of Syriza's coalition, broke ranks to back "yes".

"Far more people support 'no' than you would think from watching the TV—where they only show "yes" supporters or the government," painter-decorator Alkiviadis told *Socialist Worker*. Many bosses tried to blackmail their workers to vote "yes".

The class divide was particularly evident in the rallies run by both sides prior to the referendum. Whereas the "no" vote was dominated by young and working class people, at the much smaller "yes" rallies fine attire dotted the crowd. One well-dressed man swilling wine at a "yes" rally attracted the ire of Greek social media users.

The overwhelming 61 per cent "no" vote defied an intense scare

campaign run by mainstream media and Greek bosses which vigorously exploited the widespread fear that the banking system would collapse.

Costas Pittas, union secretary at the Ministry of Development, said, "The vote came from the working class and poor. The "no" vote was enormous in the poorest suburbs of Piraeus port and in the northern regions where the Turkish minority live."

The strength of the "no" vote was underpinned by the dedicated activists, socialists and unionists who leafleted, held stalls and campaigned in their communities.

While the Greek media was full of old elites and bosses telling people to vote "yes", on the streets, posters and graffiti called for a "no" vote.

The clear "no" vote to austerity is testament to the depth of the radicalisation in Greece.

While the democratic will of the Greek people has been rubbed out by European leaders and now Syriza itself through agreeing to a new austerity deal, the depth of the anger against austerity is clear.

Joseph Buckmaster

The assets of the wealthy could be seized to pay for increased pensions and social welfare programs

Failure of reformism led to Greek tragedy

By Dave Sewell

THE AGREEMENT in Greece has been widely described as a coup—and in some ways it is.

Europe's rulers have used vicious financial and political blackmail to overturn the Greek people's vote against austerity.

But there was no gun to the head of prime minister Alexis Tsipras, of radical left party Syriza, when he agreed to the latest austerity deal. He asked the vultures to compromise. When they said no, he had no Plan B but surrender.

To recover from this blow we need to look honestly at how that happened. Syriza was supposed to be different to the old Labor-type social democratic parties.

Many on the left internationally presented it as a model of how the left could win mass influence. For instance, even after the latest deal was agreed, Canadian socialists Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin spoke of, "Syriza's unique capacity on the international left to build the type of party capable of both mobilising against neo-liberalism and entering the state to try to actually do something about this."

Stathis Kouvelakis from Syriza's central committee debated with Alex Callinicos from the Socialist Workers Party's central committee at July's Marxism Festival in London.

Stathis argued "Syriza is an anti-capitalist party. It is a party that seeks to overthrow capitalism and go to socialism."

For Stathis, Syriza's radical aims and roots in social movements set it apart from reformist parties "that seek to improve the conditions for the working class within the framework of capitalism".

It's true that Syriza was a breath of fresh air compared to the stale Labor Party and its clones, including the Greek Labor Party, Pasok. And Stathis is part of a large and outspoken left wing inside it.

They have made clear, honest and urgent criticisms of the government's strategy. They have called for an exit from the European Union (EU) instead of endless concessions to it.

But as Alex responded to Stathis, "Those kinds of criticisms are ineffective unless you act."

In the initial vote in parliament



Above: Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras has pursued a classic reformist strategy of trying to work within the capitalist state

on whether to pursue a new deal with the EU, following the rejection of this by the Greek population in the referendum, only two Syriza MPs voted no.

There was a better showing in the vote after the punishing terms became clear, with 32 voting against it. But the leader of the Left Platform within Syriza and MP, Panagiotis Lafazanis, made it clear that they would continue to support the Tsipras government.

Alex argued, "There should have been a concerted vote against the agreement—and then those MPs should be out on the streets calling for mass opposition."

Socialist objective

When Syriza rose to prominence in 2012, some denounced any attempt to build other left parties. Socialists were told they would have no influence unless they joined it.

But the dividing line between Syriza and social democracy isn't so clear-cut.

Many of the Labor-type parties around the world had a declared "socialist objective". The Australian Labor Party first adopted this in the 1920s and it has still not been formally repealed. And the German SPD was Marxist in name when its MPs voted to support the First World War.

All reformists seek to use the capitalist state to bring about change. And

this state has always changed them more than they have changed it.

Revolutionary socialists look instead to the struggles of the working class. This isn't out of dogmatism. It's because this is the only way to win. Workers keep the wheels of capitalism turning. Their movements can bring it to a halt.

Petros Constantinou is a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party in Greece (SEK) and an Athens councillor in the anti-capitalist front Antarsya. He said, "We don't want the left government to fall at the hands of the EU rulers.

"We celebrated the left government. But, we said, that isn't our power—and prepared people to fight back."

Greece's crisis has posed questions that only workers' control can answer. And the existence of a party arguing this was central to countering the bosses' blackmail in the referendum.

Petros said, "We're very optimistic we can fight back. And we're optimistic because we've got revolutionary organisation."

Many who once said there was no future outside Syriza now talk as if there's no future at all. But the fight is far from finished.

The Greek crisis underlines vividly that even the best socialists can find themselves disarmed at crucial moments—unless they have a substantial revolutionary organisation.

European Union imposes neo-liberalism and austerity by design

By Joseph Choonara

MANY LEFT-LEANING people accept the notion that the EU is a progressive force. But the EU is a project that has always been a profoundly capitalist one.

As capitalist firms grow, they face a contradiction. On the one hand, they are tireless in their drive to expand the scope of their operation, to obtain inputs, market their goods and exploit workers on the widest possible scale.

On the other hand, firms require a state, tied to a particular national territory, which can provide them with important infrastructure, ensure the right kind of labour power exists, and secure their interests at home and abroad, using force if necessary.

By the end of the Second World War each European capitalist class had, as Chris Harman once put it, “discovered in the most damaging and harrowing ways that the scale of capitalist production could no longer be contained within narrow national boundaries.

“The monopolies and cartels that dominated each national market found that to compete internationally they had to spread their scale of operations beyond state boundaries. But this meant clashing with rival capitalist enterprises operating from within other states. In the last resort such conflicts could only be resolved by the military forces which national blocks of capital had at their disposal.”

The EU and the EEC before it are how the European ruling classes sought to overcome this contradiction. Alone, even the biggest European economies are overshadowed by their rivals.

The largest, Germany, is responsible for just 5 per cent of global GDP. The US weighs in at 23 per cent, China 13 per cent and Japan 6 per cent. Yet taken as a whole the EU makes up 24 per cent of the world economy.

The logic of the EU is to allow the major European powers to continue to play a role on a global scale. It secures for their capitalists a large domestic market and a big pool of labour to exploit, and, for those opting to abandon their national currency, it creates a form of money that can compete with the dollar.

European integration has always been somewhat dysfunctional. Most political decisions are still taken by particular states—there is no pan-



European government, whatever the pretensions of the European Commission.

The recent economic crisis has also exposed the problems of a currency shared by countries with no common system of taxation and with only minimal redistributions of wealth between them. Nonetheless, for the bulk of capitalists the EU continues to offer advantages.

The increasingly neo-liberal approach taken by the EU has always been combined with rhetoric about a “European social model”.

This was proclaimed most loudly in the 1990s, just as the budget deficit limits imposed by the 1992 Maastricht treaty triggered a wave of unemployment and welfare cuts across the continent.

Recent events demonstrate even more clearly the EU’s neo-liberal character. During the first decade of monetary union weaker European economies were subjected to a wave of cheap credit from banks of the most powerful states. When the global crisis erupted, banking bailouts, rising social spending and sharp declines in tax revenue sparked a debt crisis in countries such as Greece, Portugal and Spain.

Troika

The EU responded by doing what the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been doing to indebted Third World countries for decades. The European Commission is part of the hated troika of institutions seeking

Above: Greek protesters burn the European Union flag in protest at the imposition of austerity

to foist the most brutal austerity on Greece and doing everything it can to tame or depose the Syriza government.

Breaking Syriza is about maintaining a system of austerity across the region, an approach now enshrined in the European Fiscal Compact, which limits state spending across the eurozone.

The EU secures free movement within its borders. However, the EU’s support for free movement is based on its desire to create a European-wide labour force that can be profitably exploited. It is not motivated by humanitarianism or anti-racism.

The point when EU states began to harmonise immigration policies in the late 1990s also saw them launch intensified attacks on “outsiders”—unleashing a new wave of detention and deportation on those from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Arab world.

There is no greater indictment of the EU than its treatment of those making the desperate voyage from North Africa. Here the policies being promoted across Europe amount to drowning as a deterrent—which has been the fate of 1800 migrants in the first five months of this year alone.

The EU is a capitalist institution with commitment to neo-liberalism hardwired into its structures.

The punishment it is inflicting on Greek workers should shatter any myths that it can play a progressive role.

Socialist Review UK

Oppose corporate agenda of China FTA, not Chinese workers

By Paddy Gibson

IN JUNE, the Australian government finalised a Free Trade Agreement with China (ChAFTA), a move hailed as a breakthrough by Liberal politicians and business organisations like the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Free Trade Agreements have been a cornerstone of neo-liberal policy over the past three decades. Such agreements are designed to further the rights of big corporations at the expense of workers and the environment.

Similarly, the ChAFTA contains provisions which would allow Australian corporations to sue the Chinese government, or Chinese corporations to sue Australia, if they introduced laws impacting on corporate profits.

Similar provisions, known as Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanisms (ISDS), are currently being negotiated behind closed doors by major corporations and trade bureaucrats finalising the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP.

Australian unions have called protests in response to ChAFTA, focussing on provisions which would see regressive changes and a further expansion of the “457 visa” scheme for temporary migrant workers.

They include an exemption for many Chinese companies from “labour market testing”, i.e. advertising of jobs within Australia first, something otherwise required before the allocation of 457 visas.

Workers on 457 visas require the ongoing sponsorship of an employer to stay in the country, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Under the ChAFTA, the likelihood of exploitation is increased further.

Workers’ terms and conditions will still need to comply with Australian workplace laws, including the Award system. However, on projects worth more than \$150 million with a “substantial” (as low as 15 per cent) Chinese interest, conditions can be set by Investment Facilitation Agreements (IFAs), negotiated directly with the Department of Immigration.

Current 457 regulations that could be sidestepped include a requirement for wages to be at least \$53,900 a year, as well as labour market testing.

Sydney University economist Stuart Rosewarne has called this, “a radical shift in the institutional context within which the negotiation of



employment standards and conditions has traditionally occurred... effectively removing...workers or their unions—from any involvement”.

‘Aussie jobs’ or internationalism?

Rather than campaigning against the potentially exploitative terms of IFAs and demanding workers be represented by unions in wage negotiations, unions have instead framed the issue as one of foreign workers “taking Aussie jobs”.

An AMWU radio advertisement claims the agreement, “lets investors from China bring in their own workers on lower rates of pay... tell Tony Abbott to stand up for Aussie jobs”. A CFMEU TV advertisement similarly says, “Tony Abbott’s deal allows Chinese companies to bring in their own workers, leaving Australian workers without a hope”. Union material and interviews consistently highlight unemployment in Australia, particularly youth unemployment.

But “foreign workers” are not to blame for unemployment. Indeed, migration acts as a stimulus to the economy, helping to create jobs.

Unions seized on a letter from Trade Minister Andrew Robb to his counter-part in China, explaining that under the FTA Chinese workers will no longer be subject to “mandatory skills assessment” for a range of occupations, including electricians. Unions have presented this as exempting Chinese workers from Australian standards.

But China will only be removed from a list of ten countries requiring

Above: Tony Abbott and Andrew Robb seal the deal

extra skills assessment, outside the requirements to demonstrate appropriate qualifications in the 457 visa regime that apply to most countries. The 457 test may have problems, but singling out Chinese workers has left unions open to accusations of prejudice.

Indeed the entire 457 visa regime needs to be fought, not by excluding the workers themselves, but by welcoming them into the unions and fighting for equal rights, including the right to permanent residency.

Both the AMWU and CFMEU have done important work fighting for justice for many individual 457 visa workers ripped off by their bosses. But campaigning for “Aussie jobs”, rather than asserting the rights of all workers, regardless of their background, only undermines the solidarity needed to defend wages and conditions.

Not a word has been said about the increased powers in ChAFTA for Australian corporations to exploit workers in China. Instead CFMEU National President Michael O’Connor has positioned himself as a champion of “Australian businesses” allegedly “disadvantaged” by the deal.

Abbott government cuts and corporate profiteering are to blame for job losses, not foreign workers. But sadly, unions have done little to fight these very real attacks. Union-wide mobilisations against Abbott’s budget have been abandoned. There has also been no industrial campaign against the mass sackings at Holden, BP or Australia Post. Grandstanding against “foreign workers” is a far easier option, but it only sets back the fight for jobs.

Unions have framed the issue as one of foreign workers ‘taking Aussie jobs’

SHORTEN AND THE AWU: THE BEST FRIENDS ABBOTT AND THE BOSSSES EVER HAD

Shorten and the AWU's model of unionism short-changed workers through doing favours for the bosses writes **Mark Gillespie**

LISTENING TO Tony Abbott criticise Bill Shorten for union deals that "ripped off the workers" almost made me choke on my corn flakes. Tony Abbott has dedicated his life to attacking workers and is totally indifferent to the conditions people work under, once saying, "bad bosses...do more good than harm".

As the Industrial Relations Minister in the Howard government he opposed every submission by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) to raise the wages of the low paid.

In 2001 he established the Cole Royal Commission into the building industry. It cost \$65 million and resulted in no prosecutions but still led to new laws that further restricted unions and treated construction workers as second class citizens.

The current Royal Commission into Trade Unions is just more of the same union bashing agenda. This shouldn't, however, stop us from criticising the dodgy deals exposed and rotten model of unionism at the Australian Workers Union (AWU) that unpin them.

Bill Shorten was Victorian Secretary of the AWU from 1998 to 2006 and National Secretary from 2001 to 2007, when he resigned to run for parliament.

AWU officials, including Shorten, have been caught out accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars from employers, in return for pliable workplace agreements and a moderate union that keeps the industrial peace. This money is primarily used to inflate the union's membership which then gives AWU leaders more power inside the Labor Party to preselect candidates and to influence policy.

The number of delegates each affiliated union gets at ALP conferences depends on its size.

Over the decades the AWU has used its strength to boost dozens of its

The AWU has always been renowned for doing dodgy deals that undercut other unions

former leaders into parliament.

Stooping low

The AWU has always been renowned for doing dodgy deals that undercut other unions, but what has been revealed in recent months is just how low they can stoop.

The most revealing deal was with the large cleaning company Cleanevent that employed thousands of casuals to clean up after big sporting events, signed by Shorten's successor in the Victorian branch in 2010.

Thanks to the AWU, Cleanevent was legally able to employ casual cleaners working after hours on weekends on \$18.14 an hour, when under the Award rate they were entitled to \$50.17 an hour.

Workers that move from the Award to Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs) are meant to be "better off overall", but this didn't protect the Cleanevent workers because AWU officials never challenged the agreement.

In return for this sweetheart deal the company handed over the names of their employees (without their knowledge) and \$75,000 every year for their union membership fees. Company emails showed they were saving \$2 million a year in wages and having this exclusive deal boosted the company's value.

Another dodgy agreement that came to light, signed on Shorten's watch, was on Melbourne's \$2.5 billion EastLink Tollway project. Construction company Thiess John Holland negotiated an EBA with the AWU that undercut standard conditions on civil construction sites established by rival union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU).

After signing the agreement the company began paying the AWU just over \$100,000 a year for the next

three years. The payments to the AWU were recorded as being for training, research and for conferences, but there is no evidence that these services were ever delivered.

The project finished five months before schedule and the Institute of Public Affairs estimates the company benefited by about \$100 million. Tony Shepherd, a former Business Council of Australia president and who was the chairman of the EastLink Tollway project was full of praise for the deal saying it was a "great agreement" and that they got a "lot more flexibility regarding rostering".

The list of dodgy deals goes on. The Huntsman Group paid the AWU tens of thousands of dollars to keep a long-time AWU delegate employed, whose job was "stopping trouble" as the company restructured and closed a plant.

Winslow Construction paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for union membership fees disguised as payments for training. Winslow's founder, Dino Strano, wanted to keep the CFMEU at bay and told the commission this deal gave his firm "a certain degree of stability". Unibilt, a labour hire company, while negotiating an EBA with the AWU, was also paying the \$40,000 wage bill for Lance Wilson, who was working on Bill Shorten's election campaign.

While it is common for firms to deduct union fees from workers' wages and then pass the money over to the union, in lots of cases, firms were paying the AWU fees without deducting from workers' wages. This just looks like they were buying influence.

Cooperation

Bill Shorten has defended his role at the AWU by saying he was "a modern union leader" who strove for "cooperation in the workplace" by "making sure both employers and employees could get the best".

Unfortunately this model of unionism, where unions and employers work cooperatively to manage affairs, is neither modern nor confined to just the AWU.

The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association (SDA) recently concluded a cosy deal with supermarket giant Coles that reduces weekend penalty rates and allows Coles to cut its wages bill by \$20 million a year. The SDA actually pays both Coles and Woolworths \$5 million a year to help it collect membership fees, which are then used to maintain SDA influence inside the Labor Party.

These cooperative ideas also underpinned the Prices and Incomes Accords that the ACTU struck with the Hawke and Keating governments in the 1980s, which saw unions working with business to essentially restructure the economy along neo-liberal lines.

Within Labor circles the Prices and Incomes Accords are still seen as a success, even though real wages were cut and became tied to productivity trade-offs. Union membership collapsed along with the union movement's combativity.

Not surprisingly Bill Kelty, the former ACTU secretary who negotiated the Accords, has come out strongly defending Shorten saying he was, "brave and flexible when the country needed brave and flexible union officials".

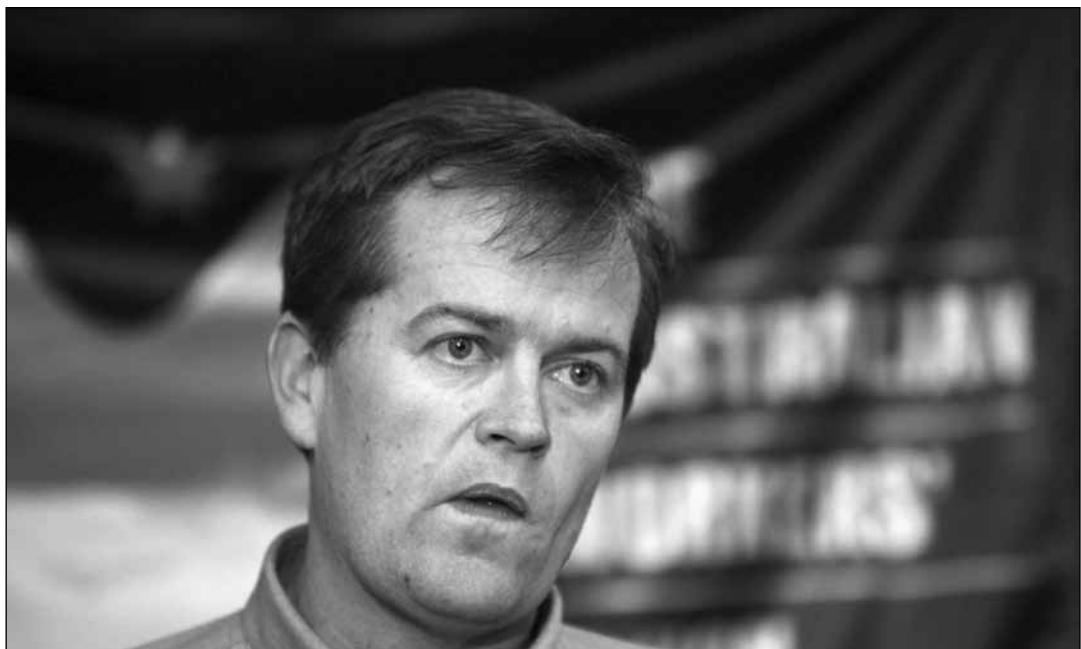
Martin Ferguson, too, who was ACTU president from 1990-96 and later became a Labor politician, defended Shorten, saying the deal struck with Thiess John Holland was an example of "what the Hawke and Keating governments achieved".

Mediating role

Unions working with business to further the "national interest", or the interests of Australian capitalism, is central to Labor's politics. But it is important to understand that these ideas have a social base. They are an expression of the mediating role the trade union bureaucracy plays within capitalism.

Unions arose as the collective resistance of workers to the ravages of capitalism. As they've become successful and stable organisations working within the system, they have thrown up full-time bureaucracies.

While many of these full-timers have their roots in the working class, their class position changes when they start working full-time for a union. Their income no longer relies on what they can extract from the employer,



Above: Bill Shorten in his days at the AWU

but on the income and resources of the union.

They are now a cut above the workers they represent and have a privileged role within capitalism as full-time negotiators mediating between capital and labour.

They prefer negotiations and consultation to class confrontation, and the Labor Party emerged as their tool to press for their interests within parliament. Its leaders have therefore adopted similar aims of management within capitalism.

It was the trade union bureaucracy that formed the Labor Party and today continues to fund it and retain the decisive influence over policy and pre-selection.

Right from the Labor Party's inception in the 1890s, the AWU been a key prop of the organisation, and helped impose a pragmatic, right-wing outlook. The AWU was a strong supporter of policies like White Australia and arbitration.

In Labor's early years it used its sprawling rural membership, including workers in occupations like shearing, to win rural seats through cultivating a conservative electoral support base. In some places, particularly Queensland, where at times it had a third of the state's total union membership, it single-handedly dominated the Labor Party for decades.

The AWU remains a key player in the party's dominant Right faction. Its role as kingmaker in knifing Kevin Rudd to install Julia Gillard as Prime Minister in 2010 was only the most recent example of a history of ruthless

efforts to make and unmake party leaders.

Left unions

It is tempting to blame all the problems in Labor and the union movement on the Right faction of the ALP. While there is no doubt these unions have set a very low standard, we need to recognise the Left unions are not immune from this bureaucratic collaborationist tendency.

The Prices and Incomes Accords with the Hawke and Keating governments would have been impossible without the support of the more militant left-wing unions.

The Left politicians, too, share with the Right faction the idea that business and unions can work together constructively. Leading left MP Anthony Albanese said he saw nothing wrong with the EastLink Tollway deal commenting, "it's about enterprise bargaining where employers negotiate with employees, I believe there's a common interest".

This cooperative model of unionism is an obstacle to rebuilding the sort of fighting organisations we need. The AWU's shenanigans have given Abbott a free kick, which he will use to pressure the Senate into passing the anti-union legislation he has waiting on the books.

Rather than a "modern" class collaborationist model of unionism, which has failed workers and just lays the basis for the Liberals to attack further, we need to get back to the politics of class struggle, by mobilising rank-and-file members, who have no interest in cosy deals.

MARXISM, ISLAM AND RELIGION

Islamophobes treat religion as a uniquely backward set of ideas, but religion can also be a reaction to oppression and a way of fighting back, writes **Erima Dall**

DEBATES ABOUT religion were central to forging Karl Marx's ideas. These views deserve revisiting in a climate of intensifying Islamophobia, with the Abbott government blaming Islam for "radicalisation" and punishing the Muslim community with raids and draconian anti-terror legislation.

Religion has been blamed, even by some left-wingers, for all manner of problems, from the conflicts in the Middle East, to homophobia, to the US Republican Tea Party. Western governments also use a reductionist view that blames Islam itself, or a particular variety of Islam, for the brutality and sectarianism of Islamic State (IS).

Islamophobia relies on the idea that Islam is a *special case*—that despite Western society's supposed religious tolerance, Islam is itself an intolerant religion, more prone to violence, sexism, and terrorism than other faiths.

This is quite something coming from Western leaders who court dictators in the Middle East, and are again bombing Iraq. Australia enthusiastically stands by every US drone strike on Pakistan, and every US-funded bomb that Israel drops on Gaza.

Acceptance of Islamophobia has led anti-globalisation political economist Susan George to side with imperialism against Muslims. George has called Islamists "fascist fundamentalists" and said she was "confused" over whether to oppose George Bush bombing Afghanistan.

New Atheists' such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris have singled-out Islam, giving credibility to bigotry with their scientific reputations. Dawkins called Islam "the greatest force for evil today".

Marxism takes a very different view. Focusing on religious ideas on their own can explain very little about people's motivations. The major religions are all ambiguous enough to allow a range of interpretations. Radical black activist Malcolm X was a Muslim, but he had nothing in com-

mon with the rulers of Saudi Arabia, who in turn have interests completely counter to the Muslim workers they oppress, or the persecuted Muslims in France.

To understand conflict, oppression, and indeed religion itself, we must go beyond superficial explanations and investigate the real social-economic conditions and historical processes at work.

Marx's materialism

Marxism is an atheist worldview. But this does not make it "anti-religious". It is a practical philosophy, aimed at drawing workers and oppressed groups into united struggle against the ravages of capitalism.

Approximately 85 per cent of the world's population are religious. If the liberation of the working class is the act of the working class, as Marx famously said, then the struggle for a different world must involve masses who hold religious ideas.

The big philosophical debates of Marx's day centred around a divide between idealists and materialists. For idealists, ideas are primary. They say reality changes because ideas change, and so history is the history of ideas. The radical Young Hegelian movement, with which Marx associated for some time, focused on challenging ideas, like criticism of religion, as the key to changing society. But for materialists, the foundation of human societies and social change is the real material world, and how humans interact with it.

Marx was firmly in the latter camp, but he made a radical contribution to materialism, by asking where ideas themselves come from.

He famously said, "It is not consciousness that determines social being, but social being that determines consciousness", meaning that ideas do not fall from the sky, but in fact reflect something about the real conditions of existence. This is just as true for religious ideas.

Marx was scathing of liberals

.....
One should not simply critique religion, but should set out to explain why religious ideas hold such appeal

who elevated the critique of religion above everything else. This eventually led him to break with the Young Hegelians.

One should not simply critique religion, he argued, but should set out to *explain* it, and explain why religious ideas hold such appeal.

Explaining religion

Marx recognised the appeal of religion to the oppressed. He argued that religious views are widely held because they fulfil a social function. Religion provides meaning, guidance and comfort in a callous, irrational world.

Marx's well-known, oft repeated quote that religion is the "opium of the masses" conjures up an image of religion as a stupefying, pacifying drug. But the full quote reveals a far more nuanced understanding:

"Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."

Here he captures the contradictory nature of religion, the fact that religion can be both an expression of, and reaction to, being oppressed and downtrodden.

That contradiction also manifests itself at a social level. Many resistance struggles have elements of religious expression; the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Dr. Martin Luther King was a leading body of the American civil rights movement. Catholic "liberation theology" which emerged in Latin America during the 1960s in opposition to poverty and dictatorship actively incorporated Marxism into a religious framework.

In the Middle East, Islamist organisations have emerged as the key resistance groups to dictatorship and imperialist oppression due to the historical failures of secular nationalist and communist organisations. Hamas

in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have been the most organised oppositional forces in their respective countries.

Socialists are not uncritical of these organisations. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood betrayed its followers when it took power and turned against the democratic movement.

But they built their support by standing with the oppressed—and in the case of Hamas and Hezbollah, by opposing the imperialism of Israel and the US.

It is entirely understandable why some people in the Middle East see imperialism as a war against Muslims. Marxists recognise this, and stand on the side of struggles for progressive political aims, even when waged under a religious banner.

Marx did think criticism of religion was necessary, but demanding people reject religion should never be made a precondition for involving them in political struggle. This would be immensely self-defeating.

Debate

Marx had to deal with the question of religious freedom directly. He grew up in the reactionary Prussian state, which still had a monarchy and no official separation between church and state.

Jews in Prussia faced systematic discrimination, with laws determining where they could live and the occupations they could take up. The French revolution had led to legal equality for Jews, and stimulated debates in Germany about whether German Jews should be similarly treated.

Bruno Bauer, a leader of the Young Hegelians, argued that Jews needed to renounce their religion and separate existence before deserving equal freedoms. He dressed this up as radicalism, saying, “The problem of emancipation is a general problem, it is *the* problem of our age. Not only the Jews, but we, also, want to be emancipated”.

Bauer essentially accused Jews of being selfish by aiming at the “removal of his special misery” and not the “downfall of the principle”.

Marx was strongly opposed to such pseudo-liberalism. He attacked Bauer’s entire framework, exposing that Bauer did not understand the connection between political freedoms, and complete human emancipation. Fighting for equal rights, defending religious freedom was in fact a crucial part of fighting for true freedom.

When Abbott and Western leaders



Above: A Muslim Brotherhood protest in Egypt. The group gained support as the only mass opposition to the dictator Mubarak

attack Islam as the basis of terrorism, it is easy to see why resistance to anti-Muslim discrimination can also be taken up in religious terms. This is why defending Muslims against Abbott’s attacks is a crucial part of building the wider fight against Abbott, his anti-terror laws and the system.

The Bolsheviks and Islam

The Bolsheviks—the party that led workers to power in the 1917 Russian Revolution—put Marx’s ideas about relating to religion into practice.

The fate of the revolution depended on it. The Russian empire was home to 16 million Muslims (10 per cent of the population) and to many oppressed nations. Atheism was never a condition for joining the Bolshevik party. Some local Muslim leaders became Bolshevik leaders as well, and in parts of Central Asia, Muslims made up as much as 70 percent of the Communist Party membership.

Lenin, one of the leaders of the revolution, was very clear about religious freedom: “Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citizen’s religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated.”

This commitment to religious freedoms saw Friday (the Muslim day of prayer) made a legal day of rest in many areas, and a Sharia court system operated alongside the Soviet system, so that Muslims could choose between Soviet or Sharia law, religious or revolutionary justice. (Some sharia sentences, however, such as stoning or cutting hands off, were outlawed.)

This approach to religions was later overturned when Stalin came to power. As Stalin broke the revolution, he reimposed discrimination against religious minorities as part of boosting Russian nationalism; something that has given Marxism an undeserved reputation for being anti-religious.

The Bolshevik’s insistence on religious freedom, also meant that the class conflicts and differences between leaders and their followers within religious communities were better revealed.

Religious belief, per se, is not necessarily the enemy of progress, or liberation; the blame for that lies squarely with the rich and powerful, the media, criminals in government, and the mad capitalist system.

The left cannot afford to give an inch to the idea that there is any intrinsic problem with Islam. Abbott is trying to win an election with relentless fearmongering against Muslims—distracting from the real threats of job losses, climate change, and attacks on unions and the welfare system. Abbott wants to divide and rule: we have to unite and fight.

Boundless Plains—but not for sharing

Ian Rintoul looks at a new book on the history of Australia's response to asylum seekers and finds a disturbing continuity with the racism of today

Across the Seas
By Klaus Neumann,
published Black Inc.
RRP \$31.95

TOWARDS THE end of *Across the Seas*, Klaus Neumann writes, "I hope my account of Australian responses to refugees and asylum seekers might have unsettled some ideas about the status quo..."

Neumann's book is indeed unsettling, but perhaps not about the status quo. The past he reveals seems shockingly familiar. Australian government policy towards asylum seekers and refugees has never been driven by humanitarian concerns but by migration and population policies of successive governments, underpinned for so many years by White Australia.

Neumann provides many examples. In 1938, just prior to the Second World War, the Australian cabinet agreed to admit 15,000 refugees from Europe over three years. But the Jewish component was to be limited to 4000 per year, although the quota could be, "exceeded in admitting approved Aryans."

Following a tour of Europe in early 1939, to investigate the selection of "alien immigrants", the assistant secretary of the Department of the Interior wrote to his secretary saying that Polish Jews, "are the poorest specimens outside blackfellows that I have seen."

After the war a Labor government, and Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell, was determined to both "populate or perish" and uphold White Australia.

The emphasis was



not on refugees, but on recruiting migrants from Britain and Ireland. When that recruitment looked like flagging, Calwell looked to blond and blue-eyed displaced persons (DPs) of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

As Neumann says, Calwell was, "not driven by humanitarian considerations...he was willing to take whoever was readily available provided their admission would not contravene the White Australia policy."

Calwell and the Immigration Department had "...clear views about the 'best material': young, healthy, non Jewish DPs from Lithuania, Latvia and Baltic countries..."

In 1945, when Calwell agreed to accept relatives of Jewish families already

in Australia, there were stringent conditions. They had to have spent the war years in a labour or concentration camp; had to organise and pay for their own transport and their families in Australia had to guarantee to support them for five years.

In the face of anti-Semitic criticism about Jewish refugees coming to Australia, rather than stand up to the racism, Calwell ordered that ships coming to Australia were not to have more than 25 per cent of Jewish passengers.

In 1972, when Ugandan dictator Idi Amin ordered that all Asians, Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis holding British passports had to leave, the British government appealed to Commonwealth

countries to help.

But White Australia was alive and well. The Liberal Immigration Minister Jim Forbes told Parliament, "Applications by Asians in Uganda will continue to be considered on their individual merits in accordance with our non-European immigration policies."

The Australian immigration officer in Kampala reported that if Australia's policy was relaxed, "I consider we could select 1000 good types with useful trade and semi-professional qualifications." Fifty thousand people fled Uganda, but Australia approved just 190 applications (covering 491 persons) and rejected twice that number.

Two thousand others who called the embassy

were told not to bother applying.

Vietnamese boats

The first boat of Vietnamese asylum seekers arrived in Darwin in April 1976, barely noticed by the press.

By December 1977, however, the Labor Party was trying to make refugees a federal election issue. In one of the unsettling twists in Neumann's history, when the Liberal Foreign Affairs Minister Andrew Peacock was asked on radio, "You have no suggestions at all that we should be stopping these boats from coming in?" He replied, "None at all."

Meanwhile Labor's Shadow Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, was telling the Perth Press Club, "that

sailing into Darwin was as easy as crossing Sydney Harbour on the Manly ferry.”

And future Labor leader, Bob Hawke, was suggesting that Australia should only accept refugees selected offshore; and that Australia had a “right to determine how it will exercise its compassion and how it will increase its population”.

In light of the present discussion about boat turnarounds, it is startling to read of Labor’s immigration spokesperson at the time calling on the Liberal government to “make an example” of the boat arrivals, and insisting, “We have to turn a few of them around, and send them back to South East Asia under naval escort.”

Interestingly, despite the Labor Party’s efforts, refugees were not a big deal at the 1977 federal election. When asked to nominate the issues most important to them, voters said, “unemployment, inflation, and economic management.” (That has continued to be the case. In 2013, “asylum seekers” ranked sixth as an issue according to the Essential Poll.)

Neumann uses the experience of the 1977 election to suggest that “a considered and principled approach” to refugees might not have the disastrous electoral consequences that, “...Labor leaders from Kim Beazley to Bill Shorten have readily assumed.”

Labor went on from its anti-boat arrival stance in 1977 to introduce mandatory detention of boat arrivals in 1992, concerned more about foreign policy considerations of the time than the human rights of Cambodian asylum seekers.

The electoral opportunism embraced by Labor in 1977 is now more commonly associated with the Liberal Party

and the governments of Howard and Abbott. But beyond the specifics of the 1977 election, the policy responses of the Fraser government laid the basis for many of the pillars that still underpin anti-refugee policy today.

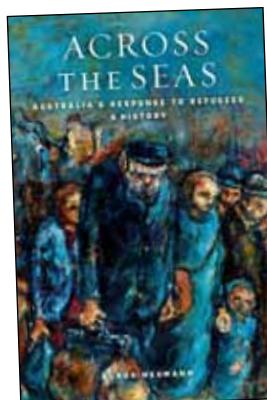
In January and February 1977, at a Geneva UNHCR conference convened to try and establish the right to asylum in international law, the Liberal government asserted that Australia, “...will wish to retain its discretion to determine ultimately who can enter Australia and under what conditions newcomers may remain.” Sound familiar?

We may never get to the bottom of who actually started the queue jumper portrayal, but as Neumann recognises, it was the start of distinguishing “good” refugees from “bad”.

Neumann quotes Whitlam as Labor Opposition leader in 1977 warning the Fraser government not to put refugees “ahead in the queue” i.e. ahead of other migrants sponsored by their relatives. Labor opportunistically positioned itself as advocates for the more established migrant groups (mostly Labor supporters) who supposedly were going to be disadvantaged by the acceptance of boat arrivals.

While Neumann seems to lay the blame with Labor for popularising the term (and there is no doubt they used it) there is very good evidence that the Immigration department and the Fraser government were initially responsible for promoting the view that boat arrivals were “queue jumpers”. Historian of the Vietnamese boat people, Nancy Viviani, records that Radio Australia broadcasts to South East Asia in 1978 “spoke sharply about queue jumpers”.

More tellingly, it is clear that Fraser’s regional resettlement arrangements



disparaging asylum seekers who might have paid for their voyage and again juxtaposing “refugees who push their claims” to those “who patiently wait in the camps.”

Continuity

At the beginning of the book, Neumann says he has selected past historical episodes to achieve a Brechtian “Verfremdungseffekt”—“...an effect that makes the present seem strange.” At the end of the book he also talks about the historical continuity represented in the history. Neumann’s book doesn’t make the present look strange at all—but rather makes the past look hideously familiar. It is precisely the shameful continuity between the episodes that Neumann’s book helps to document.

Neumann says, “particular forms of racism can be seen as historically contingent manifestations of a broader anxiety.”

At one level, it seems to be anti-Semitism that motivates opposition to Jewish refugees in the 1930s, while it is fears of an Asian invasion that motivates opposition to the arrival of Vietnamese boat people in the 1970s, and Neumann suggests Islamophobia and fear of terrorism that excites opposition to boat arrivals in the 2000s.

Towards the end of 1978, five ships carrying between 1000 and 3000 Vietnamese asylum seekers arrived in various parts of South East Asia. The Fraser government refused to resettle any of them.

Two years later, just prior to the 1980 Federal election, the Fraser government introduced the first anti-people smuggling legislation—the Immigration (Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill. The legislation first raised ideas of “profiteering” and “trafficking”,

were predicated on “stopping the boat arrivals”. Immigration officer Greg Humphries openly admitted being despatched in 1977 to Malaysia, “with virtually my term of reference to stop these boats coming to Australia,” including using sabotage to sink them.

Towards the end of 1978, five ships carrying between 1000 and 3000 Vietnamese asylum seekers arrived in various parts of South East Asia. The Fraser government refused to resettle any of them.

Like every other capitalist government around the world, Australian governments have a concern to control their

border. There is an intrinsic xenophobia, us and against them—and hence the racism—that goes with borders. This can graphically be seen in unseemly European debate over asylum seekers crossing the Mediterranean Sea at the moment, and various governments building fences to keep asylum seekers out.

But in Australia’s case, added to the xenophobia is a virulent racism that is a legacy of White Australia and even more widely the politics that goes with Australia’s origins as a settler-state, an outpost of British imperialism in Asia. There is a particularly aggressive nationalism and fear-mongering that goes with that.

Neumann’s historical account ends with the 1977 federal election. He argues that the essential elements of the public and government responses to refugees were established by then.

Yet there are things that have changed. While cruel anti-refugee policies have been embraced by both Labor and Liberal parties, it is now impossible to imagine a Liberal Party that was not committed to “stopping the boats” and the systematic use of state force that has gone with Operation Sovereign Borders and now the creation of the Australian Border Force. Refugees have become a central element of Australian politics in a way that just wasn’t the case before the Howard government.

But perhaps the main thing that has changed, is that since the late 1990s there is now a refugee movement that systematically intervenes in Australian politics to challenge the bi-partisan cruelty.

Across the Seas is a useful addition to the movement’s armoury. We need to use it to make a very different kind of history.

GREEK WORKERS SAY "OXI" TO AUSTERITY

By James Supple

THE FULL scale of the EU's ruthless contempt for ordinary people has been revealed in the new austerity deal imposed on Greece.

EU leaders demanded complete surrender from Prime Minister and Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras, determined to make an example of Greece for daring to challenge austerity.

But rarely has there been such an abject and rapid capitulation as that of the Syriza government.

The Greek people showed magnificent courage and determination to vote "no" in the referendum on a new austerity deal. The Syriza government campaigned for a no vote. But just a week later it signed up to measures far worse than those it told the people of Greece to reject in the vote.

Tsipras was "crucified" in the negotiations according to one Eurozone official. Former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, who resigned following the referendum, said the deal was a "catastrophe" and meant "humiliation". The *Financial Times* called it, "the most intrusive economic supervision programme ever mounted in the EU."

It includes increases to VAT (the Greek GST), cuts to pensions and the return of strict supervision on government spending and other actions. There will be €50 billion of privatisation, with the assets shifted out of government control into a special fund to manage the sales.

The Syriza government must even undo actions taken since its election in January that reverse previous austerity measures. EU President Jean-Claude Juncker said explicitly that this includes reversing the reinstatement of cleaning workers and the reopening of public broadcaster ERT, whose struggles became symbolic of the anti-austerity movement under the previous government.

The threat of expelling Greece from the Eurozone was used to blackmail the government into accepting new bailout loans, needed to prevent a collapse of the Greek banks and a default on its debts.

This capitulation is the end result of Tsipras's determination to keep Greece in the EU. When Syriza was elected



many pointed to the 80 per cent support for EU membership in the Greek population to justify this. But as reality has proved, there is no way to do a deal that placates Europe's rulers and remain in the EU as well as repair the living standards of the Greek people.

Syriza's failure

These events are a real blow to Greek workers, who elected Syriza in January this year to end crippling austerity measures, and voted in overwhelming numbers against austerity in the referendum. They show the failure of the idea that Greece could break with austerity simply by electing a left-wing government, and the limits of a reformist strategy of hoping for change through parliament.

Tsipras suffered a parliamentary revolt when the deal was put to parliament, with 32 Syriza MPs voting against it, including members of the party's Left Platform as well as former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis. The agreement went through, with the support of votes from the right-wing parties.

But the fight against austerity is far from over. It is now up to Greek workers to take matters into their own hands, through building struggles

Above: Public sector workers staged a 24-hour strike the day the new deal was voted on

outside parliament powerful enough to stop the new austerity measures and win change.

That fight has already begun. On the day it was approved in parliament, the public sector union held a 24-hour strike against the deal. They were joined by hospital workers, metro workers and the cleaners whose jobs are now on the line again. Tens of thousands have staged new mass demonstrations against the agreement.

They will be flashpoints as workers resist privatisation and look to demand wage rises to make up for the increase in VAT. Prior to the deal, there had already been a strike against privatisation of the ports.

Workers need to fight for an alternative to the austerity imposed within the iron grip of the EU and the Troika.

As the Greek anti-capitalist coalition Antarsya is arguing, this must be based on an exit from the European Union, in order to default and refuse to pay Greece's debts, nationalisation of the banks and seizing the wealth of the rich.

Key to the success of this is strengthening the influence of the revolutionary left. It is in the workplaces and on the streets that the fight to end austerity and make the rich pay for the crisis must be won.

The capitulation is the end result of Tsipras's determination to keep Greece in the EU

Solidarity