

Solidarity

Issue No. 75 / February 2015

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MEDICARE

UNI FEES

REFUGEES

**TAKE THE
FIGHT TO
ABBOTT**

THROW

THE

LIBERALS OUT



REFUGEES

Manus after the
hunger strike

GREECE

Syriza's challenge
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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

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Things they say

We're up to Tony Abbott 3.0
Leigh Sales on the 7.30 report

We stand for a government which believes in lower taxes, smaller government, greater freedom
Tony 3.0 hasn't changed much

Ultimately [Indonesia] are a sovereign country, and we respect our sovereignty [so] we have to respect theirs

Liberal MP Jamie Briggs on the Bali nine. He wasn't so concerned about Indonesia's sovereignty when it came to asylum boats

I reckon that the Human Rights Commission ought to be sending a note of congratulations to Scott Morrison saying "well done mate because your actions have been very good for the human rights and the human flourishing of thousands of people".

Tony Abbott

There won't be a Royal Commission into children in detention, because if there were. . . it would condemn [Labor].

Tony Abbott comes out swinging to defend the Labor Party

If the Coalition win, they are planning a once-in-a-generation culture change for the nation. It's never been attempted before.

News Ltd journalist and colleague of Rob Burgess in the lead up to the 2013 election.

With hindsight, it's clear that it will never be attempted again.

Rob Burgess, Economics journalist, News Ltd.

I believe that the team of Tony Abbott and Julie Gillard is the best leadership team for the Liberal party.

Kevin Andrews, Defence Minister and Abbott loyalist, pines for the good old days

I've seen us kick more own goals over summer than I've seen in the Asian Cup.

Queensland LNP Senator Matt Canavan

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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

Russia blames transsexuals for road chaos

RUSSIA'S GOVERNMENT has turned to trans-phobia to explain the country's horrific traffic problems. In 2011 there were 200,000 traffic accidents resulting in 28,000 deaths. By way of response, Prime Minister Dimitri Medvedev issued an order saying people could be prevented from getting a license purely on the basis of their sexual orientation, if it falls into the category of what the government classifies as a "mental disorder".

The order was published on 4 January this year. Under its authority, anyone who wears "clothes of the opposite sex in order to experience temporarily membership of the opposite sex" or has a "desire to live and be accepted as a member of the opposite sex" can be denied access to Russian roads.

Immigration official's \$44,000 taxpayer funded binge

REFUGEE SUPPORTERS have long experience of the rotten culture inside the Immigration Department. But it seems it harbours a few other repulsive practices. One official from the Department went on a \$44,000 government funded binge in China, according to the *Financial Review*. In a five day blitz with three senior figures from companies contracting for the government, he spent big on booze, female escorts, high end restaurants and luxury accommodation last June. This was dressed up as a "business trip" to inspect prefab buildings being supplied for the Manus Island detention centre.

According to the company the men only spent ten minutes on the factory floor and another ten in the boardroom. The following night in a private room in the Shanghai International Business Club, they had female escorts paraded in front of them, and took turns picking women out of the "line-up" who were "selected to take care of all of their guests' needs". The escorts were paid \$3500, the room hire cost \$3600 and the scotch cost \$1640. Other highlights of the five day trip included a \$950 dollar lunch and first class flights on Air China.

Target workers forced to do 'walk of shame'



TARGET STORES in the US are being sued for systematic use of public humiliation to deter "employee theft". In at least one case the practice has led to a worker committing suicide. The mother of 22-year-old Graham Gentles is taking Target to court after her son committed suicide three days after being subject to what staff call the "walk of shame".

Gentles, who denied stealing, was handcuffed and marched through the store by police in front of customers and co-workers, before being taken to the police station where he was released without charge. He had Asperger's syndrome and experienced such distress that he committed suicide by jumping from a hotel roof three days later.

Target workers from across the country have come forward to report identical cases of ritual humiliation. Gentles' mother claims to have over 40 contacts who have witnessed or experienced a "walk of shame" and many others have contacted the media to confirm such treatment is an unwritten policy at Target. Malkeevia Lewis, an employee at a Miami store, was accused of theft for changing prices at the register after her manager instructed her to do so. She was paraded through the store in handcuffs. She says "Target... took my whole life from me... I spent two nights in jail and haven't worked since Sept. 5."

Herald-Sun publishes call for dictatorship

BIG BUSINESS has looked on with horror as the growing unpopularity of privatisation, cuts and anti-union laws has seen Campbell Newman voted out in Queensland, with Abbott looking set to follow. Tom Elliot, 3AW radio presenter, investment banker and Liberal Party scion, has drawn the logical conclusion by calling for the suspension of democracy.

The son of former Liberal Party President John Elliot argued that the establishment of a "benign dictatorship" was necessary in an opinion piece on 6 February. He said that, "Because we fear tough decisions, we inevitably end up with leaders who just tell us what we want to hear." He claims that as a result we should bypass democracy and "appoint a committee of eminent and competent Australians" to run the country. According to Elliot our new overlords would step down after a five year dictatorship. If the results were good they would receive an "Australian Knighthood if such an award still exists".

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

HSBC leak reveals industrial scale tax evasion

DOCUMENTS LEAKED from banking giant HSBC have revealed that its Swiss arm helped wealthy clients evade hundreds of millions in tax. The files were originally leaked in 2007, and contain the details of over 100,000 clients from 203 countries. Among them were Hollywood stars, politicians, royals and criminals. Emmanuel Shallop, convicted of dealing in "blood diamonds", was one example. A bank memo says, "We have opened a company account for him based in Dubai... The client is currently being very careful because he is under pressure from the Belgian tax authorities who are investigating his activities in the field of diamond tax evasion."

They also included 470 Australian clients. Among the holders of offshore Swiss accounts were Elle MacPherson, the late media mogul Kerry Packer and former ANZ Bank chairman Charles Goode. Goode requested to be identified by the alias "Mr Shaw" in correspondence with the bank. HSBC actively marketed tax evasion strategies to rich clients and handed over millions in cash on request, no questions asked.

'Freedom' brand muesli bars banned on Manus

A \$30,000 shipment of "Freedom" brand muesli bars arrived at the Manus Island detention centre in January. But Transfield Services, the company running the centre, refused to accept the bars, from Sydney based Freedom Foods. According to the ABC the Immigration Department made the decision to stop the delivery. ABC sources say that the bars, "were not allowed to be given to the detainees because they were considered inappropriate for people who are locked in the detention centre, sometimes without any clear release date."

EDITORIAL

Abbott's terminal: resistance can kill off his agenda

THE LIBERALS are tearing themselves to pieces after just 18 months in power. It is a joy to watch. Tony Abbott has survived for now, but it's hard to see him holding on much longer. Up to 66 per cent of the backbench Liberal MPs wanted to ditch Abbott, and the circus is far from over. Despite promising more "consultation" with the party, Abbott has now sacked Philip Ruddock as Whip, in an act of petty retribution.

Yet no matter where the turmoil leads—or who ends up as leader—the Coalition is stuck between a rock and a hard place. The Abbott government's support has evaporated in record time.

Campbell Newman's shock defeat in Queensland demonstrates how deeply hated neo-liberal policies like privatisation and public sector cuts are. On key policies like the GP co-payment and university deregulation, the government faces intractable opposition.

Meanwhile, the ruling class wants more neo-liberal reform in universities and health, and more particularly they want to attack penalty rates and the minimum wage. The economy is worsening and budget revenue is taking a hit. Unemployment jumped to 6.4 per cent in January, the worst in 12 years. The Reserve Bank expects it to grow further. For them, the only conceivable solution is cuts and austerity.

Abbott declared his budget was "too bold and ambitious", and is focusing his next budget on childcare spending. But he is refusing to drop his two most unpopular policies.

He is drawing up a third version of his GP co-payment. Education Minister Christopher Pyne still hopes to push university fee deregulation through the Parliament.

Deal the blow

Abbott is now desperately trying to boost his popularity using national security and another round of anti-Muslim bigotry. He directly linked border protection, Muslims and welfare in a statement that could have come straight from Pauline Hanson or Jacqui Lambie, "There's been the benefit of the doubt at our borders, the benefit of the doubt for residency, the benefit of the doubt for citizenship and the benefit of the doubt at Centrelink." There is renewed talk about pushing to ban Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir



Above: Nurses take the fight to Abbott over his plans to attack Medicare

(see page 9).

Interestingly, Labor Party leader Bill Shorten has expressed "concerns" at the Abbott's legislation to increase internet surveillance and capture metadata. But Shorten also stressed Labor's bipartisan approach and that Labor was "willing to work constructively" with the government "in the best interests of our nation's security".

Abbott might be a dead man walking, but without a fight, the Coalition will keep ruling for the rich and will keep pushing cuts. Everyone who hates Abbott and the Liberals needs to get behind the ACTU day of action on Wednesday 4 March.

The rally can be a step towards the kind of union stopwork action that can fight for change by hitting the bosses' profits. During the Rights at Work campaign against John Howard a series of weekday rallies tens of thousands strong galvanised union members into action against WorkChoices.

Every workplace, union branch and student group needs to discuss how to build for 4 March.

Last year the campaign against Abbott's budget was wound down after just one union national day of action. In NSW, with the state election at the end of March, union officials are focused on door-knocking electorates and the Sydney rally has been called for lunchtime.

But it's demonstrations and strikes that can kill off the Liberals' whole agenda. We need to pressure the union

leaders to call further action in the lead up to Abbott's second budget in May. Big March in March rallies can help keep the pressure on.

While the union leaders are focused on getting Labor elected, the real fight is outside parliament. The next federal election is at least 18 months away, and Labor remains just as committed to running the system as the Liberals. Shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen is already talking down any expectations of a future Labor government. Sounding just like Hockey, Bowen says the era of "Santa Claus" politics is over and promised "tough [budget] decisions...which won't be universally popular"—code for cuts.

The Human Rights Commission report on children in detention is a stark reminder that detention abuses have bipartisan support. In the aftermath of the Manus Island hunger strike, Labor's Immigration Spokesperson, Richard Marles, declared it, "absolutely critical that offshore processing remains in place".

We need to demand that funding to universities be fully restored, that Medicare is universal and fully funded, that the cuts to Aboriginal health are reversed, and that corporate taxes are increased to raise the money needed for hospitals, schools, and public transport.

We need to get rid of Abbott and the Liberals, sooner, rather than later. But we also need to get rid of the system whose only priority is profit.

.....
The Abbott government's support has evaporated in record time

Compromise threat on uni fees—maintain the rage

By Amy Thomas

THE GOVERNMENT'S plans to deregulate university fees and cut funding are almost universally despised, with close to 70 per cent opposing them in polls.

This unwavering public opposition is why the Senate has, so far, held fast, voting the legislation down first just before Christmas in 2014. But we can't rest easy just yet.

Education Minister Christopher Pyne is putting the legislation to the Senate again, with a vote likely by late March.

His second attempt (despite spending a cool \$15 million on propaganda advertising) is likely to end the same way as his first.

Three of the cross-bench Senators Pyne needs to get deregulation through, Nick Xenophon, Jacqui Lambie and Ricky Muir, backed a motion in February to investigate alternatives to deregulation, with an inquiry reporting on 17 March. It also had the support of the Palmer United Senators, Labor and The Greens. As Greens MP Adam Bandt pointed out, "Christopher Pyne is a pretty slow learner."

But the cross-bench Senators might well turn out to be the saviours of fee increases.

Pyne's plan for deregulation, along with a 20 per cent cut in university funding, would give universities complete freedom to set fees, quickly creating dramatic fee increases.

But instead, some University Vice-Chancellors and MPs are pushing for the government to increase the caps on fees, without deregulating them completely.

This would mean fees would go up, but within limits set by government. Clearly, it's not principle, but populist pragmatism, that has driven their opposition to deregulation so far.

Independent Senator Nick Xenophon has offered his support to this plan for fee increases, as have the Vice-Chancellors at UTS, Victoria University and Swinburne University.

The Group of Eight, the club of elite universities that has been a supporter of deregulation all the way through, is pushing for negotiations to continue.

While Pyne says deregulation is at the "heart" of the government's plan, he's open to the call for a capped fee increase. Meanwhile they are threatening that \$150 million in funding for



research will be stalled until deregulation passes.

Show me the money

For the Vice-Chancellors and most of those in the Senate, there's no question of where the funds should come from: out of the pockets of students. The just disagree over how quickly to bleed students dry.

In 1974, 90 per cent of university funding came from government. Now, funding for higher education has been chopped back to the extent that it makes up less than half of most institutions' revenue—government funding accounted for an average of 42 per cent of revenue based on universities' 2012 annual reports.

The funding has come from two sources, students and corporate donors.

The higher fees get the more working class students will think twice about ever going to university. Student fees have increased a hundred-fold since they were introduced by Labor in 1989, according to *The New Daily*. The average four year bachelor degree now costs between \$18,000 and \$30,000, while medicine, law and other science degrees can cost more than \$60,000.

Universities now fall over themselves to compete for corporate grants and philanthropic donations, and in the process have become more and more beholden to the priorities of business and the rich.

As the architects of HECS-HELP, Labor have no problem with fees.

Above: Students shouldn't accept any increase in fees—education should be free

Christopher Pyne loves to point out that many Labor figures, such as John Dawkins, who introduced HECS under the Hawke Labor government, along with well-known former MPs Gareth Evans and Maxine McKew, support fee deregulation. Real funding per student decreased under the last Labor government.

University students and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) have stood strong against deregulation. With rallies planned around the country on 25 March, it's time to make the case loud and clear against any increases in student fees.

Instead, education can be free. In 2014, Germany made all higher education free, including to international students. Chile, following three years of student demonstrations, is now doing the same.

Right now, Australian spending on higher education is below the OECD average. Even a developing nation like Mexico manages to spend as a percentage of GDP than Australia.

Some people are swimming in cash that could fund education. Cutting business income tax concessions could raise \$10 billion a year. Andrew Forrest's Fortescue Metals has paid no tax in the last 18 years, whatsoever. The effective corporate tax rate for the richest 200 companies is 23 per cent, due to tax loopholes on the official 30 per cent rate. But rather than tax the rich, the Coalition wants to increase the burden of fees on students.

It's time we made them pay.

Some Vice-Chancellors are pushing for the government to increase the caps on fees, without deregulating them

Liberals' inquiry prepares for attack on rights at work

By Penny Howard

THE VICIOUS overreach of the Coalition government is on display in the recently-announced Productivity Commission inquiry into workplace relations. The business press and many individual bosses have been complaining for years about the supposed evils of the Fair Work Act and claims that unions have too much power. They are continually egging on the Coalition to do something about this.

These complaints are quite unfounded—union membership, days lost to strike action, and wage growth are at or near historic lows. The legal powers of unions under the Fair Work Act remain tightly restricted.

The legacy of WorkChoices and the Your Rights at Work campaign remains toxic for the Coalition. They have been extremely cautious on industrial relations.

Their plan was for an inquiry to lay the groundwork for sweeping legislation in their second term. That plan isn't going well. The Coalition delayed issuing the terms of reference for the Productivity Commission Inquiry amidst the wreckage of the 2014 budget.

In January, the Commission issued five discussion papers. It is at pains to appear impartial. Joe Hockey's terms of reference carefully mentions "fair and equitable pay and conditions for employees". But the Productivity Commission is no independent body. It is strongly committed to neo-liberal reform.

What do they want?

What is it that business wants on industrial relations? From the Inquiry papers, it looks like they are keenest to attack the standards that remain from industry-wide bargaining, despite the introduction of enterprise bargaining in 1993.

Many of these standards are a legacy of workers' industrial strength in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, coal miners and wharfies won a 35-hour week in the 1970s. This is still reflected in the Awards for these industries. Although these industries are now covered by enterprise agreements, basic conditions in the Awards originally are central to the way that wages, hours and rosters are calculated.

Awards themselves reflect the principle that there should be mini-



Above: The Your Rights at Work campaign that targeted WorkChoices has made the Liberals cautious about IR changes

mum standards of employment in particular industries—a key protection for workers. Awards remain the basis of the "Better Off Overall Test" (BOOT). This requires that any enterprise agreement or individual agreement must leave an employee better off overall than they would be on the Award.

So any new stevedoring or coal mining company must base its EBA on a 35 hour week—or offer workers some other significant benefit. This puts restrictions on the ability of companies in direct competition with each other to undercut each other on labour costs.

Issues Paper two deals with these safety nets—Awards, the National Employment Standards (lower minimums that cut across industries, including the minimum wage) and penalty rates in various Awards. Its bias against all these standards is clear. It questions the rationale for the level of penalty rates and the minimum wage, with no mention of what a living wage might be.

Penalty rates are different in each Award and industry. Rather than being based on an economic calcula-

tion, they are a product of workplace struggles (for example, double-time-and-a-half on Sundays for wharfies). The Inquiry concedes there is some logic for night and evening rates, but claims that weekends have "lost their historically special character".

Issues Paper three deals with enterprise bargaining. This repeats the earlier push to get rid of industry-wide standards. Specific questions are asked about the BOOT test and about preventing pattern bargaining, where unions seek the same enterprise agreement in negotiations with different employers. It indicates an interest in strengthening existing "productivity" requirements in agreements. It promotes Individual Flexibility Agreements, a limited form of individual contract.

The next issues paper deals with protections for individuals (such as bullying and unfair dismissal). The final paper includes a revealing section on competition law. Secondary boycotts—when workers take industrial action in solidarity with other workers, or for political reasons not related to their own working conditions—are prohibited in the Competition and Consumer Act. The inquiry quotes the Fair Work Building Inspectorate (the new ABCC) complaining that these prohibitions are "essentially ineffectual", and asks whether they should be strengthened.

The paper then goes on to complain that collective bargaining itself is anti-competitive, and asks for proposals "to address concerns about misuse of market power exerted through collective bargaining".

How do we respond?

This is a weak and flailing government. As it has become increasingly unpopular, business has started to panic that it might never get what it wants on industrial relations. But there remains the possibility that it could rehabilitate itself, and use the inquiry results to further rewrite workplace laws in the interests of the bosses. The inquiry must be branded with Hockey's cigar-smoking face, and Abbott's unfairness.

The most effective way to challenge this attack is to mobilise workers through demonstrations and strikes. That potential power is why they want to strengthen competition law to impose more restrictions on industrial action. The ACTU day of action on 4 March is a good start.

.....
It questions the level of penalty rates and the minimum wage, with only the briefest mention of "the needs of the low paid"

Manus hunger strike largest in detention regime history

By Ian Rintoul

ON TUESDAY 13 January, asylum seekers in Mike Compound on Manus Island began a mass hunger strike.

A few days before, Australian immigration officials had announced that up to 50 people found to be refugees would be moved, forcibly if necessary, on 22 January to new accommodation at the Lorengau settlement on Manus Island.

By the next day, the protest had swept the detention centre with hundreds of asylum seekers in every compound joining in. The biggest sustained protest against Australia's offshore detention regime had begun.

Just 11 months before, on 16 February 2014, G4S riot squad had brutally attacked a peaceful protest in Delta Compound, leaving one man with a badly cut throat and scores of others with broken bones and split skulls from baton blows.

Then, on 17 February 2014, Reza Barati was killed when expatriate and local G4S staff, backed by the PNG police mobile squad, violently attacked asylum seekers in Mike Compound. (Shortly after, Transfield took over from G4S and sub-contracted Wilson Security for security operations inside the detention centre.)

That memory, and the on-going death threats against asylum seekers, have hung heavily over the detention centre. The prospect of being forced into unguarded accommodation was the fear that drove the hunger strike.

It also raised a wider concern for every asylum seeker: was there any prospect of ever being securely resettled in PNG?

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton channelled Scott Morrison, denying there was even a protest happening. But this time, mobile phones in the compounds meant that photos and videos documenting the protest streamed out, exposing the lies of the Immigration Department.

What followed became emblematic of the brutality and intimidation used by the Department to try to break the protest. On 18 January, Immigration began raiding the compounds rounding up so-called ring-leaders. The hunger strike grew to 800 strong—eighty per cent of the whole camp.

That day, the Immigration Department took away Delta Compound's only drinking water. After depriving



Above: Photos streamed out of Manus Island proving the scale of the hunger strike

the hunger strikers of water for 24 hours, Australian Transfield guards, with Wilson's riot squad back by PNG police, stormed Delta Compound, arresting asylum seekers and stripping the compound.

That night there were over 90 people in Lorengau police watch-house and jail. Alarming, on the first night, there was a demonstration outside the prison of around 50 locals armed with

knives and machetes.

The day refugees were to be moved to the new accommodation came and went, with no one forcibly taken.

The hunger strike went on until 27 January, after Foxtrot compound was also attacked and stripped, in a desperate effort to find the phones that were still getting messages from Manus to an ever more interested international media.

All the asylum seekers are now out of jail, but Chauka and Charlie compounds are still being used for "troublemakers". As *Solidarity* goes to press, there are still 36 people in Charlie.

Security cameras have been installed in every compound to step up the surveillance. There are still threats that "ringleaders" could be subject to criminal investigation.

The International Organisation of Migration has been trawling the compounds (and the prison) for business—arranging to send asylum seekers back to their home countries. That so few are willing to take payments of up to \$10,000 to go home says everything about their real fears of persecution.

The hunger strike seems to have put paid to any idea of forcibly shifting refugees to new accommodation. Only 14 refugees have voluntarily moved. But like never before the Manus protest has pushed the horror story of offshore processing into the mainstream.

Shooting the messenger on kids in detention

FOR WEEKS, in the run up to the publication of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) report into children in detention, The Australian has been running a witch-hunt against its President, Gillian Triggs.

But when the damning report, *The Forgotten Children*, was finally tabled in Parliament, the government went ballistic. Abbott called it a "transparent stitch-up" and a "blatantly partisan exercise".

Coalition MP George Christensen, the chair of the social policy and legal affairs committee which is considering whether to investigate "systemic bias" at the HRC, called on Triggs to step down, even before the investigation. Now it's emerged

that Attorney-General George Brandis tried to get Triggs to resign two weeks before the report was tabled.

Under the Migration Act, the Minister for Immigration is the guardian of unaccompanied under-age asylum seekers. But the government deliberately sent unaccompanied minors to Nauru because, "the best interests of such children are outweighed by other primary considerations..."

Over 300 children remain in closed detention, 119 on Nauru.

In 2011, the Australian Medical Association told a joint parliamentary committee that "detention of asylum-seeker children and their families is a form of child abuse".

Muslims pay the price of Abbott's desperation

By Paddy Gibson

AFTER NARROWLY surviving a leadership spill on the first day of parliament for 2015, Tony Abbott reached for one of his most trusted political cards: racist fear-mongering in the name of the war on terror.

Abbott had been briefed by senior ASIO and AFP officers about arrests made during another paramilitary style “anti-terror” raid in Western Sydney.

As lawyer Adam Houda, who has represented a number of people arrested in similar raids, told the ABC, “is it co-incidental that whenever the Prime Minister is in the shit, his mates find him a terrorist?”

Abbott launched an attack on the arrested men in parliament, saying, “I don’t think it would be possible to witness uglier fanaticism than this”. He quoted from a video allegedly showing one of the men pledging to kill people in Australia on behalf of Islamic State (IS).

A number of senior barristers condemned the move as prejudicing the men’s trial.

When more than 800 police raided Muslim households across Sydney last November, Abbott peddled a fantasy story about an imminent IS beheading in Martin Place. Recent court proceedings following these raids have completely discredited the sensationalist allegations peddled by Abbott and other politicians at the time of the “terror” raids.

In reality, more than a dozen of those arrested, many of them minors, were released without charge. One man was charged with firearms offences that had no connection to terrorism.

Lawyers for the one man charged with terrorism offences (on the basis of a single phone call from a contact in Iraq) argue their client is innocent and that there has been a grave mistranslation of the Arabic used during the call.

Similarly, Omar Amrouche, arrested at gunpoint in Greenacre in further raids in January, was never charged with terrorism offences, but “acquiring and possessing ammunition”, and was released on bail.

The one incident that Abbott has been able to milk was the December siege of the Lindt cafe in Sydney, where one hostage was shot by gunman Man Haron Monis and another



Above: Police in last year’s “terror raids”

by police. Yet Monis was a mentally unstable individual with no connection to any terrorist organisation. A recent inquiry has confirmed that no attempts were ever made to negotiate with Monis and offers from Muslim leaders to reason with him during the siege were rebuffed.

Fearmongering

The real story of these raids is the abuse of power by police and intelligence agencies to terrorise the Muslim community. Abbott already passed draconian legislation in 2014 beefing up policing powers. Floundering in the polls and under attack from his own party, he has decided to use the national security card to boost his ratings.

Already, these laws can be used to persecute supporters of national liberation struggles, such as the Tamil Tigers (LTTE), the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) or Hamas and Hizbollah. Abbott used a Press Club speech in the midst of his leadership crisis to call for further laws to “tackle the people and organisations that justify terrorism”.

Abbott singled out Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international group with a small presence in Australia, who advocate for a political system based on Islamic Law.

But Hizb ut-Tahrir is actually an enemy of IS and say political change should come through peaceful means. Their worst crime has been to oppose Islamophobia and oppose Australian involvement in Western imperialist

adventures in the Middle East.

Abbott’s proposed laws would have nothing to do with terrorism and everything to do with further silencing dissent.

Disgracefully, asylum seekers have also been further scapegoated in the anti-terror push. Just as he did with the Lindt siege, Abbott tried to link the recent arrests with boat people, although neither of the men involved had arrived by boat.

Not a single terror suspect has come to Australia by boat, yet Abbott took to radio to further demonise people already locked up in horrific conditions, arguing recent raids prove, “why we have to stop the boats... these people have been given the benefit of the doubt for too long”.

Abbott is also trying to wedge the Labor Party into supporting his controversial meta-data retention regime, saying it is necessary to combat terrorism.

Greens Senator Scott Ludlam has been campaigning hard against the legislation, which would see a record of every person’s internet usage stored for a minimum of two years—a regime of “indiscriminate mass surveillance” unprecedented in Australia.

Abbott is only interested in his own political security. We need to stand against Abbott’s metadata legislation, his anti-Muslim fearmongering and his scapegoating of Hizb ut-Tahrir every bit as much as we oppose his attacks on Medicare, students and unions.

.....
The real story of these raids is the abuse of power by police and intelligence agencies to terrorise the Muslim community

Queensland rejects austerity in LNP election rout

IT WAS an astonishing result. Despite their enormous majority in the Queensland parliament, Campbell Newman and the LNP have followed the Victorian Liberal government to be thrown out of office after just one term.

The Queensland result was also a devastating blow to Tony Abbott, helping spark the move for a leadership spill. Speaking on the ABC's election night coverage, Federal Liberal National MP Jane Prentice pointedly refused to defend him, responding to questions on Abbott's future by saying, "Well, that's a discussion, isn't it? We need to look at where we're going".

The anger against Abbott was an important factor in the Queensland result. On top of the opposition to his budget measures, the debacle over knighting Prince Phillip took over the final week of the campaign.

Campbell Newman always looked in trouble, and it wasn't long into election night before it was clear he had lost his seat of Ashgrove. But no one really expected the LNP to actually lose office.

At the last election Labor crashed to a historic low of 26.9 per cent of the primary vote and just seven seats in parliament. On Saturday the swing towards Labor was an enormous 11.4 per cent. Labor won enough seats to form a minority government.

These seismic swings over the last two elections show how distrust has eroded the support of the mainstream parties. The underlying reason is the shared commitment of both Liberal and Labor to more neo-liberalism, privatisation and cuts. Both remained determined to pursue "economic reform" through attacks on services and workers' living standards.

Newman styled himself "Can do Campbell" and promised voters "Strong choices". But he was seen as a thug who went out of his way to pick fights. Over the last year he declared war on bikies, lawyers and doctors.

But it was his slash and burn austerity policies and the threat of further privatisation that were the key to his defeat. Newman used lies about a debt crisis to justify 14,000 sackings in the public sector and savage cuts to health services including Aboriginal and HIV/AIDS programs.

In 2012, Anna Bligh's Labor government was annihilated after a



Above: Campbell Newman rolled out the same approach that has sunk Abbott

\$15 billion privatisation sell off of Queensland Rail freight, forestry and the Port of Brisbane. But Newman didn't get the message, pledging \$37 billion more privatisation in power and ports if he won re-election.

The LNP is in denial about the hostility towards its policies. After his defeat Newman still arrogantly insisted that his attacks, "were necessary and I do truly believe that they have put Queensland in a far better place."

Recycled leader Lawrence Springborg even refused to concede the result, promoting the farcical idea he could form a caretaker government while counting continued.

Labor's campaign

This time Labor opposed privatisation, with leader Annastacia Palaszczuk saying the result meant, "the people of Queensland sent a very clear message, and that message was—they do not want their assets sold."

The desire to punish Newman and throw out the LNP saw votes shift from Katter's Australia Party and the Palmer United Party to Labor, as well as from the LNP. Palmer's vote was less than half his result in the 2013 federal election. The Greens have celebrated a record vote, but in the context of the massive swing their increase of less than 1 per cent was unimpressive.

Palaszczuk thanked the unions, who held demonstrations against job

cuts back in 2012, and since then ran a high-profile electoral campaign against Newman and donated millions to Labor's campaign. However this has done little to bring real change to Labor.

Labor will not undo the damage done by Newman's government. It opposed power privatisation, but its alternative plan to merge the existing energy network and generator businesses will mean job losses. Labor's commitment to keep taxes low and aim for a budget surplus will limit any increase in spending on health, education and services. Its plan for 400 extra nurses and 2500 teachers goes nowhere near replacing the public sector job losses under the LNP. In health alone Newman cut 4000 jobs.

Reversing austerity will require the kind of serious industrial campaign that the unions avoided under Campbell Newman. There should be a fight to demand that Labor reverses all the LNP's job cuts, restores services and raises tax on big business to fund health and education.

Newman's austerity drive, justified by a Commission of Audit drawn up by former Treasurer Peter Costello, is exactly the same approach we have seen from Tony Abbott. And it is clear that Abbott has learned nothing from Newman's defeat.

But the fight can't wait until a federal election in 2016. A determined fight now, can finish off Abbott and his cuts.

.....
The seismic swings over the last two elections show how distrust has eroded the support of the mainstream parties

Political chaos as out of touch parties govern for the elite



By James Supple

AUSTRALIAN POLITICS is in turmoil. The federal Labor government under Rudd then Gillard tore itself to pieces and lost all credibility within six years. Now the Liberals are repeating the experience, with Abbott's leadership in tatters after less than 18 months in power. What's going on?

Much of the mainstream commentary highlights Abbott's botched sales pitch for his budget. Cabinet minister Andrew Robb has echoed this, saying the problem was budget "surprises" in Medicare and universities and "the way we rolled them out".

Labor under Julia Gillard made a similar claim: the government was introducing good policy, and passing legislation through parliament, but just couldn't get its message out.

Malcolm Turnbull offered the same explanation when making a thinly disguised pitch for the Prime Minister's job—that leaders must be, "above all explainers and advocates, unravelling complex issues in clear language that explains why things have to change".

There's no doubt Abbott has failed to convince people about the need for budget cuts—but the issue is not communication. The bitter experience of three decades of so-called "economic reform" is that people are worse off.

This began under the Hawke and Keating Labor governments in the 1980s, which forced through wage cuts through the Accords while slash-

Above: Despite the public's hatred of privatisation, both major parties remain committed to it

ing corporate tax rates from 49 to 33 per cent.

It was a ruthless ruling class offensive to boost corporate profitability at the expense of working class wages and living standards. And it worked. The wages share of national income has fallen from 62 per cent in 1975 to 53 per cent today. Hawke and Keating also began a wave of privatisations, as did state governments like the notorious Kennett Liberal government in Victoria.

Governments of both stripes since have continued in the same vein.

Again and again we have been told that reform will mean short term pain, but make us all better off in the long term. But the good times have never arrived.

Out of touch

There is an enormous gap between the policies the majority of the population want and the policies of both major parties.

Privatisation, for example, is massively unpopular. Essential polling shows an overwhelming 70 per cent think privatisation mainly benefits the corporate sector and always leads to price increases. Essential polling also shows massive opposition to government cuts. Only 12 per cent of people support cuts to services to balance the budget, while 68 per cent back higher corporate tax.

Traditionally, the working class looked to Labor as the party that represented their interests. But the experience of successive Labor governments

has trashed that idea.

John Howard lost in a landslide in 2007 over WorkChoices. But Rudd Labor gave us WorkChoices Lite. In Queensland, the Labor government under Anna Bligh was wiped out in 2012 after it forced through \$15 billion in privatisations. Now, three years later, Campbell Newman and the LNP have been thrown out after delivering savage cuts to services and promising further sell-offs.

One consequence is that support for the two major parties is in long-term decline. Labor's rusted-on base of life-long Labor voters has dramatically fallen from 32 per cent of people in 1969 to 24 per cent. So mainstream politics has become more volatile, as voters thrash around in vain trying to find a party that represents them.

Both major political parties are committed to neo-liberalism and the agenda of big business. The end of the post-war boom in the 1970s produced the initial pressure to introduce neo-liberal policies, as business faced a crisis of profitability. But their need to amass ever-greater profits means they keep coming back for more.

There is despair in the boardrooms at how badly Tony Abbott and the Liberals, the party traditionally trusted to represent business interests, have failed. The Liberals are facing electoral oblivion, but their major attacks have not got through the Senate.

Michael Stutchbury, editor of the business mouthpiece *The Financial Review* has complained that, "Politics is a mess. There's been no major economic policy reform since Howard's GST in 2000."

So far, the crisis that surrounds the experience of Labor in government has only marginally improved the standing of The Greens. Things are likely to stay that way until The Greens unequivocally look to represent the unions and working class.

Underpinning the turmoil in parliamentary politics is the low level of class struggle. The greatest strength the working class majority has is in its industrial strength and in mass movements to fight for change outside of parliament. This is where real reforms, for land rights, equal pay, penalty rates and long service leave, have been won.

That is why socialists put such emphasis on fanning the flames of struggle—this is where the hope for change lies.

.....
There is an enormous gap between the policies the majority want and the policies of both major parties

Australian police and politicians guilty hypocrites over Bali nine

By Tom Orsag

AS THE execution of Bali nine “ring-leaders” Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran has moved closer, the Australian government has joined hundreds of thousands of Australians calling for clemency. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop pronounced the case “a grave injustice” and even threatened Indonesia that Australians might boycott Bali as a holiday destination.

But the government, unlike the millions of people who would like to see Chan and Sukumaran given a second chance, has no real concern for the their lives.

The fact is that in 2005, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) handed over the Bali nine to Indonesia, despite knowing they would face the firing squad. Although there was enough evidence to arrest them on arrival in Australia, the AFP wrote to Indonesian police about the Bali nine’s plans to smuggle heroin from Bali to Sydney, telling them to take whatever action they chose.

Australia has a longstanding policy of refusing to hand over criminals to countries where they face the death penalty. But in this case, as *The Saturday Paper* revealed there was a secret “memorandum of understanding between the AFP and the Indonesia National Police (INP)”. This agreement “was signed in the wake of the 2002 Bali bombings...and renewed in 2011.”

Nor does the government’s objection to the death penalty extend to Papua New Guinea, which decided to re-implement the death penalty in 2013, and plans to execute 13 prisoners by the end of the year. (Both Indonesia and Thailand have offered PNG their financial assistance and expertise.)

Yet both Labor and Liberal governments have maintained the Manus Island gulag for asylum seekers, insisting they are at the mercy of PNG law.

Hypocrisy

The Coalition’s hypocrisy on the death penalty also undermines their posturing. They say they oppose the death penalty, yet only ever say anything when an Australian is on death row. There is a thinly veiled racism behind the government’s attitude.

Abbott’s attempt to play bully-boy with Indonesia by “reminding” them of Australia’s aid when the tsunami hit Aceh has blown up in his face. An



Above: Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran in jail in Bali

Indonesian foreign ministry spokesman said bluntly, “No one responds well to threats.”

When the Bali bombers faced the death penalty then Liberal Prime Minister John Howard declared he thought it, “impossible ... to argue that those executions should not take place when they have murdered my fellow countrymen and women.” The Rudd government had no objection to the execution of the Bali bombers in 2008.

Nor does the Australian govern-

ment’s concern for human life extend to West Papuan independence activists who are routinely shot dead by Indonesian police.

The Abbott government has treated the Indonesian government with contempt with its refugee boat turn-back policy, despite Indonesia’s objections.

Chan and Sukumaran were betrayed by the Australian police and politicians when it mattered. No amount of last-minute posturing can hide the government’s guilt.

Sweet victory for flavour factory workers

WORKERS AT the International Flavours and Fragrances (IFF) factory in Dandenong have won a significant victory following a four-day occupation.

Members of the National Union of Workers (NUW) had been engaged in enterprise bargaining since September last year. IFF management offered a 55c an hour pay rise whilst also cutting two ten minute breaks and \$50 a day for unclaimed sick leave. But after the occupation, workers have won a 6.3 per cent pay rise and saved all their paid breaks and sick leave provisions.

The greed of IFF was obvious to workers. Tony, an NUW delegate, told *Solidarity* magazine, “From last time we negotiating they (IFF) made \$930 million profit and the value of their shares has doubled. We are being offered 55 cents an hour. They want to take sick leave and all that for 55 cents an hour”.

Workers began protected industrial action by refusing to process paperwork, essentially shutting down the functioning of the food factory. Management responded by sending home a night-shift worker who was refusing to process paperwork. The next morning, workers arrived at the gates to find themselves locked out. So twenty-six workers snuck in and began an occupation of the canteen.

Over the four days IFF workers maintained the occupation, including one worker with a six-week-old child. Along with a picket outside the site, other unions as well as the local community showed solidarity by bringing food and bedding.

Their determination paid off with victory. The strength of the existing union membership in the workplace was key, with only five or six workers out of 60 workers not in the union.

Feiyi Zhang

They say they oppose the death penalty, yet only ever say anything when an Australian is on death row

Anti-racists in Germany push back Islamophobic Pegida

By Ken Olende

ANTI-RACIST CAMPAIGNERS in Germany have pushed the Islamophobic Pegida movement into crisis. Five of Pegida's leading members have now resigned, saying that they were worried the organisation was being taken over by fascists.

They plan to set up a splinter organisation called the Movement for Direct Democracy in Europe. Pegida had a meteoric rise over the past few months with demonstrations for "European" values.

Pegida first appeared as a street movement that organised demonstrations blaming refugees—and specifically Muslims—for Germany's social and economic problems.

Pegida demonstrations began in the eastern city Dresden, drawing 25,000 to its largest rally.

They grew rapidly from an initial protest of 1000 people in October. The demonstrations were able to tap into widespread anti-Muslim sentiment that has been promoted by the major parties. The rise of an organised Islamophobic movement would be a serious threat. But outside of Dresden, anti-racist counter protests have consistently outnumbered it.

Phil Butland is a socialist who lives in Berlin. He explained that, "With the exception of Dresden and maybe Leipzig, counter-mobilisations meant that those locals who had been to the early demonstrations stopped going, leaving a Nazi core."

Pegida was forced to cancel more and more of its protests. Its current crisis began when its first leader, Lutz Bachmann, was forced to resign. He was pictured on his Facebook page posing as Adolf Hitler. The others on the leadership committee claim they hadn't realised his far right beliefs.

Support

But even inside the organisation many accepted that its sister organisation in Leipzig, Legida, was a far right grouping. And Leipzig was the one place outside their stronghold in Dresden where they believe that they have real grassroots support.

Yet 30,000 anti-fascists countered their 5000-strong demonstration. Each subsequent Pegida march has been smaller, while the anti-fascist protests have grown. Recently 30,000 anti-fascists demonstrated in Dresden, while the most recent Pegida march



there drew only 2000 people.

Dirk Stegemann from the anti-Nazi VVN group said, "Pegida emerged as a symptom of bad developments in wider current policies. Neither racism nor social chauvinism will disappear if Pegida and its offshoots disappear. But in any case we shouldn't be too hasty to predict their disappearance."

He added, "On top of this, the

Above: Counter-demonstrations in Germany have driven back Pegida

question remains as to whether playing down the Pegida problem has not already caused a shift to the right. The fact that right wing and racist attacks have doubled speaks for itself."

Phil said, "It's too early to tell if Pegida is finished as an organisation, but the ground on which it grows is still fertile."

Socialist Worker UK

North Carolina killings show double standards

DEAH BARAKAT, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha and Razan Abu-Salha were shot and killed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in February for one reason—they were Muslims.

Their next door neighbour Craig Hicks has been charged with their murders. But the police and the media are refusing to class the killings as racist. Cops say they are looking into it as the culmination of "an ongoing neighbour dispute about parking". Media outlets say Hicks was a resident known to get into disputes.

Their family are clear about the motivations for the killings.

"We have no doubt that the way they looked and the way they believed had something to do with this," Yusor and Razan's father Mohammad Abu-Salha said. Mohammad said that when Deah lived alone he did not seem to experience any problems. But trouble started once his daughter moved in wearing a hijab that clearly identified her as Muslim.

Over 5000 attended their funerals.

Protesters pointed to the hypocrisy in the reporting and investigation of the shootings

And MuslimLivesMatter protests took place outside CNN offices in New York. Protesters pointed to the hypocrisy in the reporting and investigation of the shootings. If the killer had been Muslim and the victims white it would have quickly been deemed a terrorist attack.

The Islamophobia that has taken root is starkly seen in the different treatment meted out to the Chapel Hill murders and the killings in Copenhagen, Denmark the same week.

Omar El-Hussein was shot dead by police after they allege he shot two people and injured five. One victim was killed outside a synagogue and another in a cultural centre which was holding a "debate" on Islam and free speech.

El-Hussein's motivations were already decided upon before his name was even released. Danish PM Helle Thorning-Schmidt said the shootings were a "cynical act of terror against Denmark".

Socialist Worker UK

SYRIZA'S CHALLENGE TO AUSTERITY IN GREECE

Alex Callinicos looks at the challenges facing Greece's new left government—and the ideas behind its strategy

IT'S HARD to overstate the historic significance of the election victory of the radical left party Syriza in Greece last month.

The left has drawn close to power in Greece before. As the Second World War ended, the Communist Party's role in the resistance to the brutal German occupation put it at the head of a broad national coalition.

Britain and then the US intervened to reimpose the monarchy in a bloody civil war.

In the early 1960s student protests and workers' strikes drove a mass movement against the monarchy.

Again, the Communist Party (KKE) was very influential. In April 1967 the military seized power to block a victory by the left.

Now a party originating in a series of splits from the KKE is in government. Will Greek and international capital allow it to survive when earlier left movements were crushed?

In the past 30 years Greece has seen the most intense social struggles in Europe under governments of both the centre left (Pasok) and centre right (New Democracy, ND).

These peaked in 2010-12 in response to the imposition of a brutal austerity regime at the behest of the "Troika". This is the European Commission (EC), European Central Bank (ECB), and International Monetary Fund.

Turmoil

Some 32 general strikes alongside occupations of city squares and mass protests threw Greece into turmoil.

Syriza's advance from a relatively marginal party to challenger for government in barely two years was a product of these mass movements.

The social base of Pasok, dominant in Greek politics since the early 1980s, evaporated. Syriza became the main party of the urban working class in the elections of May and June 2012.

But intense campaigns of fear allowed ND under Antonis Samaras to squeeze ahead and form another pro-austerity government.

The sheer material suffering that austerity has caused is something no developed capitalist society has experienced since the 1930s.

This tilted the electoral balance further leftwards. So did some determined struggles, including against the fascists of Golden Dawn and Samaras' attempt to shut down the state broadcaster ERT.

The combined vote of the radical left was nearly 42.5 percent, including the KKE and the Anticapitalist Left Front (Antarsya) which have considerable influence in the workers' and student movements.

Syriza offered a programme of measures aimed at reversing the worst effects of austerity. But the new government faces a strategic problem.

Greece is bound in a straitjacket of austerity by the "memoranda of understanding" signed by successive Greek governments and the EC in 2010-12.

Originally Syriza said it would scrap these memoranda while keeping Greece within the eurozone.

More recently its spokespeople—for example, the new finance minister Yanis Varoufakis—have dropped the promise to scrap the memoranda. They emphasise instead renegotiating the terms on which Greece repays its debt.

Many mainstream economists support this idea. It's widely acknowledged that Greek public debt, 175 percent of national income, is too high to be repaid.

The problem is that this is flatly rejected by EC president Jean-Claude Juncker, German chancellor Angela Merkel, and other dominant figures in the EU. For the German ruling class, austerity is a way of maintaining its high-export, low-inflation economic model.

The ECB's recent decision to introduce quantitative easing—effectively printing money to revive the eurozone economy—was a political defeat for Merkel.

She will be worried that a concession to Greece will lead to similar

Greece is bound in a straitjacket of austerity by the 'memoranda of understanding' signed by successive Greek governments

demands to relax austerity elsewhere in Europe.

Podemos, the rising new party in the Spanish state, hopes to follow Syriza's example. More mainstream politicians in Portugal, Italy, and even France would be happy to see Germany's grip on the eurozone weakened.

So the Tsipras government faces very powerful external pressures. How can it overcome them?

Marxist political theorist Stathis Kouvelakis, a leading figure on the left of Syriza, recently argued that in Greece "we see a confirmation of the attitude of Gramscian-Poulantzian option, of seizing power by elections, but combining that with social mobilisation."

Seized

He went on, "The state has to be seized from the inside and from the outside, from above and from below."

Nicos Poulantzas, another Greek Marxist political theorist, in the late 1970s advocated "a struggle within the state". This would be "designed to sharpen the internal contradictions of the state, to carry out a deep-seated transformation of the state" supported by new "structures of direct democracy at the base".

There are two problems with such a strategy. First, there are limits to "the internal contradictions of the state". In particular, a viable capitalist state needs the repressive apparatuses—the army, police, security and intelligence services—to remain committed to preserving the existing order.

Revolutionary Marxists—including Antonio Gramsci as much as Lenin or Trotsky—have always argued something different. The only way to counter this coercive core of the state is through building up the alternative forms of power created by workers in the course of their struggles.

This leads to the second problem. The typical pattern of left governments is that they tend to block this process, both to preserve their own authority and to increase their bargaining room with the ruling class.

For example, the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende in Chile discouraged the formation of “cordones”—coordinations created by working class activists—in the lead-up to the military coup of September 1973.

Since early 2012 the level of strikes and protests in Greece has fallen sharply as working people waited for a Tsipras government.

Syriza supporters blocked a national teachers’ strike in May 2013 that could have relaunched the anti-austerity movement. Kouvelakis admits, “we don’t have...strong and stabilised organisations of the subaltern classes from which we can fight in situations of protracted confrontation.”

The extraordinary basis on which the new government has been formed, as a coalition with the right-wing anti-austerity Independent Greeks (Anel), points towards further demobilisation.

The Guardian’s Paul Mason justified this decision as a way to “create a stable government for Syriza”, which is two seats short of a parliamentary majority.

But he undermines his own argument by pointing out that “Syriza can rely on the support or abstention of 15 communist MPs in any economic measures against austerity.”

Not only was the coalition unnecessary, it brought into government what Kouvelakis calls “a party of the right, one that is particularly concerned to protect the ‘hard core’ of the state apparatus”.

Its leader, Panos Kammenos, a homophobe and Antisemite with links to Greece’s big shipowners, now heads one section of this hard core as minister of defence.

His presence will make it much harder to build the unity of “native” Greek and migrant workers for which anti-racist campaigners have been striving.

Meanwhile the police is known to contain many Golden Dawn supporters. Despite the jailing of its leader, Golden Dawn is far from finished. It came third in the election with 6.28 percent of the vote, little less than it won in 2012.

So Syriza faces powerful antagonists both internally and externally. It will not overcome them thanks to its ministers’ charm or negotiating skills.

The strength of the left in Greece depends on the revival and further expansion of the mass movement that developed so explosively 2009-12.

Revolutionary socialists should celebrate the new government’s



Above: Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras celebrates on election night

victory and support the progressive measures it takes. But the entire Greek radical left will be judged by how successfully they promote working

people’s self-organisation, confidence, and combativity.

That is where the power to end austerity lies.

EU leaders prepare to punish Greece

SYRIZA LEADER Alexis Tsipras’s first act in government was canceling privatisations in electricity and the ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki.

He announced that cleaners who have been picketing government offices for a year will be among 20,000 public servants to be rehired. Pensions will be restored and the minimum wage set back at its previous level.

University reforms that were the target of large student protests last year have been cancelled, and the government will grant Greek citizenship to the children of migrants.

This means tearing up the conditions attached to Greece’s bailout program. Greek ministers were locked in talks with the European Union seeking a re-negotiation on the country’s crippling €270bn debt burden as *Solidarity* went to press.

But the EU and the international bankers have moved swiftly to punish the new government. Greek banks lost almost half their value on the stockmarket. The European Central Bank announced that it would no longer accept Greek government bonds in exchange for loans to the Greek banks—meaning they could run out of money.

Greece’s current bailout deal expires on 28 February. Syriza has appealed for a bridging deal until comprehensive negotiations on the debt can be finalized. German and EU leaders have demanded Greece accept the continuation of austerity measures attached to the current deal. Greece has rejected this, but Finance Minister Varoufakis has said, “We are going to meet half way during the next couple of days”, implying some austerity measures are acceptable.

Syriza says it won’t take unilateral action and does not want to be pushed out of the EU. This means some of its promises are on hold. The increase in the minimum wage will not take effect straight away, but has been promised by the end of the year. New university laws will not come into effect until the start of the next academic year.

Panos Garganas, of the Greek Socialist Workers Party, explained, “The new government is trying to balance between two opposite pressures.

“One is very visible—it comes from the markets, the right wing, and the political blackmail of the EU. But the other is just as important—the expectations of people who voted for the left and want it to end austerity.”

.....
The strength of the left in Greece depends on the revival of the mass movement that developed so explosively 2009-12

RACISM AND ABORIGINAL RIGHTS FIFTY YEARS SINCE THE FREEDOM RIDE

The NSW Freedom Ride saw student activists tackle racist discrimination against Aboriginal people—a fight that continues today, writes **Lachlan Marshall**

THIS FEBRUARY marks 50 years since the historic Freedom Ride, when a group of 30 students, led by Sydney University’s first Aboriginal graduate, Charles Perkins, exposed the extent of racial discrimination in NSW country towns.

To commemorate the anniversary, over 100 Sydney University students, staff and alumni will re-enact the bus trip, visiting some of the towns from the original ride.

Unlike the 1965 ride, which was entirely organised by students, the re-enactment has been arranged with much fanfare by the university administration in collaboration with Rachel Perkins and won’t be exposing the rampant discrimination that still exists.

However, the original ride provides an inspiring example of anti-racist activists exposing and physically confronting apartheid in Australia.

The Freedom Ride came at a time when awareness of, and resistance to, racial oppression was on the rise across the world. Opposition to apartheid in South Africa and the civil rights movement in the US were making headlines. Australian students were deeply affected.

After the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa over a thousand students demonstrated in Sydney’s Martin Place.

In May 1964 a demonstration by Sydney University students in solidarity with US civil rights protesters set off events that would result in the Freedom Ride. The American civil rights movement got students questioning the segregation and oppression of black people in Australia.

In mid-1964 students rallied for Aboriginal rights, adding their voice to the demand for a referendum to remove discriminatory clauses in the constitution. (The referendum to give full citizenship rights to Aboriginal people was overwhelmingly carried in 1967.)

A new organisation, Student

Action for Aborigines (SAFA), was formed. The influence of the US civil rights movement is evident in SAFA’s decision to call their tour a “Freedom Ride,” borrowing from the 1961 US student campaign to desegregate inter-state bus lines and terminals.

They decided to organise a bus tour of regional NSW towns to survey the conditions of Aboriginal people and use tactics like picketing and demonstrations to desegregate the towns.

The towns the students chose to visit were particularly marred by profound racial division.

Across the country state-based Protection Boards wielded absolute power over Aboriginal people held captive on reserves. They controlled their movement, property, money and relationships—even who they were allowed to marry. The genocidal removal of mixed-race children from their families was still in full swing.

Police harassment then, as now, was a perennial problem. An Aboriginal woman at a reserve near Moree told the students that, “they barge into houses without knocking—the men often have had only one or two glasses of beer—then drag them to truck without formally telling them they are being arrested.”

The dominant assimilation policy of the time dictated that Aborigines should leave the stations and reserves on which they had been confined and settle in towns like ‘other Australians’. Between 1938 and 1964, Aboriginal reserve land in NSW had shrunk from 15,000 acres to just 1500.

However resistance from town councils and residents meant that many Aboriginal people were forced to live a marginal existence in shanty towns along rivers and near garbage tips. They were deprived of housing, sewerage systems, clean water, electricity and other town services.

Historian Ann Curthoys, one of the Freedom Riders, kept a diary of

They decided to organise a bus tour to survey the conditions of Aboriginal people and desegregate towns

the journey, recording at Wellington, “Houses of tin, mud floors, very overcrowded, kids had eye diseases, had to cart water (very unhealthy) from river.”

Students noticed a sign above the doorway at the hotel in Dubbo that read, “Aborigines not allowed in the Lounge without Licensee’s permission.” At Bowraville, perhaps the worst of the towns, the cinema had a physical partition and separate doors so that whites never had to lay eyes on an Aborigine. School buses, and even the cemetery, were segregated.

Drama at Walgett

Walgett was notoriously racist. There had already been protests by its Aboriginal community over the jailing of two nine-year-old Aboriginal children in mid-1964 for stealing crayons and ping-pong bats from a church.

The *Sun* reported, “Two weeping nine-year-old aboriginal children have been locked up for two days and nights in a police cell at Walgett. They cried continually during the night, prisoners who were in an adjoining cell told me yesterday.”

The boys’ mothers replaced the stolen items, but subsequently, the children were removed from their families to foster homes due to “bad housing.” This travesty shocked progressive opinion. In July a delegation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal unionists arrived in Walgett to investigate the children’s treatment.

They reported that, “perhaps the most important event of our trip was a meeting of 100 Aborigines on the Sunday, who, after listening to our delegation, elected a committee to protect their interests.” Harry Hall, a shearer in the AWU, became president of the Walgett Aborigines Progressive Association, which emerged from this meeting and included white supporters.

The Freedom Ride arrived almost totally ignorant of this earlier activism. Their target was the RSL (now the



Above: The busload of student activists, led by Charles Perkins

Returned Services League), “the great sacred cow at that time...the most cherished institution in Australia,” as Perkins put it.

The RSL barred Aboriginal ex-servicemen from membership. Local Aboriginal people joined the protesters in arguing with white hecklers.

Following the demonstration they were asked to leave the church they had been staying at and departed Walgett early. Anticipating trouble, a convoy of sympathiser’s cars, including Aboriginal people—accompanied them out of the town.

Despite these precautions a utility driven by a local grazier’s son sped past the convoy and began to ram the bus, eventually running it off the road. Miraculously, no one was hurt.

The drama at Walgett guaranteed that national—and some international—media would follow the rest of the Freedom Ride intently. Trying to deflect the scrutiny, the Premier, Jack Renshaw, absurdly denied the existence of serious racial discrimination in Walgett!

Moree

Moree’s crowning glory was its artesian baths, attracting thousands of tourists a year. But, the Aboriginal population was strictly excluded. The town council had even passed a motion barring Aborigines from the baths and town hall.

The students brought six Aboriginal children to the baths for a swim but were refused entry. They began picketing, and after heated argument with the pool manager the children were allowed in.

However, after they left Moree, news arrived that the Moree baths were again off limits to Aboriginal children. The students turned around to re-apply the pressure. Locals greeted their return with intense hostility. Local graziers gave shearers the afternoon off to vent their opposition to the students, while railway workers were granted a similar privilege.

A Moree sympathiser “was grabbed by local youths when he arrived at the pool. He was carried bodily to the front of the pool and dumped in a gutter.” The hostile crowd grew to 500 and began pelting eggs and rotten tomatoes. The students had their hair pulled, received cigarette burns and were spat on.

But their determination paid off. At a crisis meeting with the students, the Mayor vowed to rescind the discriminatory motion barring Aboriginal people from the pool, if the students left town immediately. Claiming victory, the students ended the picket.

Impact

By commanding front-page publicity, the Freedom Ride put Aboriginal rights squarely on the national agenda. The oppression of Aboriginal people could no longer be swept under the carpet.

Over the 18 months following the Freedom Ride, the students went back to find active campaigns for Aboriginal rights were flourishing in the towns. The students’ visit to Moree helped launch the Moree Association for the Advancement of Aborigines. Neville Kelly, who helped establish it, said, “we had been talking about a society for two or three years before the

students came here. That was the final thing. That kicked it off. We realised we had to do something.”

Finally, the Freedom Ride was a shot in the arm for the referendum campaign, contributing to its success in 1967.

The Freedom Ride received enthusiastic support from trade unions.

After the Moree clashes the Teachers’ Federation sent the students money, while other left-wing unions carried support resolutions. A stop-work meeting by the Seamen’s Union in Sydney congratulated the students’ “courageous exposure of the oppression and segregation levelled against the aborigines in NSW towns.”

The Waterside Workers’ Federation (WWF) had actually offered support before they set out, in the form of a speaker system and an organiser to accompany them. But they were rebuffed because Charles Perkins didn’t want to be associated with a Communist-led union, thinking this would jeopardise sympathetic media coverage.

Perkins initially tried to prevent Communist students from joining the Freedom Ride too. But it was the Left that were the most enthusiastic supporters of Aboriginal rights. Left-wing unions, and in particular the WWF, had been materially supporting Aboriginal rights for years.

Many more respectable groups at the time shied away from taking up the fight against racism. Despite Sydney University’s efforts to claim the legacy of the Freedom Ride today, the original ride received no official university support.

In the end, about a third of the Freedom Riders ended up being from left-wing organisations like the Labour Club and the Communist Party.

While formal discrimination was largely abolished in the 1970s, it was shamefully re-introduced with the Northern Territory Intervention in 2007. Across the country the social position of Aboriginal people remains dire. Most of the problems observed by the Freedom Riders, shamefully, persist 50 years on—inadequate housing, water and medical services, police harassment and child removal.

Just last September at Moree, which the Freedom Ride made a byword for racial segregation, Aboriginal family members were handcuffed as their children were taken at gunpoint by riot police.

With Aboriginal people still treated as second-class citizens, the original Freedom Ride points to the kind of militant action that is needed again, today.

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Most of the problems observed by the Freedom Riders, shamefully, persist 50 years on

KARL MARX, CRISIS AND CAPITALISM

The growth of inequality and the persistence of economic crisis mean Marx's ideas are as relevant as ever, argues **James Supple**

THERE IS a renewed interest in the ideas of Karl Marx. The global economic crisis since 2008 has sent many people searching for answers.

Last year's celebrated book by Thomas Picketty, *Capital in the 21st century*, referenced Marx's own work in its title (although Picketty rejects Marxism and said he'd never actually read Marx). Comedian Russell Brand gained legions of fans in 2013 when he took on the snobbish Jeremy Paxman in a TV interview and called for revolution. The excitement is a product of deeper concern about the growth in inequality under a rampaging free market capitalism. This was the key theme of the Occupy movement of 2009, and its opposition to the rule of the 1 per cent.

For anyone who wants to understand why capitalism is in crisis, and the possibility of revolution, engagement with Marx's ideas is essential.

Understanding capitalism

Marx lived at the dawn of modern capitalism, when only England was fully dominated by capitalist production. Observing capitalism's evolution helped him grasp what was unique about this new system.

Marx recognised that competition and the drive for profit are at the heart of how capitalism operates. Different companies must compete with each other to sell what they produce on the market. Goods that can be produced more cheaply can be sold for less, undercutting competitors and winning a bigger share of profits.

Remaining competitive means having the newest technology and improving what you're selling. This requires continuous new investment. Think of the way computers have faster processors and better storage every year. A computer company that failed to innovate, and that could only offer the same technology while competitors produced ever faster and cheaper computers, would quickly go out of business. The same thing is

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Marx recognised that competition and the drive for profit are at the heart of how capitalism operates

true across the whole economy, from machines and fertilisers in farming to modern cars.

Since profits are necessary to continue production and investment, all production is subordinated to the drive for profit. So under capitalism, production does not take place to satisfy human need, but in order to enable the capitalist to survive competition on the market. Amassing ever greater profits is put before all other concerns, including the environment and social justice. As Marx put it, "Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!"

Labour and exploitation

One of Marx's key insights was explaining how profits are created. He concluded that human labour was the source of profit. Without people to work on machines and resources, nothing could be produced.

If workers are the source of wealth, profits are the result of their exploitation. A worker makes more wealth for the boss than they take home in wages—the remainder is the boss' profit. This is what Marx called, "surplus value".

This also means company owners can increase their profits by forcing workers to work longer hours, work harder during work hours, or accept a pay cut.

Marx studied the early period of the industrial revolution, where capitalists experimented to see how long people were physically capable of working. In one famous example workers in iron foundries were made to work three consecutive 12-hour shifts. As there was a huge pool of people desperate for work, the fact that people were literally worked to death did not bother these early capitalists.

Thankfully, such conditions are rarely accepted in advanced capitalist countries like Australia, where bosses usually pay enough for a worker to sustain themselves and their family

so they can continue working. But as business demands for an end to penalty rates or lowering the minimum wage show, the desire to squeeze workers continues. Whether an individual capitalist wants to force this on their workers or not, there is pressure on them as a result of competition to drive down their production costs.

The conclusion Marx drew was that the relationship between company owners and their workers was fundamentally exploitative. But this was also a source of power for workers. The fact that profits cannot be produced without labour means workers potentially have power over their employers, through going on strike and stopping production.

The attempts by capitalists to squeeze more profit out of their workforce would be resisted by workers, and result in class struggle against their bosses.

Marx argued that when class struggles reached a high point, workers were capable of carrying through a social revolution to introduce a new type of society, socialism. Such a society would be based on seizing control of the enormous wealth owned by a tiny elite and putting it to use in the interests of the whole of society.

A socialist society

Marx's vision of socialism has been repeatedly ridiculed and misunderstood. We need to rescue what Marx really thought from under a mound of slander and distortions. This is necessary not just because of the attacks on Marx by his opponents, but because people who have claimed to be his intellectual inheritors have distorted his ideas. Above all, this is true of the rulers of Stalinist Russia, China and the host of other countries that called themselves socialist. These countries had nothing to do with Marx's idea of socialism.

It is often asserted that Marx's ideas are utopian dreams that do not work in the real world. But Marx

was no academic philosopher. He developed his ideas in the process of involvement in the great European social movements of his day.

Marx began his political life not as a socialist but a radical democrat. Across his native Germany, there was a growing desire among the educated middle classes for democracy, and widespread hostility towards the repressive Prussian monarchy. Young activists hoped to transform the German provinces into a modern state along the lines of France in the decades following the 1789 revolution.

The young Marx was first involved in practical politics editing a newspaper set up by supporters of democratic reform. But he discovered that the support for democracy among the middle class intellectuals and emerging capitalists was severely limited.

They fell silent in their opposition to government oppression when it was aimed at the working class or peasantry. And even when the government moved to shut down their own progressive newspapers or restrict their right to hold public meetings they did little to oppose the crackdown. Most of them were more concerned with maintaining their wealth and privileges than in the struggle for democratic rights.

Marx played an active part when revolution came to Germany in 1848. When the revolt failed, he was forced to flee to Britain. But Marx threw himself into political struggles whenever there was a real opportunity throughout his life.

What distinguished Marx was a belief in the power of the emerging working class to completely transform society and introduce socialism. Marx did not simply spin these ideas out of his head. They were based on observing actual working class struggles.

The most important event in showing what the future might hold was the example of the Paris Commune of 1871, the first time that workers formed their own government and took over running a major city.

Marx recognised the Commune as a “new point of departure of worldwide significance” and, after it was eventually crushed, tried to analyse what was new about the Commune and the lessons about what socialism would look like.

The Commune was run according to a much deeper form of democracy than had ever existed previously, many times more democratic than the parliamentary democracies that domi-



Above: The popularity of figures like Russell Brand, who rails against inequality and the failures of the political elite, show that Marx's critique of the system remains relevant

nate the world today. It effectively dismantled the old state institutions and built a new form of democracy in its place.

Unlike democracy in Australia, where politicians are free once they are elected to misrepresent their electors for the three years between elections, representatives elected under the Commune were subject to immediate recall if their constituents were unhappy at their decisions.

As a government run by ordinary workers, it introduced measures in their interests such as banning the power of employers to fine their workers for misbehaviour, handing over to workers factories shut down by their owners, introducing pensions for widows and free education for children, and canceling evictions for non-payment of rent.

In doing so it began to exercise control both over the economy as well as ordinary political decisions. This is a far cry from the kind of capitalist democracies we have today, where the rights of a small minority to keep control of enormous wealth are never questioned. Instead of production governed by profit, the Commune showed how collective ownership of production could organise production based on human needs.

This alternative of a society run by ordinary working class people has been posed again and again in the time since Marx's death. Every great mass

movement increases the confidence of ordinary people, and gives them a taste of what it feels like to have control over the decisions that affect their daily lives.

When the last great wave of class struggle shook the system in the late 1960s and 1970s, the beginnings of workers' control emerged in revolutionary situations such as France 1968, Chile in 1973 and Portugal 1974-1975.

The high point in history so far was when Russian workers took over a whole country in 1917, before their revolution was crushed by the pressure of world capitalism from outside and from within by Stalin's dictatorship.

The global economic crisis has produced new mass movements against capitalist austerity. This has brought radical left-wing party Syriza to government in Greece, where it now faces a conflict with the IMF and the EU over its call for an end to austerity.

In Australia there is a widespread rejection of privatisation and neo-liberalism, seen in the dramatic rejection of both Campbell Newman in Queensland and Tony Abbott's budget.

Marx spent his life encouraging the growth amongst the workers' movement of a conscious understanding about how a society based on real democracy was possible. Building that understanding today is just as necessary. As Marx said, "Philosophers have merely interpreted the world. The point is to change it."

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL AND 1914: MOVEMENT THAT FAILED TO PREVENT WAR

Eliot Hoving looks at how the international workers' movement pledged to resist the outbreak of the First World War

IN THE lead up to 1914 the possibility of war between the major powers was widely feared. France and Germany had almost gone to war for control of Morocco in 1906 and again in 1911. Regional conflicts in the Balkans had already seen two wars break out in 1912 and 1913.

Many workers looked to the Second International, an international grouping of socialist parties, trade unions, anarchists and sympathisers, as the force that could prevent world war.

It was modelled on the First International which lasted from 1864 to 1876, in which Karl Marx played a leading role.

The Second International was led by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The SPD was the biggest socialist party in the world with over a million members. It claimed the mantle of Marxism.

As early as 1907, the Second International, at its Stuttgart Congress (attended by 884 delegates from 25 nations), declared it: "the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved supported by the coordinating activity of the International Socialist Bureau to exert every effort in order to prevent the outbreak of war by the means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the sharpening of the class struggle and the sharpening of the general political situation."

The latter part of the statement was vague, allowing for a variety of tactics, such as general strikes, insurrection, protests and parliamentary activities, to prevent the war.

During this Congress, Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg won the Second International to a commitment to use the, "political and economic crisis created by the war to arouse the people and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule".

The Second International would not simply wage a defensive campaign

against the war but would use the war's destructiveness to win people to socialism. This was reiterated at the Basel Congress in 1912.

War breaks out

In July 1914, the imperialist tensions that had been building up across Europe exploded. The assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Serbian nationalists was the final straw.

Austria's declaration of war on Serbia saw major European powers pick sides. The Russian government declared war with Austria-Hungary, in response Germany declared war against Russia. France and Britain declared war on Germany.

The threat of war was met with anti-war rallies in London, Paris and Berlin.

On 25 July 1914 the SPD's main newspaper argued that: "Not a drop of a German soldier's blood must be sacrificed to the Austrian despots' lust for power...we call on you to express in mass meetings the unshakeable will for peace".

Mass meetings and rallies of hundreds of thousands were organised. There were 27 meetings in Berlin alone. In France, union leaders considered a general strike, whilst the French Socialist party looked to organise similar mass meetings.

On 31 July the Second International's International Bureau reiterated its call for struggle against the war. Leaders of the International denounced the war at a meeting of thousands of workers in Brussels on 9 August. The crowd cheered when French Socialist leader Jean Jaures embraced Hugo Haase, the SPD parliamentary deputy.

In Britain, a large anti-war demonstration took place in Trafalgar Square. Keir Hardie, the British representative on the International, returned home to advocate the slogan: "keep Britain out of the war". The emphasis was on staying neutral

The threat of war was met with anti-war rallies in London, Paris and Berlin.

rather than advocating revolution as an alternative to war.

Australia was unique in its lack of large anti-war demonstrations. There were no working class meetings on how to respond to the threat of war, no statements issued, or rallies to cohere opposition.

Instead Andrew Fisher, the Labor Party leader, stated in an election campaign speech on 31 July that although he hoped "a disastrous war might be averted" should war break out then Australia would stand with Britain "to our last man and our last shilling". Opposition was limited to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and pacifist organisations.

The collapse of the Second International

Despite promising signs that the Second International would stand fast against the war, things soon began to unravel.

On 3 August, two days after Germany declared war on Russia, the SPD voted to support war credits to finance the German army. Only 15 of 111 SPD deputies were prepared to vote against the war, and they were soon brought into line by party discipline.

This marked the beginning of the end for the Second International. Soon other socialist parties lined up with their own ruling classes. Each argued that the opposing states were the aggressor and responsible for the worse atrocities.

The SPD justified its actions as "national defence". A new statement explained: "For our people and its peace, much, if not everything, is at stake in the event of the victory of Russian despotism. Our task is to ward off danger, to safeguard the culture and the independence of our own country. We do not leave the fatherland in the lurch in the hour of danger."

Arguing the same thing in reverse, many Russian socialists, and the French Socialist Party and syndicalist

leaders of the CFT, pointed the finger at German militarism. The French Socialist Party also voted for war credits.

Similarly, the British labour movement's opposition evaporated when the British state declared war. The position that Britain should remain neutral was replaced with support for war as "a war for democracy" and the idea a "defensive war" against Germany would free Belgium.

British socialists and trade union leaders spoke in favour of the war, recruited for the army and signed away the right to strike in 1915 to minimise disruptions to the war effort. This swept away the period of labour militancy known as "the Great Unrest" (1910-14), which had seen thousands of strikes, a resurgence in the suffragettes movement, and the fight for Irish Independence.

Italian and American socialists at the beginning of the war, and the Spanish, Scandinavian and Dutch socialists throughout the war, equivocated on the war whilst their own states remained neutral.

Only two parties within the International remained opposed to the war—the Serbian and Bulgarian socialists, who faced violent persecution, and the Russian Bolsheviks. Lenin's position, outlined in *The Tasks of Revolutionary Social Democracy in the European war*, unequivocally opposed the war.

It called for a strategy of revolutionary defeatism, or support for the defeat of one's own country. Such a defeat would further the social crisis the war was creating and encourage socialist revolution.

In other countries, opposition amounted to a handful of socialists from the left of the International: Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Franz Mehring and Karl Liebknecht in Germany; John Maclean and Sylvia Pankhurst in Britain; Alfred Rosmer in France; and James Connolly in Ireland.

Explaining the collapse

The SPD's support for war took many by surprise. Upon reading about the decision in an SPD publication, Lenin famously believed it to be a forgery published by the German state. However warning signs could be seen in the SPD's earlier practice.

Although revolutionary in rhetoric, in practice the SPD prioritised winning seats in local councils and parliament.

Its main theoretician, Karl Kautsky, nicknamed "the pope of Marxism", argued that the SPD



Above: Soldiers suffering the effects of chemical weapons in the First World War

was "a revolutionary party but not a revolution-making party".

The primary role of the SPD was in gaining parliamentary control, rather than looking to working class self-activity. Mass demonstrations and strikes were an auxiliary to this process.

An assessment by Duncan Hallas later explained, "Confrontation with the forces of the state, or even the employers, was avoided wherever possible. As a political force social democracy was essentially passive."

Taken to its logical conclusion, the SPD's defence of its parliamentary gains meant defending the German state against outside threats.

The SPD had become accustomed to its status as a legal party. If it had opposed the war, it would have faced criminalisation, arrests and the seizure of its press. For a strategy based on a parliamentary road to socialism this was disastrous. Instead the SPD gained access to the inner circle of the Kaiser's government, at the cost of supporting a war that killed millions.

The failure of the Second International marked a historic betrayal of Marxism.

Another common explanation for the collapse of opposition to the war is that socialists were swept up in the general patriotic wave.

Pro-war propaganda, transmitted through newspapers, speeches, rallies, in schools, and endless stories of "enemy atrocities", was initially effective

in promoting the war. Thousands signed up to fight.

However the popularity of war was fragile and uneven. Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky argued that support was not so much based on entrenched nationalism, but a reaction to the monotony of industrial work and everyday life.

Political leaders displayed war as adventurous, whilst nationalist enthusiasm brought people together in a collective identity.

Even at the height of pro-war sentiment there was space for anti-war activities to be organised.

Harry McShane, a British shop steward wrote at the time: "In the ILP [Independent Labour Party] there was a good deal of anti-war feeling but the leaders took a very weak stand and the national policy was not clear." Alexander Shlyapnikov, an engineer from St Petersburg, writes in his memoirs that the enthusiasm for the war in August 1914 was less in working class neighbourhoods. On the day the Russian Army mobilised, 20 factories in St Petersburg went on strike against the war.

Many commentators claimed the war would be "over by Christmas". As the death toll increased and the pointlessness of trench warfare was understood, attitudes shifted against the war.

The small groups of socialists who stood by their internationalist principles would find a growing audience.

Workers and Egypt's unfinished counter-revolution

Bread, Freedom, Social Justice: workers & the Egyptian revolution by Anne Alexander and Mostafa Bassiouny
Zed Books

EGYPT'S MILITARY marked the fifth anniversary of the revolution on 25 January with the murder of socialist activist Shaimaa el-Sabbagh. She was part of a group trying to lay a wreath in Tahrir square, where the revolution began. Her death, one of 18 people killed in protests on the day, was another sign of the counter-revolution and proof that the Egyptian army was never with the people.

If you want to understand the social processes and economic contradictions which led to the Egyptian revolution in 2011, read this book. It also explains why the military is back in charge and waging a counter-revolution, but never suggests this was the inevitable outcome.

Alexander and Bassiouny put class struggle back at the centre of the story, where it belongs. They show in detail how several years of rising strike activity opened the space for the revolution to come. The 2006 Misr Spinning strike in the Mahalla district was a turning point because it brought back the strike as the key tactic in workers' protests.

Earlier parts of the book explain that this strike wave was a response to decades of unpopular neo-liberal policies. Previously Egyptians had lived under the Nasserist state model where an authoritarian and repressive state ruled in return for full employment and rising



wages. The legacy of this model remains in the dominant role of the military and state-controlled trade unions. But by 2011 there was too much stick and not enough carrot to suppress discontent.

But the strike wave was not just born out of despair from privatisations and job cuts; it was possible because of rising confidence in both the workers' struggles and the social movements. A new "culture of protest" saw rallies in solidarity with Palestine's Intifada in 2000, protests against the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the Kifaya (Enough!) movement for democratic rights.

The relationship between political and economic struggles is a major theme of this book. The authors highlight that it is when political and economic struggles fuse that they pose the greatest challenge to the regime.

The growth of the independent trade union movement has been one significant expression of this. The 2008 property tax collectors strike led to the creation of Egypt's

first independent trade union Real Estate Tax Authority Union (RETAU), posing a sharply political challenge to the state controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF).

RETAU was the first of four new independent unions, which formed a new independent union federation in Tahrir square in 2011. That year saw an explosion of strike activity, a massive expansion of independent unions, and some experiments in workers' control of their workplaces.

Working class organisation

But ultimately, Alexander and Bassiouny argue, the working class has been limited by its lack of a political voice. It lacked an explicitly political organisation that could fight for class demands on the national stage. This meant it was unable to capture the growing disillusionment in the main beneficiary of the revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood. Instead, this discontent was channelled by the military.

While the Muslim Brotherhood was the big-

Above: Part of a memorial to socialist activist Shaimaa el-Sabbagh

gest and most organised opposition force to the Mubarak regime, the content of that opposition was bankrupt. Once in power, they helped revive the reactionary ETUF, whose executive was dissolved for organising the infamous thug attack on the protests in Tahrir square, the "Battle of the Camel". Muslim Brotherhood members took positions in the new ETUF executive, along with members of the old ruling party. And they campaigned hard against calls for a general strike against the Supreme

Council of the Armed Forces, whose powers they helped expand.

But this cowardly power-sharing deal only gave legitimacy to their future executioners. June 2013, when millions marched against the Muslim Brotherhood government, was one of the most contradictory moments in the revolutionary process. The legitimacy of the Brotherhood had declined, and a mass petition circulated for them to step down. But it was the armed forces that had the momentum. The police force went on strike, prompting fears of a collapse in the state. Without a clearly progressive party that was backed up by the force of working class strike activity and self-organisation, the power vacuum was filled by a military coup.

Today the counter-revolution has the momentum and the demands of January 2011 have not been met. But this also means the situation is unstable and the story far from finished. The authors suggest the "tahrir" movement (which calls for the cleansing of all Mubarak-era personnel from official posts and workplace management) is still the most fertile ground for the revival of a challenge to the state.

Bread, Freedom, Social Justice is written in a somewhat academic style, and could be read alongside a basic introduction to the Egyptian revolution for readers unfamiliar with the events, such as Sameh Naguib's *The Egyptian Revolution: a political analysis and eyewitness account*. But anyone fighting for revolution in the 21st century will find in it a wealth of ideological weaponry.

By Erima Dall

Sickening piece of propaganda for US power

American Sniper
Directed by Clint Eastwood
In cinemas now

IT WAS incredibly hard to watch *American Sniper*. My first serious activist experiences were as part of the anti-war movement before and during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The prospect of watching a two-hour long justification—or, more accurately, glorification—of the war was not particularly exciting.

Watching it as Barack Obama seeks congressional authorisation for a three year military operation against Islamic State felt even more ominous.

Obama says that, “The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) poses a threat to the people and stability of Iraq, Syria, and the broader Middle East, and to US national security.”

It is this same “threat” to US citizens that drives Chris Kyle (played by Bradley Cooper) to enlist with the Navy’s Sea, Air, Land Teams (SEALs) in the aftermath of the bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. It is clear from the opening credits that there is little room for nuance in Kyle’s world. The roll of tanks and the patter of gunfire are set against the background of the call to prayer. All Iraqis are fair game in Kyle’s world.

The first hour of the film feels like a video-game. There is very little in the way of dialogue as Kyle amasses his reputation amongst the SEALs by killing at an unparalleled rate. He kills with little to no thought and certainly no remorse. There is not one Iraqi that can be trusted throughout the entire film. Kyle tells his wife between his



first two tours, Iraqis are just “fucking savages”. As he handles one Iraqi man early in the film he proclaims, “I don’t give a fuck if it’s your house, this is a warzone, sir.”

Kyle is lauded as a hero throughout his SEAL unit and the marines. The film follows firefight after firefight, with Kyle’s ability to kill making him the best in the business. Fellow soldiers flock to him to congratulate him for his ability to kill mercilessly. He kills men, women and children.

The audience for the film is still growing. *American Sniper* is already the highest grossing war film of all time. It has been nominated for six Oscars and a host of other awards. Its basis in Chris Kyle’s own factual account of his time in Iraq is all the more disturbing.

Glorification

There is no way to view *American Sniper* as anything but a sickening glorification of American military power in the Middle East. Director Clint Eastwood’s insistence that his film is making “the biggest anti-war statement” any film can make by showing the impact that the war has on

Above: Chris Kyle is famous for no other reason than his tally of kills

Chris Kyle’s personal life is deluded. But the exploration of why many join the armed forces and the impact that combat has on families is more nuanced.

As anti-war veteran Rory Fanning discusses in his review “Lessons from an *American Sniper*”, the film gives the left an insight into some of the complexities of soldiers’ involvement in war. We see Kyle as a child, inducted into a warrior-style moral code by his father as he hunts and fights his way into his father’s good books.

His father tells him that there are three types of people—sheep, wolves and sheep dogs. It is the job of sheep dogs to save sheep from the wolves. Chris, of course, is our very own sheep dog.

Crippled by poverty and restlessness as a young man, Kyle sees the armed services as a way out of the life that has left him angry. As he goes through SEAL training Kyle and his fellow soldiers are relentlessly brutalised by their superiors. If they weren’t angry entering the armed forces, they sure are angry by the time they are deployed to Iraq.

Entering the forces

because of a world that offers him few opportunities, Kyle is pushed further into the bounds of despair after his experiences in Iraq. He is distant from his family and he sees his brother and other fellow soldiers suffer the effects of PTSD. He is clearly suffering the effects of PTSD himself as he goes to attack a sheep dog at a BBQ—a not so subtle sign of his inner turmoil.

He quickly channels this turmoil into helping wounded veterans and his own son—by teaching them to hunt. The cycle never stops for Kyle.

Kyle’s wife Taya tells him, “If you think this war isn’t changing you, you’re wrong.” And whilst Eastwood may be right that the film shows the dehumanising effect that war can have on returned soldiers, there is no doubt that we are supposed to see a brave, fearless hero when we look at Chris Kyle. His wife and his children are collateral damage in the fight to save his America. It is terrifying to see a piece of propaganda like *American Sniper* receiving accolades as Obama steers America towards the renewal of war in the Middle East.

By Ernest Price

There is no way to view *American Sniper* as anything but a sickening glorification of American military power

REFUGEE DEPORTATIONS: 'IF PEOPLE STAND UP THEY CAN MAKE A CHANGE'

REFUGEE RIGHTS activists have stepped up anti-deportation actions as the government tries to send back a growing number of asylum seekers to countries like Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and China. In December, for the first time, action by passengers on an Air China Flight from Sydney successfully prevented the deportation of an asylum seeker.

Some asylum seekers, like those from Iran, cannot be sent back because their governments will not accept forced deportations. But there a large number of asylum seekers who have exhausted all their appeal avenues and have nothing preventing them from being deported.

Steph O'Donnell was on the Air China flight in December and helped stop the deportation. She told *Solidarity*, "I was just heading over to England via Beijing for a few weeks for Christmas."

"There were a few RAC members at the airport handing out flyers and we had a chat about the situation. They let us know the asylum seeker was on the plane and encouraged people to do what they can to protest against that forced deportation.

"When we were getting onto the plane and everyone was getting settled, the asylum seeker ran up the aisle of the plane and had two Serco guards chasing after him shouting 'Stop that man'. He was right at the back of the plane in the very back seat so we didn't notice him before he did that.

"They dragged him back to his seat and as they did, he had his hands in the air. You could see the shackles around his wrists. He had a mask on his face that he pulled down saying, 'this is how they treat people, this is what they're doing to me'.

"Me and several others on the flight got up and spoke to the flight attendant, because a lot of people had concerns about safety and security on the flight after that. Eventually an official from Sydney airport came onto the plane. I told her I wasn't going to sit down until he was taken off.



"There were seven of us who were standing up and refusing to sit down. The plane started to taxi but we still didn't sit down, so the pilot put a message over the speaker saying they'd decided to go back to the airport and that the asylum seeker would be removed from the plane."

Disruptions

The transfer of an asylum seeker from Melbourne in early February was also disrupted when a number of passengers stood up and protested on the flight.

Although the protesters were forced off the plane, the 25-year-old Tamil asylum seeker, Puvaneethan, was also removed from the flight and kept in Melbourne. He had been scheduled for a move to Darwin as a step towards deportation to Sri Lanka. Activists were concerned that this would separate him from legal support and friends in the community.

Anti-deportation actions, including the disruption of flights, will not be able to stop every deportation. A

Above: Protest against deportations to Sri Lanka

Tamil asylum seeker was successfully deported from Sydney in January despite similar efforts by activists to leaflet the airport.

But the threat of disruption, as well as campaigns designed to shame airlines that facilitate deportations can build up pressure over the long term. We can start by targeting Malaysia Airlines, Air China and Thai Airways. All have taken deportees in recent months.

Ultimately we need to convince airline unions to help stop deportations through industrial bans at the airport. This has worked in the past. In 1998 action by the Transport Workers Union in Perth stopped the deportation of a Somali asylum seeker after requests from Amnesty and the UN Committee on Torture.

As Steph told *Solidarity*, "It's important the general public know what's going on, because there's so many lies, so many misconceptions. People need to know that if they stand up for what they believe in they can make a change."

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"There were seven of us who were standing up and refusing to sit down"
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