

Solidarity

Issue No. 73 / November-December 2014

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ABBOTT'S GOING DOWN



LET'S KEEP HIM THERE

WWI

The IWW: against
capitalism and war

IRAQ

Islamic State:
Who are they?

KOBANI

Imperialism no ally
for the Kurds



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SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

Solidarity is a socialist group with branches across Australia. We are opposed to the madness of capitalism, which is plunging us into global recession and misery at the same time as wrecking the planet's future. We are taking the first steps towards building an organisation that can help lead the fight for an alternative system based on mass democratic planning, in the interests of human need not profit.

As a crucial part of this, we are committed to building social movements and the wider left, through throwing ourselves into struggles for social justice, against racism and to strengthen the confidence of rank and file unionists.

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

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

Sydney

Slavery and the origins of racism
6.30pm Thursday 27 November

Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown
For more information contact: Erima on 0432 221 516
sydney@solidarity.net.au

Melbourne

The politics of Pride: Radicals putting the red in the rainbow
7pm Wednesday 3 December

Melbourne Solidarity meets 7pm every Wednesday New International Bookshop, Trades Hall, 54 Victoria St Carlton
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Things they say

It gave me heartburn but I did vote for her. I lost sleep over it but at the end of the day I'm an Aussie...I couldn't come over here and not vote for an Aussie.

Labor Senator Glenn Sterle shows that nation comes first for the Labor Party, explaining why he supported Bronwyn Bishop's bid to head the Inter-Parliamentary Union

They are lying, lying, lying toads.
Former Liberal MP Jackie Kelly on Abbott's push for a Badger's Creek airport

There is a pro-business agenda there but it hasn't been communicated in a fashion that puts it in an overall policy framework that allows people to see this.

Mark Johnson, director of Westfield, knows whose interests are served by Abbott and Hockey's Budget

Making this shirt for eight years now...never had a single complaint about it.

Neil Booth, Sydney businessman, seems not to understand why people don't like his "love it or leave" t-shirts. Woolworths has taken them off the shelves

At times Adam Goodes seems not to like Australia.

Radio host Neil Mitchell can't understand Aboriginal people

I grew up in Auburn and their first mosque [was built] in 1979 and now they have three and it is not a safe place to walk around at all.

Liberal councillor Marcus Cornish in Penrith shows that racism runs deep in the Liberal Party.

CONTENTS

ISSUE 73 NOV/DECEMBER 2014



Features



4 Inside the system

Reports

- 6** CPSU set to strike
- 6** Islamophobia public meeting
- 7** New terror laws add to climate of fear
- 8** Deaths in custody and Ms Dhu
- 8** NT communities fight mining
- 9** Victorian election
- 9** Fairfield Council strike
- 10** Sydney Uni SRC
- 28** Vigilantes attack Nauru refugees

International

- 11** Fiji election
- 12** NUMSA and South Africa
- 12** Mexico protests student killings
- 13** Ebola crisis ignored by world leaders

Reviews

- 25** Confessions of a people smuggler
- 26** Labour and the Great War
- 27** This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate

INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

‘Unprofitable’ Ebola vaccine sat on shelf for years

A TRIAL Ebola vaccine sat on the shelf for years because treating Ebola, a virus most prevalent in poor parts of Africa, was not considered profitable. There have been regular outbreaks of the deadly virus since the mid-1970s.

The vaccine, VSV-EBOV, was shown to be 100 per cent effective in monkeys, which are considered to be a good surrogate for humans. But the cost of human trials was not considered justifiable by the pharmaceutical giants.

The vaccine was created almost ten years ago by researchers from Canada and the US. Thomas W. Geisbert, an Ebola expert from the University of Texas Medical Branch and a developer of the vaccine, said, “There’s never been a big market for Ebola vaccines... So big pharma, who are they going to sell it to?”

The cost of getting a new drug to the market can be hundreds of millions of dollars. But that is about what Tony Abbott is spending this year on bombing Iraq, and a fraction of the cost of *excess ammunition* that the Pentagon plans to destroy this year alone.

Murdoch’s hypocrisy on inequality

RUPERT MURDOCH used the chairman’s speech to the G20 at the end of October to warn the world’s financial elites of the pitfalls of “greater inequality” in the West. He pronounced a moment of “great global reckoning” as the “ladder of generational progress” was now increasingly under threat.

By way of solutions, alongside predictable calls “for government to get out of the way”, Murdoch took aim at corporate tax evasion, naming Google as a particular culprit. Google’s tax evasion is indeed criminal, but a report published by the Tax Justice Network found Murdoch’s own companies paid the Australian Tax Office only 1.1 per cent on pre-tax profits totaling \$5.54 billion between 2004-2013. This egalitarian achievement was made possible by complex financial manipulations through 146 subsidiaries, including 25 in the Virgin Islands and 19 in Mauritius—both notorious tax havens.

Billionaires rough it for ‘No cash November’



MINING BILLIONAIRE Twiggy Forrest has launched “No Cash November”, a philanthropic challenge where often high profile participants pledge to live only using their credit cards for a month. The challenge is part of Twiggy’s crusade to promote a “cashless welfare” system for “all vulnerable Australians”. But it is particularly aimed at Aboriginal communities and extending the BasicsCard imposed under the NT Intervention.

The cashless challenge will see participants “learning the process and possibilities of a cash free life” according to its website. Nev Power, CEO of Twiggy’s mining company Fortescue Metals Group, jumped on board, with the challenge of spending his \$2 million a year wage using his credit card alone.

Under the actual Healthy Welfare Card scheme proposed by Forrest’s GenerationOne initiative, welfare recipients would be prevented from purchasing alcohol, gambling or withdrawing cash. But those who sign up for “No Cash November” were free to keep enjoying gambling and booze. GenerationOne CEO Jeremy Donovan described his “challenges” during “No Cash November”, reporting, “One of the frustrations is the min spend of \$10. I had to purchase lots other items as shown to be able to get the water I wanted” alongside an image of a small pile of health bars and chocolates. This only shows how far removed from the lives of people on welfare these super-rich executives are. This whole stunt is nothing but a revolting exercise in telling the poor how to live their lives.

Britain abandons Mediterranean rescues

BRITAIN HAS refused to support search and rescue operations to prevent migrants and refugees drowning in the Mediterranean. The announcement came as the official Italian rescue operation Mare Nostrum ended in November, having rescued around 150,000 people in the last 12 months.

Despite the scale of the Italian operation it is estimated 2500 people still drowned in this period. The replacement EU mission, Triton, will have about a third of the resources and will not include search and rescue across the Mediterranean, just patrols within 30 kilometres of the Italian coast. But Lady Anelay, the British Foreign Office minister, announced the government won’t even support this paltry effort. Echoing the words of Tony Abbott and Scott Morrison she declared rescues, “an unintended ‘pull factor’, encouraging more migrants to attempt the dangerous sea crossing”. No doubt Britain is hoping a few more deaths will send the right signal.

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

Brisbane Airport bans climate ads

BRISBANE AIRPORT has vetoed World Wildlife Fund advertisements calling for action on climate change. The campaign simply featured the slogan “Climate change is #onmyagenda” alongside photographs of local people. The airport claimed it does not allow political advertisements. But they had no objections to running ads for energy multinational Chevron.

The Chevron campaign has saturated the airport and promotes their LNG projects through the slogan “Make Australian gas benefit all Australia—I agree”, with stories about how the local community, business and workers benefit.

LNG projects in Queensland have drawn opposition from environment groups due to the potential for damage to the Great Barrier Reef. The successful campaign at James Price Point in WA stopped an LNG project planned there.

Chevron doesn’t sell much of its gas to customers in Australia, so the ads were aimed purely at shoring up public opinion around LNG to ensure Chevron’s massive gas projects in Australia are not threatened by public opposition.

Hospital cuts thousands off waiting list

A TOTAL of 24,149 people were cut from the Cairns Hospital outpatient specialist waiting list between November 2013 and October 2014 without seeing a specialist.

According to Dr Sandy Donald from the Together Union, three patients had contacted them in the last two weeks with letters advising them to make contact to avoid being cut off, “These people had received that letter after the last date to contact the hospital. When they tried to ring the number—one tried 12 times—they could not get through.”

In October Premier Campbell Newman announced the “best ever” waiting list results for Queensland.

EDITORIAL

All out to make Abbott a “One Term Tony”

TONY ABBOTT’S G20 performance again showed how seriously politically inept his government really is. First, Abbott’s climate denialism suffered a serious blow when the US and China announced a plan to cut carbon emissions.

The agreement is not binding, of course, but against Abbott’s best efforts, climate change became a central feature of G20.

Abbott also managed to draw international attention to the most hated elements of his budget austerity measures, the GP co-payment and university fee deregulation. Insisting, on the one hand, they were the kinds of cuts that could boost economic growth, he then declared, “it is proving to be massively difficult to get this particular reform through the Parliament”. Brilliant!

In a further blow, the Liberals are on track to lose the Victorian election. Campbell Newman is also in trouble at the Queensland state election due in March.

Despite hysterical efforts to whip up fear, Abbott’s terror scare isn’t working. A Scanlon Foundation survey in October showed that while, disturbingly, a quarter of Australians admitted to negative feelings about Muslims, this was practically unchanged from before the latest terror raids.

People are cynical about both his motives and his fearmongering for good reason. Just one person was charged with terrorism offences after the dramatised raids in Sydney in October. Now his lawyer says the police are relying on a single phone call, mistranslated in a way that, “goes to the absolute crux of whether this man ever actually acquiesced in the carrying out of a terrorist act”.

Abbott seized on a shooting of a Shia man at a Sydney mosque in November to decry “an ISIL death cult influence”, only for the police to deny that there was any link to terrorism or Islamic State.

Labor’s lead over Abbott is back to 54-46 per cent. For the last year, Labor has been ahead of the Coalition. There is a real possibility of making Abbott a “One Term Tony”! But there is no cause for complacency.

Bill Shorten may now be questioning whether the new terror laws will affect journalists, but to their shame, Labor has otherwise given its complete backing for the government on ASIO powers, terror laws and



Above: The government has just announced new cuts to the ABC and SBS

the bombing of Iraq. This only helps legitimise Abbott’s scare campaign and increases the danger that Islamophobia will grow.

Australian Federal Police Assistant Commissioner Neil Gaughan has openly stated that there will be more terror raids on the scale of the Sydney operation. US President Barack Obama has doubled US troop numbers in Iraq and requested a further 200 troops from Australia.

On the domestic front, cuts to the ABC of \$254 million over five years have been announced, on top of \$43.5 million announced in May. SBS will be cut by \$25.2 million.

Lessons of 2014

In 2014 we have seen the immense potential for fighting Abbott’s agenda. But too often the opportunities have been squandered. With practically no institutional support the March in March protests drew over 100,000 to the streets across the country. Similar numbers came out again in May when Abbott unleashed his budget.

But the union leaders were slow to act, and when they did it was half-hearted. In June, Melbourne’s union stopwork “Bust the Budget” rally brought 20,000 workers to the streets. But they then stepped back, settling for weekend demonstrations in July that drew smaller numbers.

Neither the unions, nor Labor, nor The Greens believed much could be done beyond lobbying the Sen-

ate and waiting until the next election, although to their credit the more left-wing NSW Greens did call on the Senate to block the budget completely. They did not see how the fight outside parliament, mass demonstrations and strikes, could have mobilised the outrage to create a political crisis for the government. There was a real opportunity, not just to block the worst parts of the budget, but to throw the whole thing out.

Still, the government’s problems keep mounting. The substantial fall in iron ore prices is now hitting tax revenues. Macroeconomics estimates this year’s deficit has grown by \$5 billion, and by \$52 billion over four years.

While Joe Hockey says that December’s economic update won’t see a major budget overhaul, it is clear that further cuts will come.

Hockey told the *Financial Review* that despite the Senate blocking university fee deregulation there would be cuts anyway, declaring, “We’ll find any way we can to take the money out of the universities.”

The campaign against Abbott’s cuts will need to be revived in the run-up to next year’s May budget. We need Bust the Budget rallies and union backing for any March Australia demonstrations.

Commonwealth public sector workers have voted overwhelmingly for an industrial campaign to fight Abbott’s demand for cuts to pay and conditions. We need to make 2015 a new year of anti-Abbott struggle.

In 2014 we have seen immense potential for fighting Abbott’s agenda. But too often the opportunities have been squandered

Sydney meeting builds opposition to Islamophobia

AROUND 80 people attended a public meeting in Sydney to oppose the wave of Islamophobia following the government's theatrical anti-terror raids and its military deployment to Iraq.

Lydia Shelly, a founder of Islamophobia Register and a member of the Muslim Legal Network explained, "Muslim women have been physically attacked, verbally abused, had their property destroyed—often in the presence of their children. Yet we are told by the government and the media that Islamophobia does not exist".

The Muslim community faces a high level of police harassment, she said. One man who heckled Scott Morrison on his visit at Lakemba Mosque later received a knock on the door from the Federal Police. Fatima Ali, of the Arab Council Australia, discussed the roots of Islamophobia in previous wars and over a decade of anti-Muslim hysteria since 9/11.

The forum was an important attempt by anti-racist activists to reach out and show support for the Muslim community. The networks developed put us in a better position to respond to further terrorism hysteria, police raids or Islamophobic attacks.

Islamic groups have spoken out against the government and some refused to meet with Tony Abbott. However Muslims feel under siege.

Islamic communities will bear the brunt of the new anti-terror laws. At the same time, these laws broadly undermine civil liberties, as Stephen Blanks, President of the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, discussed. ASIO's unprecedented power to access and modify personal computers with a single warrant will make it easier to spy on all of us. Wendy Bacon, Professor at UTS's Centre for Independent Journalism, spoke on the ramifications for journalists. Stuart Rees, Founder of the Sydney Peace Foundation, discussed how the scaremongering about terrorism has been linked to the new war on Iraq.

The meeting was backed by a broad coalition of Greens, students, anti-war and refugee rights activists and the left, and chaired by Greens MP Mehreen Faruqi. Abbott is using his terrorism scare to distract attention from his hated budget and plummeting approval ratings. Opposing this will be a key task in the coming months. This forum was an important contribution.

Eliot Hoving

CPSU members set for industrial action



UNION MEMBERS in the Department of Human Services (DHS) have overwhelmingly voted in favour of taking protected industrial action.

This means Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support employees, members of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), will begin action within the next month in a campaign to win decent pay and hold on to hard-won conditions.

The Abbott government has promised only further cuts and pay rises of less than 1 per cent, way below inflation.

Almost 80 per cent of union members participated in a ballot in which 95 per cent voted for industrial action.

Support for the union is growing, with 5500 new members signed up since the federal budget in May.

Veterans Affairs staff have also begun balloting for industrial action.

A day of action in November saw symbolic actions, "wearing red", in offices across the country while 2000 rallied in Canberra.

At this stage the union is planning to apply bans and limitations on work, in DHS, such as on responding to voicemail messages and replying to internal emails.

Union members will be talking to potentially millions of Australians

Above: Two thousand CPSU members rallied in Canberra in November as part of the lead up to industrial action

dealing with departments and agencies about the "attack" on wages and conditions during phone calls, emails and face-to-face.

Tony Abbott made his intentions clear when he said that the 1.5 per cent annual pay increase for the military would be the highest for anyone in the public service.

Jobs are also under threat from outsourcing and Budget cuts. A further 16,500 positions are targeted for retrenchment.

"This is a wake-up call for Mr Abbott and Senator Eric Abetz—you can't treat your staff like this and get away with it," CPSU National Secretary Nadine Flood said.

"Like the ADF, working mums at Centrelink and Medicare are being asked to cop cuts to leave and other rights as well as a low-ball pay offer. Unlike the military, though, they can and are doing something about it—by sending a clear message to government that they are prepared to take it to the next level."

One DHS Section Councillor told *Solidarity*:

"Members have shown that by committing to action, we can win our fight against attacks like job cuts, funding cuts, outsourcing and attacks on pay and conditions. DHS dropped putting their shocking agreement offer to a vote after CPSU members showed our intention to fight."

We need joint action across Australian Public Service (APS) agencies to strengthen our fight for a decent wage rise and continue the long-standing campaign for a unified APS Agreement.

Union action has been hampered since bargaining has been divided agency by agency.

Steps have been taken to reunite the APS, and most of the 100 agencies' agreements expired on 30 June 2013. Now we have an opportunity for some agencies to act together, once each agency has conducted a separate ballots to authorise industrial action. One-by-one, agencies are likely to apply over the coming months.

This would be a challenge that could wipe the smirk off Abbott's face and put Abetz in his place. Of 165,000 APS staff, 55,000 are members of the union—potentially, that's some power.

CPSU delegate, Melbourne

Sweeping new terror laws add to climate of fear



By Erima Dall

AS THE government considers escalating troop numbers in Iraq, it has pushed on with its anti-terror crusade at home. The second of three counter-terrorism bills—the Foreign Fighters Bill—was waved through the Senate on 29 October by both major parties. The new laws make it illegal to travel to “declared zones” considered to be areas of terrorist activity. They also make it illegal to “advocate terrorism”. A raft of other nasty amendments lower the thresholds for police to arrest, detain and apply control orders to civilians.

By declaring no-go zones, the government intends to prevent more Australians from travelling to Iraq and Syria to fight with Islamic State (IS). This offence carries a maximum penalty of ten years’ jail. Phillip Boulton of the Law Council of Australia explained, “All that needs to be proved... is that you actually are in the area. There is no need to show that you’ve gone there to do something illegal, let alone gone there with an intention to advance any terrorism act”.

It will be up to the accused to show evidence that their travel was justified, based on a limited list of reasons, thereby reversing the onus of proof. Valid reasons include pro-

fessional journalism, humanitarian activity, family related activity and military deployment, but not visiting friends, commercial activity, or religious reasons.

Targeting people travelling to areas in Iraq and Syria will encourage a further escalation of Islamophobic and anti-Arab racism. Racial profiling and the detention of people at airports will increase. Anyone can now be held at the airport for four hours without the right to tell a family member (increased from 45 minutes). And the government no longer has to notify someone whose passport has been cancelled.

The new offence of advocating terrorism carries a maximum of five years’ prison. Inciting terrorism is already illegal. “Advocates” is broadly defined as anything that “counsels, promotes, encourages or urges” terrorism.

Abbott has made no secret of the fact he wants to ban the organisation Hizb-ut Tahrir, telling radio shock-jock Alan Jones that “We’ve looked at banning them, but we’re advised, under existing law, we can’t do it. ... hopefully before the end of the year, it will be an offence to promote terrorism... Then I suppose we need to have another look at Hizb-ut Tahrir”.

Hizb-ut Tahrir is a political organisation with Islamic ideology,

George Brandis said not to worry, as he would personally have the power to veto prosecutions of journalists

which aims to establish an Islamic caliphate. It has been banned from speaking at events on three separate universities in recent months. Abbott has made much of the fact that its spokespeople refuse to publicly condemn IS. But the group is nothing like IS, and does not condone its actions. Rather, it is a non-violent organisation that aims for an Islamic society by slowly winning public opinion over to an Islamic viewpoint.

But their strident condemnation of Western imperialism, the new invasion of Iraq, and the terror raids has made them a target. The potential targets of the law are much wider, including many other critics of Australian foreign policy. Philip Boulton argues it will also “catch people who are ahead of public opinion”, for example West Papuans in favour of overturning Indonesian rule, or supporters of the Kurdish liberation fighters of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party).

Backlash

The second bill is the biggest of the three, but only eight days were given for submissions to be made. But the haste with which the first bill was passed has caused a public backlash.

The bill made it an offence punishable by five years’ imprisonment to disclose information about ASIO Special Intelligence Operations, leading to fears journalists could be targeted. Attorney General George Brandis said not to worry, as he would personally have the power to veto prosecutions of journalists. Just trust George.

Opposition leader Bill Shorten, after tripping over himself to help pass the laws, has now weakly requested a review to make sure they do not undermine democratic rights. Nothing could be more pathetic. A review cannot fix laws which are designed to intimidate whistleblowers and restrict freedom of speech. The fact that Abbott has agreed to the review says it all.

The final tranche of anti-terror laws, which require telecommunications companies to retain their users’ metadata for two years, have been introduced to parliament but are not expected to pass until next year.

Australia already has the most extensive anti-terror laws of any Western democracy, and they have now been ratcheted up to unprecedented levels. These laws will protect a racist police force and an unaccountable ASIO, but not the rest of us.

Above: ASIO’s powers of surveillance have received a massive boost

Ms Dhu: another WA death in custody



RELATIVES OF Julieka Dhu and other Aboriginal people who have lost family members in police and prison custody led a major protest at the G20 summit in Brisbane on 14 November.

This followed a National Day of Action in October for Ms Dhu, who died in a police cell in South Hedland, WA on 4 August. She was just 22 years of age.

Ms Dhu was locked up “paying down” around \$1000 in parking fines. In the cells she became ill, vomiting and complaining of fever and paralysis in her lower body and later her face. Police allegedly mocked her and dismissed her cries as those of a “drug-gie”. Despite begging for medical attention and being taken to the hospital, she was never allowed to see a doctor.

Witness Malcolm Wilson said that when police took Ms Dhu to hospital for the last time they dragged her across the floor of the watch house. Ms Dhu’s partner, Dion Ruffin, who was in the cell next door, believes she died in her cell, not at the Hedland Health Campus as police claim.

The family has still not received basic information such as a timeline for the coronial inquest and were not permitted to have a representative at the autopsy.

WA currently has the highest rate of Indigenous incarceration in the world, with Aboriginal people making up 40 per cent of the prison population. The Barnett Liberal government’s “tough on crime” approach has exacerbated this crisis. The number of people in West Australian prisons for unpaid fines has soared 600 per cent in the past five years. Stopping incarceration for unpaid fines was a key recommendation of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Federally, whilst Abbott’s budget found billions to fund detention of refugees, Aboriginal legal aid in all states was slashed. Ruth Barson from the Human Rights Law Centre attributes this year’s 18 per cent increase in the incarceration of Aboriginal women to federal cuts and the “tough on crime” mentality.

Tragically, on the eve of the protests demanding justice for Ms Dhu, news emerged of another Aboriginal death in custody in WA, an apparent hanging suicide. And on 13 November, the family of Mark Mason, an Aboriginal man shot dead by police in Colleranerbri in northwest NSW in 2010, led a protest through the small town, disgusted at the lack of justice following a lengthy coronial inquiry.

Geraldine Fela

Communities held to ransom by mining industry

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE at Borroloola and the surrounding Gulf region in the Northern Territory have stepped up protests against Glencore Xstrata’s MacArthur River Mine (MRM), the largest open cut lead and zinc mine in the world. Local communities have relied on the river system for their livelihood for countless generations.

On 22 October, clans from across the region marched to a community meeting to hear results from an Independent Monitor report on the environmental impact of the mine. This followed a major action the previous week, which blocked a bridge crossing the MacArthur River and pledged ongoing civil disobedience if demands for a moratorium on resource extraction in the region were not met.

The Independent Monitor’s report confirmed community fears. The mine has caused extensive heavy metal contamination of fish and waterways. Gaps in the mine’s monitoring systems mean that adult and edible fish species are not regularly tested. The extent of bioaccumulation of lead and cadmium and impacts on human health remain unknown.

A thick sulphur dioxide smoke plume has been hovering above the mine for over six months, produced by reactive chemistry in its waste rock dump. Attempts to smother it with a clay capping have failed, and will result in acid metalliferous

The mine has caused extensive heavy metal contamination of fish and waterways

drainage into the river system.

The NT Department of Mines and Energy has failed to prosecute MRM for a single breach of its operating conditions, despite many of the problems having existed since 2008.

Disgracefully, vital services in Borroloola rely on funding from the mine, such as the dialysis unit, and MRM has fuelled rumours these services would be withdrawn if the mine closed. Yet the \$32 million of mining revenue flagged for a “Community Benefits Trust” over the mine’s life pales in comparison to \$100 million in electricity subsidies alone provided to the mine by the NT Government.

The “viability” of Aboriginal communities right across remote Australia is being made reliant on the existence of destructive commercial projects. In November, the WA government announced their intention to close down 150 Aboriginal communities branded “unviable”.

NT Chief Minister Adam Giles has launched a “developing the North” economic strategy that ties the survival of Aboriginal communities to an expansion in resource projects, particularly shale gas.

Gudanji man Asman Rory, Traditional Owner for the MRM site, summed up the community’s feelings: “NT Chief Minister says our land is open for business—but our business is protecting the land, and that is exactly what we are going to do.”

Lauren Mellor

Liberals facing defeat in Victoria after one term

By Lucy Honan

VICTORIANS ARE set to punish the Liberals at November's state election. Labor was leading in the polls as we went to press, with the likelihood of the end of the Liberal government after one term.

Anger against Tony Abbott and his budget attacks are one key reason, with 23 per cent of people in one poll saying the performance of the federal government will affect their vote. The residual anger is a sign that keeping up the Bust the Budget union campaign could have both hurt Napthine as well as put a more decisive nail in the coffin of Abbott's May budget.

Tony Abbott's name is poison in Victoria, but the Victorian Liberals and Premier Denis Napthine ruined their chances of a second term all on their own. The issues voters care most about are health, education and jobs and employment. Long and public bargaining campaigns from nurses, teachers and ambulance unions have dogged the Liberal government. For almost two years unionised paramedics have covered their Ambulances with messages denouncing the inadequate staffing, atrocious pay and dangerous conditions the government is responsible for.

Unions can take credit for laying bare the Liberals' terrible record. But their political campaign has given Labor a mostly blank cheque. While Labor has promised to resuscitate TAFEs, they have said nothing public about reversing teacher performance pay. Similarly, some hospitals have been promised cash injections, but nothing in the order of what is needed.

The campaign to stop the Liberals' \$18 billion East West link toll road, and demanding investment in the long promised Doncaster rail line, has been strong enough to change Labor policy. Labor's initial position was a promise to stop the new toll road as long as contracts had not yet been signed. But facing local council and community pressure, as well as electoral pressure from The Greens who promised total opposition to the road, Labor have agreed that if they win the election they will rip up the contracts as well.

The Greens have concentrated their resources on trying to win lower house seats in the inner city. A breakthrough for The Greens would help put pressure on Labor to deliver some real change. But The Greens' decision to focus on Liberal-held Prahran will only



Above: Abbott and Denis Napthine...in happier times

reinforce the perception of the party as focused on middle class issues.

A defeat for the Liberals will be a

further straw in the wind for Abbott—and can give some confidence to revive the fight against his austerity agenda.

The campaign to stop the Liberals' \$18 billion East West link toll road has been strong enough to change Labor policy

Fairfield Council strike for pay and allowances

FAIRFIELD COUNCIL workers downed tools for two days in September in the face of an aggressive management trying to slash workers' pay, allowances and other entitlements.

Over 100 United Services Union (USU) workers defiantly picketed the Fairfield Depot site. Several delegates and members from nearby councils in Campbelltown and Liverpool also came to support the picket. Library staff also voted to strike, walking off the job and shutting down four of the five Council libraries. Administrative staff from the Civic Centre joined the strikers at the building entrance to hear speeches and debate resolutions, while a sizeable group of scabs tried to keep the Civic Centre open.

USU Metro Salaried Officers Branch delegate, Edward Saulig, gave a rousing speech denouncing the underhanded methods of the administration, calling for his fellow workers to continue the fight.

"The Council has a leadership programme it claims. Well, I'm telling you, the real leadership is right here in front of me, on this picket. You are the ones leading the fight for recognition and fair treatment at this Council, not management!"

He also urged them to seek out both members and non-members who had not gone on strike to convince them to be part of collective union action that has won the conditions they now enjoy. A motion

to continue the strike the following week was carried unanimously.

The catalyst for the strike came when, after more than 12 months' negotiation over three Enterprise Agreements, Council management sought to strip away significant allowances and conditions. When the union opposed this, management moved to terminate the agreements altogether.

This meant that around 160 employees would lose between \$50 and \$207 per fortnight, and face cuts to other entitlements, including concession days and access to extra sick leave. Members of all three unions involved, the USU, the Development and Environmental Professional Association and Local Government Engineers Association, voted for a full strike. USU members also carried a motion of no-confidence in the council general manager, Andrew McLeod.

Faced with a strike, employers in the NSW state industrial relations system are usually quick to lodge a dispute with the Industrial Relations Commission. This time, knowing their unscrupulous behaviour wouldn't stand up in front of the Commission, no case was lodged. The unions lodged the dispute themselves, arguing the Council had negotiated in bad faith. Disappointingly, industrial action was suspended pending the outcome of the hearing. The USU has now requested the case proceed to arbitration.

Grassroots must use SRC to boost student movement

By Caitlin Doyle-Markwick

THE VICTORY of Grassroots in the Sydney University Student Representative Council (SRC) elections in September was undoubtedly a win for the Left. A coalition, including Solidarity students, built around Grassroots won around 60 per cent of the votes on an explicitly left-wing, activist platform; on issues including refugee rights, defending women's refuges, the environment, fighting fee deregulation, and the need for a fighting student campaign.

However, there are worrying signs that the chance to translate the election win into building the activism that can take the fight to uni management and Abbott in 2015 is being undermined by the bureaucratic attraction of wheeling and dealing for office-bearer positions. The fascination with SRC internal structures is already a pull.

The failure to build active, inclusive and political Education Action Groups on campuses across the country meant the student movement did not reach its potential to challenge Abbott and the education cuts this year. That was clear at Sydney University.

But there has, so far, been too little discussion within Grassroots (GR), as a whole, about how to translate the election victory into a stronger student movement. The traditional SRC horse-trading over office-bearer positions has produced some concerning results.

During discussions about pre-selecting SRC office-bearers, it became apparent that, unbeknown to the majority of students involved in the GR campaign, a small group of Grassroots members had agreed to divide up the office-bearer positions. These deals had been sown up by a small group of Grassroots members with former Sydney Labor Students and various independents, in return for them campaigning for the GR ticket.

One consequence was that only Grassroots members were able to vote to pre-select a number of key positions. Discussions and meetings around these decisions were also restricted to Grassroots members, meaning other activists were locked out of any discussion over the make-up of the SRC for which they had campaigned. It remains unclear exactly how this was democratically decided within Grassroots itself. Worryingly, the move to exclude activists from the discussions was justified by claiming members of Grassroots



Above: The student campaign against Abbott's budget and fee deregulation failed to live up to its potential this year

would be somehow "unsafe" if other, still unnamed, activists were allowed to take part in meetings. This entirely unsubstantiated accusation was bureaucratically used to control who could, and could not, participate and voice their opinions.

The result of this process was that Solidarity's candidate, who had been central to the campaign against Abbott's budget all year, arguing to build a fighting campaign to draw new students into the movement, narrowly lost the pre-selection vote. The Education Officer position, an activist position responsible for coordinating the Education Action Group (EAG), instead, went to two Grassroots members who had not been as involved. This was a triumph of bureaucracy over politics, and no way to ensure the EAG (or the SRC) gets off to the vibrant start that is needed.

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There has, so far, been too little discussion within Grassroots as a whole about how to translate the election victory into a stronger student movement

Autonomous organising

These moves shocked quite a number of people in, and around, Grassroots. However, in a particularly concerning turn of events, the large minority of GR members who voiced support for Solidarity's activist candidate were labeled "racists" in an effort to discredit their arguments and shut down discussion.

The accusation of racism sprang from another political disagreement over "autonomous organising", something that needs more discussion.

Some Grassroots members are committed to the Autonomous Collective Against Racism (ACAR), which was formed on the basis of autonomous

organising principles, meaning that only "people of colour" can be members. This, in turn, is based on the idea that only those who experience racism can know how to fight it. The Anti-Racism Collective (ARC), however, operates on the principle of involving and uniting all those who want to fight racism, and to fight particularly against the essential sources of institutional racism like the government and its racist refugee policy, and the media.

The unfounded accusation of racism against GR members who support the ARC only served to stifle discussion and orchestrate the vote. As other students pointed out, no one in Grassroots had a problem with allowing the supposedly "racist" members of ARC to campaign for the ticket during the elections. An active anti-racist collective at Sydney University will be needed as much as ever in 2015, and we need an open discussion about how best to build it.

Hundreds of students voted for GR because they wanted a left-wing activist university. The experience of Socialist Alternative and Labor students attempting to bureaucratically control the EAG was a central driving force for students to build the GR election campaign and challenge for control of the SRC. We shouldn't squander the lessons of the past year.

What is needed now is a strategy of politically engaging and mobilising students, on and off campus, to build a movement strong enough to confront Pyne's attacks on education and the Abbott government's agenda in 2015.

NUMSA expulsion creates shockwaves in South Africa

By Vivian Honan

SOUTH AFRICA is witnessing the most significant break to the left of the ANC since the end of apartheid, with immense potential consequences. The expulsion of the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in November increases the prospects for the birth of a mass working class party campaigning for socialism.

At the NUMSA congress last December, the union of more than 338,000 members voted to refuse to support the ruling African National Congress (ANC), in the May elections. The ANC led the resistance movement under apartheid, but has since turned sharply to the right. They have rolled out neo-liberal policies such as the National Development Plan, and privatised roads and other infrastructure. Most horrifically they were involved in ordering the massacre of striking Marikana mine workers in 2012.

NUMSA has led a fight within COSATU to end the triple alliance of COSATU, the ANC and the South African Communist Party, after their failure to represent the interests of workers. The COSATU leadership refused to call a special national congress to discuss the issues and instead pushed ahead with the expulsion.

Thirty three unions voted for NUMSA's expulsion, with 24 against, showing NUMSA has considerable support. Eight unions have since held a meeting to discuss the possibility of leaving COSATU and establishing a new federation with NUMSA. NUMSA is also part of building a new political party which they hope to launch in December.

The General Secretary of NUMSA, Irvin Jim, says they, "will not stop mobilising the working class on the road to socialism." NUMSA plans to hold mass meetings of workers countrywide to discuss what has happened and the way forward for the union movement.

The leadership of COSATU has tried to hold back the workers' movement. The emergence of a new workers' party holds the promise of harnessing the power of the black working class that brought down apartheid to the fight to get rid of capitalism as well.



Above: NUMSA members on the march

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At the NUMSA congress last December, the union of more than 338,000 members voted to refuse to support the ruling African National Congress

Ayotzinapa—School of struggle that dares to challenge death in Mexico

THE DISAPPEARANCE of 43 students in Mexico, after they were kidnapped by police and drug traffickers, has thrown the country into turmoil, exposing the close connections between the political elite and drug gangs.

The students, called normalistas, were from peasant families studying to work as teachers in their communities.

Their teacher training college in Ayotzinapa is known as a hotbed of left-wing political activism and has a long history of support for social justice movements, with murals of Marx, Engels, Che Guevara, Zapata and other revolutionary leaders adorning its buildings. On the day of the abduction and killings, the students were protesting cuts to rural schools and soliciting funds to travel to Mexico City to take part in a march commemorating the 1968 Tlatelolco student massacre by the then PRI government.

They ended up in the small city of Iguala, in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero, to commandeered buses, a traditional Mexican method of securing transport to protests.

What they didn't know was that the politically ambitious wife of Iguala's mayor, José Luis Abarca, was giving a speech that evening. Her brother is reputedly the leader of the narco-trafficker gang Guerreros Unidos. Police opened fire on the students on the buses, killing six people

and injuring 20, including bystanders.

Police have admitted to taking the remaining 43 students and handing them over to Guerreros Unidos. Gang members have now confessed to murdering the students, but tests are yet to confirm whether their bodies have been recovered.

Protests raising slogans such as "We want them back alive" and "We are all Ayotzinapa", have led to the resignation of the state governor and the flight of the mayor of Iguala. Mass mobilisations torched the parliament building in the students' state of Guerrero, and led to riots and the burning of the doors of the national palace.

The discovery of 19 additional mass graves in the area, as a result of the search for the bodies of the missing students, has exposed the scale of Mexico's drug war, which has seen an estimated 120,000 killed since 2006.

Police arrested over the incident have received support from the drug-trafficking group linked with the abductions, who are threatening to kill innocents and release the names of officials linked with the gang if the police officers are not released.

In a nation that has become accustomed to horror stories of mass killing and political corruption, this incident has mobilised the population, bringing to the surface the close relationship between the state and narco-trafficking.

Camilo Haley

Is the left breaking through in Europe?

By **Dave Sewell**
Socialist Worker UK

ELECTORAL EARTHQUAKES have rocked one country after another across Europe.

Parties that dominated the main-stream for decades are seeing their support hollowing out or collapsing.

They've been punished for pushing through austerity, corruption scandals and supporting a war that millions marched against.

The biggest losers are the Labour-type social democratic parties that claim to represent workers, but end up managing capitalism when in office.

It's been decades since these reformists offered significant reforms, let alone a meaningful vision of a better society for workers. Many have also forged alliances with Tories.

But new forces are filling this political vacuum. Most exciting for the left is Podemos in the Spanish state and Syriza in Greece.

There are important differences between them, but both surged to the top of the polls from almost nowhere. This followed several years of workers' struggle and mass social movements, which their activists were involved in.

Power

Ten years ago, the anti-capitalist movement was dominated by debates about changing the world without taking power. Now people are leaping at the opportunity to join formations that put forward a different vision of how society could be run by trying to get rid of those who run it.

This development should encourage Marxists, who argue that workers can do just that by using their economic power to overthrow capitalism.

But even with capitalism still mired in crisis and workers under sustained attack, that idea still seems far-fetched to most workers.

Many Marxists are asking if they need to do something entirely different, arguing that it's "sectarian" to distinguish between reformists and revolutionaries. They say we need to get out of the far left "ghetto" first and worry about our long term goals later.

But as the Cheshire cat told Alice in Wonderland, which way you go "depends a good deal on where you want to get to." The leaders of Podemos and Syriza want to replace the people in government with others



Above: Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras, who has moderated his party's stance the closer it comes to power

who they argue would do a better job.

But power doesn't stop with the people in office. Elected governments are still part of a capitalist state that is made up of powerful unelected bureaucracies, not to mention the police and the army. They are part of the class which owns the factories, supermarkets and the media.

The ruling class is rarely completely united, especially in times of crisis. But the state and capitalists rely on one another.

Our rulers are bound together by the need to keep profits coming—profits that come from exploiting workers.

This severely limits the ability of left governments to deliver real change.

They can implement some reforms, but will have to pursue the bosses' interests once they're holding the reigns of the capitalist state. It doesn't matter how left wing their own ideas are.

The leaders of Syriza and Podemos both want to follow in the footsteps of left governments in Latin America.

But these increasingly work with bosses and often against workers.

Syriza has already begun to make this journey fast enough to disorient many of its own supporters.

Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky described in his *History of the Russian Revolution* how the masses choose their leaders through a process of "successive approximations".

Workers and soldiers toppled the old Tsarist regime in 1917 only to elect a party that would rather have kept it mostly intact.

They'd started "not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime."

But a year of intense struggle gradually brought workers face-to-face with the true nature of the system.

They went through "a change of parties in which the more extreme always supersedes the less."

This learning curve can't be skipped, and it has to start somewhere.

So revolutionaries celebrate a left reformist breakthrough because it means workers are beginning a journey that could lead to them to break with reformism altogether.

However, this process isn't inevitable either. The movement can fall backwards into passivity and demoralisation if it fails to overcome the obstacles facing it—just as we see in France today.

Some socialists argue that we should still support left governments, because even limited reforms could trigger a bigger confrontation with the bosses. Yet even if a left government dares start such a fight—and most don't—winning would depend on mobilising the working class.

Syriza has already helped call off strikes to avoid seeming too radical. In office the pressure to do this would be even greater.

Demobilising workers in this way can even leave left governments defenceless against the right's attacks.

There has to be an argument within the working class for going beyond left reformism.

Imperialism no ally for Kurdish fighters in Kobani

By Mark Gillespie

THE DEFENCE of Kobani against the reactionary and sectarian Islamic State (IS) has inspired many on the left. In some quarters, Kobani itself is being portrayed as part of a revolutionary social experiment in Kurdish Syria.

Kobani, a predominately Kurdish town, has been under self-rule since July 2012 when the Syrian army reached an agreement with the PYD and withdrew, something which enabled Assad to concentrate on the war against the democratic opposition in the major cities.

In January this year, Kobani, along with two other predominately Kurdish regions, Afrin and Jazira, established the autonomous self-governing confederation of Rojava (Western Kurdistan) and established a “social contract that reconciles the rich mosaic of Syria through a transitional phase from dictatorship, civil war and destruction, to a new democratic society where civic life and social justice are preserved”.

The Rojava cities are run by popular assemblies. While there are similarities to the democratic councils that took over Syrian towns in the early stage of the revolt against Assad, in Rojava they were established by agreement between existing Syrian-Kurdish political factions.

Rojava councils are also run on a non-sectarian basis, with Kurds, Arabs and other minorities all entitled to representatives.

But it would be wrong to idealise the situation. The military defence of the area is led by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), an off-shoot of the Turkish based Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Its People’s Defence Units also include Arabs and Christians and at least a third of the soldiers are women. But the PKK has a long history of authoritarian nationalism as the leading part of the Kurdish movement in Turkey.

Within Rojava, the Kurdish Youth Movement, which has played an active role in anti-regime protests from the beginning, accuse the PYD of targeting and arresting youth activists.

The Kurds in Rojava also refused to join the struggle against Assad for a long period, attempting to sit on the fence and take advantage of the power vacuum to establish Kurdish control over the area. Earlier this year the Assad regime was still funding non-military state services in the region and



Above: Kurdish fighters in Kobani

has spared Rojava from its bombing campaigns. Assad even promised to give them citizenship to try and keep the Kurds from uniting with the opposition.

But recently, under siege from IS, the Syrian Kurds have established some coordination with the Free Syrian Army and some FSA units have joined the fight to defend Kobani.

National liberation

Socialists have always supported the struggle of nations for self-determination and the Kurds are no exception; the struggle of oppressed nations weakens imperialism. However, the Russian revolutionary Lenin warned against the dangers of “painting national struggles in communist colours”. It is a mistake to equate national struggles with socialism. The dangers can be seen in Iraqi Kurdistan, for example, where nationalist Kurdish leaders Talabani (until recently President of Iraq) and Barzani are in close collaboration with Turkey and the US.

Turkey, a regional power and NATO ally, is more interested in suppressing its own Kurdish minority than in opposing IS and has systematically prevented fighters and supplies from reaching Kobani.

Turkey has also denounced the Democratic Union Party, the party leading the defence, as “terrorist”. It has now allowed fighters from the Iraqi Kurdistan government to enter Kobani, but still refuses any direct aid

to the Syrian Kurds.

There are 30 million Kurds living as minorities in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. They are the world’s biggest nation without a state and are oppressed in all four countries. This division is a legacy of Western imperialism, which drew the borders after the First World War to suit their colonial interests. While the US has stepped up the bombing of IS forces surrounding Kobani, it has no interest in supporting an independent Rojava that destabilises Turkey. The West doesn’t care about the plight of the Kurds and has historically manipulated their struggles to suit their own interests.

In the 1980s, the West ignored the use of chemical weapons by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein against the Iraqi Kurds. Then in 1990, when the West wanted to attack Iraq, suddenly Hussein was condemned for “gassing his own people”.

Turkey currently holds 8000 Kurdish political prisoners accused of terrorism and the West says nothing. Australia and the US have proscribed the PKK as a “terrorist organisation” at the behest of Turkey.

The real allies of the Kurds in Rojava are not Turkey or the West. The fight to extend democracy will depend on linking their struggle with that of ordinary Kurds in Turkey and Kurdish Iraq, as with the democratic opposition in Syria fighting against dictatorship and for a better world.

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The West doesn’t care about the plight of the Kurds and has manipulated their struggles to suit their own interests

US war in Iraq brings more sectarianism and death

By Paddy Gibson

BARACK OBAMA has doubled the US troop commitment to the latest war on Iraq, and used the APEC conference to ask allies including Australia to send additional contributions too.

But Western intervention will solve nothing. The war is already increasing sectarian conflict and drawing the US and its allies deeper and deeper into a quagmire.

Two hundred elite soldiers from the Australian SAS have already deployed, following an extended stay in the United Arab Emirates, waiting for a green light from the Iraqi government. Despite officially there in a “training role” for the Iraqi army, it is clear the soldiers will see combat. The troops come on top of a substantial Australian commitment to the air war, with RAAF fighter planes flying more than 150 bombing missions since September.

Australian troops delayed deployment until receiving immunity from prosecution under Iraqi law for any killings they commit. Political instability in Baghdad stalled negotiations. In August, the US abandoned support for Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki, who had led the essentially sectarian Shia regime installed under the US occupation since 2006. The resulting political shake-up delivered an Iraqi cabinet allegedly more “inclusive” of Sunnis, who even the US recognised had been fundamentally alienated.

The cabinet changes have not altered the sectarian dynamics. The newly appointed Interior Minister is Mohammed Salem Ghabban, a senior member of the Badr Corps, a Shia militia implicated in the torture and killing of Sunnis.

Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) have recently released reports detailing massacres by Shia militia linked with the government in Baghdad. Joe Stork from HRW said, “Pro-government militias are becoming emboldened and their crimes more shocking...and they wonder why Islamic State has had such appeal among Sunni communities”.

One such massacre took place at a Sunni mosque in the village Imam Weiss, 100 kilometres northeast of Baghdad, in full view of the Iraqi army. A spokesperson for the Interior Ministry told the *LA Times* the killings were “a normal, spontaneous reaction of revenge” for the devastating car-bombing of Shia areas by IS.



Above: The sectarian killings of Islamic State have fed a similar sectarian response from Shia militias

It is clear that Shia militias have become deeply involved in the war, with the Iraqi army remaining mired in corruption and dysfunction

Iraq correspondent Patrick Cockburn says that Shia militias are responsible for far more of the fighting than the army. Cockburn says they are often the first to move into areas softened up by US bombing raids and work to “cleanse areas of mixed Sunni population” around Baghdad.

IS has continued to make territorial gains in Iraq since the bombing campaign began, but the Iraqi army has also managed to claw back ground, driving IS from the Baiji oil refinery in northern Iraq in November.

Escalation

Despite Obama’s stated intention to “destroy and degrade” IS through this war, senior US military figures have questioned whether this is possible through bombing alone. A memo to Obama from Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, some of which was leaked to the press, complained there was “no end game” to the bombing policy. There is open discussion amongst the US military about the necessity of deploying ground troops, despite Obama’s promises to the contrary. General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed to the House Armed Services Committee in early November that such a deployment might be necessary next year, when the Iraqi security forces plan an attempt to take back IS strongholds in

the Anbar province and Mosul.

In Syria, it is the murderous regime of Bashar al-Assad that has been the main beneficiary of the US bombing campaign. While Abbott and Obama consistently cite the very real horror of IS atrocities, Assad’s own bombing caused 600 casualties in just the first two weeks of November, overwhelmingly civilians, according to the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights.

Now that IS is running municipal and often industrial infrastructure in the areas it occupies in Syria and Iraq, US bombing raids “targeting IS” can lead to the deaths of workers trying to feed their families. On 9 November, ten oil workers were killed in Raqqa at an oil facility now controlled by IS. Australian RAAF planes have similarly been involved in attacks on IS controlled oil refineries in Iraq.

Iraq and Syria are in the midst of an unimaginable humanitarian catastrophe. This is a consequence of both the legacy of the US occupation of Iraq, the brutal counter-revolution waged by Assad in Syria and the military meddling of imperialist and sub-imperialist powers.

The UNHCR estimates 13.6 million people have been displaced and hundreds of thousands killed. Many are without food or shelter as winter begins to take hold. Western leaders are closing their borders to these refugees and drip-feeding aid at the same time as their bombs rain down further misery and greater numbers of troops prepare to enter the killing fields.

ISLAMIC STATE: WHO ARE THEY AND WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

The emergence of the group Islamic state is a product of Western intervention and imperialist power games in the Middle East, writes **James Supple**

SIX MONTHS after it marched into Mosul, a city of two million people, the Islamic State remains entrenched across huge swathes of Iraq and Syria. Almost every day the media is full of new horror stories of it massacring religious minorities and opponents.

Politicians like Tony Abbott have denounced the group as “pure evil” and a “death cult”, painting it as the product of an incomprehensible ideology. But this obscures the role of both Western imperialism and local powers, both in creating the conditions for it to grow and encouraging it as a useful tool to serve their own interests.

The group first emerged as a product of the US occupation of Iraq. Before the US invasion Al Qaeda had no influence in the country whatsoever. Al Qaeda in Iraq was established when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian jihadist displaced by the US invasion of Afghanistan, arrived to exploit the chaotic post-war situation.

After the Americans removed Saddam Hussein, Iraq descended into chaos, with widespread looting, kidnapping and violent crime.

The economy had already been shattered through a decade of sanctions and bombing, and the US provided little reconstruction. Then the US disbanded the entire Iraqi army, sending hundreds of thousands of unemployed men back to their homes with their weapons.

The decision to ban anyone associated with Saddam’s Baath Party from a role in government led to fears among Iraq’s Sunni of their exclusion from power.

The result was that Sunni communities were the first to take up arms against the US occupation. But, as journalist Loretta Napoleoni has written, Zarqawi, “waited until August 2003 to enter the fighting...when the Sunni insurgency was already in full swing and the population had turned



Above: The black flag of Islamic State

against the occupation.”

In December 2004, Osama bin Laden endorsed him as the official leader of al Qaeda in Iraq. Zarqawi’s group initially gained some support in Sunni communities through solving security problems with a ruthless crackdown imposing an extreme version of Islamic law.

But from the beginning the group was just as focused on sectarian attacks on Shias as on fighting the Americans. It carried out a series of suicide attacks and bombings of Shia shrines and mosques that helped ignite retaliatory attacks by Shia militias.

Its headline tactics also alienated support amongst Sunnis, to the point where Sunni resistance groups were prepared to ally with the US against it, in what is known as the Sunni Awak-

ening movement.

As a result Al Qaeda along with other Salafist groups were marginalised inside Iraq by late 2007 and many of their fighters killed. Zarqawi himself was killed in a US airstrike in 2006, allowing the group’s current leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to take over in 2010.

A Syrian proxy

The conflict in Syria from 2011 allowed the group to revive. From the beginning the popular movement against Assad tried to appeal for unity across the sectarian divide.

But the militarisation of the struggle strengthened sectarianism on both sides. Assad’s regime, based amongst the Alawite Shia population, stoked sectarianism. The armed opposition became more Islamist and

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The conflict in Syria from 2011 allowed the group to revive

FEATURES

sectarian itself.

Once the rebellion got going, local sub-imperialist powers including the Gulf states Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as well as Turkey, began to encourage and fund the armed opposition in the hope of weakening the Assad regime. These powers were encouraged to act on their own by the US's refusal to back the armed rebellion against Assad.

Both the Gulf States and Turkey hoped to win influence in determining what kind of regime would replace Assad.

Backing the extreme Islamist groups had the added advantage of weakening the secular and democratic elements of the revolution against Assad.

This suited the aims of the Gulf States in particular, who were paranoid about the spread of popular revolution to their own backyards.

Turkey has aided rebel groups fighting Assad on a fairly indiscriminating basis, allowing anti-Assad fighters of all stripes to cross the border into Syria. It is only recently that Turkey has begun to make any effort to stop militant groups including IS from selling oil into Turkey on the black market.

Turkey also views IS as a less serious enemy than the Kurdish fighters inside Syria's autonomous areas of Rojava, as shown by its efforts to block fighters crossing the border to aid the Kurds against IS.

The Kurdish fighters inside Syria are linked to the PKK, which has waged a campaign for Kurdish independence inside Turkey for decades. This explains Turkey's lukewarm support for the US war against IS.

Saudi Arabia has long been a source of funding for Salafist groups, such as the mujahideen who fought the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. It is a key regional power as a result of its immense oil wealth, and an important backer of overarching US imperialist control in the Middle East.

The Saudis great rival for regional dominance is Iran, which turned against the US following the Iranian revolution of 1979. Due to its alignment with Iran, Syria's Assad regime is likewise hostile to the Saudis. But neither the Iranian nor the Syrian regimes are consistent anti-imperialists—both have been prepared to cut deals with the US and work alongside them where it suits their interests.

Weapons and funding from the

Gulf states ensured the extreme Islamist groups in Syria have consistently been better armed than groups aligned with the Free Syrian Army or moderate Islamists.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar in particular have been accused of funding the jihadist groups in Syria like Jabhat al Nusra, from which IS split in early 2013.

Some have questioned why the Saudi and Qatari governments would fund Al Qaeda-aligned groups like Jabhat al Nusra and IS, given the danger the jihadists pose to their own regimes as well.

And it is true that since 9/11 the Saudis have launched periodic crackdowns on funding and support for jihadist groups—in particular against Al Qaeda, following its campaign of attacks inside Saudi Arabia in 2003 and 2004.

But the flow of funds has never stopped completely. A 2009 WikiLeaks diplomatic cable released by WikiLeaks said that despite “important progress” in cutting off funds to Al Qaeda, “donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide”.

The Saudi regime has been under constant US pressure to stop the flow of funds. Since it values its alliance with the US, it has had to make a show of cracking down.

Publicly, the Saudis have funded and backed moderate Islamists and even the secular Free Syrian Army. But they have also allowed funding to the extreme Islamist groups to continue covertly.

Whether the Saudi government has funded them directly, or simply allowed Saudi citizens and religious charities to do so, remains unclear. But the fact that the money has flowed their way shows that at the very least the government has turned a blind eye.

If the Saudi state wanted to stem the funds going into Syria, which have been estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars, it could undoubtedly do so. This is a government that, thanks to its oil wealth, has almost limitless resources.

Recent outbursts by senior US government officials—who would have access to detailed intelligence on the issue—show that they believe the Gulf regimes are responsible.

US Vice President Joe Biden said in October “Our allies in the region were our largest problem” in stopping the rise of Al Qaeda in Syria, saying the Saudis and United Arab Emirates

had “poured hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of tons of weapons” into them. General Martin Dempsey, the US's top military official, speaking about IS at the Senate Armed Services Committee in September quipped, “I know major Arab allies who fund them.”

Blowback

Following its takeover of the Iraqi town of Fallujah in January, and then its spectacular capture of Mosul in June, it has become clear that IS has snowballed out of control, pursuing an independent agenda of its own.

With its control of a huge swathe of Syria and Iraq, the group now threatens to destabilise states all across the region.

IS is now a formidable force that is able to self-fund its activities through looting and even a form of tax collection. David Cohen, undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence at the US Treasury Department, has estimated they bring in \$1 million a day from oil smuggling alone. Hisham AlHashimi, an adviser to the Iraqi government, estimates that they take another \$10 million a month from kidnapping.

Classified US Defence Department intelligence on the group gathered during the US occupation of Iraq shows that these techniques were in place years before its move into Syria. Patrick B. Johnston, who is analysing the documents, told the US-based McClatchy media company, “They continued to raise more and more money over time, even amid the US troop surge and the Sunni Awakening revolt of Iraqi Sunni tribes”.

Computer files found on 160 flash drives, captured from a high level ISIS leader in Mosul two days before it fell to IS, show its total cash and assets were already \$875 million.

This is far from the first time an imperialist proxy force has spun out of the control of its initial backer. Islamist fighters in Afghanistan in the 1980s, who included Osama bin Laden, helped US and Saudi Arabian strategic interests by defeating the Russians.

But because they saw themselves as fighting for Islam, they were horrified on returning home to Saudi Arabia to realise the extent of their own government's collaboration with the US.

This led famously to “blowback” when Al Qaeda began targeting both the US and the Saudi governments.

The evolution of IS is a similar story. It initially gained support from some of the Gulf regimes, who thought it could serve their aims in Syria. But it has now gone spiraling out of control.

However unlike Al Qaeda, the Islamic State's immediate aims are not anti-imperialist. While Al Qaeda concentrated on attacks on the US, whether military targets like the USS Cole or American civilians, IS has focused on seizing territory to build its own state.

Its focus is primarily on establishing a "pure" Islamic caliphate within the Muslim world, first of all by cleansing it of the Shia regimes. As yet it has made no effort to target the existing Sunni Islamic states like Saudi Arabia and Turkey, nor does it see the US as its main target. The dominant effect of its operations has been to serve imperialist and sub-imperialist interests.

IS support in Iraq

IS's rapid success in Iraq can only be explained by the support it has drawn from Sunni communities, who were alienated by the actions of the Shia sectarian government of Nouri al-Maliki.

Sectarianism in Iraq was encouraged by the US occupiers in an effort to maintain control of the country. The government they left behind was a Shia sectarian regime.

Journalist Hamza Hendawi has explained that, "Sunnis are locked out of key jobs at universities and in government, their leaders banned from Cabinet meetings or even marked as fugitives."

But Maliki's repression of Iraq's Sunnis reached new heights in the face of the "Iraq Spring" movement of 2013. Mostly Sunni protesters were gunned down, and thousands arrested. This produced a revival in armed struggle against the government among Sunnis that allowed IS to win support, so that many Sunnis saw it as no worse than the Shia-dominated government.

There were even reports that hundreds of Iraqis in Mosul took to the streets to celebrate after IS drove out the Iraqi army. In the wake of the group's takeover, Ali Hatem al-Suleiman, head of the Dulaimi tribe from Iraq's Anbar province, told the media in August that, "we consider Maliki to be more dangerous than ISIS".

This may not last. Some Sunni tribes in the centre of Iraq have decided to resist IS—hundreds of members



of one tribe were even slaughtered for this decision.

Islamic State is clearly a brutal and violent force. It has slaughtered Shia Muslims as well as other religious minorities like the Yazidis, as well as kidnapping and executing Western journalists.

In areas it controls it has imposed strict dress codes for women and executed those it deems a threat, including doctors, parliamentarians and political activists. The group has even publicly boasted about selling women into slavery.

But Western bombing in Iraq and Syria is no solution. This will only drive more and more people into the arms of the group. It will help cement an image of IS as an opponent of imperialism.

Even James Comey, head of the FBI, told the US Congress that its support had "intensified" since the beginning of US airstrikes.

The inevitable civilian casualties will also drive more Sunnis in Iraq into seeing IS as the lesser evil compared to the US and the Shia government. There have already been numerous reports of civilian deaths, following several separate strikes in Fallajah and one attack on Hit where 22 were reported killed.

The US and Australia are working with a sectarian government which is relying increasingly on Shia militias and death squads to retake Sunni areas.

Above: Helmets abandoned by Iraqi soldiers in Mosul as the Iraqi army collapsed

Without a government in Iraq committed to unity across sectarian divides there is little hope of winning the support of civilians in Sunni areas.

Both within Shia and Sunni areas of Iraq, the only solution is the revival of a non-sectarian opposition. Bridging this divide is possible—during the Iraqi Spring the emergence of a mostly Sunni movement prepared to fight Iraq's corrupt government won the support of Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr.

The failure of the Iraqi government to provide basic services or reconstruction, due to crippling levels of governmental corruption, provide a basis for mobilising working class discontent that could cut across the sectarian divide.

Socialist politics has shown an ability to unite Iraq's Sunni, Shias and Kurds on the basis of class politics in the past. In the 1950s and 1960s Iraq was home to the largest Communist Party in the Middle East.

The resurgence of such a movement in Iraq would be aided by a clear anti-imperialist opposition to US intervention and the revival of the wave of Arab revolutions elsewhere in the region, as it was by the movement after 2011 in Egypt and elsewhere.

It is the Arab masses the hold the key to a better future in Iraq, not Western missiles and bombers.

EASTERN EUROPE AND THE BERLIN WALL 1989'S PEOPLE POWER REVOLUTIONS

The Eastern European regimes toppled by mass protests twenty five years ago had nothing to do with socialism, argues **Victor Yang**

IN 1989, popular revolutions involving hundreds of thousands of ordinary people across Eastern Europe brought an end to Communist rule. The most iconic episode was the massive protests that physically dismantled the Berlin Wall.

Ironically, reforms deemed necessary for the survival of the Soviet Union proved to be the opening through which the trapped force of popular revolt would explode.

By the 1980s, the Soviet economy had slowed to an abysmal pace. An annual average growth rate of 5.8 per cent in the 1950s had gradually but surely fallen to 1 per cent. The effects of this economic stagnation bit into peoples' lives throughout Eastern Europe, as did the suffocation of cultural, intellectual, and working life. Such an environment unsurprisingly bred pervasive resentment for the Communist regimes.

The first crack in the Eastern Bloc came in Poland. On the back of some five months of mass demonstrations and workers' strikes, the Communist party of Poland, which had ruled the country since 1948, was forced to negotiate with the Polish Solidarity movement, an unofficial trade union, and allow semi-free elections.

Solidarity surprised even itself with the scale of its political popularity, crushing the Communist Party in the elections in June 1989 and forcing it to allow Solidarity to form a non-Communist, coalition government with one of its own activists as Prime Minister. The unnerving precedent proved to be ominous for the Communist regimes.

Then in September 1989, the Hungarian government announced that it would open its border with the West for the first time since the beginning of the Cold War.

Tens of thousands of East Germans began fleeing to Hungary, hoping to travel to West Germany via

Austria. Despite the East German regime's protests, neither Hungary nor the USSR would help stem the flow of East Germans. Efforts in East Germany to stop people leaving the country sparked mass protests.

Hardliners considered a so-called "Chinese solution"—the kind of brutal military repression used against the Tiananmen Square democracy protests. Yet while the Politburo secretly decided against any Soviet military intervention, people were well aware of previous Soviet military interventions in 1953, 1956, and 1968. Thus it was with tremendous bravery that ordinary people stood up, as they did, to challenge the repressive regimes they lived under.

Larger and larger protests over two months led to growing pressure on the regime in East Germany, culminating in half a million people taking to the streets in East Berlin. Less than a week later, on 9 November, the regime approved draft guidelines allowing East Germans to pass to West Germany through checkpoints.

A senior Politburo member was tasked with relaying this to the media. In a press conference on the day, he mistakenly claimed that the measure was effective immediately, applied to everyone, and implied that access to West Germany through checkpoints was unrestricted. This was broadcast widely in the media—some of which claimed the border was already open. People flocked to the wall on both sides.

East Germans began tearing down parts of the wall, with the authorities powerless to stop them. Within a few weeks, the wall was fully open. Within a year, the 40-year-old partition of Germany was fully undone, with Germany re-united under the government of West Germany's conservative Chancellor Helmut Kohl. This marked the coming end of the Soviet Union as well as the end of the

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Larger and larger protests in East Germany culminated in half a million people taking to the streets in East Berlin

Cold War.

With dramatic rapidity all the East European Communist regimes collapsed. In Bulgaria, the 35-year Communist dictator Todor Zhivkov stepped down almost immediately; in Czechoslovakia, the so-called Velvet Revolution escalated with demonstrations in Prague by over a million people. Only in Romania was there an attempt to crush the protests, with the hated dictator Ceausescu ordering soldiers and police to open fire on a demonstration of tens of thousands in December. But even this could not stop the spread of the protests, which turned into a general strike.

When they were ordered to open fire again, soldiers refused and instead arrested Ceausescu. He was executed on Christmas Day.

A string of dictatorships that had been supposedly all-powerful, with feared systems of secret police and fierce repression of any dissent, had been toppled in less than a year.

State capitalism

World leaders were quick to use the events to proclaim the failure of socialism. The failure of the Soviet Union was used as evidence of the triumph of capitalist free market ideology; there being, as Margaret Thatcher would repeatedly insist, "no alternative". But the regimes of the Soviet Union had nothing in common with the genuine socialism envisaged by Marx.

Socialism is meant to be about workers control of the means of production—that is raw materials, machines of labor, and land. This would allow production to be based on meeting society's needs, and overcoming the exploitation of workers, the vast majority, in the interests of a powerful minority.

But in Russia and Eastern Europe actual workers themselves had no control, and there was no democracy



Above: Crowds celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989

whatsoever. A small elite of Communist Party members, the nomenclatura, ruled these societies with an iron fist, amassing immense privileges for themselves.

How do we explain “socialist” societies which were marked by authoritarian control over production and the exploitation of workers, scarcity amidst industrial growth, and the brutal assault on various political and individual freedoms? In the 1950s British Marxist Tony Cliff developed the theory that Russia was not socialist but state capitalist, a form of capitalism where the economy was completely state owned, controlled by a repressive bureaucratic apparatus.

Stalin’s counter-revolution in the late 1920s overthrew any last elements of the workers’ power in Russia that resulted from the 1917 revolution, and placed state control in the hands of a bureaucratic elite. Soviet industrial planning was directed by the motivations of international competition. Industry was driven almost solely by the state’s need to build a modern military to compete with other industrialised nations and therefore placed a relentless emphasis on industrial growth. This also accounted for Stalinist tyranny over workers and peasants, as well as the forced labour camps in the form of the Gulag; the “tyranny of capital over workers” being “the other side of the coin to competition between capitals”.

While production targets for steel, coal and electricity increased rapidly,

the production of consumer goods such as cotton or wool stagnated or declined. Hence Cliff’s observation that “Russia was very successful at producing Sputniks, but not at producing shoes”.

In the aftermath of Boris Yeltsin’s effective dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, what was most surprising was that the shift to capitalist market economies from a state-controlled economy occurred with relative ease.

Workers showed no interest in defending these so-called “workers’ states”, since they neither represented nor protected the workers. Workers held no sympathy for the Stalinist regimes, and joined the protests against them.

The ease with which the old bureaucratic elite turned themselves into capitalist business owners shows how little the difference between Russian state capitalism and free market capitalism was. This was no counter-revolution, only a free-market reorientation of an already capitalist, but state-run, economy.

Most Soviet dissidents shared the illusion that free markets were a ticket to prosperity and freedom. Yet it became clear that market oriented Post-Soviet politics did not produce the fundamental changes required to improve society.

Boris Yeltsin, a former Russian Communist Party leader, relentlessly pursued neo-liberal reforms, selling off state enterprises to a well-connected few—the ones that would become the present day capitalist oligarchs controlling billions of dollars in as-

sets. His political machinations were self-interested manoeuvres designed to wrest power from others in the bureaucratic elite, oblivious to the effects on society; unemployment, social security and inequality.

In 1991, as the *New York Times* announced Poland a “pioneer of capitalism”, the first Solidarity-affiliated government chose to take the path of austerity. It implemented disastrous “shock therapy” market reforms, with the same predictable effects on unemployment, inequality, and social dissatisfaction.

Such measures were adopted throughout the former Soviet Union, again to the same effect.

The promises of the market proved to be illusions. There was no rise in prosperity, while populations were repeatedly fed the “bitter pills” of a never-ending “transition” to market capitalism. All this meant was continual austerity.

1989 must be seen as a triumph of mass resistance, that brought down a vast totalitarian regime within months. The Eastern European revolutions demonstrated the power of mass action. But a further lesson must also be acknowledged: Genuine socialism cannot be abandoned. Real socialism means workers’ control of society, and a society radically more democratic than either market capitalism or Stalinism. In the face of the rampant inequality, economic crisis and war that remain part of capitalism its revival is long overdue.

WHITLAM'S LEGACY AND THE DEATH OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Following the show of continuing adoration for Gough Whitlam at his packed out memorial, **Jean Parker** reflects on his contradictory legacy

THE FLOOD of sentiment following Whitlam's death should be read as a testament to the depth, and resilience, of anti-neoliberal politics in Australian society.

Over time Gough has become *the* quintessential symbol of a time when the Labor Party stood for free education, for universal healthcare, for Land Rights, for the replacement of White Australia with multiculturalism, for ending the war in Vietnam, and for the unashamed building of the public sector. Those mourning Gough are yearning for a political era when Australian society seemed to be becoming more just, more equal and less racist.

For many Whitlam shines so bright precisely because in the decades since his dismissal in 1975 Labor has consistently repudiated the Whitlam government, and in power has trashed its reforms. This brings us to the point where in the mainstream politics today, there is bi-partisan support for cuts to balance the budget, more markets in the universities, the assimilationist NT Intervention, bombing Iraq and closing our borders to refugees.

It is remarkable that despite the invisibility of a genuine social democratic agenda in parliament, its support among the mass of people is alive and kicking, as the response to Whitlam's death has again illustrated. But the nostalgic mourning of the past month does nothing to bring this politics back to life, nor to defeat the new round of neo-liberal counter-reforms embodied in Abbott's budget.

What's more, nostalgia disguises the real legacy of Whitlam's time in power, a legacy that contains the seeds for Labor's shift to the right under Hawke and Keating. Understanding the fundamental limits of Whitlam's politics is therefore necessary to reverse the corrosive impact of Labor's capitulation to neo-liberalism.

A sober assessment of the Whitlam years must start by recognising that Gough played virtually no role in creating the wave of radicalisation that brought him to power and opened the way to the passage of his key reforms.

Those who made it "time" for

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Those who made it "time" for Whitlam's election in 1972 were not the ones sitting in parliament

Whitlam's election in 1972 were not the ones sitting in parliament. As Howard Zinn would have it, they were the ones sitting-in, occupying parliament's lawns with tents, and its streets with striking workers and students.

They were the workers who, in increasing numbers in the last years of the 1960s, struck for wage rises as thirty years of economic growth fed into a wave of worker militancy; the socialists in the unions who prepared to break the anti-union "penal powers" by striking for jailed union leader Clarrie O'Shea in 1969; the Gurindji stockmen who walked off Wave Hill station in 1966 and sat down for their land, winning the support of workers across the country; the three women who chained themselves to the doors of the Arbitration Commission in 1969 demanding equal pay; the anti-war activists who campaigned for Labor's Arthur Calwell in 1966, and then when Labor lost realised the need to take direct action against the Vietnam war by organising hundreds of thousands to strike against the war, by hiding draft resisters and by raising money for the Vietnamese National Liberation Front. They were the black activists who set up the Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside Parliament House demanding national land rights.

It was these struggles in the 1960s and early 1970s that shifted society to the left and laid the basis of reforms like Medibank, Land Rights, no-fault divorce and the withdrawal from Vietnam. It is the policies that are remembered today, not the struggles that made them possible.

The reforms, and the significant new social programs that Whitlam's government initiated and funded in its first years in office, did make real improvements to people's lives. They should be celebrated and defended.

Responding to crisis

But while Whitlam was willing and able to bring in this suite of changes, he was unable to defend them. Nor can this be explained by the right-wing assault represented by the 1975 Kerr dismissal. What's largely over-

looked today is that from late 1974 Whitlam explicitly froze his reform agenda, and spent much of 1975 trying to reign in spending. In truth the dismissal interrupted a drastic back-peddling from Whitlam, and probably saved Gough's legacy.

When Whitlam came to power in 1972, Australia, along with the rest of the developed world, had lived through 30 years of economic growth. The post-war boom was the political and economic status quo.

On coming to power after 23 years of Conservative rule, Labor assumed that it would preside over an economy that would continue to grow at 6-7 per cent a year—just as their predecessors had. The global Keynesian consensus preached that Keynes's economic policy tools had ended the booms and busts that had characterised capitalism's history.

Whitlam had been consistently explicit that his programs relied on this strong level of private sector growth. Few imagined that the boom could end. In his first budget in 1973 Whitlam increased spending by 40 per cent. He doubled education spending, tripled urban development and quadrupled public housing funding. But even after this, the budget was still \$211 million in surplus!

In 1974, however, the global "stagflation" crisis hit Australia. The economic conditions that Whitlam's reform program relied on dissolved. Inflation rose to 22 per cent, unemployment (which had been statistically negligible) suddenly hit 5 per cent. Profit-rates plunged, and bosses panicked.

It was the panic created by the first deep crisis in a generation that underpinned the hysterical rejection of Whitlam by key sections of the ruling class and the media. As workers took strike action at record levels, capitalists wanted immediate action against unions, and were prepared to break parliamentary rules to get it.

But it was the way the Labor government responded to the crisis that is key. Labor Left leader Jim Cairns, famous for his role in the anti-Vietnam



Above: The crowd that gathered in Canberra on the day of Whitlam's dismissal

moratorium movement, was treasurer. Initially his response to the crisis was that it presented the chance to enlarge the size of the state in relation to private industry. He argued that the government's reform program must continue, and that it was better to go down fighting than to surrender Labor's agenda.

This instinct was right. But to be implemented it would have required the mobilisation a militant union fight against the stockbrokers and bankers—fighting the sackings with occupations and nationalisations, organising mass strikes in support of the government's legislation, meeting the media barons' relentless propaganda with workers' power.

But even the most progressive Labor government in Australian history, supported by a highly organised union movement and mass social movements, had absolutely no intention of implementing such a strategy. To do so would have been to abandon Labor's commitment to parliament and to running capitalism.

Heading the wrong way

Instead Labor moved sharply to the right. Its first priority became fixing the economy. Cairns argued, "We live in a society where the determinants, the things that happen in society as a whole are taking place in the private

sector...If we're to keep people in work or get them back to work, we have to work on the private sector." Working on the private sector meant getting profit-rates back up, and so Labor committed itself to ensuring a, "reasonable rate of return on investment". This meant trying to contain strikes, holding wages down, and freezing public spending. By the May 1975 budget Cairns declared that he was, "planning to get the domestic deficit down to the lowest possible figure".

In the face of the new economic turbulence that would characterise the coming neo-liberal decades, Whitlam's Labor established the idea that reforms in the interests of workers, women, Aboriginal people and the poor could only come once the economy was healthy, and bosses were getting the returns they wanted on their investments.

This is the lesson that Hawke and Keating took from the Whitlam government and the logic that led them to reduce company tax from 46 per cent to 36 per cent, to corporatise and eventually sell-off parts of Australia's welfare state, and to implement an Accord that was more successful in shifting wealth to capitalists than any policy in the previous 50 years.

Whitlam failed to mobilise the social forces that brought him to power,

and instead set about trying to win back the support of the ruling class and their newspapers.

This doomed strategy explains both the back-peddling on social programs, and the failure of the government to defend itself from the powers on display in the 1975 dismissal.

Whitlam's government, the high water-mark for Labor's social democracy, also reveals how Labor's parliamentary reformism is fundamentally incapable of winning meaningful change.

Ultimately, real power is not in parliament. The powers stacked against Labor in 1975—capitalist crisis, a hostile press, and bosses that wanted their profits restored—were quite willing to dispense with parliamentary democracy when it suited them.

This is how the system actually runs. Labor rode into office on the momentum created on the streets and used parliament to implement some progressive reforms. But it was not able to both defend these reforms and manage the bosses' economy. Labor chose the economy.

The struggle to crush Abbott's budget, to fight for Land Rights, equal pay and refugees requires completely different politics—to unequivocally put human need before corporate greed.

THE IWW IN AUSTRALIA DIRECT ACTION AGAINST CAPITALISM AND WAR

The Wobblies combined opposition to the First World War with militant industrial organising, but their intransigence was also their undoing, argues **Lachlan Marshall**

NOT A lot is remembered about the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) a century after the peak of their influence during the First World War. Yet as Australia is once again at war it is appropriate to examine the politics and practice of the most principled and energetic opponents of that bloodbath.

The IWW, known colloquially as the Wobblies, consistently argued for militant forms of direct action like strikes and sabotage against employers to win better wages and shorter working hours.

They emphasised building struggles from below and reserved their harshest criticism for the parliamentarism of the Labor Party. As Vere Gordon Childe claimed, the IWW was “the first body to offer effectively to the Australian workers an ideal of emancipation alternative to the somewhat threadbare Fabianism of the Labour Party.”

Moreover, they stood for anti-racism, internationalism and equal pay for women at a time when other organisations of the working class, like the Labor Party and most trade unions, clung to reactionary ideals like the White Australia Policy.

These principles stemmed from the IWW’s emphasis on organising workers at the point of production, which meant that overcoming racial and other divisions were of the highest priority.

But they saw politics, which they equated with parliamentary action, as a distraction from the industrial struggle.

At its height in early 1917 IWW membership stood at 2000. The Wobblies’ paper, *Direct Action*, had a circulation of 15,000 copies, although its readership would have been much larger.

However the IWW’s life as an organisation was short lived. Their



Above: The IWW aimed to unite all workers in one large industrial union

on trade unions as tools of revolutionary action; and an emphasis on direct action culminating in the revolutionary general strike to overthrow capitalism and usher in a socialist society of workers’ control and industrial democracy.

There is a tension in the syndicalist tradition over whether to organise within existing unions—“boring from within”—or set up separate revolutionary unions—“dual unionism.”

The American IWW, the inspiration for the Australian Wobblies, tended to opt for “dual unionism,” organising the unskilled, migrant and black workers excluded from the mainstream labour movement and the conservative American Federation of Labor.

On the other hand, the relative strength and organisation of the Australian labour movement—encompassing skilled and unskilled workers—made such a strategy unrealistic. On the whole the Australian Wobblies were forced to “bore from within.”

Nevertheless, the IWW’s goal remained the replacement of the existing unions by new “industrial unions” and the formation of One Big Union that would unite the entire working class.

attempt to combine a revolutionary organisation *and* a trade union in the one body meant they ultimately failed at both tasks.

Syndicalism

The IWW stood in the tradition of syndicalism, an influential current in the US and European labour movements during the period of intense working class struggle around WWI. (The peak of Spanish syndicalism was reached during the Civil War of the 1930s).

While syndicalist theory and practice varied, they converged around rejection of parliamentary politics, political parties and the state; insistence

The Australian Wobblies

The origins of the Australian IWW as a national organisation lay in the IWW Clubs, formed in 1907 by the Socialist Labour Party in Sydney, Melbourne and some NSW mining towns.

Echoing debates in America between the Chicago (non-political) and Detroit (political) factions of the IWW, Chicago-aligned direct actionist IWW Locals in Adelaide and Sydney coalesced in 1911 and eclipsed the Detroit-oriented IWW Clubs. By November 1913 the IWW had 199 members.

A number of factors explain the rise of the Australian IWW.

Firstly, the early years of the 20th century saw a massive growth of the organised working class. Between 1901 and 1909 the number of unions doubled while union membership trebled.

However, this was accompanied by the consolidation of a conservative layer of union officials. The Commonwealth system of Arbitration introduced in 1904 exacerbated this, shifting the focus from the shop floor to arbitration courts, and strengthening the hand of the union bureaucrats who represented their members in court.

Finally, the disappointing experience of the first federal Labor government from 1910, and earlier State Labor governments, gave weight to the IWW argument that parliamentary politics was a sham.

As Prime Minister Hughes acknowledged in federal parliament in 1917, the IWW's popularity represented "the revolt of the people against the chicanery of legislatures."

WWI and conscription—the high point

The IWW shone brightest in its opposition to the war and conscription, which led to growing influence in the unions as workers began to suffer from inflation caused by the war.

The IWW opposed the war from the beginning. It denounced the betrayal of the socialist parties of the Second International, correctly attributing their capitulation to the aim of taking over the state through winning control of parliament which, "lead the Socialist parties to the defence of the national state..."

In 1916 the Wobblies led strikes in the shearing and mining industries to victory, often coming to the assistance of workers who had been abandoned by their own unions.

In Northern NSW and Queensland shearers wanted a pay rise to match the booming profits enjoyed by the pastoralists. In August 1916 they went on strike in defiance of their union, the AWU, which planned to wait for the old agreement to expire. So the shearers appealed to the IWW for assistance instead.

The IWW seized the opportunity and despatched an organiser to assist the strike. It helped sustain the strike through collections from its Locals and in the Sydney Domain, and its newspaper, *Direct Action* reported on the strike's progress. They printed thousands of stickers that read: "Don't scab on the Shearers – Let the Blowflies win the Strike."

With the pastoralists terrified of

In 1916 the Wobblies led strikes in the shearing and mining industries to victory

losing the whole season's wool clip as sheep began dying from fly-blow, they eventually conceded the shearers' demands. It was a vindication of the Wobbly tactics of bypassing arbitration and insisting on direct action.

The next major strike involving Wobblies was by NSW miners in November 1916 for a pay increase and reduction in hours, which was joined by miners in Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania.

The press howled that the IWW were working for the Germans. But with the nation heavily reliant on coal to fuel the war-time economy, the strike forced the intervention of Prime Minister Hughes to instruct the arbitration tribunal to grant the workers' demands.

Even where there were no IWW members Wobbly influence was evident. For example, in the lead-up to strikes at the NSW railway workshops in Randwick in February and Eveleigh in April 1916, where workers acted independently of their leaders, Wobblies had held lunch-time meetings at the factory gates and put posters up around the workshops.

Similarly, the NSW general strike of 1917 bore the hallmarks of IWW influence, with workers walking out against the opposition of their union officials.

But it was the anti-conscription campaign that gave the IWW its greatest opportunity for growth. Throughout the campaign the IWW displayed a feverish level of activity, spreading its anti-war propaganda in hundreds of IWW meetings.

In July 1915 the IWW and other socialists launched the Anti-Conscription League, a campaign in which they collaborated with the left of the Labor Party.

Hughes resorted to a referendum rather than legislating to introduce conscription because even the Labor Party caucus wouldn't pass a Conscription Act.

Hughes, albeit with some exaggeration, blamed the IWW as "largely responsible for the present attitude of organised labour, industrially and politically, towards the war."

Importantly, the IWW put its anti-racism to the fore in the campaign, arguing against those who warned of the "threat" coloured labour would be imported to replace workers conscripted to the front.

Following his defeat in the first conscription referendum, Hughes split from the Labor Party and established a new "National Labor" Party. He failed again in a second conscription

referendum in December 1917.

Fall of the IWW

From a peak in July 1915 military recruitment fell steadily, leading to increased government repression of opponents of the war effort—in particular the IWW.

In September 1915 Wobbly agitator Tom Barker was charged under the War Precautions Act for publishing a poster "prejudicial to recruiting," and then jailed in March 1916. He was released in August after an impressive defence campaign. But the government was only biding its time.

The following year Hughes told a meeting of union leaders that the IWW must be repressed "with the ferocity of a Bengal tiger."

In September 1916 the IWW hall in Sydney was raided. Membership lists confiscated were passed on to employers, who dismissed IWW members en masse.

The following month twelve leading IWW activists were arrested and charged with treason, receiving sentences of between ten and 15 years.

A campaign to "set the twelve men free" attracted wide support, including from unions hostile to the IWW and even the Labor Party. It was so blatantly a frame-up that even those who shared none of the Wobblies' convictions demanded a new trial. It later emerged that police simply fabricated evidence to secure convictions.

At Broken Hill, a bastion of Wobbly influence, miners called a general strike for the release of the Twelve, with some going so far as to take possession of the mines in December 1917, until local authorities were reinforced by South Australian police.

Most of the Twelve were freed within a few years. But the damage to the IWW had been done.

The passage of the draconian Unlawful Associations Act in December 1916, which had the explicit aim of muzzling the IWW, resulted in sackings, the jailing of over 100 members, and deportation of foreign-born members (who comprised a large part of its leadership). The organisation lay in tatters.

Revolutionary?

Unlike anarchism with its complete rejection of authority and fetishisation of individual freedom, syndicalism stressed unity, organisation and discipline against the capitalist class.

However, the IWW still had a tendency to celebrate individual, "heroic" acts of resistance that could lead to easy isolation and repression by the

FEATURES

state. These included acts of sabotage and even the counterfeiting of banknotes in the belief that this would hasten the downfall of capitalism. Such acts provided a pretext for the arrest of leading Wobblies and were very hard to defend with collective workers action.

When the state crackdown came they also failed to avoid confrontations they had no chance of winning, or to prepare to operate illegally.

Some IWW branches, with typical bravado, simply vowed to “retaliate by filling the jails.”

Tom Barker explained their myopia: “We didn’t go into hiding. I don’t think we ever thought much about what we should do if we were declared illegal. We expected it to come and we just waited until it did come and then carried on despite it.”

This underestimated the severity of the state’s attack, which called for an orderly retreat and reorganisation, not ultra-left posturing.

However, the more fundamental contradiction of syndicalism lay in its aspiration to function simultaneously as a trade union and a revolutionary organisation.

In order to gain sufficient bargaining power within a workplace trade unions must recruit both militant and more conservative workers.

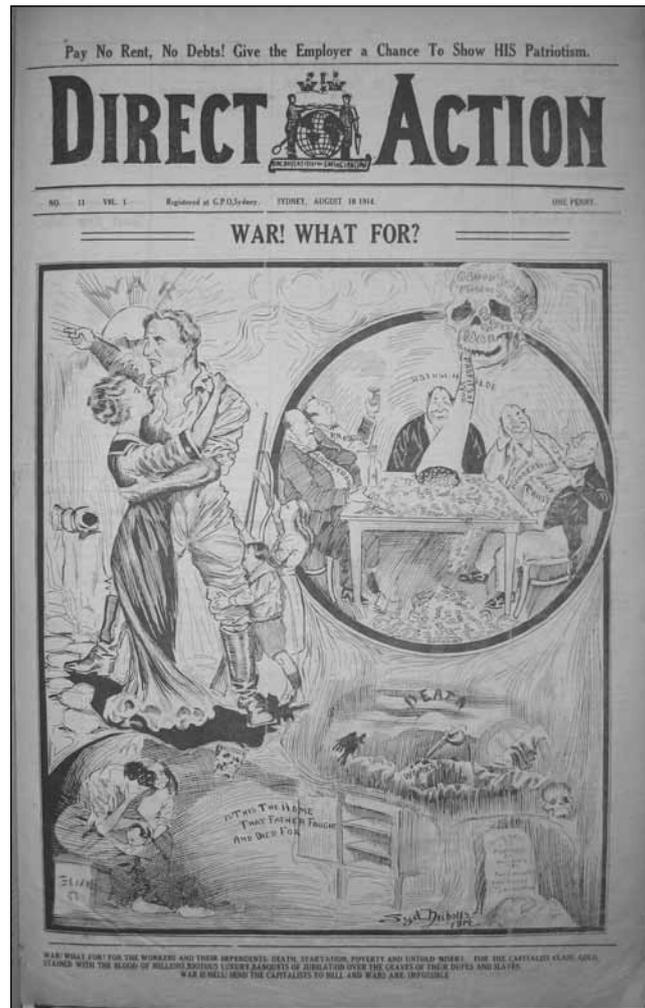
This meant the Australian IWW, with its uncompromising militancy, failed in its bid to build separate industrial unions. Most Wobblies were members of mainstream unions. The closest they came to dual unionism was in the Broken Hill mines, where the Amalgamated Miners’ Association (AMA) initially recognised the IWW membership card.

However this ended after the IWW declared itself a “Local Industrial Union” in July 1916 in an attempt to replace the AMA. The IWW tried to poach AMA members by undercutting it with low dues of only 10 cents per month, but their effort failed.

The revolutionary party

The Russian revolutionaries Trotsky and Lenin enthused about the prospects of collaboration with the IWW. On hearing that some former Wobblies had joined the fledgling Communist Party of Australia Trotsky commented, “That is good because the I.W.W. are the real proletariat and real fighters.”

But they also realised that to successfully lead a socialist revolution the minority of revolutionary workers had to be organised into a separate revolutionary party to lead the working class



The IWW paper, Direct Action, campaigning against war in August 1914

Photo: Reason in Revolt archive

on both economic and political planes.

The IWW’s rejection of politics on the basis that it would sow unnecessary divisions and thus threaten industrial unity led to serious limitations.

For instance, while the IWW welcomed all women workers and supported equal pay, not many women could become Wobblies because membership required that they be wage-labourers, a status often restricted to women at the time.

And economic struggle, once it reaches a certain stage, inevitably confronts the question of political power.

Syndicalism’s belief that power would pass into the hands of the working class as an automatic outcome of growing economic unity, summed up in Direct Action as, “First, education; second, organisation; and finally, emancipation,” passed over the fact of unevenness of consciousness within the working class and the need to engage in a protracted battle of ideas to win over the majority to revolutionary politics.

In a debate with British syndicalist Jack Tanner at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920, Lenin responded:

“If Comrade Tanner says he is against the Party but in favour of a revolutionary minority of the most determined and class-conscious proletarians leading the whole proletariat, then I say that in reality there is no difference between our points of view. What is the organised minority? If this minority is really class-conscious and able to lead the masses and give an answer to every question that stands on the agenda, then it is actually the Party.”

“If comrades like Comrade Tanner, who are particularly important for us because they represent a mass movement ... want a minority that will fight with determination for the [proletarian] dictatorship and educate the mass of workers along these lines, then what they want is a party.”

Under the leadership of the Bolsheviks in 1917 the Russian working class not only overthrew capitalism but took power into their own hands, through the soviets, or workers’ councils.

The emergence of workers’ councils in Russia and elsewhere in the wake of the Russian revolution was seen by many syndicalists as the embodiment of the syndicalist ideal of workers’ control and industrial democracy, and led to many joining the burgeoning Communist Parties.

The Wobblies were pioneering propagators of an anti-racist, anti-war and revolutionary current in the Australian working class. Their frenetic activity and tireless agitation aimed at building socialism from below, militant strike leadership and successful anti-conscription campaigning continue to be a source of inspiration for revolutionary socialists today..

However, the crushing of the IWW shows the extreme lengths the state will go to defend the power and privilege of the capitalist class. This pressure exposed some of the fundamental limitations of their syndicalist strategy that unnecessarily isolated them. And revolutionary workers can not stand aloof from politics, there is an imperative to organise the most militant and class-conscious sections in a revolutionary party that can meet the challenges of changing circumstances and chart a path forward for the struggles of all workers and the oppressed.

Further Reading:

Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia by Verity Burgmann;
Radical Unionism: The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism by Ralph Darlington

‘The people who help asylum seekers the most are people smugglers’

Confessions of a People-Smuggler
By Dawood Amiri
Scribe, \$24.99

CONFESSIONS OF a People-Smuggler is a confronting, and revealing book. Dawood Amiri, a Hazara, tells his story of fleeing from the Taliban’s targeted killings in Quetta in Pakistan, to getting involved in people smuggling in Indonesia to fund his own trip to Australia by boat.

People smugglers are at the centre of the refugee policy debate in Australia. They are portrayed as merciless people who profit by trading in tragedy. In 2009, then Labor Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd made headlines referring to smugglers as the “absolute scum of the Earth”. The Abbott Liberal Government has tried to justify the brutality of Operation Sovereign Borders because the people smugglers’ “business model” needs to be destroyed in order to protect the nation’s borders.

This is a very deliberate tactic. By posing people smugglers as the real “problem”, governments try to shirk their humanitarian obligations by diverting attention from the reasons why people get in contact with smugglers in the first place.

Amiri’s perspective allows him to show a very different picture of people smugglers. As an asylum seeker himself, he sees the work of people smugglers as noble and humanitarian. In the concluding paragraph of the book, he states, “Honestly, the people who help asylum-seekers the most are people-smugglers... asylum-seekers want to be



smuggled”.

One of the most important messages from this book is that people smugglers are often the only ticket to freedom that is available to those fleeing from persecution. Amiri does acknowledge that there are people smugglers who are completely unconcerned with the welfare of asylum seekers and only interested in money. But, he says, such people are usually weeded out, as the word spreads among asylum seekers about the pleasant and successful experiences they have had with particular smugglers. In other words, only relatively altruistic smugglers are ultimately successful.

Asylum journey

Confessions of a People-Smuggler also draws attention to how difficult the asylum seeker’s journey truly is. It damns the prolonged processes of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) that result in tremendous frustration. It

Above: Dawood Amiri remains imprisoned in Indonesia for people smuggling

is people smugglers who offer the only efficient avenue to be processed and resettled in another country. It also reveals how the difficulties of asylum seekers are made worse by anti-refugee policies. The criminalisation of people smuggling forces smuggling operations to operate underground, making boat voyages even more dangerous.

The book sheds light on the hypocrisy and failings of Australian governments, particularly with their anti-smuggling policies. Amiri talks briefly about how Western intervention in the Middle East only intensified the tribulations of those targeted by the Taliban. He writes, “The armed forces of America, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations have fought in the war on terror...this added to the terrorising and suffering of the people who lived there. But when some of these damaged people, the refugees, try to make their way to the countries who have participated in the wars on their soil, those same countries take very little responsibility for their plight”.

Often anti-smuggling laws are justified on pseudo-humanitarian grounds, arguing that by stopping the boats, deaths at sea are prevented. But like many ordinary Australians, Dawood Amiri sees right through this petty argument, explain-

ing that asylum seekers lives are “...played with like footballs, at the feet of politicians, warlords, bureaucrats, capitalists, terrorists and criminals”.

History provides many examples of people smugglers who are now hailed as heroes. People like Irena Sendler, a Polish social worker who smuggled over 2500 Jewish children from Warsaw ghettos during the Holocaust and Iraqi asylum seeker, Ali Jenabi, often referred to as the “Oskar Schindler of Asia”.

The work of people smugglers today is no less significant than the acts of those in the past. The fact remains that asylum seekers will continue to use the services of people smugglers so long as war, persecution and misery continues to create asylum seekers around the world. As long as Australia has policies that try to block and intercept boats rather than assist them, people smuggling ventures will be seen as the only legitimate avenue for those fleeing persecution.

Confessions of a People-Smuggler is a must read. In the context of adversity, Dawood Amiri’s work as a people smuggler is of inspiration and bravery. Rhetoric centred on demonising people smugglers is designed to criminalise asylum seekers, and provide justification for Operation Sovereign Borders’ use of the military against them.

Amiri’s story makes it clear that the only people who are truly profiting from human misery are the politicians sitting in parliament using asylum seekers as victims of their political expediency.
Gabrielle Pei Tiatia

Backing bloodshed a long Labor tradition

Labour and the Great War
Labour History
No.106 (May 2014)
Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, \$40

BILL SHORTEN'S uncritical support for Tony Abbott's renewed war in Iraq has handed the Liberals the political initiative and horrified many Labor voters.

But his unquestioning approval of the rush to war has deep precedents in the ALP tradition.

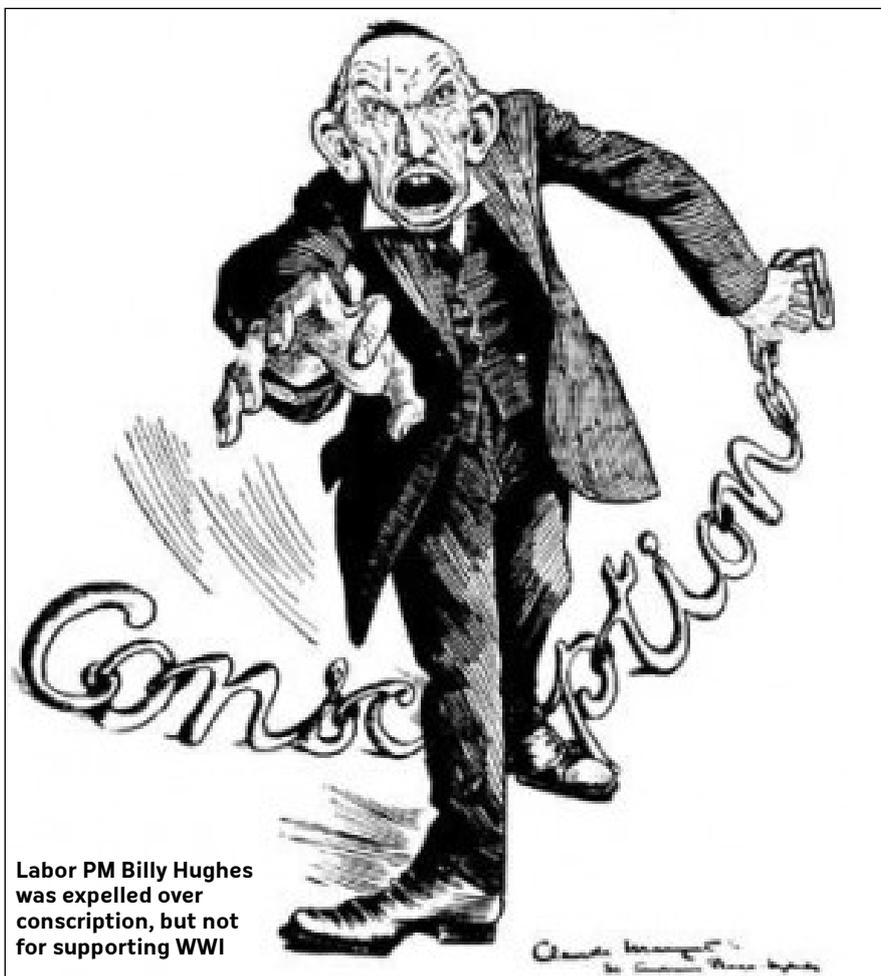
It was Labor leader Andrew Fisher who famously promised Britain in an election speech in the days before the outbreak of World War I that Australia would "defend her to our last man and our last shilling".

And while Labor was to expel its wartime Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, over the issue of conscription, the argument was always posed in terms of how to win the war, rather than over the war's legitimacy.

This is the period discussed in "Labour and the Great War: The Australian Working Class and the Making of Anzac"—the May 2014 issue of *Labour History*, issued by the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.

Douglas Newton's chapter looks at the way Labor responded to Liberal Prime Minister Joseph Cook's offer to the British government on 3 August 1914 of 20,000 troops and the entire Royal Australian Navy. The offer was sent while the British Cabinet was split over the question of war. It was a very public attempt to tip the balance towards hostilities.

Labor's response echoed Shorten's today. Fisher issued a statement: "In a state of affairs like



Labor PM Billy Hughes was expelled over conscription, but not for supporting WWI

this there are no parties. The safety and welfare of our country and all near and dear to us is our first consideration."

William Hughes made a similar declaration the same day: "Whatever needs to be done to defend the interests of the Commonwealth and of the Empire must be done."

In a bid to fend off claims of disloyalty during an election campaign, Labor had signed a blank cheque for mass, industrialised slaughter.

Labor in comparison

Robin Archer's chapter compares Labor's approach to the threat of war to those of other social democratic parties—and the difference is striking.

In terms of rhetoric at least, virtually every

European socialist party condemned the drive to war in July 1914. Jean Jaures, the leader of the French socialist party appeared at a rally with his arm around his German counterpart, Hugo Haase.

The German party's paper declared: "We want no war! Down with war!" and the party organised mass meetings across the country—27 in Berlin alone—followed by rallies of hundreds of thousands.

All Second International parties (with the exception of those in Russia and Serbia) were to capitulate at the outbreak of hostilities, but the Australian party stood out for its positive attitude to war.

As Archer writes: "There were no frantic meetings to decide how to respond, no declarations

denouncing the pending war, no attempts to rally public opposition, no attempts to exert a restraining influence on government, no discussion of blocking finance for the war, and no prominent dissident leaders."

Why was the ALP so supine? Archer suggests a number of reasons including Labor's embrace from 1908 onwards of compulsory military training (linked to the desire to defend Australia as a white outpost of the British empire).

But his main argument is that Labor had already travelled much further down the path towards incorporation into capitalist democracy than its counterparts in Europe or the US. On the eve of war, the ALP had already

formed government (1908 and 1910) and was to do so again six weeks after war was declared.

Where the ALP had 56 per cent of all MPs by September 1914, the German party had 27 per cent, the French 17 per cent, the Russians just 3 per cent and the Serbs 1 per cent.

Labor's electoral success made the party the most belligerent of its social democratic peers—the least willing to challenge the aggressive logic of imperialism.

A number of chapters look at Labor's relationship to the Anzac legend. Mark Cryle argues that Labor immediately accommodated Anzac within its rhetoric, trying to claim the Digger as the archetypal worker and mateship as workers' solidarity.

Labor speakers and newspapers would decry "militarism" and jingoism, but carefully avoided criticising the soldiers. As future Labor Prime Minister John Curtin wrote in 1918: "The gallantry of the Anzacs is beyond question."

Nick Dyrenfurth, looking at Labor and the Anzacs through to 1945, writes that the ALP tried throughout that period to appropriate the "working-class heroics of Gallipoli ... to inspire labour activists during the trials of the Depression and war".

It was an argument they could never completely win, as its inherent nationalism conceded the initiative to the unashamed patriotism of the Liberals. This helps explain how Labor could lead the successful opposition to conscription, but fail to turn that into a solid grasp on federal office. The message for Shorten is that wrapping yourself in the flag always strengthens the Right.

David Glanz

Climate action requires challenging capitalism

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate
By Naomi Klein
Allen Lane, \$29.99

NAOMI KLEIN'S new book is a welcome intervention into climate politics. There is a hunger for serious responses to climate change. Over 2000 people turned up to Klein's book launch in London.

The US and China's climate deal on the eve of the G20 meeting has put the climate issue back on the political agenda. Obama's climate announcements may have embarrassed Abbott, but the details are much less impressive.

The agreement is non-binding and any serious cuts are again put off to the never-never, starting sometime after 2020. What the \$3 billion Green Fund to help developing countries decarbonise will be spent on hasn't been specified. But it's paltry compared with Obama's new war in Iraq, which will cost an estimated \$18 billion to \$22 billion each year.

Klein's book is a useful anti-dote to the solutions on offer. The situation is so urgent that, she argues, "only mass social movements can save us now". Importantly Klein argues that building a movement against climate change has to go hand in hand with the fight against inequality.

Klein squarely pins the blame for the climate crisis on capitalism. She argues that "market fundamentalism has from the very first moments systematically sabotaged our response to climate change" and that the free market is incapable of delivering the kind of



emissions cuts required. She says attempts to limit climate action to fit market logic, with false solutions like carbon trading, carbon offsets, and green consumerism have wasted decades. There are solutions to climate change that will work, she argues, "but the catch is that these also involve changing everything".

In some of the strongest chapters of the book Klein argues that real solutions require "planning and banning". Cutting emissions, and a mass roll out of renewable energy and public transport will require, "visionary long term planning, tough regulation of business, higher tax on the affluent, big public sector expenditure, and in many cases reversals of core privatisation".

Klein is contradictory on carbon taxes, sometimes dismissing them as timid, yet elsewhere welcoming them. However recently on Lateline Klein argued Australia's

Above: Activists need to recognise that capitalism will be unable to seriously tackle climate change

carbon tax was "not based on a polluter-pays principle" and "offloaded too much of the burden onto consumers".

Environment groups Klein takes a useful swipe at "Big Green" and the mainstream environment movement's cosy up to corporations. In the US the Environment Defence Fund has gone so far as to argue that "coal is not the

enemy" and the Nature Conservancy drills for oil in its own nature reserves. In Australia much of the mainstream environment movement displays the same timidity about challenging corporate interests. They support useless carbon pricing "solutions" on the basis that nothing else is politically possible, rather than trying to build a movement that can change politics. This led them to overwhelmingly back the carbon tax, despite the fact it would have entrenched a useless market mechanism to deal with climate change.

Klein rightly says, "The Green movement's mantra that climate is not about left and right, but about 'right and wrong' has got us nowhere."

The book is not without its flaws. It could have been much shorter. The chapter on Klein's efforts to conceive is particularly self-indulgent. The calls for sacrifice in the book "for everyone but the poor" strike a discordant

note with the call to address inequality. However it is on the strategy for building a movement that Klein is weakest. She has a scattergun approach that glorifies blockades above all, but also highlights community wind farms and divestment campaigns. She never quite condenses what she thinks are the key demands needed to take the climate movement forward.

Movements

Klein looks at movements historically that have brought massive change, and points to the need to tackle economic vested interests. She points to the strike wave in the US after the Great Depression as one example that forced the bosses to redistribute wealth and saw the introduction of Social Security measures.

Unfortunately Klein never fully follows this logic through. She treats trade unions as just another potential ally in a long list. But the key to fighting for control of the economy is the power of the working class to stop production and interrupt the flow of profits.

This Changes Everything is a much needed ideological shot in the arm for the climate movement. At the end of the book Klein welcomes the potential of the Arab Spring and similar moments of mass resistance, and says, "These moments when the impossible seems suddenly possible are incredibly rare and precious. The next time one arises it must be harnessed not only to denounce the world as it is and build fleeting pockets of liberated space. It must be the catalyst to actually build the world that could keep us all safe."

Chris Breen

NAURU VIGILANTES ATTACK REFUGEES: A SIGN OF THINGS TO COME?

By Ian Rintoul

AT AN institutional level, the government policies of offshore processing and mandatory detention are coming under sustained attack both domestically and internationally.

In Geneva, the UN Committee on Torture (CAT) grilled Australian representatives about offshore processing. The committee chair, Claudio Grossman, rejected Morrison's claim that Australia was not responsible for the detention centres on Nauru or Manus Island.

"You [Australia] have the control and authority in the [detention] facilities. Australia pays the bills and administers the centres," he said, "It is not convincing to claim that Australia is not responsible for these people [asylum seekers]." The CAT report will be handed down on 28 November.

On the domestic front, the Parliamentary Committee will report on the "Asylum Legacy Bill" on 27 November; the bill that intends to introduce temporary protection visas and remove appeal and other fundamental rights of asylum seekers. Morrison's Bill has already been unanimously condemned by the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee (which includes a majority of Coalition MPs), for violating numerous human rights obligations.

On 3 December, the Senate constitutional committee enquiry into the killing of Reza Barati on Manus Island will hand down its, likely damning, findings. The report will be a timely reminder of the need to keep up the fight for justice for Reza and to end offshore processing. The obscenity of offshore processing is exposed day by day.

The attacks on refugees on Nauru—which have left one Iranian man partially blinded in one eye—are a terrible warning of the dangers to refugees on both Nauru and Manus Island.

On Manus, all asylum seekers live in the shadow of the killing of Reza Barati in February. Resentment runs



deep on Manus; resentment over the detention centre; resentment at the lack of jobs, houses, and services. The threat to the lives of refugees forced to live on Manus is obvious.

Even after the central government's announcement that ten asylum seekers had finally been determined to be refugees, and would be temporarily settled on Manus Island, the local Member of Parliament, Ron Knight, emphatically rejected the idea. Knight told Radio New Zealand, "The concern that a lot of people have is that the government thinks that these people are going to be settled in Manus. That is not true. They will not be settled anyway whatsoever in Manus. And I think it will be difficult for them to settle anyone in Papua New Guinea whatsoever."

Morrison's grand welcome of the PNG government plan, "...to activate the next stage of the resettlement

process..." is a figleaf to try and cover the deep crisis that besets offshore processing.

The PNG Foreign Minister says he will announce another ten refugee determinations a month. But at the end of October, only 104 assessments had been made in 16 months. There are still 1056 people detained on Manus Island.

Nauru attacks

On Nauru, the situation has dangerously deteriorated since the first vigilante attacks on refugees and unaccompanied minors in late October. There have now been a number of attacks targeting refugees for "taking" jobs on Nauru. In early November, one man who had a job as a carpenter was in work uniform on his way home when he was taken aside and warned, "Next time if you come to work again we kill you."

Another Iranian refugee, Merhzad, was walking in the street when a group of locals stopped him. Merhzad told *Solidarity*, "They start swearing at me and told me 'We kill any refugee who would work in Nauru'. I told them I wouldn't but they hit my eye and knocked [me] to the ground."

Merhzad has lost 60 per cent of the sight in his left eye, and lay for days without treatment in the Nauru hospital. It is tragically reminiscent of the three asylum seekers also blinded in one eye in the February attack on Manus. So far, the Australian government has refused to bring Merhzad to the Australian mainland for treatment.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, Scott Morrison has announced that Australia will not resettle any refugees processed in Indonesia.

In truth, Australian governments have always discriminated against refugees from Indonesia and have resettled very few. But this is one more step by the Coalition to withdraw from any commitment to the Refugee Convention. Shamefully, Labor's only response was to ask for a briefing. 2015 is shaping up to be a decisive year for the refugee movement.

Above: Iranian refugee Merhzad faces losing sight in one eye after an attack on Nauru

The attacks on refugees on Nauru are a terrible warning of the dangers to refugees on both Nauru and Manus Island