

- ▶ CUTS TO PENALTY RATES
- ▶ JACKING UP GST

TURNBULL RULES FOR THE RICH



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People power
for Abyan

CLIMATE CHANGE

Why capitalism
prevents action

UNIONS

Amalgamations and
membership crisis



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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.

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**Why climate action means
challenging capitalism**
6.30pm Thursday 3 December

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

In this place, we all know that it will only be our family and very close friends who will push our wheelchairs around as we grow old Smoking Joe Hockey admits his days as a Liberal MP haven't won him many new friends in his parting speech in parliament

The current structure of penalty rates is profit murder for small business

Hockey is surprisingly blunt about the real aim behind attacking penalty rates

We must increase and over time broaden the GST, we must lower all income tax so those people and companies are given more incentive to take risks and receive rewards. As a minimum, we should aim for a...20 per cent tax rate for businesses Hockey again, outlining the Liberals' tax agenda

There is a saying amongst them that all cops are bastards. The cops have earned that label, they have to un-earn it.

Senator David Leyonhjelm's first ever useful comments, in a hearing on treatment of Western Sydney Wanderers fans

It's no surprise that someone who makes a living glorifying crime and violence is a cop-hater, too

Patrick Lynch, head of New York police union, calling for a boycott of Quentin Tarantino's movies after he spoke at a protest against police brutality in New York

One of the most reckless proposals the Labor party has made Turnbull on Labor's (aspirational) target of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030

The fact is that Lucy and I have been very fortunate in our lives. We have more wealth than most Australians... Let me say, this country is built upon hard work, people having a go and enterprise. Some of us will be more successful than others.

Born-to-rule Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who plans to keep things that way

There's no connection between what I do [as Transfield chairman] and government policy.

Diane Smith-Gander, denying reality about Transfield's role on Manus Island and Nauru

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INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

Top 1 per cent own half the world's wealth

THE WORLD'S top 1 per cent now controls half of all wealth, according to the new Credit Suisse Wealth Report. Their position has risen steadily since 2009. Oxfam, in a report at the start of this year, estimated that this could happen in 2016. Mark Goldrig from Oxfam said, "The fact it has happened a year early – just weeks after world leaders agreed a global goal to reduce inequality – shows just how urgently world leaders need to tackle this problem."

The bottom half of the world's population own less than 1 per cent of the wealth while the top 10 per cent together hold 87.7 per cent. Worldwide US dollar millionaires make up about half of 1 per cent of the population. The number of millionaires has increased 147 per cent since 2000. Australia has almost 1.5 million people within the top 1 per cent of global wealth holders, and had the third highest average wealth per person of any country, after New Zealand and Switzerland.

Australians work some of world's longest hours

NEW FIGURES coming from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that Australians work some of the longest hours in the world. In the past international studies have suggested Australians work an average of 35 hours per week; less than most developed countries. But these figures are misleading. Not only do 2 per cent of Australians, 250,000 people, work 70 hours plus per week, but another 400,000 are working 60-69 hours. This means they are working more than 12 hours per day in a five day week.

The two most punishing industries are mining and fishing. More broadly, the figures show that over 2.6 million people are working between 40 and 44 hours when a complete working week should be between 35 and 39 hours. This portion of the workforce is actually larger than the section that works part-time or less than 30 hours per week. The ABS stats show that on the whole Australians are overworked—a significant minority intensely so.

Use of force on asylum seekers in detention up 2700 per cent



THE BRUTALITY of the government's onshore detention of refugees has been laid bare in "incident logs" obtained by the Guardian. The logs, acquired through a freedom of information request, catalogue every reported "use of force" between January 2013 and March 2015.

Analysis of the logs shows that during the period covered there was a 2700 per cent increase in the use of force against detainees across mainland detention and Christmas Island. The rate of incidents escalated dramatically from 2.6 incidents per 1000 detainees in January 2013 to 70.3 in March this year. The spike coincided with the "deregulation" of the use of elbow and arm locks on detainees in 2014, along with the "streamlining" of the approval process for the use of force in the same period.

The logs show that the steep increase in such incidents actually began when Rudd announced the PNG Solution in July 2013. The subsequent large-scale forced transfers of asylum seekers to Manus Island and Nauru demanded an immense increase in the use of coercion. The shocking revelations come as the Coalition is proposing further increases in the powers of guards through its "Good Order Bill". Currently blocked in the Senate, the Coalition bill was pilloried by former Victorian Supreme Court Judge Stephen Charles SC at a senate enquiry in April. He said the draconian bill would effectively authorise guards "to beat asylum seekers to death".

SA cop unpunished after threat to lynch Aboriginal man

AN UNNAMED senior constable in South Australia threatened to lynch an Aboriginal man in the style of white racists in the US South. The constable called the man, detained under powers granted in the SA Mental Health Act, a "black c---", and said he would like to tie a hose around his neck, set him on fire and drag him behind the police car "with the lights and sirens on".

The incident was revealed in the South Australian police ombudsmen's 2014-2015 annual report tabled in October. This vicious racism was reported by other officers but effectively went unpunished. According to the annual report the former state police commissioner Gary Burns, who retired earlier this year, simply ordered the constable undergo "cultural awareness training" for six weeks at the police academy.

Research and writing by
Adam Adelpour

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

Abbott hits speaker's circuit with 'fascistic' address

TONY ABBOTT, at a loose end after his dumping as PM, has been quick to hit the international speaking circuit. Suitably, Tony is being represented by the Washington Speakers Bureau, an agency that also takes bookings for war criminals Tony Blair, George Bush and John Howard.

According to the bureau those that wish to book Abbott's services can nominate payment that ranging from "travel and expenses" to "over \$40,000 USD". They promise that, "Abbott is able to speak thoughtfully on terrorism and security in the 21st Century", something he never managed while PM. Apparently he can also "offer unparalleled insight on leadership".

His first high profile engagement was the Margaret Thatcher Lecture in London. His speech called for the use of military force against refugees trying to enter Europe and was so right-wing that according to journalist Paul Staines a top Tory "wincing" and afterwards described the speech as "fascistic".

While refugees fleeing war-torn Syria suffered in French camps in Calais, Abbott then made his own journey to France, reportedly treating himself and his office staff to a holiday in a luxury French Villa.

NAB increases interest rates while posting record profits

THE NATIONAL Australia Bank has posted record profits a week after hiking interest rates on mortgage payments. In the second half of October the NAB lifted its variable mortgage rate to 5.60 per cent. The NAB's Gavin Slater said the decision was "not easy" and complained about "the costs associated with providing home loans". Only a week later the bank announced an after-tax mega profit of \$6.3 billion for 2014-2015—20 per cent up on the previous year.

EDITORIAL

Stuff Turnbull, stuff the GST

MALCOLM TURNBULL might be keeping the Coalition ahead in the polls, but the gloss is coming off his Prime Ministership.

The Prime Minister who wants Australia to be known for its respect for women, allowed raped Somali refugee, Abyan, to languish on Nauru for weeks while the Immigration Department refused to bring her to Australia. Approaches to his office met with silence.

It was only when refugee advocates went public about her disgraceful treatment, and phone calls, petitions and emails flooded Turnbull's and other MPs' offices that the government finally began to act. But he did nothing while Abyan was denied counselling and treatment and then spirited out of the country by a special RAAF jet.

Turnbull is heading to Paris in November to be seen to be at the international Climate Summit. But at home, he is a staunch supporter of Abbott's Direct Action program that will put billions into the pockets of carbon polluters and profiteers (see p14).

His real agenda becomes clearer by the day, with growing talk of both an increase in the GST and attacking penalty rates.

Turnbull has stuck with virtually all of Abbott's policies, but has tried to deflect concerns by saying lots of things are "under consideration".

Even schools funding for years five and six of the Gonski reforms was "being considered", he told the media, but added this was "in the context of a very tight budget".

Turnbull declared, "Fairness is absolutely critical." But there is nothing fair about the \$4.8 billion cut to family payments (over four years) he is now trying to push through Parliament. One hundred and thirty-six thousand single parents will still lose money.

GST

Turnbull has admitted that increasing the GST to 15 per cent is on the table. Turnbull tells us "vulnerable Australians" would not be left worse off.

But a rise in the GST would hit the pockets of millions of workers, pensioners and welfare recipients. An ACOSS (Australian Council of Social Services) report says a GST increase, "would be a recipe for driving inequality."

Even using a GST increase to pay for tax cuts would make hit lower income households the hardest, while higher income households would pay



Above: The unions should be calling protests to send a signal that Turnbull's GST increase and any attack on penalty will face a fight

less tax overall as a proportion of their income.

The GST is a deeply unfair tax, designed to increase the taxes paid by working class people and the poor so corporations and the rich can get tax cuts.

As if that was not bad enough, they have now started looking at "overhauling" (read "cutting") welfare payments like the disability and aged pension, saying they have got to, "get people into the workforce".

Turnbull has also argued for an attack on penalty rates, saying they were a product of "history" and advocating "a move to a more flexible workplace".

He also has the unions in his sights, pushing again to bring back the anti-union Australian Building and Construction Commission. He wants to use the Royal Commission to push for further restrictions on trade unions, threatening unions would be "a front-line issue" at the next election unless Labor caved in to his legislation.

Yet so far Labor leader, Bill Shorten has focussed on distractions like the idea of lowering the voting age to 16. His "snappy" slogan, "Fairness is not a consequence of prosperity, it is a precondition of it," sounds more like Turnbull than someone determined to fight Turnbull's agenda.

Tragically, Greens leader Richard Di Natale has been worse, signalling his willingness to work with Turnbull,

saying they were "poles apart" on many issues but, "there is some common ground that we will be able to work with the government on".

All this does is reinforce the illusions that Turnbull might represent something other than the standard rule-for-the-rich Liberal policies.

When Abbott floated his attack on Medicare in January 2013, the unions responded by backing immediate protests. We need the same kind of response to Turnbull. The unions should be calling demonstrations to make it clear to Turnbull and the bosses that they face a serious fight over the GST and penalty rates.

The People's Climate Marches on 27-29 November should be calling for direct action on renewables.

Federal public sector workers are showing the way, escalating their campaign over pay and conditions, with Border Force (formerly Customs) workers at airports set to take their first 24-hour strike as *Solidarity* goes to press.

New Public Service Minister Michaelia Cash arrogantly dismissed the workers, saying they weren't in the "real world" if they rejected demands to sacrifice conditions in exchange for a pathetic 1.5 per cent pay rise.

Turnbull will have to be fought every bit as hard as Abbott if we want to see an end to the Liberals' agenda of cuts, union bashing and attacks on refugees.

A rise in the GST would hit the pockets of millions of workers, pensioners and welfare recipients

Are amalgamations the answer to union membership woes?

By Tom Orsag

THE TALK of union amalgamations and the latest statistics on union membership have again raised the question of how to build unions.

The CFMEU and MUA may merge to form a “super union” according to MUA Secretary Paddy Crumlin. The TCFUA also wants to merge with the CFMEU. There is also talk of the left-wing AMWU and the right-wing AWU amalgamating.

Most unionists see this as a great thing in that “bigger is better”. The Coalition described the merger of the MUA and CFMEU as a “disaster”, arguing it will lead to a more powerful and militant union.

ABS statistics said just 15.1 per cent of the workforce are now union members, and just 11 per cent in private sector. Rightly the ACTU pointed out that unions still represent 1.8 million members, and are the single large voluntary organisations in Australia.

But over the past two decades union membership has declined from 43 per cent of the workforce in 1992.

But amalgamations are not the answer to rebuilding the union movement.

Nor are talk-fests, as ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said “Next month union leaders will be gathering for the Australia Disrupted Symposium to discuss the future of work and how we can best represent workers no matter who they are or how they work.”

Unions are built through strikes and industrial action. When unions take action they recruit new members. The Victorian nurses’ union recruited almost 6000 members through its industrial campaign in 2011. The ETU in Victoria has grown from 8500 members in 1995 to 19,000 today under a militant leadership not afraid to take strike action.

The idea that amalgamations could help turn around declining membership is not new. Between 1991 and 1996 the number of unions more than halved through amalgamations. Union membership continued to decline.

Nor is it automatic that bigger unions will lead to solidarity. The MUA was formed through amalgamating the Seamen’s Union of Australia representing seafarers and the Waterside Workers Federation representing dock workers. But officials effectively



Above: The CFMEU is likely to amalgamate with both the MUA and TCFUA

told the seafarers to scab on wharfies during the Patrick lockout of 1998, despite seafarers wanting to walk out in their support.

The white-collar CPSU has built a “super union” by merging state-based public service unions, but has become more bureaucratised and now has less active delegates’ structures.

Similarly, the AEU Victorian branch now incorporates primary school and secondary school teachers, teachers’ aides, other support staff and principals. It rarely calls mass meetings, except at the end of a dispute to ratify Certified Agreements.

Big unions are a short-cut for the hard yards of recruiting people and too often a cover for officials too politically timid to break anti-strike laws, whether it be the MUA in 1998 or the CFMEU today, which has paid millions in fines rather than argue to break the law.

Dutton’s offshore resettlement crisis: Cambodia, Philippines...Kyrgyzstan?

THE DEMONSTRATION of people power that brought Abyn to Australia is also widening the cracks in the offshore processing regime.

The latest pitch for a resettlement arrangement with the ex-Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan came after the Philippines firmly rejected any idea that it would be part of a refugee resettlement deal with Australia.

Australia has given a bucket of money to Cambodia (around \$55 million), but only four refugees have gone there from Nauru—and even they are trying to move on.

The talk of Kyrgyzstan is an admission that the government does not have any resettlement arrangements for the refugees on Manus or Nauru. The gaping holes and the abuses of offshore processing are getting too big, even for the boosters of offshore processing.

Shamefully, two of the boosters are Labor leader Bill Shorten and shadow Immigration Minister, Richard Marles. Even after the Philippines rejected any deal with Australia, Bill Shorten was still telling reporters that the government should continue to engage with Asian countries including the Philippines.

“I don’t think Australia should give up,” he said, “To me, the

government needs to redouble its efforts with Thailand, with Malaysia and Indonesia, with the Philippines.”

Despite urging from Shorten, the fact is that resettlement in “third countries” like Cambodia, the Philippines and now Kyrgyzstan, are contemptible proposals of a desperate government, that will never happen. Kyrgyzstan is the second poorest Central Asian country and more than a third of its workforce has left the country. Recently Afghan refugees have been resettled from Kyrgyzstan to Canada.

Internationally, the refugees on Manus and Nauru are rightly regarded as being Australia’s responsibility.

Even the Murdoch mercenary, Chris Kenny wrote in *The Australian*, “Ideally, Australia would again gradually and quietly resettle most of the refugees in Nauru and Manus Island on our shores.” The Australian editorialised that “the Turnbull government needs to find suitable third countries for the refugees waiting resettlement.”

The contradictions are becoming more exposed. The campaign here can drive the point home; the only “third country” for the refugees is Australia.

People power for Abyan shows how to stop refugee cruelty

By Ian Rintoul

MORE THAN 1000 health professionals and medical workers rallied outside hospitals in Brisbane, Sydney, Darwin, Adelaide and Newcastle on 30 October to demand the release of children from detention.

The demonstrations followed the stand by over 1000 doctors, nurses and medical workers, who rallied behind a "Detention Harms Children" banner at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital on 11 October.

"We want to increase the pressure [on the Turnbull government]. And we won't stop with this protest. We will make noise until the detention of children ends," senior paediatrician Dr David Isaacs told *The Guardian* after the Sydney protest.

While the medical workers have stopped short of saying that they won't release children from the hospital to be taken to immigration detention (and potentially to Nauru), such defiance of the Immigration Department is being openly canvassed.

The protests also followed the mass outrage across Australia that followed the government callously removing Abyan, the pregnant Somali refugee who was raped on Nauru.

Abyan had been brought to Australia from Nauru late on Sunday 11 October, only to be removed from Australia on a specially chartered RAAF flight four days later, on the morning of 16 October.

But if Malcolm Turnbull and Peter Dutton had had their way, Abyan would never have been brought to Australia. Raped, pregnant and requesting a termination of the pregnancy, the Australian government did nothing while Abyan's options narrowed by the day and her desperation grew.

It was not until Abyan's plight became public and tens of thousands signed a petition and thousands of others sent emails and contacted MPs offices that the government moved to bring Abyan off Nauru.

Her callous treatment in Australia was despicable. Abyan was sick; she was mentally exhausted. But the Immigration Department demanded that she jump to their timetable. Despite pleas for counsellors, and for her lawyer, in a desperate measure to get her away from any chance to review her treatment in a court, she was flown to the Solomon Islands—and then to Nauru.



Above: Rallies and public pressure forced the Turnbull government to act on Abyan

Peter Dutton detailed a list of supposed "interactions" Abyan had had with medical staff while she was in Sydney, but it has never been publicly released because it would not stand up to scrutiny. Abyan is insistent that she never saw a doctor and never saw a counsellor.

Peter Dutton and Immigration bureaucrat, Border Force first assistant secretary for detention services, Neil Skill, took it upon themselves to get her out of the country, beyond the reach of lawyers or advocates on 16 October.

But the outcry continued with angry protests in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane. More thousands, disgusted with Malcolm Turnbull's hypocrisy bombarded the offices of the Prime Minister and Immigration Minister.

The Australian, with support from the Australian government, dispatched journalist Chris Kenny to do a job on Abyan. Peter Dutton had no problem collaborating in the violation of Abyan's privacy. But despite doing his worst, even turning up to Abyan's donga with Nauruan police, Kenny had to publish what Abyan had said all along, that she had never said that she would not have a termination.

Amnesty International issued an urgent international action alert in support of Abyan; the UN's High Commission for Human Rights also issued a statement calling on the Australian and Nauruan governments.

Senior IHMS and Immigration officials were quickly sent to Nauru, and the young, pregnant, Somali refugee that they had so cruelly treated, was returned to Australia on 28 October.

Immigration stalling

For over two months, the Australian government stalled—denying her even the most basic considerations or assistance to a victim of sexual assault.

On 19 October Dutton was still attacking refugee advocates, but by 29 October, Dutton said that plans to bring her back to Australia, "had been in the making for days."

The facts speak for themselves. The government spent over \$130,000 to get her out of the country and then another chartered flight to bring her back 13 days later. But the cost to Abyan, kept on Nauru, deprived of her choice, is incalculable.

The extreme victimisation of Abyan is driven by the government's determination to enforce offshore detention at all costs. Abyan was just collateral damage to a government increasingly obsessed with the militarisation of refugee policy.

Against the odds, the refugee movement brought Abyan to Australia. Turnbull is not about to give up and a desperate government will continue to sanction the shocking abuses on Nauru; but the victory for Abyan tells us that with growing mobilisations, we can close Manus and Nauru and bring all the asylum seekers and refugees to Australia.

The extreme victimisation of Abyan is driven by the government's determination to enforce offshore detention at all costs

Turnbull takes up Royal Commission anti-union agenda

By Mark Gillespie

MALCOLM TURNBULL wants to make industrial relations a “frontline issue” at the next election and will use the findings of Abbott’s Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption to go on a union bashing offensive.

The Commission has exposed new embarrassing evidence for Bill Shorten of cosy AWU deals with bosses that slashed union members’ wages.

Turnbull will try to convince the public he is fighting corruption and not coming after their wages and conditions.

But central to his agenda is the revival of the Howard-era Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) which treats ordinary construction workers like second class citizens and gives authorities special powers to go after building industry unions.

The building industry unions in Australia are a key part of the movement and hobbling them would be the first step in a more general attack. When Turnbull talks about unions needing to be “much more agile”, this is code for wanting them to roll over on penalty rates and other issues.

Also on Turnbull’s legislative agenda are new laws giving the state more power to interfere in trade union governance.

This isn’t about defending the interests of ordinary workers but about demonising unions and tying them up in bureaucratic red tape.

Part of the offensive is to beat up the talk of “lawlessness” in the construction industry. A recent Fair Work Commission report showing that CFMEU officials are being breached in increasing numbers was used to hype up the need for change. But most are being breached over minor bureaucratic issues such as walking onto a building site without the required notice.

The problem is not any entrenched corruption in the CFMEU but rather the restrictive workplace laws that prevent unions from operating effectively.

The arrest of CFMEU organiser John Lomax on blackmail charges is typical of the witch-hunting atmosphere around the Commission. These charges generated sensational newspaper headlines but were quietly dropped a few months later.



Above: The CFMEU is one of the main targets of the Royal Commission

Only in the dreams of Liberal politicians does putting industrial pressure on employers to pay better rates of pay amount to blackmail.

The Commission

Turnbull has already described Dyson Heydon, the head of the Commission, as the “ultimate straight-shooter” and he will try to convince the public that the Commission is fair and independent.

But from day one it has had a union bashing agenda. It was established by Tony Abbott who had used this same tactic before. In 2001 he established the Cole Royal Commission, which was also supposedly designed to fight corruption in the building industry. This commission cost the taxpayer \$65 million and resulted in no prosecutions but still recommended new anti-union laws.

Abbott hand-picked Dyson Heydon, a renowned conservative with connections to the Liberal party, because he could be relied upon to generate the right headlines and write a report that would put the Liberals on the offensive.

Kathy Jackson, a Liberal party star witness, was given preferential treatment by Dyson’s offsideers at the Commission and extensively briefed about what questions to expect. Even then she stuffed it up and her \$305,828 splurge of union money on herself was exposed.

AWU dodgy deals

The commission has exposed corrupt deals made by AWU officials (including

Bill Shorten) where wages and conditions were traded off in return for payments such as for AWU memberships, or to fund AWU political campaigns.

A former finance manager at Cleanevent admitted in the Commission that the company hid its payment of \$25,000 a year to the AWU because it was a bad look for both the union and the company.

ACI Glass paid \$450,000 to the AWU over three years through two secretive accounts. It also funded a \$130,000 overseas trip by then AWU official Cesar Melham.

Meanwhile a Thiess senior executive admitted that the company issued false invoices for \$300,000 to hide the fact it was paying for an AWU organiser on site.

These deals are indefensible. They have seen workers’ wages slashed and have given the Liberals a stick to beat the unions with. But there are double standards about how unions and employers are being treated.

The major beneficiaries of the deals have been the employers. It is estimated that John Holland Construction made a cool \$100 million from its deal on the EastLink tollway project. The cleaning company Cleanevent pocketed \$2 million a year in stolen wages by not paying proper penalty rates.

But we’re not seeing the same witch-hunt against employers. The ripped off workers shouldn’t hold their breath waiting for redress. This commission is only going after unions and needs to be opposed tooth and nail.

Muslim kids and prisoners the new enemy under Turnbull

By Amy Thomas

SO MUCH for Malcolm Turnbull's fresh approach to dealing with the Muslim community. His government is forging ahead with plans to introduce restrictive control orders for people as young as 14.

Young Muslims have become the latest victims of the government's anti-terrorism push following the Parramatta shooting. There is, unsurprisingly, no evidence at all that control orders prevent terrorism. But the facts haven't gotten in the way before when the government has been determined to cultivate fear.

Former Independent National Security Legislation Monitor Bret Walker SC carried out a review of all control orders in 2012 and found, "There's simply no experience from which one could sensibly say, 'This is going to make us safer'."

They will, however, create more anger and despair for the young people targeted. President of the Australian Lawyers Alliance, Greg Barns, expressed the widespread opinion that the control orders will be counter-productive, saying, "If you want to further radicalise people, if you want them feeling they are completely alienated from society...then you're going the right way about it."

Control orders have been used to punish people that the police and ASIO don't have evidence to actually mount a case against. Charges were dropped against Harun Causevic, accused of a supposed ANZAC day terror plot. So a ten-point control order has been imposed on him.

Causevic must stay at his home, wear a GPS-tracking device, consent to his house being monitored, not watch any unapproved media, and stay away from dozens of locations including mosques, airports and government buildings.

A person who is made subject to a control order is not even shown the secret affidavits that are used by courts to make the orders, so that challenging them in court is almost impossible. Turnbull and Brandis want all this to be sanctioned against teenagers not considered old enough to vote or even get a job in some states.

ASIO is already monitoring teenagers—including, apparently, someone as young as 12. Australia is following the ridiculous road of Britain, where a three-year-old was



Above: Police conduct terror raids in Sydney last month

recently revealed to be on a terror watch list.

NSW Premier Mike Baird has cynically used the Parramatta shooting to bolster police powers. He wants the power to hold people in prison without charge for 28 days, instead of the current four.

Alongside this the NSW government have given themselves the ability to force prisoners to speak English, supposedly to prevent terror plots. And yet, "there is no known specific terrorist threat from inside our prisons" according to the Coalition's own Minister for Corrections, David Elliott.

Their new powers, though, are good for show: the latest in a continual effort to confect a major terror threat and appear tough on national security. The new powers deliberately draw an association between Arabic and other languages and terrorism, as well deny people the basic human right of speaking their own language(s). They also give NSW more powers to spy on prisoners' communication.

In tandem with the anthem

Turnbull himself was nowhere to be seen or heard when his Social Services Minister, Scott Morrison decided to channel Abbott and decry as "pathetic do-gooders" staff at Cranbourne primary school in Victoria. The staff allowed Shi'a Muslim students to absent themselves from the national anthem at a school assembly.

The students were observing the month of Muharram, when singing

or celebration is forbidden to commemorate an important religious figure. This, of course, was lost as the right-wing talkback circuit and the likes of Senator Jacqui Lambie went into a tailspin.

Meanwhile, new powers that allow the government to jail journalists for up to ten years for reporting on ASIO operations, and force agencies to hold onto everyone's metadata for two years, have now come into effect. Turnbull, who reportedly did not favour such laws in the past, is now in vocal support.

Interestingly, the recent Scanlon Foundation "Mapping Social Cohesion" report and Morgan poll both show that anti-Muslim prejudice is not the majority view but rather solidified amongst a minority. Sydney was the worst place for Muslims, where 27 per cent of respondents reported negative views.

The effect of the repression and prejudice coming from the top is to green light that minority. In recent weeks, a Muslim woman was pushed and threatened with a knife in Melbourne while another was asked to leave a RSL in Noosa, Queensland, because of her hijab.

Racist anti-Islam campaigner Geert Wilders chose Perth to launch a new racist party in October. The neo-Nazi United Patriots Front mobilised a few hundred in Bendigo against the building of a local mosque in late September. And there will be another round of anti-Muslim "Reclaim Australia" rallies on 22 November. Now is not the time to cut Turnbull any slack.

Their new powers are the latest in a continual effort to confect a major terror threat and appear tough on national security

By Peter Jones

AS PART of trying to soften us up for “the economic leadership our nation needs”, Malcolm Turnbull has been telling us Australia is a “high wage, generous social safety net, first world society”. The third claim is unarguable (it’s true by definition), but the stats show that our economic woes are producing wages growth that is anything but high.

Since the end of the mining boom in the middle of 2012, real wages in Australia have gone practically nowhere. Retail workers have seen their real pay per hour excluding super increase inch up by 0.12 per cent per year; real pay in accommodation and food services has grown by just 0.10 per cent per year. These are also the people who rely most on the penalty rates which are currently in the government’s sights. In administration and support services pay actually went backwards slightly.

In fact, across the economy as whole, taking into account super, the average worker is being paid 2.3 per cent less per hour than they were three years ago after adjusting for inflation.

As for the claim that Australia has a generous social safety net, try telling that to someone on Newstart, which, along with its draconian activity requirements, is indexed to CPI and therefore doesn’t increase at all in real terms.

Unsurprisingly under these conditions inequality is getting worse. The latest figures are for 2013-14, and show that the richest 20 per cent grabbed nearly half (48.5 per cent) of all income. The poorest 20 per cent took home just 4.2 per cent. As Bill Shorten pointed out on Q&A recently, inequality in Australia is the worst it’s been in 75 years.

What Shorten didn’t say was that much of this happened while Labor was in government. Under Rudd and Gillard the Gini coefficient increased a little (from 0.438 to 0.446, where zero is perfect equality and one maximum inequality), and during the Accord years under Hawke and Keating the share of income going to the top 1 per cent increased by nearly 40 per cent.

The underlying causes for rising inequality are fairly clear: around the world the ruling class response to falling profit rates from the 1970s was attacks on workers’ pay and conditions. Here this succeeded in pushing up profits (if not the rate of profit) at the expense of wages, as the graph above shows. It compares the ratio of profits

Wage growth slumps as economic pain bites



Above: A ratio comparing profits to wages plotted against the income share of the top 1 per cent of income earners. Both have risen substantially since the 1970s

to wages with the share of income for the highest 1 per cent of “earners”.¹

The data demonstrate a number of things: first, the introduction of superannuation hasn’t meant increased profits now “benefit everyone”, income from company profits and investment properties continues to flow overwhelmingly to the rich. Second, although in Australia the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) didn’t coincide with a significant fall in profitability, it *did* give bosses a pre-text for holding down real wages. Third, record high prices for Australia’s exports during the mining boom overwhelmingly boosted profits and not wages. Fourth, the decline in the ratio of profits to wages since then still leaves it at around the same level as before the GFC.

The increase in the profit share and inequality is also related to the decline in union coverage and activity. This link is clearest if we look at rates of increase in real wages by sector. Since 1997 (the first year data is available), the weakest growth in wages has been in: information, media and telecommunications (an average annual increase of 0.38 per cent); “other” services (0.24 per cent); retail trade (0.20 per cent); and accommodation and food services (just 0.01 per cent). These are some of the most poorly organised industries.

On the other hand, the strongest growth in real wages since 1997 has been in industries where unions have

suffered smaller declines in density and levels of activity: construction (1.07 per cent per year on average); education and training (1.08 per cent); mining (1.16 per cent); and electricity, gas, water and waste services (1.30 per cent).

The fact that education and training makes this list suggests that union strength has been the crucial variable for determining where wage increases have been won, not so much whether an industry was directly affected by the mining boom. And even though real wages are stagnant on average currently, Melbourne train drivers managed to win a 14 per cent pay increase over four years after taking two strikes, indicating that it is still possible to make gains if the bosses’ hands are forced.

The attacks on the union movement by the Liberals are therefore not primarily an expression of their anti-union ideology, but an attempt to further weaken the institutions which remain the most important vehicles for workers to fight for and win better pay and conditions.

Notes

1. “Profits” here are profits accrued by corporations and landlords after depreciation and company tax, and “wages” include super. Data for the income share of “the 1 per cent” is taken from figures published by the economist (and Labor MP) Andrew Leigh.

War and chaos boost Erdogan back to power in Turkey

By James Supple

TURKISH PRESIDENT Recep Tayyip Erdogan has secured a majority in Turkey's re-call election, after refusing to form a coalition government following previous elections in June.

His victory came through inciting a security scare, as he reignited the war on Turkey's Kurdish minority, leading to bombings and violence across the country. The hopes of a peace deal, and an end to state discrimination against the Kurdish population, lie in tatters.

Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) have been in power since 2002, consistently winning elections with large majorities. The June elections, where it failed to win enough seats to form a government in its own right, were its first major setback.

The AKP has become increasingly authoritarian, symbolised by its repression of the Gezi Park protests in 2013 where 11 people were killed and thousands injured. The government has jailed dozens of journalists, for reporting on alleged government corruption as well as voicing support for the Kurds.

The week before the election police stormed the offices of two newspapers linked to the Islamic political movement of Fethullah Gulen, using water cannons and tear gas. All the journalists were fired and replaced.

But Erdogan has still fallen short of the super-majority needed to hold a referendum in order to grant himself greater executive powers. In 2014 he stepped down as Prime Minister in order to run for President, a role that is still largely ceremonial. But he has continued to use his office to campaign for the AKP, in breach of tradition.

His election victory relied on a surge of votes to the AKP from the far right party MHP, which lost 4 per cent, or one quarter of its support.

War on the Kurds

The HDP, which unites Kurdish nationalists and the left, also lost votes but succeeded in passing the 10 per cent threshold to win seats. It only passed this threshold for the first time in June's elections, and will now have 59 seats in parliament.

In July the government began



Above: An election rally by supporters of the HDP, uniting the Kurds and the Turkish left, which narrowly remained above the threshold to enter parliament

bombing Kurdish nationalist PKK guerrillas in northern Iraq, as Erdogan declared that after two years of the peace process, continuing it was impossible.

Far right groups staged attacks and set fire to over 100 offices of the left-wing HDP party across the country, as police looked on, allowing the attacks to happen.

The Turkish military sealed off the Kurdish town of Cizre in early September, killing 25 civilians including children after they cut off all medical supplies, food and water to stage an operation against PKK fighters.

Then came the horrific bombing in Ankara of a peace demonstration, killing 102 people and injuring 400 more. The demonstration was organised by progressive trade unions to call for an end to the government's war on the Kurds.

When police arrived at the scene, ahead of ambulances or medical help, they used tear gas on those trying to assist the injured.

The government said Islamic State was responsible. But many on the Turkish left blame the state and the military for failing to prevent the bombing. The government banned media coverage of the bombings and shut down Facebook and Twitter in the aftermath, provoking further suspicion.

The election result is a setback for the left. But as Turkish socialist Ron Marguiles put it, "the government's

authoritarianism and the discontent both generally and in the AKP's ranks have not gone away.

"People voted for the AKP not because they are suddenly happy with its policies, but for lack of an alternative."

The country's economy has slowed in the last two years, after a decade of relatively strong growth. Unemployment is at almost 10 per cent. The AKP argued that a stable government was needed in the face of war and economic uncertainty.

But the main opposition party, the CHP, remains tied to the military, which continually toppled elected governments prior to the AKP taking power. It managed just 25 per cent of the vote.

Erdogan has promised that his government can bring stability. But the PKK's armed struggle has dragged on since 1984, and with the peace process abandoned there is no end in sight. The now semi-autonomous Kurdish areas in Syria have only given further encouragement to the Kurdish struggle in Turkey.

Turkey has been drawn further into the conflict in Syria too, after the disastrous results of its policy of indiscriminate support for any group willing to fight the Assad regime. This has helped strengthen Islamic State and other hardline groups.

Erdogan's authoritarianism and war will continue to generate opposition.

Canada's Tories toppled by Liberal talk of 'real change'

By Penny Howard

JUSTIN TRUDEAU'S Liberals have surged to power in Canada by promising "real change" after almost ten years of Conservative rule. Despite their position as one of Canada's two big business parties, the Liberals even managed to outflank the New Democratic Party on the left.

Tony Abbott and Stephen Harper, Prime Ministers of Australia and Canada, shared a similar brand of nasty right-wing politics and what the Financial Review described as a "mutual admiration society". Now, both are gone.

Of the two, Harper was far more competent and long-lasting, as Prime Minister since 2006. But he faced popular revulsion against the government's cuts and austerity, racist policies against First Nations, Muslims, and refugees, his climate and pro-war policies and attacks on civil liberties in the name of anti-terrorism. Strong movements emerged on all these issues. Going into the election, it was clear there was a mood for change—but Harper had proved he was a political survivor who was willing to run the nastiest of campaigns.

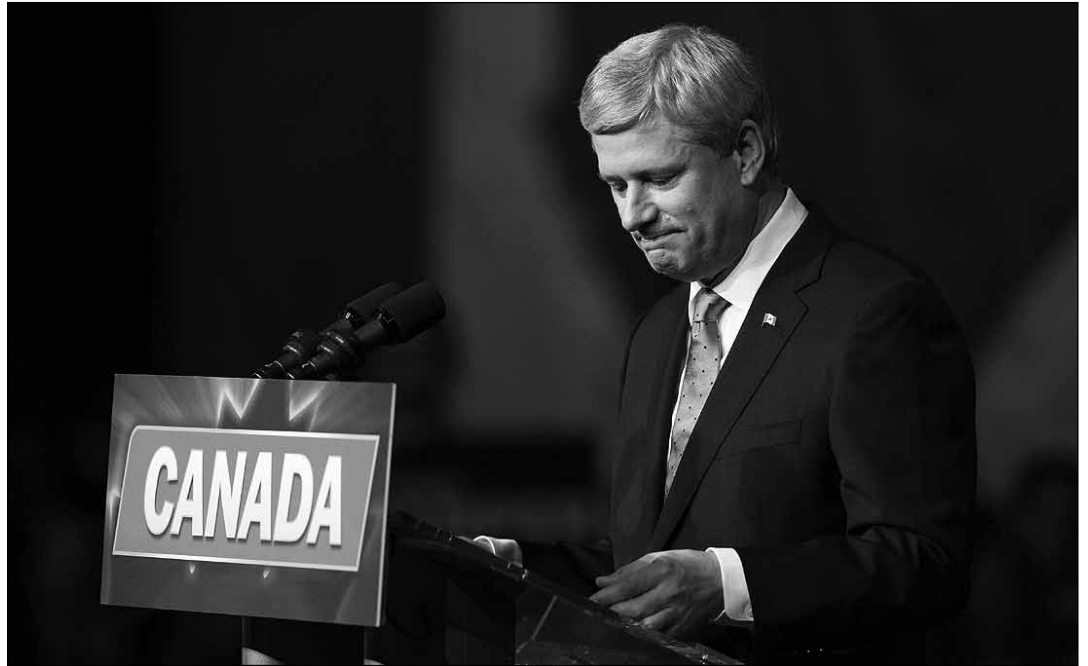
When the election was called, the official opposition was the left-wing New Democratic Party (NDP). The NDP had shocked everyone in 2011 by tripling the number of seats it held to over 100, its highest number ever. The Liberal Party were reduced to an embarrassing third place, for the first time since the party was founded in the 1850s.

The Canadian Liberals are a corporate party with a progressive veneer due to their introduction of welfare state measures in the 1960s, and lent official support to multiculturalism, bilingualism, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canada's bill of rights.

More recently they presided over enormous cuts to social programs in the 1990s and 2000s and have shown an obsession with budget deficits.

The NDP is Canada's equivalent of the Labor Party, but has never formed a federal government and is seen as an outsider. They are supported by the union movement and linked to the student movement and many other campaigns.

In the context of 70 per cent of the electorate looking for "change", at first the NDP led the polls. In May the NDP won the Alberta provincial



Above: Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper is out of office after almost ten years in power

election in Stephen Harper's conservative home state. Yet instead of seizing the momentum for change, leader Thomas Mulcair saw the main challenge as proving the NDP's respectability within the traditional straightjacket of austerity politics: being fiscally responsible and maintaining a balanced budget.

He also distanced himself from key demands of many movements: promising more tar sands mining, silencing pro-Palestine candidates, defending the purchase of fighter jets, promising more police, and scaling back tax hikes for corporations and the wealthy.

The NDP base went into "shock" after Mulcair promised four years of balanced budgets, as Ontario union leader Sid Ryan put it.

Liberals talk left

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau rejected this logic and promised to run deficits of up to \$10 billion to build infrastructure and jobs. He even promised to tax the rich and criticised military spending.

The Liberals accused the NDP of planning a "Stephen Harper budget". The result was that despite many excellent progressive NDP policies, such as a national public \$15 per day child care scheme with one million places, Trudeau was able to campaign against the NDP from the left. He effectively questioned how the NDP were going to bring in such an ambi-

tious scheme and balance the budget.

Trudeau grew up in the Prime Minister's residence when his father was in power, but somehow managed to present himself as an outsider willing to break political rules and bring change.

The NDP promise of a balanced budget was particularly disastrous in Quebec, where unions led anti-austerity strikes during the election campaign. In 2011, the NDP picked up 59 out of 75 seats as voters rejected both the traditionally dominant parties of the Quebec nationalists and the Liberals. They lost 40 of these seats this time, mostly to the Liberals. They also lost all their seats in the east coast provinces and in the left-wing heartland of Toronto. The Liberals made an astonishing comeback, from 36 to 184 seats.

Voting is not compulsory in Canada. Analysis shows that the Conservatives did not lose many votes. What changed the outcome was three million new voters who backed the Liberals' message of change, and one million who switched from the NDP to the Liberals.

The success of the Canadian Liberal campaign and the enthusiasm that Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders have generated show that people around the world are sick of austerity politics and are looking for change.

But real change can only come from mass movements and the working class, not from one or other of the parties of big business.

.....
Trudeau was able to campaign against the New Democratic Party from the left

A new generation rekindles Palestinian resistance

By David Glanz

PALESTINIANS HAVE launched a new wave of resistance in response to decades of dispossession, discrimination and humiliation.

In Gaza, Palestinian youths from the eastern Bureij refugee camp managed—for the first time in years—to cross the border into Israel and hang the Palestinian flag.

But unlike the first two intifadas or uprisings in 1987-1993 and 2000-2006, the fightback is not being led by Palestinian resistance organisations, but by individuals.

This has led the media to talk about “lone wolf” attacks and to paint a lurid picture of fatal stabbings of Israelis. Almost a dozen have been killed.

However, the Palestinian Ministry of Health reported on October 26 that 59 Palestinians including 14 children and a pregnant woman had been killed so far in Israeli counter-attacks.

The latest round of conflict began over Palestinian fears that Israel was reducing access to the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem’s Old City.

Yonathan Mizrahi, head of Emek Shaveh, an organisation of Israeli archaeologists opposed to the use of archaeology for political ends, told *Middle East Eye*: “Israel is weakening the Muslim and Palestinian presence there so that Israeli Jews can believe they are the true owners of the site.”

Israeli archaeological activities, he said, had almost completed Israel’s encirclement of the al-Aqsa compound, isolating it from Palestinian neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem.

But the roots of the resistance go much deeper. As Israeli Major General Nitzan Alon said: “Some of the motivation of the Palestinians to carry out terror attacks is due to the violence of right-wing elements in the West Bank...”

“The Palestinians, for them IDF (Israel Defense Forces) activities in which Palestinians are hurt serve as another issue encouraging and causing terror activities. They differentiate between the activities of soldiers and those of settlers, but for them both are occupation.”

Israel has long used the expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank to create practical control of Palestinian land and to lay the basis for further annexation and dispossession.

Under Prime Minister Benjamin



Above: The new Palestinian revolt has been led by the youth independently of the established political organisations

Netanyahu, in office since 2009, the number of settlers has increased by 120,000.

According to an opinion piece in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, Netanyahu has overseen a dramatic expansion of settlement activity in the heart of East Jerusalem’s Palestinian neighbourhoods.

“Virtually from the moment he took office, with the 2009 approval of a new settlement in Sheikh Jarrah, through last week’s settler takeover in Silwan, under Netanyahu the settler enterprise in these volatile areas has boomed.”

The settlers—like the 200 responsible for recently attacking a Palestinian neighbourhood with stones and firebombs in Hebron—have been given the green light on the West Bank, too.

“Netanyahu approved a new settlement in Hebron, in a large Palestinian structure taken over by settlers. Netanyahu has confiscated large swathes of the West Bank, including 490 acres to facilitate the legalization of outposts and 990 acres to benefit the Etzion settlement bloc, a confiscation unprecedented in scope since the 1980s,” according to *Haaretz*.

“Netanyahu has also built major new infrastructure to serve settlements, including a highway to give settlers living south of Jerusalem direct access to the city’s center, routed through the middle of a Palestinian neighborhood of Jerusalem ...

“And Netanyahu is actively working to push Palestinians out of Area

C—the area of the West Bank under full Israeli control and home to most settlements—via home demolitions, actual and threatened, and coercive displacement targeting.”

Resistance

It is little wonder that many Palestinians can take no more. A mass strike shut Palestinian towns on 13 October, with 40,000 Palestinians taking to the streets in the town of Sakhnin.

But for the most part, what has characterised the resistance is that it is led by the young and is taking place without the coordination of traditional Palestinian leaders, who are widely seen as ineffectual and corrupt.

As *Al-Monitor* reported: “All of [the attackers] ... had no security records, never spent time in an Israeli jail and were not affiliated with any armed Palestinian organization ...

“For many young people, those who were born into the second intifada, none of these organizations—Fatah, Hamas or Islamic Jihad—is worthy of joining. This generation of young people is defying the old guard that promised statehood but failed to deliver.

“This young generation sees the previous one—even their own parents who caved in under the plight—as the one that did not have the courage to take destiny into its own hands and work for the future.”

Whatever the outcome of the struggle in coming months, the new resistance proves that almost 70 years of Israeli dispossession and apartheid has failed to crush the Palestinians.

Netanyahu has overseen a dramatic expansion of settlement activity in East Jerusalem

WHY CLIMATE ACTION MEANS CHALLENGING CAPITALISM

Tackling climate change through a rapid transition to renewable energy is perfectly feasible, but corporate interests are determined to frustrate action, writes **Erima Dall**

THE WORLD is at a climate cross-roads. For over 20 years, international meetings of world leaders have wrangled to avoid any meaningful climate action. The science is as clear as ever; the planet hotter.

In November over 190 world leaders will meet at the COP21 conference in Paris. But countries have already announced their emissions reduction targets, and they will not prevent a rise of 2°C in global temperature - a generous estimate of what is a “safe” temperature increase.

Global investment in renewable energy is growing, but nowhere near fast enough. We are operating in a battlefield. To stop a dangerous shift in our climate system we will have to challenge the economic greed of the capitalist system.

We need to build a mass radical movement capable of challenging the fossil fuel giants, and governments’ absolute commitment to the market; a movement to demand a just transition to 100 per cent renewable energy and an expansion of green jobs.

Turnbull

Many held hopes that the end of Abbott and the rise of Malcolm Turnbull to Prime Minister would mean a shift on climate policy.

Abbott’s climate change denialism contrasted with Turnbull’s previous support for an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) when he was opposition leader in 2008-9. But Turnbull has embraced Abbott’s ludicrous “Direct Action” policy, calling it a “very, very good piece of work”, and stuck to the pitiful emissions reduction target of 26-28 per cent by 2030. The Climate Change Authority has said a 45-65 per cent reduction target is necessary.

Nor is Turnbull willing to reverse



Above: World leaders have been determined to put the profits of multinationals ahead of climate action

Abbott’s attack on official climate change bodies, by re-establishing a Department for Climate Change, the Climate Commission, or raising the Renewable Energy Target that Abbott cut back. Moreover he has just re-approved the Adani Carmichael coal mine—the biggest in the nation, and one of the biggest in the world.

The hypocrisy is stark, given Turnbull previously called Direct Action “an environmental fig leaf to cover a determination to do nothing”. He has ducked any thorny questions about his abrupt position change, telling the 7.30 report, “we’re not looking for theoretical or economic theoretical purity here; we’re looking for practical measures that work”.

But Direct Action doesn’t work. Its main mechanism—an Emissions Reduction Fund of \$2.55 billion is a

spectacular waste of money. The fund has so far spent \$660 million funding projects that will allegedly reduce emissions by 47 million tonnes over ten years. Not only is this a drop in the ocean (it amounts to less than 17 per cent of an already pitiful 5 per cent reduction target), but these are not real emission cuts. Rather they consist of dubious schemes such as “not clearing land”.

In fact most of the projects were already in existence. LMS Energy, for example, successfully bid for \$100 million of funds for 28 separate landfill gas projects, of which 25 were already operational—some for more than ten years.

Environment minister Greg Hunt is chalking this up as a victory for “low-cost emissions reduction” at \$13.95 a tonne. But of course, the

lowest cost projects would be the ones that already exist. As *Solidarity* goes to print, the second round of auctions is taking place, and will spend up to another \$1 billion from the fund.

Turnbull is a climate hypocrite and Direct Action a joke. But it would be a mistake to lobby the government for a carbon price, or back Labor's proposal to return to an Emission Trading Scheme (ETS). This is not the "sensible centre" of the debate, but another dangerous distraction (see box).

Labor's proposed return to an ETS only threatens to again squander the opportunity to make a real shift to renewable energy.

A renewables revolution?

To tackle climate change we need to shift to 100 per cent renewable energy. Electricity remains the highest source of emissions in Australia, at 33 per cent, so tackling these emissions is central to a climate solution.

This is technologically feasible. The price of wind and solar PV technology is plummeting. According to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, 2013 was the first year more renewable energy was added to global energy mix than fossil fuels—a trend they expect to continue.¹

In Germany, to take one example, renewable energy has increased eight-fold since 1990. And China's renewable energy market is growing remarkably. By 2017, China will generate over half a trillion watts of electricity by renewable power.

Australia is exceptionally well resourced with renewable energy sources, but only gets 14 per cent of energy this way. Most of that is from hydro-electricity.

A report written by Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE) in 2010 shows how Australia could achieve 100 per cent renewable energy in ten years, based on a blue print that combines 12 large-scale solar-thermal plants with wind farms across the country. To achieve a 50 per cent renewable target would cost only \$80 billion, according to new analysis for the UBS bank. Much of this will come from the private sector, and most of the money would be spent anyway because ageing coal and gas plants need replacing.

System Change

If we lived in a sane world, all of this would be good news that a solution is imminent. But we are down the rabbit hole: this is capitalism. Even as renewable capacity grows, so do emis-

sions and the fossil fuel industry, such is the system's insatiable appetite for growth and profit.

It will take more than logic and a few PV solar cells to stop the coming climate catastrophe. The Fifth Assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has produced a global "carbon budget" that shows if we want to stay below a 2°C rise, we have already burned half the allowable carbon emissions.

At current rates, we will chew through the remainder in just 30 years. And even this carries a significant chance of exceeding 2°C of warming.

But existing proven reserves of fossil fuels represent five times this allowable carbon budget! These are mines of gold in the eyes of corporations driven by profit and competition. In Australia \$36.8 billion was made from coal exports in 2012-13, and there are predictions that volumes of coal exports will double in the next ten years.

The fossil fuel corporations are amongst the wealthiest, and hence

The fossil fuel corporations are amongst the wealthiest, and hence the most powerful, companies in the world

the most powerful, companies in the world. Three oil companies and two car companies sit among the world's 20 largest companies. Meanwhile, G20 governments subsidise oil, gas and coal companies to the tune of \$120 billion a year—while the top 20 companies themselves spent less than half this on exploration in 2013. Australia is amongst the worst, giving over \$4 billion every year in direct subsidies. These are the forces we are up against.

As Naomi Klein put it at the Festival of Dangerous Ideas, "Climate change is not just about carbon pollution; it's the collision between carbon pollution and a toxic ideology of market fundamentalism that has made it impossible for our shackled leaders to respond, while they simultaneously make the problem so much worse."

Then there is the issue of how governments are not spending money. To get anywhere near 100 per cent renewable energy we need base-load solar thermal technology. This form of solar energy is not dependent on continuous sunshine, because it stores

Trading our way to disaster on carbon

LABOR IS again proposing a price on carbon as the centrepiece of its climate policy. The unpopularity of the carbon tax experiment means they now advocate an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) instead. This is essentially the same thing.

An ETS works by releasing a capped amount of pollution "permits", and letting the capitalist controlled "market in carbon" set the price. By slowly reducing the available permits, the theory goes, the price will rise and pollution will reduce because the carbon permits to pollute will get more expensive.

But this is not how an ETS works in practice. Banks and companies influence the carbon price by creating their own permit market, speculating on future prices.

Around the world, where carbon prices do exist, the cost remains well below what would be required to actually force a transition to renewable energy. Europe has had the longest and largest scheme, and the price of carbon there has proved incredibly volatile—crashing to below €1 per tonne at points. The irony is that as emissions themselves fell due to

Last time Labor designed an ETS it included billions of dollars of "compensation" to the biggest polluting companies

recession in the Global Financial Crisis, the price of permits fell so dramatically that it undermined the scheme: polluting companies were able to buy up permits on the cheap, while banks trading in carbon permits cut jobs and scaled back these programs.

Last time Labor designed an ETS—Rudd's "Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme"—it included billions of dollars of "compensation" to assist the biggest polluting companies to transition away from emissions-intensive industry, even though it would ultimately be consumers that paid the price through power bills. In the worst instances, "compensation" for the scheme generated windfall profits, for instance for the ageing brown coal-fired power stations in Victoria.

An ETS won't deliver renewables. Beyond Zero Emissions warned that a modest carbon price would more likely encourage a transition to more gas power than to wind or solar. Letting the market rip is what caused the climate crisis; more of the same medicine is not the answer.

FEATURES

up energy in tanks of molten salt that can then be released over time to provide round-the-clock power, and hence replace base-load coal-fired power stations. BZE's 100 per cent renewable energy plan suggests this technology could produce 60 per cent of Australia's energy.

But the start-up capital costs for solar thermal remain high—too high for the private sector when more lucrative profits can be made elsewhere.

In Port Augusta, BZE have joined forces with local climate activists to campaign for Australia's first solar thermal plant, to replace ageing coal-fired power stations.

But power company Alinta Energy has made it clear this would be, "well outside of the bounds of a commercially attractive investment", at an estimated cost of \$577 million for a 50MW solar thermal plant with 15 hours storage.

We cannot wait until it is "commercially attractive" before saving the planet. That is market madness. We need to demand that the government build the necessary infrastructure. They could build seven such power plants in one year alone using the money that is currently subsidising the fossil fuel industry.

Rebuilding a climate movement

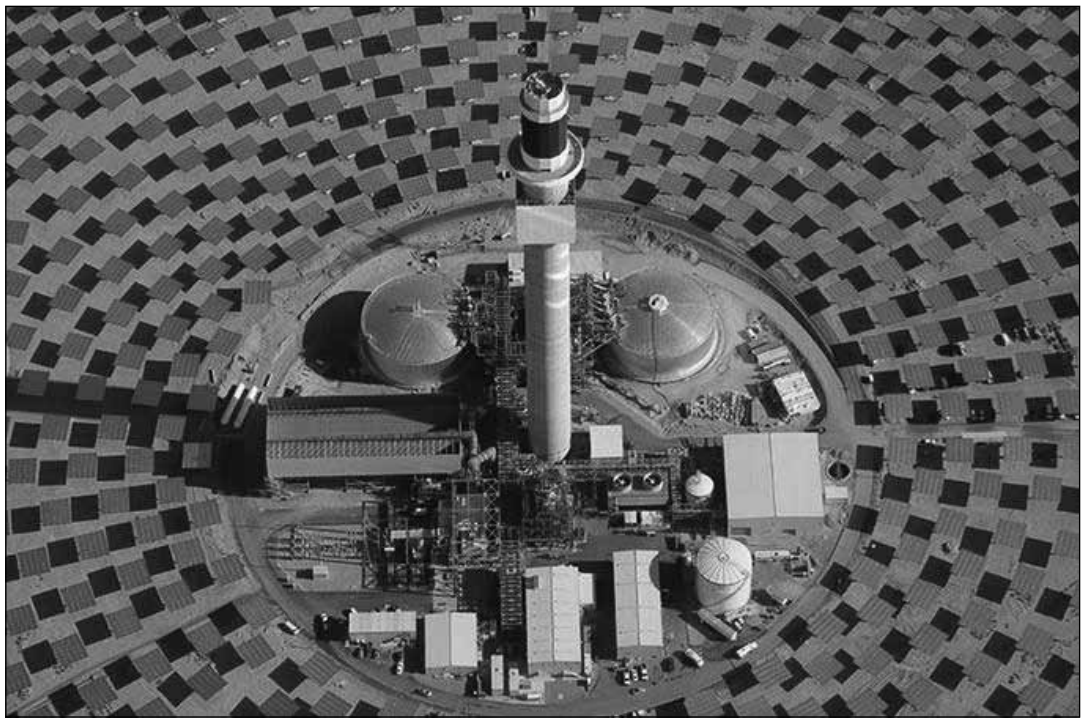
A mass expansion of renewable energy and public transport would be immensely popular, and a way of building support for climate solutions that are based on more jobs, more social services and a higher standard of living.

Seventy-eight per cent of people believe that climate change is happening, and support for renewable energy is very high.

The People's Climate March on 29 November is an important initiative, and will send a strong message for the government to do more—but, astonishingly, it does not have any explicit demands, and so risks simply falling in behind Labor's call for a return to an Emissions Trading Scheme.

The experience of the Rudd-Gillard years was that backing a carbon price is a dead end for the climate movement. The carbon tax was an unpopular, inequitable and ineffective market mechanism. It pushed up the power bills of working class people, as the fossil fuel companies simply passed on the costs.

This experiment set things back, as it put the burden of climate action onto the poor and working class, and



Above: A solar thermal plant with molten salt storage, technology that allows the plant to generate power even when the sun isn't shining

there was nothing to show for it! In a Newspoll conducted late last year, 88 per cent were in favour of government funding for renewable energy, but 64 per cent said this was only a good idea as long as they didn't have to pay more for electricity.

A climate campaign that can win will need a movement that reaches deep into the working class, and has to relate to concerns around cost of living.

Working people are not the problem. In fact they hold the key to a solution, because only the working class has the power to strike and take industrial action to cut off capitalism's profits—something that could really force action. A radical working class movement could refuse to build further polluting power stations or industries, and demand new clean jobs instead.

This has happened before—in the 1970s the Builder's Labourers Federation (BLF) put construction bans on high-rise developments that would destroy parklands or low-income housing. This year the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) has backed a Labor policy proposal to create an agency to help workers in fossil fuel industry with redeployment, retraining and income support during the transition to renewable energy. Such a plan, if carried out seriously, could help build workers' confidence that opposing fossil fuels won't leave them jobless.

The fact that unions are involved

in the "Building the Future" block at the Climate March is a small start.

There is strong popular opposition to CSG drilling, and growing opposition to mining developments. The prolonged battle against the Whitehaven coal mine (which was unfortunately unsuccessful), and looming battles against the Adani and Shennua mines, have given rise to calls for a moratorium on coal.

But campaigns against coal exports do little to actually reduce the carbon emissions produced by the big polluters in Australia, which according to the OECD has the highest level of greenhouse gas emissions per head of population in the world.

We need a fight for climate action that links with the fight against austerity; that fights to save and demand more jobs, that expands affordable public transport, that makes corporations and the rich pay more tax, puts power back into public hands and brings down electricity costs. These are the kind of demands that could build enthusiasm for climate action amongst the working class and give us a movement powerful enough to challenge the system before it destroys the climate.

Notes

1. Bloomberg reveals 143 gigawatts of renewable was added to the energy mix compared to 141 gigawatts of fossil fuels, however they include a small amount of Nuclear energy in the category of "renewables".

CAPITALISM AND ABORIGINAL OPPRESSION

Aboriginal dispossession served capitalist interests, argues **Paddy Gibson**, but Aboriginal people have remained a “problem” from the point of view of Australia’s rulers ever since

ON THE ABC current affairs show Q & A last year, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks from Utopia in the Northern Territory (NT), castigated former Liberal MP Peter Coleman for his argument for the need for assimilation to “solve the problem” of the position of Aboriginal people in Australian society.

Kunoth-Monks said, “Do not talk about me as a ‘problem’... I am not the problem, I have never left my country or ceded any part of it”.

Prior to 26 January 1788, the peoples of this continent lived in freedom, intimately connected with their country.

They have survived through genocide and so too has a fighting vision—of a fundamentally different way of life here, with relations of egalitarianism and reciprocity between both people and the land. This continuing resistance should be an inspiration to all fighting for justice in a world wracked by inequality and environmental destruction.

But from the perspective of the capitalist class who control the system of government here, Aboriginal people have always been, and remain a fundamental problem.

Integrating the Australian continent into the global capitalist economy was only accomplished through disease and a protracted war, reducing Indigenous population numbers by more than 90 per cent by the First World War. Land maintained by Aboriginal people for countless generations needed to be occupied and transformed into a commodity that could be bought and sold on the marketplace, and accessed by capitalist interests without the threat of disruption to their investment.

Poor European settlers seeking land and opportunity, or dispossessed Indigenous people drafted into “Na-



Above: The struggle at Noonkanbah to prevent mining on Aboriginal land

tive Police” units, were often on the front lines of this war. But it was a war directed and resourced by the new settler-colonial governments, controlled by capitalists making fortunes from expanding pastoral empires.

This war provided foundations for the formation of the state and economy in Australia. The racist doctrine of “terra nullius”, that says Aboriginal people are non-human, formed the core of the imposed property relations that remain in place to this day.

NSW has the oldest mounted police unit in the world, formed in 1825 to fight the war for Wiradjuri country.

As the needs of capitalism have changed, so too have the duties of the police—but they have never stopped persecuting Aboriginal people.

In the 20th Century they became the enforcers of apartheid and mass child theft. Today they harass, terrorise and incarcerate Aboriginal people at rates amongst the highest of any persecuted group in the world—more than 15 times the non-Indigenous rate for Indigenous men and 20 times for Indigenous women across Australia and more than 50 times for Indigenous juveniles in WA.

Many of the wealthy families in the Australian ruling class today built their power and wealth through genocidal war.

Alexander Downer’s grandfather Sir John Downer for example, a leading politician in the SA parliament in the 1880s, played an active role organising massacres across the NT to

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clear the land of people and make way for huge pastoral leases—to ensure revenue poured into the coffers of the colonial government and its wealthy capitalist politicians.

Managing dispossession

The state in Australia emerged not just to guarantee the fruits of dispossession remain in the hands of the capitalist class. It also ensures the on-going exploitation of the working class. This requires an ultimate threat of armed force—the NSW Mounted Police were also formed to chase down convicts escaping servitude and police continue to break picket lines today.

But, retaining power also requires a consistent ideological campaign to legitimise racism and capitalist power in the eyes of this working majority.

A central “problem” for Australian capitalism has been how to manage the social catastrophe inflicted on Aboriginal people and its continuing domination, in ways that re-enforce the legitimacy of the Australian state. This has required a persistent dehumanisation and persecution of the people who are the living reminder of the brutality built into Australia’s foundations.

Aboriginal people were denied citizenship in “democratic” white Australia. Their very presence in towns, schools and workplaces could pose an affront.

Every state gave itself powers to control people’s movements, family life and working conditions. These were very useful in remote areas, where the profitability of pastoral capitalism came to depend on indentured black labour.

They were also used with fierce intensity across the country during the Depression, when mass unemployment hit Aboriginal people the hardest. Black people living rough were scapegoated, denied the dole or employment relief and confined on managed stations.

Aboriginal enclaves presented their own anxieties for the ruling class however. Scobie, an official from the NSW Aborigines Protection Board (APB) during WWI, summed up the “problem” in this way, “although there are only a few full-blooded Aborigines left, there are 6000 of the mixed-blood growing up. It is a danger to us to have a people like that among us, looking upon our institutions with eyes different from ours”.

Scobie was part of a push for genocidal removal of children from their Aboriginal families as one “solu-

tion” to this “danger”.

Chief Inspector Donaldson of the 1920s NSW APB believed, “In the course of a few years there will be no need for the camps and stations; the old people will have passed away and their progeny will be absorbed into the industrial classes of the country.” But Aboriginal families fought hard to stay together and stay close to traditional lands, despite severe repression.

Others who were pushed into the “mainstream” played a crucial role supporting struggles for their people.

Yorta Yorta woman Margaret Tucker, for example, was stolen into domestic servitude from the Cummeragunja mission in the 1920s, but went on to make a life in Melbourne amongst other Aboriginal activists and socialists who helped build substantial support in the labour movement when the Yorta Yorta walked off Cummeragunja in 1939 demanding freedom.

Many urban based Aboriginal activists also helped to lead the “Day of Mourning” protest in Sydney in 1938, denouncing the nationalist celebrations of 150 years of colonisation in Australia in terms that continue to fuel Aboriginal protest today, “you have almost exterminated our people, but there are enough of us remaining to expose the humbug of your claim, as white Australians, to be a civilised, progressive, kindly and humane nation”.

This phenomenon intensified during the 1960s when the cities of Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, where the government had hoped people would “assimilate”, became organising centres for Aboriginal activists who launched a mass movement for black rights.

These protests, part of a global wave of anti-colonial revolt, helped throw off the racist controls of Welfare Boards across the country and won citizenship.

The movement won some important gains against racism, particularly a network of community controlled organisations to help with daily survival like medical, legal and housing services. Opportunities opened for some Aboriginal people, for example in the education system, that would have been unthinkable to previous generations. But many concessions made during this period also served to channel the radicalism of Aboriginal protest into the effort of running the services with-in the system and demobilised the struggle to challenge the fundamental racism of the system

Government responses to Aboriginal demands for self-determination have always been begrudging

itself.

Since land rights were legislated in the 1970s for the NT, successive governments have made sure that claims were even more limited and focused on remote areas marginal to the economy.

Labor promised national Land Rights legislation in the 1980s but backed down to pressure from mining and pastoral companies. Kooris who had played a central role in the national movement won a NSW Land Rights Act in 1983. But that only allows claim over narrow categories of unoccupied Crown Land and has seen only 0.1 per cent of the state granted back.

Recognition of “Native Title”, beginning with the Mabo judgement in 1992, helped take the fight for land off the streets and into the courtrooms.

But Native Title is also only recognised on Crown Land, for small numbers who can convince the court their customary use has survived the onslaught of colonisation. Even for those who have it, Native Title provides no power to stop capitalist development on your land.

Government responses to Aboriginal demands for self-determination have always been begrudging and shackled by fundamental constraints. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) formed in 1991, had elected Aboriginal representatives having input into funding decisions.

But the government retained ultimate control of the purse strings, and Aboriginal organisations were never given access to the massive resources that could have been used to turn around the horrific social consequences of generations of dispossession and racist exclusion.

The sharp contradiction between formal legal “equality” and the world beating rates of youth suicide, imprisonment, child removal, preventable diseases and unemployment has been explained through a vicious racism that blames Aboriginal people themselves.

The Howard government worked assiduously to construct a “white blindfold” narrative that celebrated colonisation as bringing progress, while denying the massacres and stolen generations and blaming the limited Aboriginal rights won in the 1970s for contemporary suffering.

Howard launched an Intervention into the Northern Territory, re-imposing “Welfare Board” style controls in an attempt to extinguish any idea of

Aboriginal self-determination.

More than \$1 billion has been spent on bureaucracies to control and constrain Aboriginal life.

This is the most intense example of a national system of control by racist state agencies, spending billions of dollars every year on the systematic discrimination against Aboriginal people, with ever more police, prison cells, foster care placements for children stolen out of communities and BasicsCards to control meagre Centrelink payments.

Aboriginal resistance and socialist revolution

The contemporary social crises gripping many Aboriginal communities can only be seriously addressed by a fundamental shift in power relations, with Aboriginal people controlling their own community development. Resources are urgently needed in the hands of grassroots Aboriginal groups, so communities can get to work rebuilding shattered lives and lands.

But it is simply not within the logic of the capitalist profit system to provide the resources to meet Aboriginal needs and aspirations.

Nor does the capitalist class want well-funded, well-functioning Aboriginal controlled organisations with a confident leadership, because of the role such organisations have played in building solidarity and fighting oppression. Instead they punish and blame the victim.

At the same time, there are consistent attempts to incorporate Aboriginality into Australian nationalism and neutralise any threatening political content.

Kevin Rudd apologised to the Stolen Generations to “remove a great stain from the nation’s soul... to reconcile and build a new future for our nation”. Yet more Aboriginal children are being forcibly removed than at any time in Australia’s history. BHP Billiton sits on the board of Reconciliation Australia while destroying Aboriginal lands.

The current farcical push for “constitutional recognition” offers Aboriginal people no rights or restitution, just a token place in the preamble of the constitution of a political system that tried to exterminate them.

Ultimately, ending Aboriginal oppression will require tearing up the constitution and overturning the capitalist system which created, and maintains, that oppression.

Socialist revolution will require



Above:
Demonstrating for
land rights at the
Commonwealth
Games in 1982

confrontation with the continuing colonial dynamics of capitalism that maintain the dispossession and racism. By taking control from the capitalist class, the rights of Aboriginal people to self-determination can be guaranteed, as can whatever resources are needed to meet their needs and aspirations.

This is not an argument to defer any hope of progress until “after the revolution”. The struggle against racism and capitalism have to be built out of the struggles for justice and against Aboriginal oppression in the here and now.

A revolutionary approach does argue for particular strategies within these struggles, most importantly an appreciation of the class divisions that exist in Australia and the potential for making common cause between Aboriginal communities and the broader working class.

It looks to the power of organised workers, black and white, as a crucial social force able to win Aboriginal rights.

Aboriginal people have always resisted - from the guerilla struggles that challenged every advance of the “frontier”, through to the movements against forced closure of remote communities today.

The periods in which Aboriginal struggles made the greatest strides forward however, came during the late 1960s and 1970s, when the working class in Australia was more militant and organised than ever before, with the highest number of strikes in Australian history occurring in 1974. This was also a time of global revolution,

with insurrectionary general strikes throughout the industrialised world and anti-colonial insurgencies on the march.

Aboriginal unionists such as Kevin Cook and Chicka Dixon helped to organise union support for the new wave of struggle being driven by young Aboriginal activists.

During the Moratorium for Black Rights in 1972 for example, building workers, wharfies, teachers and council workers went on strike to join the demonstrations. This industrial power of organised workers is the most powerful weapon for hitting back against the system.

Control over The Block in Redfern was won in 1972 by a campaign that included the Builder’s Labourers Federation, who placed a “green ban” on the site to stop it being taken over by developers.

Similar bans were placed on a number of mining projects opposed by Aboriginal people in this period, including an ACTU ban on work at the Nookanbah mine in WA in 1980, during mass blockades led by Aboriginal people.

Just as Aboriginal rights surged forward during a period of union militancy, the wind back of many of the gains over the past two decades has occurred during a period of serious retreat by the union movement, with historically low levels of membership and strike activity.

Actively building working class support for Aboriginal rights is crucial for the development of a revolutionary working class consciousness in Australia.

As long as the capitalist class remain in power on this continent, there can never be real justice for the people they stole it from.

Every struggle today can help to lay the basis for the development of a movement capable of pushing back and ultimately destroying this system.

As Wiradjuri warrior Ray Jackson, who passed away this year after decades at the forefront of struggle said:

“The liberation and rights of Aboriginal people are tied up with the rights of the working class, because we have a common enemy, a common master—the capitalist system. All of us who are abused by the Establishment—unionists, Aboriginal people, national minorities and all working people—have to eradicate what divides us, like racism and sexism. We have to speak with one voice and strike with one fist.”

‘DICTATING AUSTRALIA’S FOREIGN POLICY’ HOW STRIKE ACTION HELPED INDONESIA END COLONIAL RULE

Seventy years on, **Lachlan Marshall** explains the important role strike action by Australians unions played in assisting Indonesian independence

AT THE end of the Second World War, Britain and the Australian government supported the Dutch returning as colonial masters of Indonesia. But workers in Australia had other ideas.

A trade union boycott of Dutch shipping, uniting Indonesian, Indian, Chinese, Malay and Australian workers, helped aid the fight for Indonesian independence.

The Australian ruling class saw Dutch-ruled Indonesia as an “umbrella” shielding White Australia from Asia, and were therefore initially committed to the restoration of Dutch rule.

But political strike action by the Australian union movement delivered a serious blow against colonialism and showed the power of workers’ action to bring change.

The Black Armada struck during an acute shortage of shipping as a result of the destruction of the war. It paralysed the re-occupation effort by delaying the Dutch offensive in the critical early phase of the Indonesian war of independence, contributing to the ultimate victory of the republic.

Dutch collapse

The Dutch had ruled the Netherlands East Indies (NEI)—today’s Indonesia—for 350 years. But the southward march of the Japanese ended Dutch control just as easily as that of the French in Indo-China or the British in Singapore.

The Dutch fled the Indies and in March 1942 established a Government-in-exile near Brisbane.

Labor Attorney-General Dr H. V. Evatt welcomed the Dutch to their new home, exclaiming, “Australia will become a base from which the Dutch colonies will be finally regained...we visualize the restoration of the former sovereignty.”

For this purpose they were granted extra-territorial powers to maintain their military and to imprison dissidents on Australian soil.

A Dutch steamer arrived in Australia in 1943 carrying 500 Indonesian political prisoners previously interned in the penal colony of Tanah Merah, in Dutch New Guinea. Many were leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party and veterans of the anti-colonial uprising of 1926. They were destined to be re-interned courtesy of the Australian government.

When the ship docked at Bowen, Queensland, a detainee dropped a note to a waterside worker explaining the situation of those on board and urging Australians to help them gain their freedom. A second note reached a rail worker at Liverpool station, Sydney, while the detainees were en route.

The rail worker notified activists in Sydney, who were able to trace the prisoners to the Liverpool and Cowra Prisoner-of-War camps. Unions successfully led a campaign for their release, and these seasoned revolutionaries from Tanah Merah would go on to spearhead the boycott campaign.

During the war the Dutch brought around 10,000 Indonesians to Australia as sailors, clerks, administrative staff, political prisoners and soldiers.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was instrumental in forging connections between Indonesian republicans and the Australian working class.

In 1944 Indonesians in Australia formed Indonesian Independence Committees. The CPA used its network of members on the railways to deliver mail for the Indonesians, who feared monitoring by the authorities.

Bans by 31 Australian unions and four unions of Asian seamen immobilised 559 ships that would have been deployed against the republic

Indonesian nationalists saw the capitulation of the Dutch to the Japanese in 1942 as forfeiting any claim the Dutch had to the Indies. So on 17 August 1945, as the authority of the Japanese colonial occupation crumbled, Indonesian leaders Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta proclaimed Indonesian independence.

Indonesians in Australia—soldiers, sailors and engineers—declared themselves for the new republic and mutinied against the Dutch government in Queensland, NSW and Victoria.

Indonesians in Sydney were following events at home by radio. They immediately pledged support for the republic and refused to crew Dutch ships back to Java. They approached the communist-led Seamen’s Union of Australia (SUA) and Waterside Workers’ Federation (WWF), who agreed to support their stand.

Many unions opposed colonial restoration, which was regarded as a violation of the Allies’ 1941 Atlantic Charter, which pledged support for national self-determination.

The immediate post-war period saw a surge in trade union action as workers sought to make good on the sacrifices they had suffered during the war. Union membership rose by a third between 1946 and 1951. It was not until the working class rebellion of the early 1970s that Australia would see a higher level of strikes.

Workers’ increased confidence, and the widespread belief that the war had been fought not only against fascism but for a better world, made them sympathetic to the emerging national liberation movements in Asia.

Thousands of returning soldiers added a volatile element to the labour movement. Australian troops were reported to have graffitied on buildings

and old tanks in Indonesia at the end of the war, “We fought for freedom—let’s give it to the Indonesians.”

The WWF ban quickly spread to other unions connected with the maritime industry: tugs, boilermakers, ironworkers, engineers, storemen and packers, painters, dockers and carpenters.

In September 1945 Indonesian troops mutinied and Indonesian seamen walked off Dutch ships in Brisbane and Melbourne after discovering arms on an Indonesian-bound ship. The fact that the strike was in part motivated by the conventional trade union grievance of deferred wages assisted them in gaining the support of the WWF.

The Sydney branch of the WWF distributed flyers on Sydney wharves declaring, “The loading of these ships is a definite challenge to the democratic ideals of the Australian Labor Movement. To assist the Dutch in any way is to assist avaricious Dutch imperialism against Indonesian democracy.”

From now on, from Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to Fremantle, all Dutch shipping was declared banned or “black.” The call would result in bans by 31 Australian unions and four unions of Asian seamen, immobilising 559 ships that would have been deployed against the republic.

Unions from around the world, including the Dutch seamen’s union, pledged support for the republic.

Australian authorities conspired with Dutch imperialism to smash the boycott.

When Indonesians refused to crew the *Van Heutz* in Brisbane, and Australian unionists imposed a ban on the ship, Dutch soldiers were used to break the strike. State and federal police protected the scabs.

On 30 September a rally of 5000 filled the Sydney Domain calling for the release of imprisoned Indonesians and the removal of Dutch troops from the docks.

In October Indonesian soldiers on the Dutch ship *Esperance Bay* tore off the insignia on their uniforms and vowed never again to fight for the Dutch. Under trade union pressure, the Australian government repatriated the Indonesian mutineers to republican-held territory to join the struggle, rather than hand them over to Dutch internment.

Australian supporters crowded the docks to farewell the *Esperance Bay*, showering them with gifts, cigarettes and cries of “merdeka—independence.



Above: The first demonstration for Indonesian independence, held in Sydney

As the bans gathered pace, the NSW Trades and Labour Council declared “everything Dutch is black”. When the ACTU voted in support, some 1.5 million Australian workers were formally committed to the boycott.

Internationalism

The Black Armada depended on the solidarity of workers from diverse backgrounds.

Indian seamen were instrumental to the success of the boycott. After a British airlift into the country they were escorted by Australian police to be used as strike-breakers on the Dutch ships.

But it wasn’t difficult for the Indian workers to identify with the Indonesians’ struggle, given the fresh experience of the Quit India campaign and the belief that the defeat of Dutch colonialism would be followed by the fall of the British Raj.

A dramatic victory came in October 1945. The Dutch tried to break the union bans by sailing the *Patras* out of Sydney Harbour, with Indian seamen forced to sail at gunpoint. A small boat of Australian and Indian unionists sped after them.

One of the Indian unionists, Dan Singh, appealed to the crew by megaphone, telling them they were being used to reimpose colonial rule on Indonesia. But with Dutch troops making any defiance impossible the

cargo ship steamed away.

However within hours the *Patras* was forced to return—the crew had refused to keep the engines running!

The ships were being used for military matters, so the crew were guilty of mutiny. But despite this threat the momentum behind the national revolution rendered the maritime law a dead letter.

In October and November over 200 Indian seamen went on strike, with another 1000 on shore refusing to sail.

With the aid of Australian unions, Indonesian mutineers squatted in mansions in North Sydney and King’s Cross. Toll staff on the Harbour Bridge allowed them to cross free of charge.

The Indian strikers stranded in Sydney waged a campaign to have the Dutch shipping line, KPM, pay for their board and eventual repatriation. Two protests of Indian strikers took place at KPM’s Sydney offices in December.

The second rally marched from the strikers’ accommodation in North Sydney across the Harbour Bridge to KPM’s offices in the CBD. Australian unionists, some wearing their army and airforce uniforms, along with the remaining Indonesian seamen, joined them.

Hundreds of the strikers proceeded to occupy both the offices of KPM and the Indian High Commissioner, win-

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ning some of their demands.

Challenging racism

Indian seamen also had to confront entrenched racism from Australian union leaders.

They initially approached the SUA to represent them while in Australian waters. But the union rejected them as “foreign workers,” claiming “the union had enough to worry about as it was.” They were advised instead to form their own “foreign” union, the Indian Seamen’s Union in Australia (ISUiA), which the SUA supported.

Australian unions took a dismissive attitude to the Indians, not even inviting them to the *Hands off Indonesia* rally they organised in Sydney in April 1946.

Chinese and Indonesian seamen had faced a similar response and also formed separate unions.

This racism only weakened the union movement. The “foreign” workers were amongst the most class conscious workers in Australia. Malay, Indian, Chinese and Vietnamese seamen’s unions struck for equal pay in Australia and pledged support for the Indonesian republic.

One Indian striker explained: “This is not the first time I have been on strike. During the big strike in Calcutta when the Indian Seamen’s Union was first formed I went days without food. They killed some of the strikers and ever since then I have been true to Union principles.”

The “foreign workers” were among the best unionists and working class fighters and should have been welcomed into the unions—a lesson that remains important today.

Ebb and flow

The question of whether to release relief ships from the boycott divided the union movement. Relief ships ostensibly carried only humanitarian supplies and no arms.

In January 1946 the ACTU and NSW TLC suspended the strike and advocated the loading of relief ships while the WWF insisted on maintaining the ban.

The relief ships were discovered to be carrying munitions, and the militant unions defied the ACTU and reaffirmed support for the boycott, rather than trust Dutch promises.

In February Attorney-General Evatt convened a compulsory union conference to try to end the boycott.

Eventually unions agreed on the release of relief ships to Indonesia, provided that trade union monitors



Above: The SS Moreton Bay was on the ships chartered by the Dutch that were halted by the union ban

would accompany them to Java “to ensure that neither the vessel nor its cargo were used against the Indonesians,” a condition labelled “scandalous and insulting” by the Dutch.

But the union officials were under pressure from the Labor government to end the boycott without conditions. The strike came to an effective end in July 1946, when the ACTU and NSW TLC prevailed on the small coal lumpers’ union, which was unaffiliated to the WWF, to supply coal for Dutch ships in Sydney Harbour.

A year later in July 1947 the Dutch launched a “Police Action” aimed at crushing republican-held areas. Outrage followed.

More unions joined the boycott by refusing to work for Dutch forces or its shipping company, KPM.

Sydney University students in the Labor Club organised a demonstration at the offices of the Dutch Consulate-General, and were joined by a contingent of wharfies. The rally was attacked by NSW police, who arrested protesters. It was the first Australian student demonstration in support of an Asian independence struggle.

In August an ACTU conference re-issued the ban on the movement of all Dutch goods—not just those destined for Indonesia.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* railed against this “industrial warfare”. Then Opposition Leader Robert Menzies lamented that the unions were “dictating Australia’s foreign policy”.

But by now only token bans were possible because most Dutch ships had already left port.

The spirit of the boycott spread to Australian troops in Indonesia sup-

posed to be restoring Dutch rule after the defeat of Japan.

A letter signed by 80 soldiers in East Indonesia sent to the WWF claimed, “The overwhelming majority of our chaps have a tremendous amount of sympathy for these people here whose life is one of continuous squalor under the imperialists.”

The CPA had 4000 members in the military, of whom 1400 were in East Indonesia. They helped establish a pro-republican organisation in the Australian army and air force.

Australian troops encouraged Indonesian protesters and advised them on military strategy against the Dutch. Some of the Australian soldiers supported the Indonesians by distributing republican pamphlets and handing over their arms.

Conclusion

The Black Armada showed the power of workers’ strike action to fight imperialism and to force change despite the policies of the Australian government.

This tradition continued during the Vietnam War when wharfies imposed bans on the shipment of supplies to Australian troops on the Boonaroo and Jeparit in 1966.

As eye-witness Rupert Lockwood concludes in his history of the Black Armada: “Future historians may resolve that in this era the conscience of the Australian people found expression more often on the waterfront than in the nation’s legislatures.”

It shows how workers and trade unions can be a powerful ally for international solidarity, anti-imperialist struggles and the fight for a better world.

Understanding the rise and fall of Syriza

Syriza: Inside the labyrinth
By Kevin Ovenden,
Pluto Press

FROM JANUARY'S election, through all the twists and turns of the last six months, Kevin Ovenden has been a key source of English-language updates on the Syriza government and the monumental events taking place in Greece.

Now he has produced one of the first detailed accounts of the events that made the radical left's rise to government possible, and charting Syriza's rapid capitulation to EU-imposed austerity.

Syriza's commitment to negotiating within the European Union saw it accept brutal new austerity measures in July, worse than those it agreed to tear up after its election in January.

The failure of Syriza, held up as one of the best hopes for the radical left in decades, contains crucial lessons for all those committed to radical change.

Ovenden puts at the centre of his account not just the catastrophic economic collapse in Greece since 2009, and the austerity policies that worsened it, but a level of "social resistance, unmatched anywhere else in Europe".

The Greek working class staged 30 general strikes, along with hundreds of other localised strikes and struggles, in an effort to stop cuts to wages of one third and swinging cuts to public sector jobs, pensions and services.

The movement was not able to stop parliament passing the austerity packages. But it "blunted and slowed the pace of attack. And it had brought down one government after another".

Millions of Greeks had



Above: The hopes that Syriza could provide a model for the left to break through in Europe have soured

been part of five years of struggle, and the experience changed them and opened them up to new arguments from the left. This experience was the key to making the election of Syriza possible.

It also strengthened networks of trade union, social movement and left activists, who were aware that the election of Syriza would not be the end of the struggle, he writes, but that further battles were to come.

But the experience of mass struggles contained within them two potential political responses, he writes. One way to look to the election of Syriza as a way to give the radical left a chance at power for the first time.

"A second, minority, answer was provided fleetingly at the highpoints of the struggles themselves – developing new forms of democracy, challenging the old power centres for control, from the local environment to the national broadcaster."

The mass support for electing Syriza represents a stage in workers' consciousness where, "For most people the two

answers were not in opposition." But ultimately they do represent different strategies for social change.

The state

The strategy Syriza adopted, of taking power through the existing state and parliamentary institutions, has failed to end austerity.

Ovenden also foregrounds the international debate about Syriza as a model for the left taking power, laying bare the strategy it employed to do so.

He outlines how Syriza made increasing compromises and began moderating its policies as it prepared for power between 2012 and 2015.

One of his most illuminating chapters is on Syriza's compromise with the Greek "deep state". Any modern state has a bureaucracy committed to the interests of the rich and powerful which survives democratic changes of government, and can frustrate left-wing policies. But in Greece, Ovenden explains, the legacy of the civil war following WWII and military rule from 1967-74 has created a bloated military and police apparatus. This has produced continuing networks and attitudes inside the state bureaucracy with an especially right-wing, nationalist outlook.

On taking government, Syriza's strategy was to conciliate the "deep state" through giving the posts of Foreign Affairs, Police and Defence Ministers to right-wing figures outside the party. The effect of these measures was to reassure and encourage hard right elements in the military and police

forces. Tsipras even signed a deal in April to spend \$750 million modernising military planes, making a down payment of \$65 million at the same time as reducing the humanitarian measures Syriza had promised to deal with poverty.

Another useful chapter explains the growth of the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement, from the opposition to Islamophobia instilled by the anti-war movement of the early 2000s to the response to a series of racist panics engineered by successive governments. He highlights the courageous resistance of Pakistani and other immigrant groups in standing up to resist this racism. This dates particularly to 2012, when 15,000 mostly new migrants demonstrated following the round up and detention of thousands of undocumented migrants in a vicious police operation.

Even those who have followed the Syriza drama closely will find useful background in his book, from Syriza's pre-history in the path of Synaspismos, to the scale of the 2008 youth revolt to the history of the Greek state.

Ovenden's sympathies are clearly on the side of the anti-capitalist left, and he outlines how anti-capitalist measures like cancelling the debt, exiting the Euro and seizing the wealth of Greece's capitalists could chart an alternative route out of the crisis.

The realisation of this vision will rely on the "glimpse of a new way entirely of doing things", where workers take control of their workplaces into their own hands, seen fleetingly during the struggles against austerity, becoming generalised.

By James Supply

TURNBULL BACKS COAL OVER CLIMATE

By James Supple

MALCOLM TURNBULL'S climate credentials have taken another hit, after he praised coal as providing the "largest single part" of the global energy mix now and "for a very long time".

He also echoed comments a few days before from his Energy Minister, Josh Frydenburg, who declared there was a "strong moral case" for coal. The use of coal was necessary to, "lift hundreds of millions of people out of energy poverty" through providing electricity in places like India, he claimed.

Tony Abbott, who said coal was "good for humanity", would have been proud.

Turnbull was responding to an open letter, signed by 61 prominent Australians, calling for world leaders to put a moratorium on new coal mines on the agenda at December's global climate talks in Paris.

He dishonestly ignored the call for a global moratorium, to claim just stopping Australian coal exports would make not "one iota" of difference, because someone else would just step in to sell the coal.

Turnbull's defence of coal was nothing more than a narrowly veiled cover for protecting mining company profits. Coal exports were estimated to be worth \$40 billion last year. And the mining bosses are determined to keep expanding their profits, even as it takes the world towards climate disaster.

New coal mines being planned include Adani's massive Carmichael mine in Queensland and the Shenua mine in NSW's Liverpool Plains.

The Liberals are totally committed to the free market and corporate profits, meaning they are hamstringing in their ability to act on climate change.

Turnbull showed where his sympathies lie when he admitted, "The object is to make sure we have access to all of the energy we need at the cheapest possible price because energy is a major input." So the desire for cheap energy for business comes ahead of the transition to renewable energy we need to avert climate



catastrophe. Once again, profits come before everything else.

The truth is the world is on the road to disaster because of the continual expansion of carbon emissions and fossil fuel use, when the need to cut emissions is urgent. The years 2013 and 2014 were the equal highest for global emissions on record.

Renewables

The transition to renewable energy is too urgent to be left to the free market, whether through the Liberals' "Direct Action" or an Emissions Trading Scheme.

We don't leave the funding of basic services like schools or hospitals to the market, and for good reason. Nor should we leave the future of life on this planet to the whims of the corporate profiteers.

Despite the steady reduction in the cost of solar panels and wind farms, installing 100 per cent renewable energy remains more expensive, and less profitable, than relying on fossil fuels.

Climate research group Beyond Zero Emissions has estimated Australia could do it in a decade at the cost of \$40 billion a year. This kind of investment can only come from government.

Above: Turnbull, like other world leaders, is determined to put profits about the climate

We should invest in installing and driving down the cost of renewable energy, so that Australia can export renewables, instead of coal, to poorer countries like India where there is a need to expand energy use.

Replacing coal with renewable energy could generate thousands of jobs. One estimate by academics from Newcastle University found that manufacturing and installing solar and wind power would produce almost three times the number of jobs as mining and burning coal.

It is crucial that workers affected by the transition away from fossil fuels have job guarantees as part of this process.

It is only through building a movement that has the mass of working class people on its side that we will mobilise the power to force action on climate change. And ordinary people should not have to pay the price of action, in the face of the multi-billion dollar profits banks, mining and oil companies have made from fossil fuels.

The fight for action on climate change, and to transition from coal use, must also be a fight for jobs and to demand that the companies that have profited from destroying the environment are taxed to pay for it.

Turnbull's defence of coal was nothing more than a cover for protecting mining company profits