

# Solidarity

Issue No. 68 / July 2014

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## Stop work to stop the budget



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### SOCIAL MEDIA

Protest, ideas and social media: behind the hype

### IRAQ 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](http://www.solidarity.net.au/about-us) for more information on what we stand for.

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## Things they say

There are big differences in terms of skin colour and cultural background... They are only minor things but they have a very big impact on who we let into the country  
Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson interviewed on 3AW, isn't so keen on the human rights of refugees or migrants

I think everyone except the climate deniers is deeply concerned with the direction [Australia] is going  
Heather Zichal, the White House's chief climate adviser until last November

They [PNG] are a country that I love, I might say, but 150 years ago, they were still eating each other  
Liberal Senator Ian Macdonald, in the Senate inquiry into the incidents on Manus Island, revealing who is really responsible for the racism on Manus Island.

I've met with him before I'll meet with him again, I've had dinner with him before I'll have dinner with him again, this is what people in my position do  
Tony Abbott tries to explain away his meeting with Rupert Murdoch in New York

There is always, in my experience, those who attend these kind of rallies who are there unlawfully  
Nigel Hadgkiss, director of Abbott's building industry watchdog, explaining to Senate Estimates that the agency regularly undertakes surveillance of rallies

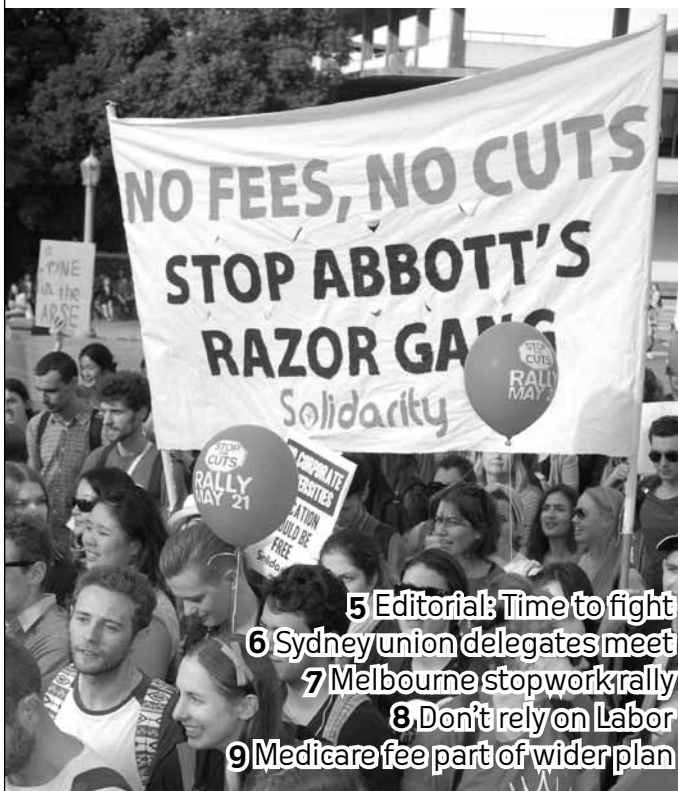
The worst piece of policy I have seen in Australia in my 27 years in Australia  
Stephen Park, Vice-Chancellor at the University of Canberra on the deregulation of university fees

Haven't they read Mr Hockey's speech? The age of entitlement is over. Cuts have to be made to the ABC in the Budget.  
Malcolm Turnbull, Communications Minister, and member of the parliamentary Friends of the ABC

# CONTENTS

## ISSUE 68 JULY 2014

### Fighting Abbott's budget



- 5 Editorial: Time to fight
- 6 Sydney union delegates meet
- 7 Melbourne stopwork rally
- 8 Don't rely on Labor
- 9 Medicare fee part of wider plan

### Features



- 16 25 years after Tiananmen Square  
Dave Sewell, Socialist Worker UK
- 18 Social media and social movements  
David Glanz
- 20 The Frontier wars Paddy Gibson

### 4 Inside the system

#### Reports

- 10 Labor and refugees
- 24 Uncovering the truth on Manus Island
- 11 Muckaty waste dump
- 22 Sydney Uni debates BDS
- 22 UTS staff strike back

#### International

- 12 Counter-revolution in Egypt
- 13 Iraq crisis is West's legacy
- 14 European elections
- 15 Thai military stage coup against democracy

#### Reviews

- 23 Dirty Secrets: Our ASIO files

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# INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

## No expense shared on hotels for the super-rich

IN THE aftermath of the economic crisis the super-rich paused their spending on extravagant hotels and holidays, anxious to avoid being caught out in luxury while others were seeing their lives destroyed.

Now spending on ultra-expensive holiday accommodation has rebounded with a vengeance. The rich are spending more than ever before.

The pattern is repeated across the world, with ever more extravagant hotels springing up to meet the demand. In December Rosewood London opened its Manor House Wing. Its six bedrooms and three living rooms, library and eight person dining room are accessible through a private street entrance and private elevator. The \$42,000 per night suite also comes with its own postcode.

The super-rich don't just want luxury hotels, they want them as soon as they snap their fingers. One Spanish hotel, the St. Regis Mardavall, got a call from a German man about the weather. After hearing from the receptionist that the sun was shining he booked the biggest suite available and said he'd be there within the hour. He had been circling above Spain in a private jet.

## Anti-homeless spikes appear in exclusive London suburbs

ANTI-HOMELESS SPIKES installed in London to remove "sleep sites" that the homeless use to shelter from the wind and rain have generated widespread outrage.

Thanks to austerity and cuts to benefits rough-sleeping has increased by 75 per cent over the past three years in the capital.

The spikes were installed on a ledge outside a Tesco supermarket in London's Regent Street as well as beside the doorway of a luxury apartment complex in Southwark in South London.

After activists covered the spikes in concrete and protesters threatened to converge on the store, Tesco agreed to remove them.

## Lifetime ripping off Spaniards forces out a royal



SPANISH KING Juan Carlos' recent abdication prompted celebration, as 20,000 people took to the streets of Madrid, alongside protests in 50 cities and towns across the country demanding a republic.

His decades of obscene extravagance enjoyed at the expense of ordinary Spaniards should not be forgotten.

Spain has been hit hard by the economic crisis since 2008, with unemployment at a shocking 26 per cent and ruthless government cutbacks. But in 2012 Juan Carlos caused a scandal by treating himself to a \$14,000 per day elephant hunting trip in Botswana, just weeks after saying he was "kept awake at night by the plight of Spain's youth unemployed".

This year his daughter Cristina was forced to appear in court over her husband's suspected money laundering and embezzlement of \$8 million in public funds.

It was only in 2013 that Juan Carlos thought to sell off his 40 metre yacht that cost taxpayers \$36,000 just to re-fuel. He never even disclosed his annual budget, paid for at taxpayers' expense, until 2011 when it came in at \$12 million a year.

Juan Carlos was only hoisted to the throne due to the wishes of Spain's fascist dictator General Franco in 1969.

Juan Carlos only maintained his popularity until the hunting incident through a media pact that prevented any reporting on his dodgy business dealings or affairs. He has avoided two separate paternity suits due to his royal status conferring immunity from prosecution. After 40 years on the throne, Spain's economic crisis has seen him as exposed for what he was all along—a greedy parasite.

## Jobless pregnant women to be denied income

PREGNANT WOMEN have been refused exemption from the Coalition's changes to welfare that could see under-30s go six months without support.

Under the current system a pregnant woman is exempt from Centrelink job-seeking obligations once they are six weeks away from giving birth. The fact that 2600 women claimed this exemption in 2011 gives some indication of the scale of devastation that would be wrought by throwing a comparable number of expecting mothers off any form of welfare for months.

When questioned by the *Guardian* as to whether pregnant women would now face the same draconian treatment as other under-30s a spokeswoman for Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews refused to rule it out. The spokeswoman described it as "encouraging parents to participate in the workforce".

Research and writing by  
Adam Adelpour

Send suggestions for INSIDE  
THE SYSTEM to [solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

## Boss paid workers in pizza

THE OWNER of two Melbourne pizza restaurants has been hit with \$335,000 in fines after paying over 100 young workers in pizza and fizzy drink. Ruby Chand runs the two restaurants as part of the La Porchetta franchise.

Over a period of four years 111 young kitchen hands, cooks and waiters were underpaid by over \$250,000, receiving less than the minimum wage and having annual leave entitlements withheld. This appalling exploitation of workers, some teenagers, was exposed after a complaint from a parent.

Chand claimed that staff received half-price pizza and soft drink and that this was "offset" against their wages and entitlements. The business had also made use of government training schemes to claim more than \$45,000. Chand's companies, Bound for Glory Enterprises Pty Ltd and Zillion Zenith International Pty Ltd, were required to back pay wages in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

## Chaplaincy program linked to homophobia

ABBOTT'S SCHOOL chaplaincy program will cost \$240 million over four years. Previously schools had the option of employing secular student welfare workers or religious chaplains. Now the funding will be available to employ chaplains only. Some chaplain providers have been linked to extreme homophobia.

Access Ministries provides chaplains for over 300 Victorian schools. Recently it was revealed that one of their volunteers distributed "bible-zines" to year 6 students that said homosexuality was a sin, telling those who think they are gay never to act on it.

# EDITORIAL

## As budget anger grows: It's time to strike back at Abbott

ABBOTT'S BUDGET is the most unpopular in a generation, with greater public opposition even than the horror budget John Howard delivered straight after his election in 1996.

The Liberals have utterly failed to convince people about the need for cuts. Their "deficit crisis" is widely seen as a fraud.

The Senate could easily block the whole budget and force a new election. But both Labor leader Bill Shorten and The Greens' Christine Milne have dismissed this idea. The Greens are even considering passing the increase in petrol tax. They are both too committed to playing the parliamentary game and to ensuring stability for big business.

But the Senate, even after Clive Palmer takes the balance of power in July, could still block some of the worst individual measures in the budget. The more anger explodes onto the streets the more pressure will be on the Senators to stick to their guns and stop Abbott's attacks.

The fact that the unions have started to mobilise is a major step forward. Melbourne has led the way, with at least 20,000 joining a week-day rally on 12 June. Construction workers, among others, walked out on strike to attend.

Unions in Melbourne and Sydney have called another day of action on Sunday 6 July. Union members and all other activists need to do everything we can to make sure these are the biggest demonstrations against the budget yet.

We need to take material into every suburb, workplace and classroom to make sure that everyone who hates Abbott's budget knows this is the place to be.

If there are large organised union contingents this can be a springboard to further union stopwork action.

But large weekend demonstrations will not be enough on their own to stop Abbott. We need a repeat of the early period of the Your Rights at Work campaign, when the unions organised mass week-day rallies against WorkChoices. These saw workers take strike action in their tens of thousands against the last Liberal government. In late 2005 around 200,000 people in Melbourne and 30,000 in Sydney (as well as others across other Sydney venues) joined the largest of the days of action.

Abbott is ruling for big business



**Above: Over 20,000 joined a union week-day rally in Melbourne to send a message to Abbott**

and the rich. His budget is widely seen as unfair, with workers and the poor hit hardest. The blueprint for his budget agenda was drawn up by the Business Council of Australia, big business' peak lobby group, in the government's Commission of Audit. Strike action hits business where it hurts, cutting off their profits and potentially costing them millions.

Ongoing strikes can shut down the country and create the kind of political crisis that could bring Abbott to heel.

### Union leaders

It's clear that union leaders will not agree to organise further stopwork action unless there is serious pressure to do so from union members and the wider working class.

In Sydney union leaders tried to brush aside any discussion of industrial action against the budget at the delegates meeting held on the same day as Melbourne's rally.

Instead of trying to stop Abbott's budget attacks before he can implement them, the ACTU is simply hoping the worst attacks get blocked in the Senate, and waiting for the next election in two and half years' time to vote Abbott out.

But if we fail to mobilise the anger when it exists now to deal Abbott a fatal blow, it leaves him plenty of time to recover before the elec-

tion. When the unions wound down the fight against John Howard during his first term, he was able to stage a comeback and went on to win the next three elections.

And even if Abbott is booted out, the ACTU strategy would mean a repeat of what happened at the end of the Rights at Work campaign back in 2007. This saw the union leaders wind down the mass demonstrations in order to focus on an electoral campaign in marginal seats. When Labor was elected, Kevin Rudd and then Julia Gillard were able to thumb their noses at the unions and all those who voted for them, and carry on with a watered down version of the Liberals' agenda of cuts, attacks on workers' rights and neo-liberalism.

Beneath its fighting rhetoric against Abbott, Labor continues to agree with idea the some budget cuts are necessary (see p8). Just a year ago, it was a Labor government that forced through cuts to single parents' payments and universities. Unless we build a stronger movement and stronger unions able to fight for change, re-electing Labor will change little.

Large, angry demonstrations on 6 July can help to build the pressure for further action. We also need an avalanche of motions at union meetings and signatures on the open letters pressing for union strike action. It's time to build the fightback.

.....  
**We need a repeat of the early period of the Your Rights at Work campaign, when the unions organised mass week-day rallies against WorkChoices**



# Sydney unions begin moving to fight budget

By James Supple

UNIONISTS FROM across Sydney gathered in a mass delegates meeting on 12 June to launch a major rally against the budget for Sunday 6 July. This is a chance to bring the kind of social weight to the fight against the budget that we need—and which could see far larger numbers on the streets even than at Sydney's 10,000-strong March in May.

Over 500 people from across the union movement gathered at the meeting, with good contingents of rank-and-file members from the MUA, firefighters union and the CFMEU, as well as NTEU members. The involvement of the unions in fighting the budget is a major step forward.

But the conservatism of senior union officials was also on full display. The turnout paled in comparison to the early days of the Your Rights at Work campaign, when the unions packed out three separate venues across Sydney. Many unions simply sent a delegation of officials from the union office.

Unions NSW did practically all it could to avoid discussion of what the unions might actually do to fight the budget. Most of the meeting was taken up with a long and often dull summary of the budget measures.

It was clear that Unions NSW's main focus was on re-electing Labor at the next election, instead of fighting to stop Abbott implementing the budget full stop.

Lecturer Shaun Wilson referred to a campaign focused on the election in "two and a half years' time". Unions NSW Secretary Mark Lennon, introducing the official resolution, told delegates it "commits us to a long campaign", code for a focus on the next election.

## Push for strike action

Debate on the resolution was kept until the final minutes. Speakers from the MUA and firefighters union both gently raised their support for a campaign involving industrial action against the budget.

But when Susan Price from the NTEU was allowed to speak, she both called for industrial action and tried to put an amendment to the motion, to call on the ACTU to organise a nationwide day of industrial action. Mark Lennon was having none of it, moving to close the speaking list and refusing



**Above: Over 500 people packed the Sydney union delegates meeting**

to put the amendment to a vote.

But the response from the floor showed it had strong support. The room exploded into uproar when the chair tried to brush the amendment aside and simply put the original resolution. CFMEU delegate Dennis McNamara called out, "We're holding a democratic meeting. An amendment has been put and has to be voted on".

The original motion was declared carried, but with barely a third of the room actually voting in favour of it. In the confusion most delegates didn't vote at all.

With even a basic level of rank-and-file organisation across different unions, it might have been possible to win the meeting's support for industrial action. This brings home the need to push inside the unions for a much more active fight against Abbott and his hated budget.

The mood in the working class and the wider community, demonstrated in the rallies already held against the budget in the past month, from March in May to Medicare to the student rallies, shows many are willing to fight. We are going to need to build much stronger socialist and rank-and-file organisation in the unions to force this to happen.

Solidarity and Socialist Alliance have initiated an open letter to Unions NSW calling for a week-day stopwork rally. You

can read the open letter at this link <http://chn.ge/10lhHTL>. To sign please send your name and union position to [jsupple05@gmail.com](mailto:jsupple05@gmail.com)

**The response from the floor showed stopwork action had strong support**

**RALLY TO**

# BUST THE BUDGET

**SUNDAY JULY 6**

## Sydney

1pm Sydney Town Hall

## Melbourne

1pm Trades Hall,  
54 Victoria Street, Carlton South

## Brisbane

11am Queens Park, Cnr George and Elizabeth Sts, City

## Canberra

12pm Parliament House

## Perth

1pm Stirling Gardens

# Melbourne unions stop work to stop Abbott

By Chris Breen

MELBOURNE GOT a taste of the power that could stop Abbott when over 20,000 workers joined a week-day stopwork rally to bust the budget on 12 June.

Marchers took over the centre of Melbourne, stretching for almost a kilometre through city streets.

Construction workers led the way with building sites in the city shut down so workers could attend. Some stopped work to come from as far away as the Latrobe Valley.

As Trades Hall Secretary Brian Boyd told the rally, "Building workers are here in defiance of the ABCC".

Building industry watchdog Director Nigel Hadgkiss had blustered that this was illegal strike action and those attending without their employer's permission, "could be brought before the courts".

But construction unions have defied these threats before. Tens of thousands stopped work against WorkChoices under John Howard, and 10,000 struck again last year following the collapse of a wall on Grocon's Swanston St site that killed three people.

The NUW and AMWU also brought large contingents, with the AMWU saying it had brought 20 buses and 2000 members to the rally.

"I have come out today because the budget is an attack on workers, elderly, the sick, the poor, the unemployed," AMWU delegate Stephen Wise told *Solidarity*.

"We need more of this, it will send the message clearly to them that people aren't happy and will stay unhappy while this budget is in place."

Most other unions sent only small numbers of delegates or union officials. Even amongst the stronger unions, it was not an "all out" call. Stephen told *Solidarity*, "There's several of us here representing our workplace, but the employers were very nasty in their attitude towards the rally and people attending."

The AMWU tried to get workers in bargaining periods, who can take legal strike action, to attend. But this effort to work within the law backfired when one company took



the union to the Fair Work tribunal arguing the action wasn't protected because the notices were defective as it was "political" strike action.

To bring out hundreds of thousands, as the unions did in Melbourne over WorkChoices, we will need mass defiance of the law.

The 12 June was the largest rally against the budget to date, and showed that it is possible to defy the law and stage illegal strike action to fight Abbott. The union fightback against the budget has now begun.

But to escalate the pressure on Abbott we will need larger and broader stopwork action. This kind of action has the power to shut down workplaces and cost business millions of dollars.

## Next steps

Trades Hall has now called a weekend rally against the budget on Sunday 6 July together with VCOSS, Get Up, Council of Churches, Trades Hall, March Australia Melbourne, Environment Victoria, and Friends Of The Earth.

The slogan "Bust the budget" has

**Above: 20,000 workers pack the streets around Trades Hall in Melbourne**

been replaced with the weaker "Our community counts—march for a fairer Australia".

Nonetheless a huge turnout on the day will add to the political pressure on the government and the Senate, and give confidence to unions to take further strike action.

Union activists are circulating an open letter to Trades Hall initiated by Solidarity and Socialist Alliance, calling for a mass delegates meeting to plan a state-wide strike against the budget.

It now has the signatures of over 250 union members, including organisers and officials.

Mass delegates meetings were called to build the huge strikes against John Howard's Workchoices legislation.

For the kind of fight we will need to bust Abbott's budget, we need to keep pushing within the unions for a mass delegates meeting to deliver an all-out strike as the next step after Sunday 6 July.

For a copy of the letter to circulate in your workplace, email [melbourne@solidarity.net.au](mailto:melbourne@solidarity.net.au)

**The rally showed that it is possible to defy the law and stage illegal strike action to fight Abbott**

# Don't rely on Labor to fix Abbott's budget blows

By Amy Thomas

ABBOTT'S OBSCENE rule-for-the-rich budget has given Labor a new lease on life.

Newspoll has them six points ahead in two-party preferred terms, a 6.5 per cent increase on last year's federal election.

It's not just their vote that has recovered. Their vocal opposition to key budget measures like the Medicare co-payment, university fees, the petrol excise increase and denying the dole to under 30s, has rebuilt some hope and enthusiasm that Labor will be better in power and unwind Abbott's attacks.

We'll all be celebrating if the slogan "one term Tony" becomes a reality. But if we want to kick out Abbott *and* his policies, we can't rely on Labor.

Firstly, Labor broadly accepts the political and economic logic behind Abbott's budget strategy, and unchallenged, will deliver a fundamentally similar neo-liberal diet of cuts.

We still live with Howard's legacy—the GST, the bulk of WorkChoices, the ban on same-sex marriage, watered down Native Title—because the previous Labor government kept it all in place.

Secondly, waiting until mid-2016 to kick Abbott out at the ballot box risks demobilising the fight against him, letting demoralisation set in, and giving the Coalition breathing space to defend their agenda.

In 1996, the anger at John Howard's first budget was left to dissipate when the unions abandoned an industrial campaign against it. As a result Howard scraped back in 1998.

The only guarantee of *real* change is the strength of the movement against Abbott in the streets and the workplaces, and whether it is willing to take the fight to Labor, too.

## Labor's austerity

Just voting Labor in will mean a slower program of cuts. The evidence was there for those who wanted to hear it in Shorten's budget reply speech: "What the Australian public expect are consistent structural changes aimed at the medium and long term...Australia does not have a budget emergency, as the government claims, but it has a budget task."

Shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen has made a point of stressing his com-



**Above: The campaign against Abbott's budget has to go beyond simply hoping for a better government to replace Abbott**

mitment to cutbacks, saying "Labor understands that in challenging times, budgets need tough choices" and boasting that Labor cut \$180 billion in spending while in power.

Labor itself promotes the idea that the budget has to be returned to surplus through cuts. As recently as 2012, it sacrificed single parents on the altar of the budget balance, cutting their payments by forcing them onto NewStart. Gillard also took the axe to university funding, and Kevin Rudd raised the pension age from 65 to 67.

Labor is not above picking and choosing from Abbott's horror budget, signalling they'll support his "green army", a proposal where young people will be paid less than the minimum wage for environmental projects like picking up rubbish.

Labor has been committed to neo-liberal economic management since Hawke and Keating, and has continually betrayed its supporters in power.

## Labor and the fightback

Shorten has told the Labor caucus it needs to appeal to the "white hot anger" at the budget. Yet at the same time Labor will neither block supply (the budget funding bills Abbott needs) nor call for the protests and strikes against Abbott that we need now.

Labor MP Tim Watts made it clear Labor was more concerned with parliamentary respectability and managing capitalism, saying, "any opposition that uses the Senate to block

supply would be creating a noose for its own neck should it ever form government and not control the upper house itself."

Labor wouldn't offer support to the March in March or March in May. The unions will be the key to mobilising workers to fight Abbott, yet Bill Shorten is seeking to cut ties between the unions and Labor and dump the connection with working class politics.

Mass demonstrations, social movements and most importantly, strikes, have the power to force Abbott to back down. Workers can stand in the way of the business profits that are so important to Abbott and his corporate friends.

In John Howard's last term, union leaders turned the focus of the Your Rights at Work campaign from "fighting" to "voting". The very strength that could have truly buried WorkChoices was held back for a focus on marginal seats campaigning and keeping quiet about Labor's shortcomings. That meant when Labor was elected, the pressure that could have forced them to act had already subsided.

None of us—pensioners, the sick, the disabled, workers—can afford for the same thing to happen again. Welfare rights, support for the disabled, education funding, retiring before we're 70—it will all have to be forced on Labor.

Strikes and the fightback now will decide whether the outcome is genuine change, or Abbott-lite.

.....  
**As recently as 2012, Labor sacrificed single parents on the altar of the budget balance**



# Fightback campaign can block the \$7 GP fee

By Jean Parker

THE LIBERALS' proposed \$7 Medicare co-payment is among the most hated element of Abbott's budget.

It's clear it will force the poor to choose between basic necessities and visiting the doctor. Even before it has passed into law, and a year before the government plans to implement it, the co-payment is already stopping the poor visiting the doctor.

Some GPs in Western Sydney have sent SMS messages to all their patients to reassure them that the \$7 fee is not yet in place.

Since the budget some bulk-billing clinics have seen 30 per cent, and one as much as 50 per cent, reduction in patients according to the AMA.

Brenda Murrison, a Medical Centre director from Bunbury, south of Perth, told the media, "We have received many distressed calls from patients who cannot afford to pay the \$7, they don't want to come in until they check they won't have to pay it and we have had many patients in tears at the thought."

The government has tried to defend the \$7 fee as a small price to pay, with Treasurer Joe Hockey telling us it was only the price of "a couple of beers".

## Broader agenda

But the charge is the first step in Health Minister Peter Dutton's broader plan to privatise our health system.

This vision, articulated clearly in the Commission of Audit, is to create a two-tier system. Most people would be forced to pay for private health insurance to cover GP visits, with Medicare becoming a poor-quality safety-net only for those at the very bottom.

Dutton is explicit about this. He has repeatedly said that GP bulk-billing should only be for those on the lowest of incomes, claiming, "Bulk-billing was intended to be for patients who could not afford to pay a fee" and describing current rates of bulk-billing (80 per cent) as "not sustainable".

Dutton also wants to remove the current ban on private health insurers from covering GP fees, according to a *Sunday Age* report citing private meetings held with senior health sector figures.

This would lead to an ever more unequal health system, with some clinics able to massively increase their



**Above: Opposition to the GP co-payment at March in May**

fees in exchange for higher quality services.

Letting private health insurers into GP clinics would force up the cost of GP services due to the private health companies looking to boost profits. This would open primary healthcare in Australia to the dynamics of the US health system.

The US spends more on health-care than any other developed nation, nearly double what Australia spends as a proportion of GDP. Yet in 2008 41 per cent of Americans were struggling with medical bills and tens of thousands in medical debt. This market madness is both expensive and lethal, and must be resisted every step of the way.

Already, Medibank Private is trialling a system in Queensland where it funds "administrative costs" for GPs. In return its members receive services not normally available, such as guaranteed appointments within 24 hours and after-hours home visits.

Inevitably the Queensland trial will be ammunition for the Liberals in their struggle to get private insurers

into GP services.

## Defeating the GP fee

Given the depth of community opposition to the GP fee, the changes could well be blocked in the Senate.

Labor, The Greens and the Palmer United Party all oppose the plan. However until just before the budget Palmer was equivocal saying, "this is something that has to be looked at".

Terry Barnes, who first floated the co-payment idea in January, has suggested amendments that might help the Liberals get Palmer's support. He proposes a one-off \$70 annual increase to the pension as compensation for the cost of the ten visits before concession card holders get the fee waived.

But the Liberals' wider plans for the demise of bulk-billing will cause far greater pain, eating into the incomes of workers and the poor over time.

Public health is too important to be left to manoeuvres and amendments in the Senate. We need to keep mobilising to defend Medicare until we can claim a definite victory against the co-payment and the user-pays model. It is only the movement on the streets and in workplaces that can ensure that bulk-billing is here to stay, and fight for it to be extended, not whittled down.

A defeat for the GP fee in the Senate would be a good early victory against Abbott's budget. But it would not end the Liberals' plans to dismantle what remains of Australia's public health system.

As President of the Doctors' Reform Society Con Costa has argued, even without implementing the co-payment, the debate itself has already weakened bulk-billing by creating the sense that eventually all GP visits will be user-pays.

The more prominent the issue on the streets, the more pressure on the likes of Palmer to vote against any co-payment.

The defeat of the co-payment will put us in a stronger position to keep private health insurers out of primary healthcare, and also to expose the existing role of private insurance in our hospitals, specialists and pharmaceuticals.

It is part of the fight for a genuinely universal health system where health needs come before corporate greed.

# Labor caucus backs offshore processing but there's cracks in the ranks

By Ian Rintoul

SHAMEFULLY BUT not surprisingly, on 17 June, a motion proposing that parliamentary Labor oppose the offshore processing of asylum seekers lost "on the voices".

The motion that the party "shall no longer support the transfer of asylum seekers by Australia to Manus Island or Nauru and shall call for the detention centres in those places to be closed down forthwith", was moved by Melissa Parke and Anna Burke.

An alternative motion, moved by Shadow Immigration spokesperson Richard Marles and seconded by Labor right Senator Sam Dastyari, calling on the Abbott government to strive to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all persons at the Manus Island detention centre and that "all asylum seekers should be afforded safe, dignified and humane conditions while awaiting refugee status determinations", was then carried on the voices.

Considering the murder of Reza Barati, the absolute cruelty of Manus and Nauru and the brutal bashing of protesting asylum seekers on Christmas Island, the call for Tony Abbott "to strive" to ensure the well-being of asylum seekers on Manus Island is nothing less than pathetic.

Having re-introduced offshore processing when it was in office, the Labor leadership has been absolutely craven in the face of Abbott and Morrison's Operation Sovereign Borders. The Shadow Immigration Minister used his May speech at the National Press Club to insist that Labor would stick with offshore processing. At the same time, Marles farcically declared that modern Labor was driven by the values of "compassion, fairness and generosity".

Only a week before the vote, Labor leader Bill Shorten very publicly proclaimed that Labor would remain committed to offshore processing.

But the truth is the Labor leadership is under pressure. That a vote against offshore processing was even considered so early in Labor's time in opposition is an indication of the discontent among Labor's own membership and of the growing community and institutional opposition.

There are now at least seven federal Labor MPs and a number of state Labor politicians who have openly opposed offshore processing. Those numbers can only grow.



**Above: Breaking Labor from the bi-partisan support for offshore processing and mandatory detention must be a goal of the refugee rights movement**

When Labor was in opposition last time, it took eight years for Labor to shift towards a humanitarian refugee policy and ten years for the Parliamentary Labor Party to vote against any aspect of John Howard's anti-refugee policies.

In the run up to the caucus vote a petition, coordinated through Darwin's refugee advocacy group, DASSAN, with over 4000 signatures calling for Labor to oppose offshore processing was presented and/or emailed to Labor MPs and Senators.

The Victorian Labor conference in May voted unanimously against offshore processing. A similar resolution will be put to the NSW state conference in July.

A meeting of the NSW Young Labor Left controversially resolved that the group would "collectively and openly" withdraw its support from the campaigns of any Labor parliamentary candidate that does not publicly declare their opposition to the mandatory detention and offshore processing of asylum seekers.

The increasingly active support for Unions for Refugees is particularly encouraging.

The obvious cracks in Labor's ranks, so early, are promising.

That doesn't mean that closing Manus Island and Nauru is dependent on changing Labor's policies or that changing Labor's policies can be or should be the focus of the refugee movement.

The Labor leadership will have to be dragged behind a vibrant refugee campaign that directly confronts Abbott and Morrison and shifts public opinion.

Nor do we have to wait for Labor; substantial change was won from the Howard government despite the Labor leadership in the early 2000s. But breaking the bi-partisan support for offshore processing has to be one political goal of the refugee movement. This means building a campaign oriented to winning Labor's base in the unions and the working class to fight Labor's policy, as part and parcel of the campaign to beat Abbott and Morrison.

## Morrison unleashes savage attack on Christmas Island asylum seekers

ON CHRISTMAS Island, where over 1000 men, women and children are earmarked to be sent offshore, Scott Morrison unleashed the Serco riot squad on peacefully protesting asylum seekers in early June. They were sitting-in to mark the 100 days since Reza Barati's death. Heads were split open, and at least five had their wrists

broken; one asylum seeker's wrist was so badly twisted that a pin from a previous injury was ruptured from the bone. Morrison chillingly explained that the injuries were inflicted on the asylum seekers because they displayed "non-compliant behaviour".

Don't expect an inquiry into that violence either.

# Muckaty will fight nuclear waste dump all the way

By Paddy Gibson

WARLMANPA PEOPLE fighting against the Commonwealth government's attempts to dump nuclear waste on their land are intensifying their campaign, as a legal challenge to the proposal is heard in the Federal Court.

More than 300 people marched through the outback town of Tennant Creek in Central Australia on 25 May, a week before the opening of the court case, marking seven years since the nomination of a site on the Muckaty Aboriginal Land Trust for a nuclear dump by the Northern Land Council (NLC) in 2007.

The rally delivered a defiant message that the community was ready to take direct action to stop the waste dump, regardless of the outcome of the court proceedings.

Muckaty Traditional Owner Penny Phillips received the largest cheer of the day when she told the crowd, "I'm ready to block the road!"

Local Labor MLA Gerry McCarthy pledged he would join picket lines that "no one will be able to cross".

The Darwin branch of the Maritime Union of Australia was well represented at the rally, with Secretary Thomas Mayor and other delegates traveling more than 1000 kilometres to be there. They also pledged to join picket lines and refuse to handle any nuclear waste bound for Muckaty.

Mayor also delivered solidarity greetings from a recent Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Indigenous conference. The ACTU have a position of support for any trade unionist refusing to co-operate with the construction of a nuclear dump at Muckaty. This resolution was passed in 2010, following numerous speaking tours of Warlmanpa people to unionised workplaces and union conferences right across Australia.

## Radioactive racism

The nuclear industry in Australia has oppressed Aboriginal people from its inception. Aboriginal groups have long fought against uranium mines—from Roxby Downs to Jabiluka. Nuclear bombs were tested by the British at Maralinga while Aboriginal people were still out on the lands, leading to catastrophic health effects which are still being felt today.

The British gifted a "research" reactor to the Australian government, set



**Above: More than 300 marched through Tennant Creek against the waste dump, including MUA members from Darwin**

up at Lucas Heights south of Sydney, in exchange for the rights to test these nuclear bombs. Lucas Heights allows Australia's rulers to confidently sit as part of the global nuclear club. It is spent fuel from Lucas Heights that would initially be dumped at Muckaty. But political leaders in both the ALP and Liberal party have spoken openly about their desires for a remote dump that could accept nuclear waste from across the world.

The nomination of Muckaty by the NLC took place under the draconian Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act (CRWMA), designed by the Howard government to target Aboriginal lands.

The NLC only ever received the consent of one small family group with interests in Muckaty, ignoring hundreds of Aboriginal people opposed to the nomination. In his opening submissions to the Federal Court, Dr Donoghue, a barrister representing the Commonwealth, argued that the nomination of Muckaty should be allowed to progress regardless of whether it was found the NLC had carried out their obligations to gain consent from Traditional Owners.

Donoghue said that successive Commonwealth governments had tried and failed to establish nuclear dumps on remote lands, due to campaigns led by Aboriginal people and consistent litigation. For that reason, the CRWMA had been explicitly crafted to deny people rights to appeal.

The CRWMA suspends Aborigi-

nal Heritage legislation, allows for the compulsory acquisition of Aboriginal lands surrounding the nominated site and tries to foreclose any legal challenge to a nomination by prohibiting appeals on the grounds of procedural fairness.

Disgracefully, the compensation package for the nomination is set to come in the form of \$12 million paid into a charitable trust, to be invested in service provision for local Aboriginal people. Projects earmarked for funding include road construction, housing maintenance and the provision of 30 scholarships by the Commonwealth Department of Education.

This offer came just months before Howard launched the NT Intervention, which viciously cut funds from remote Aboriginal communities.

Young Warlmanpa leader Kylie Sambo told a press conference outside the Federal Court: "Roads, housing, education; these are all things we as Australians should have access to, without having to accept a nuclear dump... policies like the NT Intervention and this nuclear dump show clearly we still suffer racism in our own lands".

Warlmanpa people opposed to the dump have mobilised strongly around the court hearings, marching to the Tennant Creek courthouse for the first day of proceedings, painting their bodies to dance when the court visited an outstation at Muckaty and fronting national and international media with their message that the fight will only intensify if the Commonwealth tries to push ahead with their plans.

**Muckaty Traditional Owner Penny Phillips received the largest cheer of the day when she told the crowd, "I'm ready to block the road!"**



# Sisi presidency sign of Egypt's advancing counter-revolution

By Feiyi Zhang

ABDEL FATTAH EL-Sisi's recent "win" in Egypt's Presidential elections and the jailing of key activists are signs of the advancing counter-revolution.

Sisi, former head of the armed forces, wants to co-opt support for the Egyptian revolution and shore up support for the return to military power.

But a dismal voter turnout, continuing protests and his inability to address economic inequality show that the counter-revolution is far from complete.

## Crackdown on dissent

In the lead-up to the presidential election, the military ramped up a crackdown on dissent.

There are now an estimated 40,000 political prisoners in Egypt's jails. It is estimated that 1000 protesters, mainly Muslim Brotherhood members, have been killed since the downfall of the Brotherhood government in July last year.

Mahienour el-Massry, a leading member of the Revolutionary Socialists, has been jailed for two years for protesting the murder of political blogger Khaled Said by police.

Leading activist Abdel Fattah was recently sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for attending a protest, without his defence team even being able to attend the trial.

Their imprisonment follows the outlawing of protest movements. On the same day that death sentences were announced for 683 Muslim Brotherhood supporters in April, a court banned the secular April 6 youth movement.

The ban shows how Sisi wants to isolate and crush the revolutionary left. Police attacked a press conference to launch a solidarity campaign for the release of Mahienour el-Massry. Afterwards activists formed a human chain of protesters holding banners along the coast road.

"Within minutes we were attacked by the police led by Nasser al-Abd, head of the secret police in Alexandria," Revolutionary Socialist Taher Muktar told Socialist Worker.

"He is well-known as being the police chief who led attacks on demonstrations and protests under Mubarak. They arrested me and 14 other protesters and sexually harassed some of the women.



**Above: A protest in Egypt against the protest law and demanding freedom for Mahienour el-Massry**

"They assaulted us in the street, beating us with the back of guns and sticks and fists. They stole money, mobiles and other belongings, and held us for six hours."

However Mahienour and her solidarity campaign remain resolute. In a recent letter from her prison cell she refused to beg for amnesty and said "The regime is the one who should ask for amnesty from the people".

Leading trade unionists from the Ministry of Labour, Petrotrade, Misr Spinning in Mahalla, Nasr Cars, Steam Boilers Company, teachers, electricity workers and public transport workers' unions joined the launch of Mahienour's solidarity campaign. Many of these workers have led important strikes in recent years.

The ability of workers to mobilise against the crackdown will be critical to stopping the counter-revolution. It was a militant strike wave in 2011 that was the nail in the coffin of Mubarak. The workers movement is not on the offensive at the moment but it hasn't yet been broken.

## Electoral sham

El-Sisi hoped the presidential election would boost his popular credentials and democratic legitimacy. Sisi was initially talking about an 80 per cent voter turnout but now even government claims of 47 per cent turnout seem unlikely. This shows real disillusionment with Sisi and the election process.

The state went to extreme lengths to avoid humiliation. Polling stations stayed open an extra day and public

sector workers were given the day off to vote.

"Public sector workers were told they would have 500 Egyptian pounds taken from their wages if they didn't vote," said Revolutionary Socialist Wassim Wagdy. For many, this would amount to a month's pay.

El-Sisi's only opponent was left nationalist Hamdeen Sabahi. The much publicised 93 per cent for el-Sisi and 3 per cent for Sabahi doesn't tell the real story. Official figures showed several polling stations registering zero votes for Sabahi. This led to an outpouring of complaints from people saying they had voted for him there and asking, "What happened to our votes?" There were multiple reports of electoral officers falling asleep at the booths and votes for Sabahi found in toilets and on the streets.

Sisi does have real support from a section of society who want stability after three years of turmoil. But a recent poll shows a much smaller approval rating than the vote would indicate. Some 45 per cent view el-Sisi unfavourably, compared to 54 per cent approval.

The Revolutionary Socialists argued for a vote for Sabahi as a way to expose Sisi's agenda. Millions of people did not support Sisi and fall for his propaganda. Much of the Egyptian youth also seemed to boycott the elections.

The counter-revolution is on the offensive. But Sisi is not as powerful as he would like to be.

See <http://bit.ly/1uE7tBb> for a solidarity motion to move in your union

**In the lead up to the election, the military ramped up a crackdown on dissent**

# Iraq's crisis and divisions created by the West

By James Supple

THE DRAMATIC capture of Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, by sectarian extremists is the direct product of the US occupation and its imposition of divide-and-rule sectarianism.

A succession of smaller towns also fell in June as fighters continued to march toward Baghdad.

In nine years of occupation the US spent an estimated \$1 trillion on its war in Iraq. The real cost was up to a million deaths, and a country destroyed and divided.

Much of the media coverage has portrayed the offensive by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a Sunni Muslim extremist group, as a product of the war in Syria.

It fact its growth in Iraq is the direct result of the US policy of stirring up sectarian divisions to impose control. Its successes also suggest it has been joined by local Sunni militias.

Before the US occupation, inter-marriage between Sunnis and Shiites was common, and they mixed and prayed together in the same communities.

But in the face of a growing Iraqi resistance movement against the occupation from 2004, the US encouraged political parties and militias based on Iraq's Sunni, Shia and Kurdish groupings.

The US armed rival sectarian militias that carried out a wave of terror. This was designed to undercut the growth of any united national resistance movement.

It was eventually able to co-opt a number of Sunni tribal groups to support the occupation through the "Sunni awakening" movement, based on promises of inclusion in the Iraqi government and a share of state resources.

## Maliki's sectarianism

Nouri al-Maliki, whose government was established under the occupation, has become a vicious Shiite sectarian who has targeted the Sunni Muslim population in particular. Sunnis have been effectively excluded from the government.

Maliki has refused to spend the country's oil wealth rebuilding infrastructure shattered by the war in Sunni areas. Thousands have been arbitrarily arrested and tortured. When a non-violent Sunni protest movement against Maliki developed in late 2012, the government responded by killing



**Above: Iraqis fleeing Mosul in their thousands as ISIS advanced**

dozens of people.

According to Iraq analyst Michael Schwartz, "As the government has escalated its repression of these protests, what is essentially a guerrilla war has developed."

These resentments have provided the space for ISIS to expand its influence. But, according to Schwartz, "most often it is not the dominant force in any locality".

The Iraqi army in the north simply disintegrated in the face of attack, abandoning uniforms and weapons to ISIS. This reflects the impact of divided sectarian loyalties inside the army. Up to 30,000 soldiers simply turned and ran in the face of the assault. This is a huge embarrassment for the US, which invested billions of dollars to train and equip the army.

## Powder keg

Iraq now faces the frightening prospect of a full-scale ethnic civil war. Senior cleric Ayatollah Sistani has called on Shiites to take up arms against the Sunni rebellion.

The Kurds in Iraq's north have also seized the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, which they have long hoped to set up as a Kurdish capital, after government troops there abandoned their posts.

It also threatens to draw in the major regional powers. Shiite Iran has

sent 2000 initial troops into Iraq to prop up Maliki's government.

ISIS has received backing from Sunni states such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia as a proxy against Iran and its allies.

## No to intervention

US President Obama has responded by talking up the prospect of a US military response, which Tony Abbott has already promised to back. While Obama has ruled out sending large numbers of troops back to Iraq, Maliki is pressing the US to call in airstrikes.

This is a supremely arrogant response from the people who created this nightmare in the first place.

Some have claimed that US troops were responsible for holding back the sectarian civil war until they left. But as Simon Assaf pointed out in *Socialist Worker*, "The violence peaked in 2007. So did the US troop deployment in the country, numbering 166,300 soldiers in October 2007."

"This puts pay to the lie that the US held in check the sectarian war."

US military support for the Shiite government will do nothing to reduce the sectarian tensions that produced this crisis.

The violence in Iraq today is the direct result of the 2003 invasion.

**.....**  
**ISIS's growth in Iraq is a direct result of the US policy of stirring up sectarian divisions**

# Racist right benefits from mainstream political crisis in Europe

By Mark Gillespie

MAY'S EUROPEAN elections showed the growing crisis for the mainstream parties after their introduction of austerity policies in response to the economic crisis.

Worryingly, far right parties made significant gains. In the UK the anti-immigrant UK Independence Party (UKIP) outpolled both Labour and the Conservatives. In France it was the fascist National Front that got the biggest vote and a third of France's seats in the European parliament. There were also big votes for far right and fascist parties in Denmark, Austria, Hungary, Greece and the Netherlands.

But in Greece and Spain, the countries where union and social movement struggles against austerity have been strongest, there were significant votes for the far left. In Greece Syriza received the biggest vote with over 26 per cent by campaigning uncompromising against austerity.

In Spain, the two mainstream parties saw their share of the vote fall from 81 per cent of the total in 2009 to just 50 per cent between them.

The four month old Podemos (Yes We Can)—born out of the indignados mass movement against austerity—won 8 per cent of the vote and five MEPs, while the Communist Party-led United Left won another 10 per cent.

Podemos organised local circles involving 33,000 people across the country in a grassroots process to select candidates.

## Alienation breeds despair

The electoral success of the far right is a product of the deep alienation of voters with mainstream social democratic and conservative governments and their pro-market neo-liberal agendas. This has accelerated since the economic crisis began in 2007.

The National Front's vote has gone from 10 per cent in the 2007 Presidential election to 18 per cent in 2012 to just under 25 per cent in the recent European elections. This period saw both right and left mainstream parties force through cuts and attacks on workers. Conservative President Nicolas Sarkozy was booted from office in 2012 after raising the pension age and attempting to impose a "fiscal compact" limiting government spending. He was replaced by the Socialist Party's Francois Hollande (the equivalent of Labor) who, after promising



**Above: Podemos, a new left party in Spain, broke through amidst the wider picture of far right gains**

to tax the rich, delivered tax cuts for business but welfare and services cuts for everyone else.

The National Front pose as opponents of austerity and the political elite by denouncing the European Union from a nationalist perspective.

A similar trend has been seen in the UK where people were already disaffected with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's pro-market and pro-war "New Labour" governments when the crisis hit.

But the vote didn't automatically go to the Conservatives. People still remembered the neo-liberal reforms of Margaret Thatcher, forcing Conservative leader David Cameron to portray himself a "modern compassionate conservative". The Liberal Democrats picked up a record 23 per cent of the vote due to the disaffection with the two major parties.

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition has been anything but compassionate in government. To pay for the bank bailouts they have clobbered workers with pay freezes, tax increases and cuts. Their approval ratings collapsed but rather than the Labour Party benefiting, most of the vote went to UKIP.

## Respectable racism

But just as importantly the use of racist scapegoating by both social democratic and conservative governments have made the politics of the far right respectable.

Sarkozy ran a vicious campaign against Muslims and Roma, banning the burqa and niqab in public and

deporting Roma in their thousands. During the 2012 election he made a direct appeal for National Front votes saying, "I've heard you. The French don't want to be dispossessed".

Following a dismal result for the Socialists in local council elections in March, Hollande moved sharply to the right by appointing Manuel Valls as Prime Minister. Valls has a reputation for being tough on migrants, saying they should "return home" if they won't integrate. This not only failed to shore up his support base but only legitimised racism further.

Cameron in the UK too attempted to deal with the rise of UKIP by beating his own xenophobic drum. On the same day as the fascist English Defence League held a major march in Luton against Muslims, Cameron announced an attack on "state multiculturalism" which he claimed had "failed" and was producing extremism.

Labour hasn't opposed this racism. "It's not right-wing for us to talk about immigration", said Labour leader Ed Miliband after UKIP's recent success through attacking migrants.

But the right's significant gains were partly a product of the fact that only 45 per cent of those eligible actually voted.

The results in Greece and Europe show that the left can also benefit from the disillusionment with the political mainstream. Doing so will depend on building new movements to combat the growing respectability of racism and raising the general level of struggle against austerity.

**The National Front pose as opponents of austerity and the political elite**



# Thailand's military stage coup for elite and monarchy

By Lachlan Marshall

THE THAI military has seized power after nine months of disruptive protests by pro-military royalists, the Yellow Shirts, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

The military coup delivers on a key demand of the Yellow Shirts, deposing the democratically-elected Pua Thai government. This exposes the declared "neutrality" of the coup as a lie.

The junta, calling itself the National Council for Peace and Order, has dissolved the Senate and banned gatherings of five or more people. Army chief General Prayuth Chan-ocha, leader of the coup, announced the suspension of elections for at least a year, "depending on the situation." This, he says will be necessary "in order to mend our democratic system" and ensure "peace and order."

Since the coup on 22 May there has been a massive crackdown on dissent. The military has rounded up hundreds of journalists, progressive academics and pro-democracy Red Shirt activists. Most have been interrogated and released, after being warned not to organise opposition to the coup.

In early June a taxi driver was imprisoned for *lèse majesté* (insulting the King) after a passenger reported him to police. Plain-clothes police and soldiers have kidnapped people off the street.

Meanwhile, the opposition Democrat Party, its leader Suthep Thaugsuban and their Yellow Shirt supporters, all remain unmolested despite the violence they displayed in their protests and their armed intimidation of voters during February's elections.

## Red shirt, yellow shirt

Since the last military coup in 2006, Thailand has grown increasingly divided between Red Shirts, supporters of the Pua Thai party and former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra; and Yellow Shirts, supporters of the traditional Thai elite and the monarchy.

The middle-class Yellow Shirts resent the electoral dominance of Pua Thai, whose prime ministers Yingluck Shinawatra, and her predecessor and brother Thaksin Shinawatra, won widespread popularity among the urban and rural poor for their policies such as rural employment projects, rice subsidies and cheap healthcare.

Whereas in 2001 when Thaksin was first elected 84 per cent of the



**Above: A protest against the junta at a Bangkok train station**

national budget flowed to the capital, leaving only 16 per cent to the provinces, this year rural areas received a quarter.

But Thaksin is no man of the people. His chief aim was to modernise Thai society, for which his background as a billionaire telecommunications tycoon qualified him well. After being embroiled in corruption scandals, he fled to Dubai, but was believed to be pulling the strings in his sister's government behind the scenes.

Unable to defeat the government through elections, Yellow Shirt protesters call for the "restoration of an absolute monarchy."

Renewed protests began in December last year against a bill that would have granted amnesty to Thaksin for corruption charges on the one hand, and exonerated those responsible for the military crackdown in 2010 that killed 90 Red Shirt protesters on the other.

In an attempt to diffuse the crisis Yingluck dissolved parliament and held elections in February. The Democrat Party, linked to the Yellow Shirts and military, boycotted the elections and harassed voters. This was used as an excuse for the courts to annul the result. Yingluck was then deposed by the Constitutional Court for abuse of power.

The junta's actions reveal the patronising contempt in which the Thai masses are held by the royalists and their military allies. A recently announced "happiness project" involves soldiers in uniform singing to "cheer

up" the public, providing free meals, haircuts and distributing sweets and snacks. The Thai elites' attitude to the majority is that they are "too stupid to deserve the right to vote."

## Resistance

In the face of this vicious crackdown, the official leadership of the Red Shirts, who are close to the Pua Thai Party, have failed to organise resistance. Pua Thai hopes to come to an accommodation with the military, as it did in 2011 when it struck a deal with military leaders to return to power.

In contrast, despite the repression and intimidation, thousands of Thais in Bangkok came out in spontaneous anti-coup protests and flash mobs in the days immediately following the coup. In some cases protesters chased police and soldiers off the streets and flashed the defiant three-fingered salute from *The Hunger Games*.

An Anti-Coup Workers Group released a statement condemning the coup as an attack on civil liberties that drastically limits workers' ability to organise.

They write, "In previous history, workers have always had an important role in the fight against the dictatorship. In the past, after previous coups, military governments have issued new laws that severely limit workers' rights."

Only a reinvigorated movement of the Red Shirts and other pro-democracy activists independent of the elite leadership of Thaksin and Pua Thai can restore and extend democracy in Thailand.

# TIANANMEN SQUARE: ANOTHER CHINA IS POSSIBLE

The protests in Tiananmen Square 25 years ago showed the possibility of real socialism emerging in China, writes Dave Sewell

THE FALL of the Soviet Union, and China's turn to the free market, were supposed to prove there is no alternative to capitalism.

In reality none of these regimes had been communist in the sense that Karl Marx meant.

The revolt that grew around Tiananmen Square showed the possibility of a real alternative to both capitalism and this false socialism.

The massive square is at the heart of Beijing, China's capital.

Twenty five years ago the death of Hu Yaobang, a senior politician associated with reform, opened a door for dissent. Students came to lay wreaths in Tiananmen Square. They stayed for speeches.

Soon there were tens of thousands. This turned into a general movement against the rampant corruption and nepotism targeting leading party officials, and demanding greater political freedom.

Some attacked the gates of the compound where China's rulers lived. One told reporters, "The police don't dare to do anything. If there's trouble the workers will join in."

The day of the funeral on 22 April 150,000 people defied a ban on protests to fill the square. They chanted, "We will return".

The following week a huge march made its way to the square. Students shouted "long live the workers" as they passed building sites, while workers banged their lunch boxes shouting "long live the students".

Workers stopped troops attacking the march. Nearly 1000 army trucks fled as it entered the square.

The movement grew and spread to over 400 cities across China.

The protesters turned the square into a well-organised camp with food, first aid and protester-run checkpoints.

Half a million people occupied it during Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev's visit in May.

China's rulers had to sneak him in the side door of the Great Hall of the People which was on the square's

western edge. The next day numbers swelled to a million, as groups from workplaces marched together into the square.

The new Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation set up headquarters in the square. Thousands of workers attended meetings about wages, workplace democracy and political representation.

## Barricades

Thousands more flocked to barricades when the government declared martial law and moved troops in on 18 May. They appealed to soldiers not to attack.

One eyewitness told *Socialist Worker*, "Every route into Tiananmen Square is now marshalled and workers deliver a constant stream of food, drinks, cigarettes and ice lollies.

"Cooks from restaurants arrive on the back of open-topped lorries bringing huge food containers. There are tens of thousands of students from the provinces here and the workers in restaurants are serving them free food.

"All of the city centre, maybe six miles wide and six miles deep, is now under the control of workers and students. People talk of five million people, over half the total population, in the streets yesterday."

This was a festival of the oppressed, and it was turning into a challenge to the regime.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong took power in 1949. It freed China from subjugation by imperialism.

But where the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin had used brutal repression to achieve rapid economic growth, China's economy stagnated.

Attempts to force development led to mass starvation. And state terror paralysed even loyal officials with fear of being seen to make the wrong move.

Bitter fights broke out in the CCP. These reached fever pitch with the persecution and forced displacement

**"People talk of five million people, over half the total population, in the streets yesterday."  
—eyewitness**

of millions in the "Cultural Revolution" in the late 1960s.

Its target was a faction led by Deng Xiaoping, which argued for a version of the free market. But by the late 1970s Deng's group was taking over. Its reforms mirrored neo-liberalism in the West.

It allowed peasants to sell their own produce, creating a rural market. This increased production—but increased inequality and shifted agriculture towards cash crops.

## Growth

It set up dozens of Special Economic Zones, with low wages and taxes that undercut neighbouring countries for foreign investment. This began urban growth that transformed China—and made CCP leaders rich while exploiting millions of workers on poverty wages.

Deng's faction walked a tightrope. The changes it wanted to introduce necessitated attacking past policies like the "Cultural revolution". It allowed ordinary people to speak out against some of the regime's past crimes in order to consolidate the shift. Sometimes they backed protest to isolate conservatives. Sometimes they viciously cracked down on revolt.

But this didn't stop the growth of a student movement. Rapid expansion of universities created a volatile combination of overcrowding, petty rules, and relative intellectual freedom through the 1980s.

There were a series of student protests from 1984 to 1986, tolerated within strict limits.

At the same time oppressed minorities began to stir. By 1989 there was martial law in Tibet's capital Lhasa, after an uprising, and hundreds of thousands protested against racism in Muslim provinces.

Meanwhile Deng's strategy had unleashed economic growth at more than twice the rate he'd planned, leading to inflation and shortages.

Industries couldn't get materials, and workers struggled to afford food.

Rationing returned and price controls were imposed in some cities—until they became too expensive to maintain.

Crisis turned into recession. Millions of people were thrown out of work. Banks told companies to pass the cost on to workers by withholding wages.

All this fed into the Tiananmen Square revolt.

As *Socialist Worker* argued at the time, “This is not a revolt against ‘socialism’ as the Western press claims. It is a revolt both against the old style Stalinist state and the capitalist market that China’s leaders have been trying to introduce in the last decade.”

Protesters waved red flags and sang *The Internationale*—symbols of workers’ revolution. They carried a double meaning in the context of a regime that claimed to be socialist.

They could point beyond the rotten ruling class to hopes for genuine liberation. As one lorry driver told reporters, “These men aren’t communist, they’re just feudal old guys who are afraid of the people and despise us.”

But they also affirmed loyalty to a regime that few were ready to try and overthrow.

## Democracy

Some also had illusions in the West—so they built the iconic Goddess of Democracy statue to echo the Statue of Liberty.

But, as Western politicians such as former British Prime Minister Edward Heath recognised, what the protesters called for “is not our idea of democracy”.

The ideas that dominated the leadership of the movement were a mixture of reformism and nationalism. Very few had any conception of an alternative to CCP rule. The official demands of the students remained limited to demanding the removal of particular government ministers and an end to corruption.

There were sharp arguments between those who wanted to deepen the revolt and those who feared damaging the “national interest”.

These came to the fore when a majority of protest leaders opposed risking disruption to Gorbachev’s visit.

A minority realised they had to seize the time or be crushed when it had passed. They began a hunger strike and called more protests.



Workers were united over the need to defend the students, but there was little agreement on how to go further.

Student Siu Chong told reporters, “Only if the workers stop steel production and the power stations and the railways can we bring these people down.”

“There are not enough soldiers to keep the vital industries running. The workers have the power, let the workers have their say.”

But for this very reason, protest leaders rejected calling for a general strike.

Still, there were some strikes, and shutdowns caused by protests and disruption to transport. But mostly workers joined the barricades between their shifts.

Without a clear focus, by late May the movement began to dwindle in Beijing even as it continued to spread elsewhere.

On 3 June the state retaliated. Tanks ploughed through barricades, and soldiers shot down protesters.

Crowds rained rocks and petrol bombs on soldiers, commandeering buses and setting them alight as new barricades. But protest leaders opposed taking up arms. Soldiers had no reason to believe the movement could stop them being executed for defying

orders.

More than 2000 protesters were probably killed, though the authorities never permitted a proper count. By the end of the year tens of thousands would be arrested.

Western politicians shed crocodile tears. But the *Wall Street Journal* summed Western capitalism’s response up, saying “The market is breathing a sigh of relief that Deng is coming on top”.

Rapid growth has continued, making China a giant of capitalism. The labour movement that was missing in 1989 has begun to emerge through strikes for better wages and conditions.

Recent years have seen mass village protests against corruption, and ongoing environmental protests in Guangdong and ethnic tensions in Xinjiang.

Now China’s economy is slowing, and could face another crash. The China Labour Bulletin reports a sharp increase in strikes. Sooner or later, further explosions are inevitable.

China’s rulers and its Western rivals like to give the impression of a monolithic place where no radical change is possible. But Tiananmen Square proved that nowhere is immune from revolution.

**Socialist Worker UK**



# PROTEST 2.0? SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE STREETS

Social media has been given the credit for protests from Occupy to the Arab revolutions. **David Glanz** looks at what it really means for activists and social movements

“Twitter is known for three things. It’s known for the Arab Spring, it’s known for Justin Bieber, and it’s known for narcissism.”

*Caroline O’Donovan, staff writer at the Nieman Journalism Lab*

FACED WITH events they can’t explain—or that they think their audience won’t understand—too many western media commentators choose to focus on novelty. In the case of the Arab Spring, that novelty was the use of social media.

Michael Short, writing in *The Age* earlier this year, summed up the mainstream position: “Social media was pivotally important in public uprisings that brought fundamental political and social change in several nations including Libya, Yemen, Tunisia and Egypt.”

Others went so far as to suggest social media activists in Egypt, or even Twitter or Facebook, deserved a Nobel Peace Prize.

There was, of course, a kernel of truth in the argument. As one Egyptian activist said: “We use Facebook to schedule the protests and Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world.”

It’s a practice that Australian activists would recognise. Few protests today are called without the support of a social media presence. Some protests are publicised entirely through Facebook.

Socialists gladly embrace the potential each generation of technology offers. You may, after all, be reading this article online, after clicking on a Solidarity link in your Facebook feed. Or a friend may have retweeted the link and you’re reading this on your phone.

But new technology raises questions for the Left, too: does digital communication make printed materials redundant? Are online posts more effective than running street stalls or holding meetings? Why focus on talking to handfuls of your closest supporters when social media can give

you access to thousands, potentially millions?

## Communicating change

Media fascination with innovative communication channels is not new. When activists were organising against the World Economic Forum meeting in Melbourne on September 11, 2000, journalists were more excited to write about the S11 movement’s use of the amazing new thing called the internet than about the protesters’ aims.

Long before that, radio enthusiasts talked of how broadcasting “would encompass the world, bring universal harmony, make an end to loneliness and isolation”. One Belgian journalist wrote in 1923 that epochs should no longer be defined “by great wars and battles or by the rule of certain peoples or rulers” but by the development of “genial” technologies like radio.

Fifty years before that it was the telegraph that transformed daily life and ended the “tyranny of distance”. Australian colonists writing a letter to Britain could expect a reply six months later. The new technology cut the wait to 48 hours.

A generation earlier, it was an improvement to the design of the rotary printing press that allowed publishers to print millions of newspapers a day. A newspaper went from a luxury item accessible only to the ruling class to a working class staple, “often read aloud in homes ... Significant speeches were sometimes printed in their entirety, giving politicians and social activists a much wider audience”.

Each invention opened up new horizons for spreading the word of resistance. But struggle against exploitation and oppression has never relied on technology.

News of the Eureka Stockade, the miners’ revolt on the Ballarat goldfields in 1854, was the first message sent by telegraph to Melbourne—the technology reported

Three thousand people signed up on Facebook for the Bust the Budget rally in Melbourne but tens of thousands turned up on the day

the struggle, but was not used to organise it. Radio broadcasts did not begin in Russia until 1921, four years after the workers’ revolution.

While the Left today should make full use of social media, there are two pitfalls that need to be avoided.

One is to treat the technology as neutral. This was how many greeted the advent of the internet—it would free information from corporate and government control, ushering in a new era of unfettered democracy.

The reality is that corporations have quickly moved to dominate the online experience. Google’s algorithms not only deliver a river of (lightly taxed) advertising profit, but determine how easy or hard it is to access information on the web.

Facebook’s strategy is to constantly reduce the reach of people’s posts, to force users into paying to ensure their messages are received. It may be a free platform for progressive causes, but Facebook also hosts a myriad of racist and sexist pages.

And behind the likes and emoticons, every post is potentially being spied upon. In the US, all phone calls and internet traffic may be subject to government scanning. To help with this, Google stores searchers’ IP addresses and search phrases for up to 18 months.

## Changing consciousness

The other mistake is to assume that social media can substitute for the more humdrum processes involved in building movements.

Three thousand people signed up on Facebook for the Bust the Budget rally in Melbourne but tens of thousands turned up on the day. The difference came down to postering, leafleting and, most importantly, conversations between union delegates and activists and their workmates.

Capitalists understand why. Market research company Nielsen’s 2013 Trust in Advertising report found



**Above: Graffiti in Egypt, where the role of social media in launching the 2011 revolution has been vastly overstated**

that word-of-mouth was still No. 1 for attracting new customers. Even online, recommendations from people known to potential customers carry more weight than the slickest advert.

Public relations authors Brian Solis and Deirdre Breakenridge put it this way: “Regardless of the technology, beneficial conversations are about trust, respect, mutual benefits, and positive experiences. We also can’t stress enough that the most rewarding dialogue has always been one-to-one rather than one-to-many.”

Given the billions spent on advertising through TV, radio and online, how can this be so?

The answer lies in a contradiction between two huge influences on workers’ opinions—on the one hand, the way in which the ideas of the ruling class dominate society and create a “common sense”, and the other the way that workers’ own experience cuts across the dominant messages.

In the era of newspapers and the telegraph, Karl Marx wrote: “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.”

In the era of Instagram and Netflix, online media and Pinterest—not to mention TV, radio and compulsory school education—there are ever more ways in which the rich can impose their values.

But it is not one-way traffic. Sections of the media might parrot the Liberals’ arguments justifying their budget attacks, but people know that \$7 to visit the doctor will affect their families, or can calculate how deep their debt will be for attending university.

Workers join unions and sometimes take industrial action because they have learned that they cannot trust their employers, even if they grudgingly accept their control.

The result, as Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci wrote, is that the “average person” has “two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one...which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed”.

The Left has to engage in this battle of ideas, to shift workers (in Gramsci’s words) from “common sense”—which accepts the logic of capitalism—to “good sense”, to consciousness of their interests as a class.

The British revolutionary Chris Harman wrote: “The struggle for ideological clarity and hegemony takes place at different levels. At one level it is the arguments that take place in the locality or the workplace. A key role is played here by people who have some basic conception of what a

movement is fighting for and who its opponents are.

“These are the key to organising and influencing much larger numbers of people (just think of the role played today by trade union activists, shop stewards and workplace reps, or of those who try to mobilise against racism or war).”

## Communicating change

Where does social media fit into this? The answer is that social media is like every other form of media—the level of trust that workers or students assign to the messages they consume depends to a large extent on who they already trust, and what they have already learned through their own experience.

A Facebook post may reach more people than a leaflet or this magazine, but whether people respond to that post depends partly on how deeply they feel about the issue, and partly on whether they think the person or group who posted the message are credible.

So when raw anger about an issue in the off-line world explodes, such as around the PNG refugee deal last year or the announcement of Tony Abbott’s horror budget, Facebook can provide a way to tap into and mobilise that sentiment.

At other times it can galvanise a more diffuse mood, such as the anger against Tony Abbott that fed into March in March.

But it cannot create such anger out of thin air. Nor is it so useful in sustaining campaigns, unions and social movements beyond these initial bursts of enthusiasm. This requires patient work building up activist networks, and building trust among different groups.

Real trust and credibility has to be built first and foremost in practical life—in the workplace, on the campus, and in campaigns—through direct interaction and one-on-one conversations, where leaflets and printed material remain crucial.

People whose formal politics are well to the right will vote for a socialist as union delegate if they are convinced that she or he is committed to their interests.

In campaigns, it is the activists who combine hard work with a vision of a way forward who will win leadership in contested issues.

In other words, in the battle of ideas, it’s not enough to be right. It’s not enough to be at the cutting edge of digital communication. You also need to earn the right to be *listened to*.

# THE FRONTIER WARS: THE WARS THAT REALLY FORGED THE NATION

Systematic frontier massacres to drive Aboriginal people off the land established the foundation for Australian ruling class wealth, writes **Paddy Gibson**

ON ANZAC day this year, Aboriginal activists in Canberra attempted to march behind the official parade of soldiers and veterans. The protesters carried signs commemorating massacres of Aboriginal people during the “frontier wars” that accompanied the invasion of this continent.

Police lined up to stop the Aboriginal protest from reaching the Anzac parade. It was a stark symbol of one of the ideological battle-lines taking shape as the Abbott government prepares for a barrage of militarist propaganda to accompany the 100 year anniversary of the Gallipoli landings in 2015.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent to celebrate what we are told was the “birth of the nation” on a far off beach in Turkey.

Meanwhile, the war that really forged the nation, the genocide of Aboriginal people to make way for an expanding settler-capitalism, continues to be ignored.

Between 4000 and 5000 monuments to overseas war dead stand across Australia. Aside from a handful of small plaques, thousands of frontier battlegrounds in this country are evidenced only by the bones of Aboriginal victims lying in unmarked graves.

This brutal history cuts directly against the celebratory nationalism being promoted through Anzac commemorations.

The capitalist elite that sent young working class men and women to die in foreign battlefields to defend imperialist interests are precisely the same people who organised the systematic slaughter of Aboriginal people in this country.

It was a slaughter that forms the basis of much of the wealth controlled by the rich in Australia today.

As historian Tony Roberts argues: “when you know who owned the stations on which Aboriginals were killed and the names of the politicians who knowingly allowed it to happen, you also know the ‘who’s who’ of colonial

Australia...this is why some people still want this history to remain hidden”.

## 1885 and the birth of the nation

Historian Henry Reynolds, in his book *Forgotten War*, uses the year 1885 to demonstrate the contradiction between the Anzac myth and the realities of frontier conflict.

In the National War Memorial’s honour roll in Canberra, 1885 is the year that supposedly marks the beginning of Australia’s participation in warfare, with five soldiers from NSW listed as casualties of the Sudan conflict. None of them were killed in battle. They all died of sickness, mostly on the long sea voyage. They were in the Sudan as part of a counter-insurgency war against indigenous resistance to British colonialism. They served no useful military purpose and spent a lot of time guarding a railway line.

But in 1885 there was a very real war raging across the northern half of Australia. It was a continuation of a war started in 1788 when Arthur Phillip began the military occupation of Sydney Cove.

In the four months that the NSW troops were in the Sudan there were 13 settlers killed by Aboriginal fighters in the north of Queensland. There were 30 patrols of the Queensland Native Police, death squads designed to kill and otherwise terrorise Aboriginal people refusing to leave their lands.

Queensland newspapers compared the Sudanese insurgency to that being waged by Aboriginal people against pastoral expansion across the colony.

At the same time, 17 Aboriginal people were massacred on Glen Helen station in Central Australia. Such attacks would characterise the whole career of murderous constable William Willshire, who had recently established a police station in Alice Springs.

In June 1885 the *South Australian Register* published a letter from a Dr

Robert Morice, a colonial surgeon and nominal “protector of Aborigines” based in Darwin about frightful massacres there the previous year.

He said “not less than 150 Aborigines had been killed, a great part of them women and children”. Modern estimates put the figure well above 200.

Four miners had been killed on the Daly River to the South of Darwin. The Aboriginal people responsible were captured and tried. But that didn’t stop the incident being used as an excuse for mass slaughter to displace and terrorise the tribes of the region.

The slaughter was organised by police inspector Foelsche, a notorious butcher who served as a senior officer in Darwin for more than three decades.

Foelsche gathered four private posses comprised of squatters and other settlers, along with a massive police party. He sought permission from the government in Adelaide for bloodshed and plied the men with government funds and ammunition.

Foelsche issued orders to “bury the remains of the Natives”. Posses were sent east, west and south, over an area stretching many hundreds of kilometres in what the inspector himself described as a “nigger hunt”.

## Capitalism and Aboriginal genocide

In this same year, Foelsche was busy co-ordinating the slaughter of tribes throughout the vast Gulf of Carpentaria. Tony Roberts’s historical work demonstrates clearly how this killing was done to facilitate the needs of a rapidly expanding settler capitalism.

In 1881 the entire Gulf region, an area the same size as the colony of Victoria, was leased to just 14 landowners. All but two were wealthy businessmen and investors, absentee landlords from the eastern colonies.

One of the three principle owners of one company was Queensland Premier Sir Thomas Mackalray.

.....  
“When you know who owned the stations and the politicians who knowingly allowed it to happen, you also know the ‘who’s who’ of colonial Australia”—  
historian Tony Roberts



The South Australian Minister of the Northern Territory at the time, Sir Richard Baker, was chairman of another private pastoral company handed a lease.

The leases were granted under strict stocking rules—use the lease or it would be withdrawn. Granting new leases in the Gulf Country was seen as a way of generating economic growth—ensuring a steady stream of revenue into South Australian government coffers, along with profits for the business and political elite in the colonies who owned the stock.

By 1885 the runs were declared “fully stocked”. In just four short years 200,000 head of cattle and 10,000 horses had poured into the Gulf Country.

To facilitate this there was wholesale slaughter of the Aboriginal people in the area. From evidence discovered during his research, Roberts puts forward what he calls a conservative estimate of 50 separate massacres in the Gulf country to 1910.

Approximately 15-20 per cent of the local Aboriginal population was killed in violent attacks. Many more starved or had their lives otherwise destroyed in the wake of this ethnic cleansing.

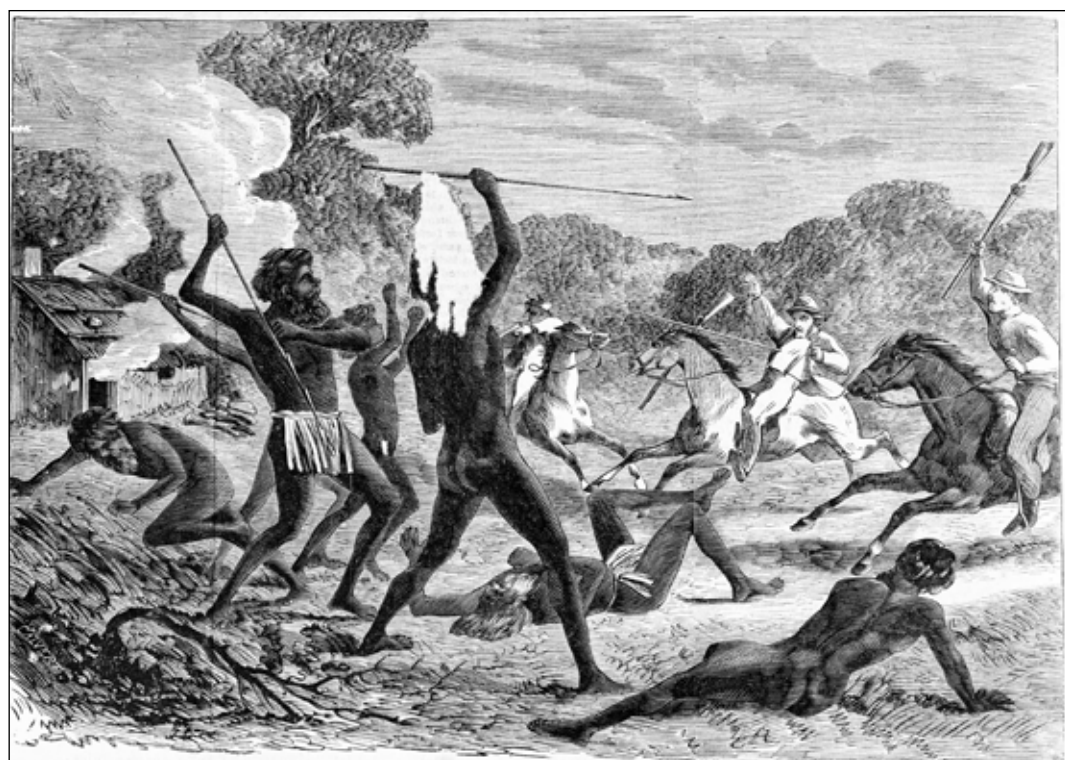
Roberts describes how these punitive raids operated:

“Adults and children received a bullet to the brain, while babies—whether injured or not—were held by the ankles ‘just like goanna’, their skulls smashed against trees or rocks.”

One character involved in this slaughter was Sir John Cockburn, a minister for the NT in the South Australian parliament. In 1886 Cockburn dispatched a police party that perpetrated massacres at Malakoff Creek, “with a death-toll of 64 men, women and children in one camp alone”. He went on to become the Premier of South Australia just three years later.

Another was Sir John Downer, one of the founding fathers of Australian federation and grandfather of Howard government minister Alexander Downer. According to Roberts, “an examination of the injustices and massacres of the frontier period reveals his name more frequently than any other Adelaide politician”. There is also a suburb named after him in Canberra.

Downer corresponded regularly with Inspector Foelsche, approving massacres while Attorney General (1881-84) and Premier (1885-87). Downer responded to outrage over the Daly River killings with a “pri-



**Above: An 1867 image from the Illustrated Melbourne Post, depicting Aboriginal people and white settlers in battle**

vate hearing” that exonerated those involved. He used his expertise as a barrister to defend William Willshire when he was brought to trial for massacres around Alice Springs, the only police officer ever charged for NT frontier killings.

Once Downer had seen the charges dismissed, he sent Willshire up to the Victoria River region with troopers and an endless supply of ammunition to continue his massacres.

Massacres of Aboriginal people to clear them from land continued in Australia into the 1920s. In Queensland alone it is estimated 25,000 Aboriginal people were killed by the Native Police and a similar number by punitive parties of squatters and their supporters.

Whereas an estimated 250,000 Aboriginal people lived in Queensland prior to colonisation, there were only 20,000 left alive by the time Australian troops set sail for Gallipoli in 1915.

### **Anzac day and Aboriginal people**

Many Aboriginal people flocked to join the Australian armed forces in both the First and Second World Wars. A strong motivation for enlistment was to prove themselves the equal of any white person.

Aboriginal people had to slip through racist laws that prohibited their enlistment. They were then

treated with contempt on their return, forced to live again under apartheid laws and cut out of programs to assist return soldiers.

There are many tragic stories of Aboriginal soldiers returning to families torn apart by the forced removal of children. Aboriginal names were not listed on honour rolls and Aboriginal soldiers were denied access to RSL clubs.

Given this history of racist exclusion, many Aboriginal people have pushed for recognition of the “black diggers”. But as the 100th anniversary of Anzac approaches, this is being used by the government to incorporate Aboriginal people into the nationalist celebrations. A special memorial to the “black diggers” is planned for Hyde Park. Millions of dollars have been budgeted for histories of Aboriginal servicemen.

The hypocrisy of this “recognition” needs to be exposed. The government is quite happy with Aboriginal faces lined up amongst others waving the flag for empire. But they will never acknowledge the fighters who fell defending their homelands from the imperialist invasion of this country.

Aboriginal genocide was the foundation for the power and wealth now held by the grandsons and granddaughters of the colonial elite, who still rule a system which tramples Aboriginal rights in the name of profit.

# UTS staff strike back at management



## Sydney Uni campaign for BDS has controversial start

ON 4 June, a 130 strong meeting of the Sydney University branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) voted 68-56 against a motion to devote branch time and resources to discuss BDS.

A motion committing the branch to a discussion of BDS had originally been put by the recently formed Sydney Staff 4 BDS, and carried unanimously, at a meeting on 15 May. That motion condemned the expansion of Israeli settlements in the illegally occupied Palestinian territories, and called for, “a broad discussion among members about whether to endorse the BDS call.”

The vote precipitated a few weeks’ stormy discussion, which resulted in the resignation of branch vice-president, Damien Cahill, followed by the unprecedented intervention of NTEU General Secretary Grahame McCulloch. On 4 June, the branch carried a resolution moved by McCulloch, “Not to support, or to use Branch resources to promote a debate around, the BDS campaign.” While disappointing, the narrow vote indicates there is a solid basis to continue the Sydney Staff 4 BDS campaign.

The group was initiated in support of Sydney University academic Jake Lynch’s refusal to participate in a fellowship scheme with the Hebrew University, funded via the Zelman Cowen Foundation. Lynch has been the subject of both a media campaign by *The Australian* and mischievous court action by Israeli apologists.

Lynch’s boycott of the fellow-

ship reflects the official policy of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, which backs BDS. Sydney Staff 4 BDS’s first act was to write to all Sydney University board members and advisors of the Zelman Cowen Foundation asking them to step down, because, “Research collaboration, conferences, and scholarly visits between Israeli institutions and international institutions...form an integral component of Israel’s attempt to whitewash its human rights violations.”

This is part of the BDS group’s strategy to put pressure on Sydney University and expose the ways in which universities and other institutions are complicit with Israel’s ruthless colonial expansion.

Several left-wing, but anti-BDS, union members argued that opening up the BDS debate in the union would divide the branch when it needed unity to fight the Abbott government’s attacks. But staying clear of controversial issues and ignoring the Palestinian call for solidarity is no way to build a political, confident union capable of beating Abbott.

As BDS supporter David Brophy put it, “A strong union doesn’t shy away from pressing global issues, or stick its head in the sand when an entire nation calls out for solidarity.”

A follow-up Sydney Staff 4 BDS forum the day after the vote attracted around 40 people. More forums are planned to extend the discussion to win the campus to the BDS campaign.

**Erima Dall**  
NTEU & SydneyStaff4BDS

**Above: Union members at UTS picketing the campus during the strike on 21 May**  
Photo: UTS NTEU

NATIONAL TERTIARY Education Union (NTEU) members at UTS picketed the campus as part of a 24-hour strike on 21 May. Despite being the first strike in a decade, the action visibly depleted the numbers of students and staff on campus, galvanised union members, and sent a strong message to management.

After a year of negotiations, it was not until staff held a stop-work meeting and voted to strike that UTS management sent senior staff to the bargaining table—an indication of their contempt for the process.

The university has proposed removing existing protections for staff that would make jobs less secure. It is clear that UTS wants to get an agreement that gives them more ability to micro-manage and sack staff.

The university is putting \$1 billion into new buildings, but offering the staff expected to deliver their “innovative learning experience” an effective pay cut through a 2.75 per cent offer.

An average of 60 per cent of academic staff nationally are in casual positions and UTS has one of the fastest-growing rates of casualisation. Yet management has rejected the union’s demand to turn 80 casual teaching positions into permanent roles. UTS’s first offer was five permanent positions, increased to a still negligible 20.

The sacking of UTS NTEU Branch President Simon Wade—the lead staff representative in negotiations—shows what kind of culture UTS management wants on campus. Simon had worked at UTS for 16 years without any problem with his performance. Yet in the midst of negotiations, UTS accused him of misconduct and dismissed him. The NTEU is fighting this in court.

Management’s woeful offer to non-academic staff in June shows that the university want to make it easier to performance manage and dismiss staff. Simon’s treatment is a warning to all staff at UTS.

The Commonwealth Public Sector Union (CPSU), which also represents non-academic UTS staff, has now joined with the NTEU in rejecting the University’s Professional Staff agreement, and is balloting its members for industrial action.

The UTS NTEU branch has voted to strike on the first day back of semester two, raising the prospect of joint union action on this day. UTS staff realise that if we want to win the conditions and wages we deserve we will have to force a recalcitrant management to deliver.

**Jean Parker, UTS NTEU**

# Files that give a glimpse of what ASIO was up to

**Dirty secrets: Our ASIO files**  
**Edited by Meredith Burgmann**  
**NewSouth Books,**  
**\$32.99**

THE LAST few years have seen a number of documentaries and books based on people's ASIO files, which can now be released to the public after 20 years.

Meredith Burgmann's new book *Dirty Secrets* brings together chapters from left activists and other well known Australians written after accessing their own files.

Burgmann's book contains chapters on 26 people's files ranging from the *Movie Show's* David Stratton, libertarian and investigative journalist Wendy Bacon, Aboriginal activist Gary Foley, former High Court judge Michael Kirby and Jack Waterford, former editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Many of the contributors point to how bumbling and pointless the effort ASIO put into surveillance was. But the damage ASIO was willing to do to people's lives and the danger it was prepared to put them in also comes through.

Victorian Labor Left MLA Jean McLean found out that ASIO had a hand in her sacking from a job in a bank.

Colin Cooper, who became a union official in NSW, found out that his ASIO file meant he was moved from his job within Telecom. Penny Lockwood, who had Communist Party parents, found out a man she was having a relationship with was an ASIO spy.

Colin Cooper's file confirms what I wrote in a prior article on ASIO—that it has spied habitually on the Labor Party and the



A surveillance photo from feminist Anne Summers' ASIO file

unions.

ASIO's brief—to keep an eye on the nebulous and all-encompassing notion of “subversion”—gave its investigations a simply enormous scope.

**Obsession with the left**  
 Verity Burgmann's file revealed that ASIO planted two members in Solidarity's predecessor organisation in the 1970s, the International Socialists (IS), who posed as a couple. One had even got people to pose for photos he took and then handed over to ASIO.

Kevin Cook, an Aboriginal activist and former organiser with the NSW BLF, has a file that shows an ASIO obsession with the IS and the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).

Kevin rightly says, “What surprised me was how little there was in the file about land rights... There was nothing in the files about the actual campaigns or what we wanted or what we did! They just wanted to know who came to the meetings.”

ASIO does pay the IS a back-handed compliment, noting that, “the International Socialists consistently support all [Aboriginal] demonstra-

tions”.

Writer and feminist Anne Summers was spied upon, even though her file had written in it “capacity for violence—nil”.

ASIO was a law unto itself but the Ministers responsible—in particular successive Attorney-Generals—have all been

complicit in the obsessive spying.

Nicola Roxon, Attorney-General in the Gillard government, recalls querying an “intercept warrant” for phone tapping. When the ASIO officer could not explain the need for the intercept, Roxon refused to sign the warrant without further information. She was told that this had never been done before. She hasn't said whether she finally signed off on the warrant.

While former Liberal PM Malcolm Fraser is fashionable these days for his support for refugees and social justice, it was he who increased ASIO's powers in 1978 after the Sydney Hilton bombing, which killed three people in February that year.

Tim Anderson spent seven years in jail (1978-85) alongside Ross Dunn and Paul Alister, after being framed for the Hilton bombing. All were members of the spiritual organisation Ananda Marga.

ASIO worked hand in hand with the old “Special Branches” of the various state police forces. Colin Cooper states that, “The NSW police ignored the warrant requirements and undertook illegal phone

taps over a sixteen year period from 1967.” Tim says, “The two spy agencies [ASIO and Special Branch] often exchanged files.” The three were convicted on the “evidence” of paid informers.

ASIO also “exchanged files” with secret police forces overseas, including the ruthless Apartheid era police in South Africa, as Tasmanian gardening expert Peter Cundall's file shows.

I applied under the Archives Act but was told I don't have a file. This is despite being interviewed by ASIO for a security clearance when I worked for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade only to be denied one.

Yet in the late 1990s, when the *Melbourne Age* did a story on Victoria Police's Special Branch hiding its secret files, my former Labor MP in Canberra rang me to say he was miffed that he didn't have a file but that I was listed as having one.

Spies will never stop a genuine mass upheaval in society. The Okhrana could not save the Russian Tzar. SAVAK (trained by the CIA) could not save Iran's Shah. The KGB could not save Gorbachev's Stalinism. The Stasi, which had a spy for every 6.5 East Germans could not save Honecker's East Germany.

Suharto finally fell in Indonesia in 1998, without the military or his secret police lifting a finger. The same applied to Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt in 2011.

But the spooks can continue to make some people's lives a misery. The asylum seekers who fail ASIO “security” checks, and so end up in detention for life, are only the most recent example.

**Tom Orsag**

**Victorian Labor Left MLA Jean McLean found out that ASIO had a hand in her sacking from a job in a bank**



# COVERING UP FOR MANUS MURDER

## LIES, DAMNED LIES AND THE CORNALL INQUIRY

By Ian Rintoul

MORE THAN 120 days after the murder of asylum seeker Reza Barati on Manus Island, still no one has been charged with his killing.

The Cornall inquiry, commissioned by Immigration Minister Scott Morrison, into “the events of 16-18 February on Manus Island” has now been released. But we are none the wiser for it.

Some basic mistakes damage its credibility from the beginning. He says that one person lost their eye from brutal bashings on the 17<sup>th</sup>—in fact two asylum seekers lost eyes. How could you get that wrong?

Cornall blindly accepts G4S’s statement that it had no legal power to conduct searches of asylum seekers accommodation compounds when in fact “shakedowns”, generally conducted by local G4S guards supervised by white expat guards, are routine.

Scott Morrison has accepted the Cornall inquiry and its recommendations. Why wouldn’t he? The Cornall inquiry is a white-wash. As predicted it essentially places the blame on the asylum seekers, saying that if there had not been a “riot” on the night that Reza Barati was killed, the police and locals would not have attacked the asylum seekers.

The evidence says otherwise.

Cornall even goes out of his way to justify the murderous PNG police attack, saying that the PNG mobile squad has an obligation to suppress a riot.

Like the *Four Corners* program that claimed to set out what really happened on Manus Island, the Cornall inquiry uncritically accepts the official G4S version of events on the night.

G4S says that the events were the result of predominantly Iranian asylum seekers engaging in a “sustained assault on other transferees and Centre staff”. But no centre staff were injured by asylum seekers. Yet the asylum seekers were seriously injured by PNG police and local PNG staff (although there are allegations that up to four Australian and New Zealand ex-pats were also



involved). Such was the violence that one man, Reza Barati, was killed.

G4S even makes the fantastical suggestion that protest were triggered by a note (that they never saw) thrown in an empty plastic water bottle (which are banned from the centre) from Foxtrot to Mike compound—over two compound fences that are around ten metres apart.

Cornall uncritically accepts reports that rocks and pieces of metal were thrown by asylum seekers at locals on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup>. But, according to the G4S account, a week earlier they had gone through Mike compound removing rocks and anything else that could be used as missiles.

The G4S version says that there was a “riot” in Mike compound before the police and PNG locals attacked. But every account by the asylum seekers themselves says there was no riot. Cornall does not even draw attention to that stark discrepancy.

Steve Kilburn, a G4S manager who was at Manus Island on the night, has now backed up the asylum seekers’ account, telling the Senate Inquiry into the Manus events that there was no riot before the lights in Mike Compound were turned off—

**Above: Vigils were held around the country to mark 100 days since Reza Barati’s death, like this one in Sydney**

**Steve Kilburn, a G4S manager who was at Manus Island on the night, has now backed up the asylum seekers’ account**

the cue for the vicious attack by the PNG police and other PNG locals.

Steve Kilburn also points to real reasons the locals resented the detention centre: “Everything is disposable—every knife, fork, cup. We go through thousands and thousands and thousands of disposable plates, knives, forks and bottles of water every day. There are no facilities on Manus Island for recycling...It all gets taken away and dumped in the bush. People are resentful about that.”

Nicole Judge, a ex-Salvation Army employee who worked for one and half years on Nauru and Manus, told the Senate Inquiry that, “Between September and 21 December 2013, over five protests were held by PNG nationals, making it unsafe for staff to walk to and from the centre and to visit the town, even during daylight hours.” And on one occasion, there was “an attempted invasion into Delta compound by locals armed with machetes.” All this was months before the attack that killed Reza.

It is unlikely that anyone will ever be charged with Reza’s murder. But we already know who is guilty—Scott Morrison and the systematic brutality of offshore processing.

**Solidarity**