

# DON'T LET TURNBULL TRASH MEDICARE

## Pathology co-pay? No way!



### REFUGEES

Cologne attacks no excuse  
for racist backlash

### SUFFRAGETTE

The full story of how  
the vote was won

### UNIONS

Royal Commission report  
reveals Heydon's bias



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# SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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## Things they say

**We need help from men in powerful positions who appreciate that promoting women and paying them what they deserve is good for profits.** Carla Zampatti, executive chair of Carla Zampatti Ltd, outlining her views on quotas for women corporate boards.

**He appears from what people are saying to be quite bitter, quite resentful, in fact I think it's got worse.** Liberal powerbroker on Tony Abbott's desire to return as Prime Minister

**It's what one bloke thought he was saying to another bloke** Barnaby Joyce defends Dutton's sexist text message meant for Jamie Briggs

**We do not intend to be in Iraq forever.** Malcolm Turnbull wishing the Iraq catastrophe was over

**Sell everything except high quality bonds. This is about return of capital, not return on capital. In a crowded hall, exit doors are small** Royal Bank of Scotland's credit team urges panic at the freefall on global stockmarkets

**I have to say what I have to say. And you know what I have to say? There's a problem. We have to find out what the problem is.** Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump defends his call for a ban on Muslims entering the US

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# INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

## Millers Point relocation team wins Award

THE MILLERS Point Relocation Team was responsible for trying to drive 400 public housing tenants out of the suburb, which is on prime real-estate adjacent to The Rocks in Sydney. Now they have won the NSW Government Customer Service Team Excellence Award 2015. The prize was awarded by the Baird Government's Department of Family and Community Services (FACS).

Vacated housing at Millers Point is to be sold off to the highest bidder, netting the government proceeds expected to exceed \$500 million. Millers Point resident Barney Gardner says "there's been a lot of pressure and intimidation" to move. Houses were deliberately run down so tenants, many of them elderly, would be encouraged to relocate. In March 2015 Gardner told a rally outside the NSW Parliament that one resident was so distressed he committed suicide. The FACS website says the awards, "celebrate the contributions of FACS employees working to break the cycle of disadvantage through outstanding client service." But it's clear the only service they are providing is to the top end of town.

## CEOs rake in multi-million dollar perks

NEW DETAILS have emerged of how Australian CEOs are super-sizing their already huge salaries with massive non-monetary benefits.

Rio Tinto CEO Alfredo Barrios pocketed almost \$2 million in non-monetary benefits when he relocated from Spain to Canada to take the top job at the Australian mining company. Westpac boss Brian Hartzer got \$1.02 million in benefits on top of his \$5.7 million salary when he left the Royal Bank of Scotland to take the position. TPG Telecom CEO David Teoh took home \$570,000 in benefits over the last financial year.

Virgin and Qantas execs get free business class travel for personal use and Westfield has two private aircraft for their executives. The greed is shameless, and worse, it's on display as Turnbull and the bosses call for workers' penalty rates to be cut.

## Mothers could lose \$12,000 in Turnbull's parental leave cuts



NEW MOTHERS could still be \$11,800 worse off under Turnbull's regressive changes to paid parental leave (PPL) announced in late December.

Research by the Women and Work Research Group at the University of Sydney found that working mothers on low incomes would be hit, in particular nurses, retail workers and teachers. Yet the government claimed that these parents are somehow rorters who are "double-dipping".

Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey tried to prevent parents from accessing both government and employer leave schemes, but failed to convince the Senate. Right now the government offers 18 weeks of parental leave funded at the minimum wage regardless of how many weeks a woman's employer provides. By combining employer and government schemes mothers can get a bit closer to the recommended 26 weeks of leave.

Turnbull has taken up Abbott's cuts, but instead of denying government support after the dollar amount of 18 weeks' leave at the minimum wage is reached, will allow new mothers to keep claiming from the government until 18 weeks, if their employer-provided leave runs out before then.

According to the modelling used in the study these changes would leave a retail worker in Tasmania around \$4330 worse off. An ambulance driver in Queensland would stand to lose \$11,800.

## Julie Bishop spends \$1700 on three beanbags

THE DEPARTMENT of Foreign Affairs and Trade has spent over \$1700 of taxpayers' money on three beanbags for a government initiative called "innovationXchange". They came at a price of \$590 each.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop described her pet initiative as a "gorgeous little funky, hipster, Googly, Facebooky-type place" when questioned about the purchase. The program is supposed to encourage more "innovation" and "creativity" in the development of foreign aid programs and will receive \$140 million funding over four years. Staff have also been provided with a special tennis table that can be transformed into a conference table for meetings.

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

## 62 people own same wealth as half of humanity

A NEW report by Oxfam titled *An Economy for the 1 per cent* has found 62 people now own as much wealth as the bottom half of humanity—3.6 billion people. Inequality is snowballing. This is down from the 85 people who held as much wealth as the poorest half of the world two years ago.

The report says "The big winners in our global economy are those at the top. Our economic system is heavily skewed in their favour. Far from trickling down, income and wealth are instead being sucked upwards at an alarming rate".

Apologists for the system often point to the fact that between 1990 and 2010 the number of people living below the extreme poverty line has halved. But they are not the main people benefiting. As the report points out, "had inequality within countries not grown during that period, an extra 200 million people would have escaped poverty. That could have risen to 700 million had poor people benefited more than the rich from economic growth".

## Turnbull to spend \$28m to advertise innovation

THE TURNBULL government has found tens of millions of dollars to advertise its so-called "innovation" agenda. According to Innovation Minister Christopher Pyne the \$28 million, tax-payer funded campaign will "help inspire the entrepreneurs of the future". The campaign's big price tag will enable the government to bombard us with hollow slogans about "entrepreneurship", "risk taking" and "innovation" through a range of mediums from TV, to print to digital and social media. Published government tender documents show Orima Research will enjoy a \$455,290 contract to conduct market research for the costly dose of election year spin.

# EDITORIAL

## Rule-for-the-rich Turnbull targets penalty rates, unions, Medicare

MALCOLM TURNBULL tried to use the dying days of 2015 to dump two tainted Ministers. First sexist Minister Jamie Briggs, who resigned after being outed for an incident with a female public servant in a bar in Hong Kong.

Then Mal Brough who said one thing to Channel 9, and another thing to parliament, about whether he had asked anyone to illegally photocopy the former Speaker of Parliament, Peter Slipper's diary.

The incident is now being investigated by the federal police. Not a good look.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton was his usual obnoxious self. Backing up Jamie Briggs, he accidentally sent a text meant for Briggs to a female journalist who had criticised Briggs, describing her as a "mad f\*\*king witch".

But Turnbull let that slide, and Dutton is still the Minister responsible for the regime of sexual abuse of women on Nauru.

Ever since public outrage stopped Abbott's \$7 GP co-payment, the Coalition has been casting around to find other "efficiencies" in the health system. Just before Christmas, Turnbull attempted to quietly slip through some nasty pathology cuts to Medicare.

It will mean patients paying up front and copping co-payments of around \$30 for services like pap smears, blood tests, MRIs, and urine tests, according to doctors and pathology companies.

But the news went viral online, and nearly 200,000 have signed a petition against the cuts (see p7).

The national "These Cuts Are Killing Us" rallies on 20 February can be the basis for building a united campaign in defence of Medicare in the run up to the budget.

While polls show that Turnbull and the Coalition are ahead that can change quickly as Turnbull seeks to screw the most vulnerable and make us pay to get the budget back in order.

Meanwhile astonishing evidence of rampant tax avoidance was released by the ATO in December. Thirty-eight per cent of large Australian and foreign-owned companies paid no tax in 2013-14.

But that's ok, according to Minister for Small Business, Kelly



**Above: The cuts to pathology bulk-billing incentives need the kind of fight that Abbott's GP co-payment faced**

O'Dwyer, who said, "...just because they don't pay tax doesn't mean that they are avoiding tax".

Income growth is the lowest for 50 years, yet all the indications are that Turnbull wants to increase to the GST, while lowering corporate tax even further—to 22 per cent under one proposal handed to Turnbull's advisers by the Finance Services Council.

And while the Australian Retailers Association predicts retailers banked \$16.8 billion between Boxing Day and January 15, Turnbull is backing those same bosses to cut penalty rates. The Productivity Commission declared that Sunday penalty rates are "anachronistic", while Turnbull said penalty rates were old fashioned and cutting them was "inevitable".

Turnbull also revealed his anti-union hand when he called the Trade Union Royal Commission report a "watershed" and declared his intention to make union power an issue at the next election (see p9).

### Fightback

Meanwhile, we are waiting for the fightback. Labor leader Bill Shorten declared that he will debate Malcolm Turnbull over the GST any time. But his whistle-stop anti-GST tour is most

famous for his awkward small talk about lettuce in Queanbeyan.

Defending Medicare, defending penalty rates and defending the unions can't wait until the next election. We won't beat back Turnbull with a marginal seats campaign focussed on voting Labor.

The CFMEU called rallies outside the court when the Victorian state officials were charged with blackmail (see p8). This is the kind of action that is going to be needed to push back Turnbull's big business agenda.

As the Chinese economy slows and the price falls of iron ore, coal and gas cut into government revenue, there will be even greater demands from the top end of town for cuts to government spending.

Turnbull talks about national agility and innovation; what he really means is boosting profits.

But the boom-bust of capitalism is graphically on display as the economy slows, mines close, and banks lay off workers.

The IMF has cut its predictions for the growth of the world economy for a third time in less than a year. Turnbull's answer is the same as Abbott's—make workers pay.

We need to make the Medicare rallies the first step to fight Turnbull and the bosses' system he stands for.

.....  
**While polls show that Turnbull is ahead that can change quickly as he seeks to make us pay to get the budget back in order.**

# Saying sorry means you won't do it again—fighting the new Stolen Generation

By Paddy Gibson

IN DECEMBER, activists travelled to Jigalong, a remote Aboriginal community in Western Australia that is crying out for help to stop the Department of Child Protection forcibly removing their children.

Jigalong is featured in the film *Rabbit Proof Fence*, about the experience of Stolen Generation children in the 1930s. But as Jigalong Elder Heather Samson told the ABC, “[The] Stolen Generation never ends. They say things have changed, but nothing. I don’t believe it... our kids are really missing out on the love of their family and community and the language and the culture that we want to show them”.

Australia-wide, there are currently more than 15,000 Aboriginal children in out of home care. This is more than one third of children in the child protection system, despite Aboriginal people making up less than 3 per cent of the population. The number of Aboriginal children being taken is much greater than at any point in Australian history.

Protests in the 1980s enshrined an “Aboriginal child placement principle” in child protection law. But less than half of placements in out of home care today are with people classified as Aboriginal kin. Even this does not stop the trauma of removal for many children and means the “kinship carer” becomes subject to surveillance from the Department.

The delegation to Jigalong was organised by Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR), and joined by NSW Greens MLC David Shoebridge.

GMAR unites Aboriginal families affected by the child removal crisis, and activists from across Australia, to demand Aboriginal control of Aboriginal child welfare. GMAR has organised protests and active support for families. In recent months groups in Ballina, Newnan and Jigalong have formed.

In November, protests forced the Tamworth Child Protection office to sign an agreement on “guiding principles” with GMAR. The most important principle is that extended Aboriginal family should be consulted about child protection concerns to help find solutions as an alternative to forced removal.

A number of children have been returned to their families as a result



**Above: The March against continuing Stolen Generations during the G20 summit in Brisbane**

of this initiative, but as yet there is no evidence of fundamental change. The group will lead a demonstration in Canberra on 11 February, marking eight years since Kevin Rudd’s apology to the Stolen Generations.

## Neglect and Aboriginal oppression

Rudd’s apology took place in the middle of an explosion in the number of child removals. Approximately 1000 new Aboriginal children have come into the foster care system every year since.

Aboriginal children have always been overrepresented in this system. Numbers began to climb in the Howard era, as Aboriginal organisations were attacked and assimilation once again became the byword in Aboriginal affairs. Most often the official reason Aboriginal children are taken is “neglect”. But the circumstances of poverty in Aboriginal communities are the result of generations of systemic neglect and racism by the Australian state.

And it continues. Children are removed from women experiencing domestic violence, while women’s shelters are closed down. Children are removed from overcrowded houses, or from homeless parents, while the government refuses to build any new houses and moves to close down whole communities. The disgraceful state of legal services means many

Aboriginal parents go unrepresented in court and cannot contest allegations against them.

More than \$1 billion annually is spent on Aboriginal child protection, while jobs and community programs are facing death by a thousand cuts.

Racism also drives some allegations of neglect. Aboriginal parents are punished for taking their children traveling to visit relatives or their country, or for allowing extended family to play an active role in raising the children.

GMAR was formed by Aboriginal grandmothers sick of the callous disrespect from a Department that refuses to allow them to take on care of their grandchildren. The Department raids houses, often with police, to forcibly remove children, rather than genuinely engage with families and communities about concerns. This includes removing Aboriginal babies, often straight out of the hospital ward, hours after birth.

Rather than punishing families for racism and poverty, the billions spent on child removal and policies like the NT Intervention could be redirected into funding for Aboriginal controlled programs that provide employment, liveable housing and meaningful support for Aboriginal families. Yet instead, things are going in the opposite direction. State governments have strengthened powers to make child removal more permanent and to make it more difficult for families to reunify.

.....  
**More than \$1 billion annually is spent on Aboriginal child protection, while community programs face cuts**

# Turnbull's pathology cuts: the new war on Medicare

By Jean Parker

THE COALITION is wielding the scalpel on Medicare—again. As part of their December mini-budget, the government announced cuts of \$650 million over four years to an incentive for pathologists to bulk bill patients.

If they get away with it, the cuts will mean new fees for standard medical tests like blood tests, X-rays, MRIs, and pap smears.

And because providers would be charging fees, under Medicare rules, patients would have to wait for rebates. This means patients will be out-of-pocket for enormous bills until they are able to claim the rebate. Abbott's \$7 GP co-payment was widely loathed, and rightly regarded as the thin edge of the wedge that would end with a two-tiered, user-pays health system. Community outrage and mobilising the unions through the Save Medicare campaign sustained such a backlash against the co-payment that the Senate refused to pass it, and the government was forced to retreat.

Since then the Coalition has been searching for other ways to shift costs onto patients. The co-payment back down was accompanied by Health Minister Sussan Ley announcing a cocktail of reviews into the health system—six in total—that are still ongoing. They're floating a dizzying array of potential changes to the health system, obscuring which options the government is serious about pursuing.

One way they're creating "savings" is by keeping the Medicare rebate frozen at the 2013 level, something started by the previous Labor government. This is slowly corroding bulk-billing.

## Who pays?

Half of the population access these tests once a year, meaning we'll all lose out from the cuts.

The sickest, such as patients with chronic conditions like diabetes, and those with cancer, will be most at risk. Dr Nick Musgrave of Pathology Australia told *The Sydney Morning Herald* that Australia's 1.7 million diabetes sufferers "could have to pay more than \$400 upfront for a year of standard blood and urine tests to monitor their kidneys and risk of heart disease."

This comes on top of the costs of medication, which diabetes educators



**Above: Public opposition and protest helped stop Abbott's \$7 GP co-payment**

say is already unaffordable. Patients may skip tests, making their condition worse and increasing the likelihood of kidney disease, blindness and other medical complications. Worst hit areas will be places like Penrith in Western Sydney, which has the highest rate of diabetes in the country.

As nurses at Nepean hospital in Penrith explained at a Save Medicare campaign hospital meeting last year, skimping on diabetes support by forcing patients to pay to access the GP or get tests simply means more hospitalisation, and more cases where patients cannot be operated on due to their diabetes. The money the government saves in one part of the health system will be spent in another with sicker patients, more deaths, and more hospital overcrowding.

Pathology companies that perform pap smears and sexual health checks are forecasting a \$30 charge per test. Again this completely undermines the benefits of investing in preventative medicine—catching disease at an earlier stage—that makes survival more likely and intervention less costly.

**Paying up front will mean cancer patients paying costs such as \$500 per test**

## Lies on top of cuts

Despite efforts to sneak the cuts through in December, as news got out, outrage spread very quickly, and momentum is building for nationwide rallies against the cuts on Saturday 20 February.

Sussan Ley attempted to discredit

critics by stressing that Medicare still covers the tests and the GPs that administer them.

Yet the Coalition is effectively reducing the bulk-billing rate by cutting the extra incentive and pushing the providers into charging. New administration costs, and the bulk-billing freeze on top of this, make the losses even bigger.

Paying up front will mean cancer patients paying costs such as \$500 per test or in some cases as much as \$1000. Mammograms, thyroid function tests and CT scans can also cost this much.

These cuts are not "efficiencies"—they will increase healthcare spending. But shifting the burden onto us is the government's version of efficiency.

Increasing the costs of primary care is also a way to allow private health insurers into the sector, and displace Medicare. This would replicate the US system that's one of the world's most expensive and inefficient.

These cuts must be resisted—and they can be defeated.

While the measures can be implemented through regulation, they can be disallowed by the Senate. The campaign must demand that Labor, Greens and the crossbenchers do just that.

The government is scared of the backlash that stopped the co-payment. They know that public healthcare is hugely popular.

Building a united, union-backed campaign can turn these cuts into an albatross for Malcolm Turnbull's neck.

# Don't let the courts send these unionists to jail

By Tom Orsag  
CFMEU member

AT LEAST 5000 Melbourne building workers joined a strike and rally in early December as CFMEU officials John Setka and Shaun Reardon faced court. The two Victorian Construction union officials face charges of blackmail under the Crimes Act.

This is a new—and unprecedented—escalation of the attack on the CFMEU, one of the country's most militant and effective trade unions. Dave Noonan, national secretary of the CFMEU's construction division, pointed out, "There is no allegation that they have tried to personally profit from anything here." Noonan added, "The issue here is...whether industrial relations should be turned into a criminal matter."

The charges concern an industrial dispute with building supply company Boral and carry a maximum penalty of 15 years' jail. CFMEU officials allegedly banned Boral from working on building sites in order to pressure another company, Grocon, over a safety dispute. Boral supplies concrete on all Grocon sites. This is an industrial tactic that has been widely used by unions in the past.

The charges are an attack on the rights of all unions. As Ewin Hannan wrote in *The Australian*, "The decision...has caused alarm across the union movement, including among officials with little time for the CFMEU."

Bob Nanva, the national secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU), says the charges could set "a legal precedent that will have profound and frightening implications for everyone involved in enterprise negotiations".

Nanva added, "If an industrial demand from a union is blackmail, then surely an industrial demand from an employer must be blackmail as well."

Even ACTU President Ged Kearney called it, "a very serious precedent."

The charges result from the appearance of Mike Kane, Boral chief executive, at the Trade Union Royal Commission. Kane "respectfully" suggested Setka be referred to Victoria Police for investigation for blackmail. Heydon praised Kane for his "powerful points". Five months later, Heydon dutifully recommended in his Royal Commission report that Setka and deputy, Shaun Reardon, be charged by



**Above: CFMEU Victorian secretary John Setka addresses the stopwork rally before heading into court**

Victoria police for alleged blackmail.

Between July and September, unfortunately the CFMEU has stuck to fighting legal cases against it in the courts only, without mobilising the members to defend the union.

So in September, the union lost a Federal Court case to Boral and agreed to pay \$9 million to Boral in fines and legal costs over the same incident. Boral accepted the settlement as the union agreed to further financial penalties if it broke a pledge not to interfere with Boral's business until 2018!

Boral announced a profit of \$257 million last year, up 48 per cent, despite the CFMEU boycott.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is

also taking the union to the Federal Court over the dispute with Boral, alleging it engaged in secondary boycott action, with the union facing another \$10 million in fines.

So far the union is suggesting that a legal defence will be enough. The CFMEU's December issue of *Worker Express*, stated, "The charges against John Setka and Shaun Reardon will be strongly defended."

But the union's stopwork rally in December must not be the last. There should be further action when the case resumes on 15 March, to help send the message that a guilty verdict will cost the bosses millions in further disruption. Seeing Setka and Reardon go to jail is a precedent we can't allow.

## MUA stage 24-hour national strike at Patrick

Workers at Patrick Stevedores in Melbourne, Sydney, Fremantle and Brisbane staged their first 24-hour national strike since the 1998 MUA dispute on 19 January.

The workers are demanding guarantees of job security and an increase to weekend penalty rates. Patrick is reportedly trying to sell the company.

As MUA Deputy National Secretary Will Tracey explained, "central to our dispute is the refusal by Patrick to commit to the 'Job

Security' claims". The union aims, "to ensure the job security of our members regardless of who owns Patrick or what form the new ownership takes", he said.

Enterprise Bargaining talks have been underway since April last year.

The company handles 44 per cent of the country's imports and the national strike is estimated to have cost it millions of dollars.

Further strikes are planned in the coming weeks, including a 48-hour strike at Port Botany in Sydney.

# The Trade Union Royal Commission—a right royal union bashing

By Ian Rintoul

AFTER 18 months and almost \$46 million dollars, the Trade Union Royal Commission, delivered its final report in December. The Liberal's loyal servant, Commissioner John Dyson Heydon, delivered volumes of excuses for the Coalition to continue its union bashing.

Predictably, Heydon paints a dark picture of union officials, "But it is clear that in many parts of the world constituted by Australian trade union officials, there is room for louts, thugs, bullies, thieves, perjurers, those who threaten violence, errant fiduciaries and organisers of boycotts." Not surprisingly, Heydon seems to think that standing up to bosses or organising boycotts is a crime.

Victorian CFMEU secretary, John Setka and assistant secretary, Shaun Reardon, have been charged with "blackmail" for industrial action during Grocon dispute in 2012. A blackmail charge against Canberra CFMEU official John Lomax, for negotiating a pay deal, was dropped in October last year.

But the government will continue to fund Taskforce Heracles, the special Federal and State Police Taskforce attached to the Royal Commission, to pursue investigations and prosecutions of union officials for such "crimes".

## Real target not dodgy officials

The Royal Commission did turn up some officials who ripped off members, and examples of sweetheart deals with particular bosses that shamefully sold rank-and-file members short. The Cleanevent enterprise bargaining deal stitched up by the Victorian AWU officials that cut night shift and weekend penalties is a complete disgrace.

David Hanna, Queensland state secretary of CFMEU resigned after facing allegations that Mirvac paid for extensions on his house. NUW NSW secretary, Derrick Belan, also resigned after allegations that he had misappropriated union money.

But it would be a mistake to think that the Royal Commission was really concerned with rip-off officials or enterprise bargaining deals that cut penalty rates.

The Royal Commission was a union bashing exercise from go to woe, and its recommendations show it is clearly on the side of the bosses.

One of Heydon's targets is union



**Above: The Royal Commission was aimed at weakening the union movement as a whole**

officials' right of entry to workplaces. The former High Court judge is outraged that the right of entry is used "as a means to apply industrial pressure and control worksites."

The right of entry offends his idea of bosses' property rights as well. He says, "There is much to be said for the abolition of rights of entry, if only because they give such great powers against private landowners, and because they have been so widely abused."

He then goes on to recommend that the penalty for individual officials breaking right of entry rules be increased from \$10,000 to \$180,000.

Heydon also proposes law changes to "oblige officials to leave work sites when inspectors are present and investigating possible breaches of industrial or work health and safety laws."

Although Heydon concludes "abolishing it *per se* is too radical", he makes it clear that he would also like to abolish "pattern bargaining" in the construction industry, that is, the practice of enforcing common pay and conditions on all contractors. In the end, he says he will leave it to the Fair Work Act to restrict the unions' bargaining in this way. But it is a nod and a wink to Turnbull and the bosses.

The Royal Commission also wants to curb enterprise bargaining agreements stipulating industry superannuation funds. In the case of the CFMEU he says "large financial benefits that

flow to the CFMEU under pattern enterprise agreements."

This is not true. What bothers Heydon and Turnbull is that industry funds have unions represented on their boards, and their mates in the financial sector can't get their hands on union members' money.

## More to come

The recommendations of the Royal Commission are about shackling the unions in more red tape, more regulation and anti-union legislation.

Turnbull says he will take the issue of union reform to the next election. "And," he says, "We will be going to the members of the unions and we will be saying to them we want you to get a fair deal." But the idea that Turnbull and the Coalition want workers to have a fair deal is a joke.

The Productivity Commission has already flagged cuts to penalty rates for all hospitality, retail and tourism workers.

The government plans to introduce legislation in February to re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission to police the construction industry.

The fight can't be left to Parliament. In August last year, the anti-union legislation lost in the Senate by just one vote. To beat back Turnbull's offensive, we will need an industrial campaign of strikes and demonstrations.

.....  
**Heydon is outraged that the right of entry is used "as a means to apply industrial pressure and control worksites."**

By Ian Rintoul

THE IMMIGRATION Minister, Peter Dutton, made headlines in mid January threatening to send 72 children back to Nauru. The children are among the 260 asylum seekers and refugees who have been brought from Nauru and Manus for medical reasons.

Dutton's threat comes just weeks before the High Court of Australia is likely to rule on whether it is constitutional for Australia to maintain offshore detention centres. Dutton's announcement makes it very clear that if the government wins the High Court case, it intends to return the 260 covered by the court case to Nauru and Manus Island.

Yet the conditions on Nauru and Manus Island continue to spiral downwards. Even at a basic health level, Nauru can't cope. About the same time as Dutton was saying people would be sent back to Nauru, around 25 people were taken from Nauru to Port Moresby for medical treatment. In spite of the government's ruling that no-one is to be brought to Australia, at least one refugee from Nauru was so sick they were brought here.

It is not going to get any better. The Nauru hospital often runs out of basic medical supplies, while creeping skin rashes and sores due to the heat and humidity run rampant. Even worse, there is no resettlement and no future on Nauru, and detention times are blowing out.

**New Zealand**

The absolute refusal of the Australian government to allow any of the offshore refugees to be resettled in Australia has resulted in some advocates focussing on possible third country resettlement. Refugees on Nauru recently signed letters sent to the New Zealand government and now to Malcolm Turnbull seeking resettlement in New Zealand.

The request to New Zealand was based on a three-year old "agreement" between then Labor Prime Minister, Julia Gillard and New Zealand Prime Minister, John Key to take 150 refugees from Australian detention centres. But that agreement came from a different period, and it has never been acted on.

In March, 2013, when Gillard struck that agreement, Australia was willing to resettle people they sent to Nauru who were found to be refugees. That all changed when Rudd became Prime Minister and ruled that anyone

**Close Nauru and Manus—Australia the only place to resettle refugees**



**Above: At a time when concern about children in detention is growing, Dutton wants to send 72 children back to Nauru**

arriving after 19 July 2013 would never come to Australia.

When Tony Abbott became prime minister shortly afterwards, in September 2013, he quickly repudiated the agreement with New Zealand.

For its part, New Zealand works hand in glove with Australia and is complicit in the abuse of asylum seekers. It has used Australia to intercept, and turn around boats that were attempting to get to New Zealand.

It has also introduced its own draconian legislation against boat arrivals and keeps its annual resettlement quota at a paltry 750.

Now Turnbull has made it clear that there won't be any special arrangement with New Zealand. The reason is obvious.

If asylum seekers arriving by boat in Australia can get resettled in New Zealand, even if it is via Manus or Nauru, then it risks restarting the boats from Indonesia. Turnbull is not going to chance that.

But he does have a problem. As the situation deteriorates, as detention gets longer, as the news of scale of sexual assault becomes more known, there is increasing pressure on the government to find a solution. Hypocritically, the Labor Party has even been critical of the government for not finding a third country.

But the UNHCR has refused to sanction or cooperate with Australia's offshore processing regime. All the other resettling countries that have relations with the UNHCR rightly regard the refugees on Manus and Nauru as being Australia's responsibility. They aren't about to agree to take refugees that Australia has refused.

That is why Australia has gone (unsuccessfully) to Cambodia, The Philippines and Kyrgyzstan to try to bribe them to accept refugees.

The refugee movement needs to keep the focus on resettlement in Australia. The pressure on the government is building and there are cracks.

Mass outrage brought the pregnant Somali refugee, Abyan, to Australia. After separating them for six months, the government finally brought the family of a young Iranian asylum seeker brutally raped on Nauru to join her in Australia.

The Australian High Court decision is expected in February. If the government wins that case, we need to do everything we can to prevent them from sending anyone back—with emails, petitions, demonstrations, and blockades.

This will be the next battle to push back against the government policy and win resettlement for all those stuck in the offshore hell-holes.

**When Tony Abbott became prime minister in September 2013, he quickly repudiated the agreement with New Zealand.**

## Racists use Cologne attacks to demonise Muslims and refugees

RACIST POLITICIANS are trying to use horrific New Year's Eve attacks on women in German cities to undermine solidarity with refugees. These attempts are also boosting racist groups.

They hope to stir up racism against the 1.1 million refugees that have arrived in Germany through the Syrian refugee crisis in the last year. But all these refugees are not to blame for the acts of a tiny minority among them.

In the worst incident in Cologne, at least 1000 men massed near the city's cathedral and a railway station. More than 500 women have filed criminal complaints over attacks there—40 per cent of them sexual assault cases including at least one alleged rape.

A leaked police report describes women having to "run an indescribable gauntlet of drunken men". It said they threw firecrackers and bottles at the women, robbed them and groped them.

The attackers have been described as of north African and Arab appearance. All of the 19 suspects being investigated by police are immigrants, 14 of them are from Morocco and Algeria. Some are asylum seekers. Similar incidents have been reported in Hamburg, Stuttgart and Bielefeld.

Gangs of north African pick-pockets have existed for some time in Germany. Some have used sexual assault in the past as a way to distract women and rob them. It should not be a surprise that the illegal status some migrants are forced to live in, and the fact they find it harder to get jobs, have pushed some into crime. But this is a product of poverty and deprivation, not race or religion.

Much of the ensuing debate has blamed Arab and Muslim "culture".

Chancellor Angela Merkel has proposed changing the law to make it easier to deport asylum seekers who commit crimes.

This would introduce a two-tier system, where criminals who commit the same act would receive different punishments according to their country of origin.

Cologne police chief Wolfgang Albers has been suspended. Police initially played down the attacks, reporting a "calm" night despite later admitting the opposite.

Mayor Henriette Reker proposed a "code of conduct" telling women to keep at "arm's length" from strangers to avoid attack.



**Above: Anti-fascists in Cologne demonstrate against racism and sexism**

This holds victims, instead of perpetrators, responsible for sexual assault. It underlines that sexual violence and the attitudes and structures behind it are fully part of European society.

Rape and sexual assaults are shockingly common, including at public events like Oktoberfest and other German festivals. One in seven women have experience sexual violence, according to a study by the German Ministry of Family Affairs. According to Kate Davison, writing in *Overland*, "reported rapes at Oktoberfest are between two and ten per year. In 2015, 26 sexual assaults were reported at the festival, including two cases of rape".

Yet politicians and the media have been quick to racialise these attacks. Angela Merkel said the events showed the need to, "discuss the fundamentals of cultural co-existence in Germany". The Sat1 TV network's breakfast show demanded the authorities "defend our values, way of life and beliefs" against "Muslim men".

The same response has been heard outside Germany too. Belgium's immigration minister Theo Francken announced compulsory classes for non-European migrants "on how to behave with women ... in our Western culture".

### Organise

The hypocrites at the top have legitimised racist gangs who carried out a series of organised beatings in

Cologne.

A group of several dozen attacked six Pakistanis near the train station where the New Year's Eve assaults took place.

Two victims were hospitalised. Separately, a Syrian refugee was attacked.

Several far right groups had put out calls on social media inciting vigilante attacks on foreign men. Police describe "deliberately provocative" groups gathering before the attacks.

This followed a "refugees not welcome" demonstration by racist organisations Pegida and Hodesa (Hooligans Against Salafism) in Cologne the previous day.

Police say 1700 took part, though a local newspaper estimated 600 "drunken hooligans".

Despite the backlash, the bigots aren't going unopposed.

The racist demonstrations were dwarfed by a 4000-strong anti-fascist counter demonstration.

Some 1000 people joined it from an earlier flash mob against sexual violence in front of Cologne cathedral.

Another demonstration took place the previous week.

Many Germans are outraged at attempts to blame 1.1 million refugees for attacks by a tiny minority—especially from those who do nothing for women.

**Based on an article by Dave Sewell, Socialist Worker UK**  
[www.socialistworker.co.uk](http://www.socialistworker.co.uk)

.....  
**Much of the ensuing debate has blamed Arab and Muslim "culture".**

By John Passant

# Tax avoidance is big business

THE AUSTRALIAN Tax Office released the Corporate Tax Transparency Report in December. It tells us which big businesses didn't pay any income tax. On top of that it tells us those companies who did but at rates well below the statutory rate of 30 per cent.

The Report should, but won't, end this government's mantra about Australia having a spending problem, not a revenue problem. When you have 38 per cent of big businesses in the report not paying any income tax in the 2013-14 financial year, you have a revenue problem.

It also should, but won't, end the Turnbull government's cuts to spending on services like public health and public education and attacks on the sick, the disabled, the unemployed and low paid workers.

It won't, but should, stop this government arguing for tax "reforms" like imposing the GST on fresh food, health and education and increasing the rate to 12.5 or 15 per cent.

## Naming the names

This first report specifically names the companies. Here are some of the stellar performers.

In the year in question, 2013-14, Qantas had gross revenue of over \$14 billion. It paid no tax but did sack 5000 of its workforce and freeze their wages until the end of this year.

BlueScope Steel recently sacked 500 workers (one tenth of its workforce) and has frozen wages for three years. With gross revenue of \$4.6 billion, and despite having a taxable income of \$319 million, it paid no income tax in 2013-14.

Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd had total income of \$2.8 billion in the same year but paid no income tax. The geniuses at News Ltd cannot figure out how to make a profit on such massive sales revenue—other than to sack workers, such as the 55 editorial staff at its various newspapers it recently fired.

Two years ago the mining companies were still making healthy profits with the boom only just beginning to falter. Yet 60 per cent of energy and resource companies in the Report paid no income tax that year.

Citic Resources Australia explores for and exports iron ore, aluminium, alumina, steel, and now coal. It had gross revenue of over \$5 billion but had no taxable income and hence paid



**Above: Corporations like Apple use tax laws to shift profits into low-tax countries**

no income tax.

ExxonMobil is one of Australia's largest oil and gas producers. Its activities include the exploration and production of oil and gas, petroleum refining and supply of fuels (including natural gas), lubricants and chemical products. In 2013-14 its gross income was over \$9 billion but it made no profit on that on which to pay tax.

Newcrest Mining had gross income of over \$2 billion but paid no income tax.

## Offshoring profits

My favourites are Google and Apple because they show that even when companies do pay tax the back story shows they are up to their armpits in reducing their taxable income here through shifting profits offshore.

According to the *Financial Review*, by charging itself fees from Apple Ireland for intellectual property rights in the goods sold here, Apple shifted profits totalling \$9 billion out of Australia in the last decade. So for \$6 billion or so in sales here in 2013-14 it paid tax of just \$74 million.

Reports from previous years said Google had revenue from Australian sources of over \$2 billion but paid only \$740,000 in tax.

This is because when you put an ad for Australian audiences on Google you are actually contracting with

Google Singapore and under our tax treaties Singapore, a low tax country, has the taxing rights.

So when we read that Google had gross revenue in Australia of \$357 million and a taxable income of \$90 million on which it paid just \$9 million tax (or 10 per cent) we should ask not just why its tax rate is 10 rather than 30 per cent, we also how much of its Australian income was actually sourced for Australian tax avoidance purposes in Singapore. Quite a lot is the answer.

Singapore is also a favourite for mining companies who in recent years have set up marketing hubs there. They evidently can't sell the stuff from Australia. Setting a hub up in Singapore means they can shift some of their profits from Australia to the city state.

There are many many more, very similar, stories. Tax avoidance isn't just a few bad Apples. It is endemic and systemic.

Labor has said it would crack down on tax avoidance. But its policies would raise peanuts—just \$2 billion over four years. There are tens of billions at stake.

Tax avoidance is big business. Getting more out of these tax leaners would help immensely the poor, the homeless, the unemployed, the sick, the disabled, and pensioners, to name just a few.

**When you have 38 per cent of big businesses in the report not paying any income tax, you have a revenue problem**

# Paris agreement pledges nothing for the climate

By Erima Dall

THE MEDIA hailed the Paris climate conference as delivering an “historic” global agreement. But there is nothing to celebrate. The agreement is a sham.

World leaders were determined to avoid the appearance of failure, even stage-managing a standing ovation. But the deal is voluntary, non-binding, and contains no penalties for failing to reach targets. The deal was there was no deal, just worthless words.

Whereas the Kyoto Protocols were supposed to be legally binding, in Paris they didn't even try. Countries were allowed to pledge their own emissions reduction targets, for review five years from now.

In all, 176 countries made a pledge to reduce their emissions. But if you add these up, global temperatures will rise by 2.7 – 4 degrees. This is not safe. And nothing stops governments breaking even these promises.

World leaders agree on one thing: putting profits before the planet. They are not prepared to confront the power of the fossil fuel industry, or corporations that want cheap electricity to stay “competitive”. G20 governments give \$120 billion a year to oil, gas and coal companies. The logic of capitalist competition means politicians always put profits first.

Much was made of the aspiration to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, a step beyond the usual 2 degrees. And there is some symbolic value, given low-lying island nations have long argued that they cannot survive more than a 1.5 degree rise. But in the end it is all hot air. The agreement only says it will “pursue efforts” for 1.5 degrees. They are actually letting the planet warm by at least twice this.

Global emissions are allowed to continue to rise until a peak as far out as 2050. Emissions from shipping and airlines were excluded altogether, despite making up 10 per cent of global emissions.

And the agreement continues to advocate market-based carbon pricing and trading schemes as the key to emissions cuts. This includes the dodgy practice of funding “offset” schemes in third world countries instead of actually cutting emissions.

## Fossil fuels

The document specifically makes no mention of coal, oil, gas or fossil



**Above: Malcolm and Tony follow King Cole at December's climate march in Sydney**

fuels—let alone any promises to phase them out. Early in the conference Malcolm Turnbull made a point of refusing to sign on to an agreement initiated by New Zealand to phase out fossil fuel subsidies.

World Coal Organisation chief Benjamin Sporton predicted no “massive change at the moment”. BHP Billiton predicted an agreement in Paris would not hit their mining profits, which they plan to double by 2030. The Australian government is continuing with the mega Shenhua mine in NSW, and the Carmichael mine in Queensland. Turnbull is clinging to Abbott's old do-nothing “Direct Action” plan. Japan and South Korea will continue with plans to open over 61 new coal-fired power stations in the next ten years.

As prominent climate scientist James Hansen said, “It's just bullshit...As long as fossil fuels appear to be the cheapest fuels out there, they will continue to be burned”.

## No justice, no money

Nearly every justice-based issue, from indigenous and migrant rights, food sovereignty, intergenerational justice, and a just transition, were pushed into an unenforceable preamble.

And developed countries continued to shirk historical responsibility, failing to assist developing nations to transition to renewable energy.

In 2009 they agreed to give US\$100 billion per year by 2020 to

developing nations for transition and adaptation. So far, the fund has only raised US\$10.2 billion in pledges for the period up to 2018, and almost half of this has not been signed off. Only US\$2 billion is actually available.

The OECD recently reported that US\$62 billion has been pledged in 2014—but this is deeply misleading. Most of this money is dubious loans and schemes from the private sector.

Australia promised a pathetic \$200 million, out of existing aid. Julie Bishop won the “fossil of the day” award on day ten for saying, “coal will remain critical to promoting prosperity, growing economies and alleviating hunger for years to come.”

## Defiance

Outside, 20,000 people defied the ban on protests to rally on the final day with red fabric to symbolise the “red lines” being crossed by the agreement.

France banned demonstrations overnight in response to a terrorist attack, but cannot fathom a real emergency response to the coming climate catastrophe. This task is up to us.

Around the world three-quarters-of-a-million people marched in the largest-ever global climate demonstration. There is a long way to go—but this is where the hope lies. Nothing short of a mass struggle will overcome the fossil fuel addiction of world leaders and businesses. Paris was a reminder of this.

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**The deal is voluntary, non-binding, and contains no penalties for failing to reach targets**

By Andy Durgan,  
member of En Lluita in Barcelona

GENERAL ELECTIONS in the Spanish state in December brought increasing political instability, with the biggest gains made by the left.

Widespread corruption and vicious austerity have seriously undermined the political setup in place since the end of the Franco dictatorship in 1977.

The conservative People's Party (PP) came first with 29 per cent of the vote, but lost nearly four million votes since the last election in 2011.

With 22 per cent, the Labor-type Socialist Party (PSOE) had its worst result since 1977.

The two parties' combined vote fell to just 51 per cent, down from 73 per cent in the last elections in 2011 and 84 per cent in 2008. This meant the end of the two party system.

And new right wing populist party Citizens (Ciudadanos) did much worse than widely predicted.

The real victor is radical left party Podemos. After barely two years of existence it won 21 per cent and over five million votes—just 400,000 fewer than the PSOE.

Podemos and its allies won in Catalonia and the Basque Country. It came second to the PP in Madrid, Valencia, Galicia, the Balearic Islands and Navarra. Most importantly its vote was strongest in urban working class areas.

Podemos has undoubtedly moderated its politics over the last year. It has consciously adopted a “social democratic” programme and included in its lists high profile candidates such as the former Nato general Julio Rodriguez.

However, its spectacular eruption onto the election scene is still a victory for the left. In Catalonia, Valencia and Galicia, all areas where it did particularly well, it stood in coalitions with forces to its left.

The mood at Podemos's massive electoral rallies showed that its supporters expect real change. The left must welcome its victory, but remain critical while looking for the broadest possible unity in struggle.

### Distorted

The proportional electoral system means smaller parties get parliamentary representation.

The PP now has 123 MPs, the PSOE 90, Podemos 69 and Ciudadanos 40. Parliamentary arithmetic makes any stable coalition government unlikely. Even if Ciudadanos joins the PP the right cannot get a majority. But neither is there a clear left majority.

## The left is the real winner of Spanish elections as two party system crumbles



**Above: Podemos launching their campaign in the European elections in Oviedo**

Podemos has repeatedly ruled out joining a government headed by the PSOE, though it does not rule out some form of collaboration. This would be on the basis of an agreement on constitutional reform including a new electoral law and protection of social rights.

National movements, particularly in Catalonia, are another key divide.

In Catalonia there is now mass support for independence, but the PP government in Madrid blocked a referendum. Now Podemos' defence of a referendum makes an agreement with the rabidly Spanish nationalist

PSOE difficult. And while the main parties refuse to contemplate anything that could undermine the “unity of Spain”, Catalan nationalist MPs could be decisive in any agreement.

Even if some form of minority government can be patched together, the situation remains very open.

Podemos continues to capture much of the spirit of the *Indignados* movement and working class opposition to austerity.

The central question is whether this spirit of resistance can be deepened rather than subordinated to the machinations of institutional politics.

### Podemos' left reformism means compromise with the political system

THE EARTHQUAKES in Spanish politics are a product of resistance to the economic crisis. Unemployment is still around 21 per cent, and 47.5 per cent among young people. Podemos has captured much of the spirit of the *Indignados* movement of 2011, which saw occupations of city squares across the country.

But Podemos' leadership sees elections as the sole way to bring change. It says that its aim is to win government and radically reform the Spanish political system. Like Syriza in Greece and new British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn it is one of a series of new left reformist parties focused on parliamentary change.

But as the experience of the Syriza government in Greece has shown, this strategy creates immense pressure to capitulate to the existing capitalist institutions.

Podemos has watered down its program as its popularity has grown in an effort to chase electoral victory. It has dropped earlier promises of widespread nationalisation, retirement at 60 and a universal wage for all citizens. Like Syriza it also promises to renegotiate Spain's debt with Europe's financial institutions, but opposes breaking with the EU. Defying these institutions and the capitalist ruling class requires mobilising the power of the working class outside parliament.

# Venezuela's election: end of the road for the revolution?

By Mark Goudkamp

THE DEFEAT of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) in the National Assembly elections of 6 December last year came as a shock for much of the left internationally, and has led to a wave of soul searching.

The conservative opposition coalition—the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD)—not only won the poll, it stormed in to narrowly claim a two-thirds “super majority”, taking 112 out of 167 seats.

This potentially gives the right—the same neo-liberal elites who attempted to topple Hugo Chávez via a coup in 2002—the power to tear up the constitution and initiate a recall election against President Nicolás Maduro before his term ends in 2019.

The right’s “super majority” hit a snag when the Supreme Court barred the swearing in of four elected members from Amazonas state until an investigation into reports of vote-buying is complete, and declared the National Assembly’s decisions “void” after it defied this initial ruling.

However, this standoff cannot disguise the scale of the setback for the Bolivarian Revolution. Since coming to power in 1998, Chávez and his supporters had won 18 elections out of 20, often with large majorities.

Chavez’s social programs around literacy, housing and health improved the lives of millions of Venezuela’s workers and urban poor.

After 2005 there was much excitement when Chávez called for a debate around what “21st century socialism” might look like. And internationally Venezuela formed strong relations with other left governments in Latin America, and became an irritant for US imperialism.

## Economic problems

So how could such a popular project have lost so many votes, including from its own support base?

Firstly, the country’s faces serious economic problems. Inflation and shortages mean life for the poor, the revolution’s most staunch supporters, is increasingly a struggle.

With official inflation reaching up to 200 per cent per month, the cost of a basic food basket for a family of five is equivalent to ten times the minimum wage. Sometimes products



**Above: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro holds a photo of Hugo Chavez at a rally before the election**

like coffee, rice and milk are not available at all.

Profiteers exploited this situation by seeking to monopolise products, create shortages, and raise prices. When these products reappeared in supermarkets, huge queues formed and stocks quickly sold out. And although the government sought to impose “fair prices”, most people were forced to rely on “resellers”, who would ask for four or five times the official price.

On top of this economic insecurity, the growth in violent crime has created a strong sense of personal insecurity which the right sought to exploit.

Chávez’s social programs were made possible because of revenue from the country’s massive oil reserves. The wealth of local elites stayed largely intact, and there was no mass expropriation.

But the collapse of global oil prices from \$140 a barrel to under \$40 in recent years drastically reduced state revenues, which in turn cut into these social programs.

## Bureaucracy

The Bolivarian revolution has never been controlled from below by Venezuela’s workers and the poor. Instead those around Chavez sought to use state structures from above to address poverty.

Bureaucratisation around the ruling PSUV has created increasing corruption among government officials, increasingly referred to as the

“Bolivarian bourgeoisie”.

Many people asked how it was possible for the people’s government to permit corruption that allowed some “revolutionary” leaders to enrich themselves. They asked how it was possible that \$300 billion could disappear without a reaction, or how the former head of the state oil company could suddenly leave the country with vast quantities of money in foreign banks.

They asked how food, medicine, and petrol could cross the border with Colombia while the government, the army and the National Guard turned a blind eye?

When two of Maduro’s own nephews were caught trafficking drugs, for many this was the last straw.

As Gonzalo Gómez of Marea Socialista, a small socialist group that has criticised the government from the left argues: “There are two enemies of the revolution: the bureaucracy and capital. They are two sides of the same capitalist coin at this point. Both compete against each other electorally, but share their briefcases under the table.”

The right fed off the fear, the weariness and disillusionment of the masses. However, their agenda will be to roll back the social and political gains made over the past 17 years.

To prevent this, there needs to be a revival in mass popular struggle, to impose real control from below over the Bolivarian revolution. Without such an upsurge from the masses, the revolution faces an uncertain future.

**Inflation and shortages mean life for the poor is increasingly a struggle**

# SUFFRAGETTES

## THE VOTE, THE WAR AND WORKING CLASS WOMEN

**Geraldine Fela** discusses the new film *Suffragette*, and how the fight for the vote polarised between wealthy and working class women

*SUFFRAGETTE* is a timely reminder that rights such as the vote were not handed to us by sympathetic parliamentarians. They were fought for, in this case by a movement that had the British establishment terrified.

*Suffragette* pulls no punches in showing us police brutality, and the horror of the force-feeding that hunger striking suffragettes endured as political prisoners. Nor does it hold back in showing us the women's militancy, from destroying post boxes and smashing windows to blowing up politicians' country homes. Where the film falls down is in its commitment to portraying a "sisterhood" combining different classes. In reality, wealthy women and poor women didn't have a common cause. Upper class women ultimately betrayed the movement; it was up to working women to win the vote.

*Suffragette* tells the story of Maud Watts (Carey Mulligan), a laundress, as she is drawn into the struggle for women's suffrage. We see the atrocious conditions that working class women experienced in 1912 London. Placing a working class woman at the centre of the narrative is welcome, but nevertheless, it depicts a top-down version of the struggle for suffrage. Maud and women like her are mere footsoldiers, doing the bidding of charismatic middle class personalities such as the famous Pankhurst family.

### Working women on the move

In reality, long before the Pankhursts, working class women had been organising and mobilising alongside men for higher wages and better working conditions. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an enormous upsurge of workers' struggle and an explosion of trade union membership.

In the decade from 1886 the number of women in trade unions rose from around 37,000 to nearly 118,000 in 1906. Radicalised and growing in



confidence from battling the bosses, it was these women who first committed to the fight for the vote. They campaigned and organised in their workplaces, leafleting, petitioning and speaking out.

Mass meetings were held after working hours in working class neighbourhoods. In one such open meeting in 1906 leading suffragist Selina Cooper told the crowd that women, "do not want their political power to enable them to boast that they are on equal terms with men. They want to use it for the same purposes as men—to get better conditions."

Selina Cooper had worked in cotton mills since the age of ten. She and women like her understood that suffrage was only a tool in a wider struggle, that the vote was important but that it wouldn't fill a hungry stomach—it needed to be fought for

**Above: Suffragettes demonstrating to demand the vote in the new film**

alongside better pay and conditions for all workers.

In contrast, for middle class suffragettes such as Christobel and Emmeline Pankhurst, winning the vote was about gaining access to the privileges and power of the men of their class. They grew hostile to a working class perspective, and to supporting causes like Irish independence. At one stage, Emmeline declared that, "our members are absolutely single minded; they concentrate all their forces on one object, political equality with men. No member of the WSPU divides her attention between suffrage and other social reforms."

### Women's suffrage or universal suffrage

Debate raged inside the movement over whether it should campaign for the vote on the same existing terms for

men, or for universal suffrage for all adult men and women. Prior to 1918, only 58 per cent of men had the vote in Britain. The requirement that men either own property or pay an annual rent of ten pounds excluded many poorer workers. *Suffragette* ignores this important fact.

In one scene, Maud's husband Sonny angrily asks her, "What would you do with it [the vote] Maud?" to which she replies, "Do the same you do with yours, Sonny. Exercise my rights!" Yet it's highly likely that a poor worker like Sonny would, like his wife, have been denied the vote under the existing law. He would have had as much to gain from universal suffrage as Maud.

Unfortunately, despite the enthusiasm for the vote amongst working women, the leadership of the labour movement was largely inactive on the question. Some trade union officials held reactionary ideas about a woman's place being in the home. Some argued that supporting women's suffrage on the existing terms would only increase the vote for the powerful and propertied, arguing it would mean "votes for the ladies". The socialist solution was to make women's suffrage a central demand of the struggle for universal suffrage.

But even some socialists were confused. In 1907 at the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart, the Austrian socialists argued that for the sake of winning wider suffrage for men, it was tactically correct to *not* put the demand for women's suffrage in the foreground and to demand instead "universal manhood suffrage". The majority of delegates, however, voted against the Austrian proposal. But in some countries, including France and Britain, the broader labour movement did not take up the fight for women's suffrage, leaving the leadership of the struggle in the hands of upper class women.

### **The Pankhursts—a family divided**

The Pankhurst family originally had roots in the labour movement, and had been part of the Independent Labour Party. But their middle class background meant that their focus quickly moved away from the working class and towards "respectable" women.

The organisation they formed, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) came to reflect this. Alice Milne, a working class supporter, visiting the WSPU offices in 1906, found the place to be, "full of fashionable ladies in silks and satins".

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### **The Pankhursts failed to see the power that masses of organised working class women could wield if they were drawn into the struggle**

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This is not to say that the WSPU was not militant, it was. Between 1910 and 1912 the WSPU campaigned around three separate bills before parliament to extend the vote to women; each was defeated. Disillusioned and furious, Emmeline Pankhurst called for direct action.

Just as seen in the film, guerrilla style groups of women routinely attacked the homes of MPs who voted against women's suffrage. Vandalism was common and no one who stood in the way of the vote was safe.

Whilst this took immense bravery and sacrifice, these tactics failed to engage with the masses of ordinary women. After all, middle class women could afford a spell in prison but for women living on the breadline this could mean losing your job and your home.

Though they were right to see the futility of change through parliament, the middle class Pankhursts failed to see the power that masses of organised working class women could wield if they were drawn into the struggle.

There was, however, one exception—Sylvia Pankhurst, the daughter of Emmeline and sister of Christabel and Adela, became a revolutionary socialist.

While Christabel was contemptuous of the working class, telling Sylvia that, "Working women are the weakest portion of the sex ... We want picked women, the strongest and most intelligent", Sylvia recognised their power to transform society. In 1913, she set up the East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS).

The aims of the group were very different to the WSPU. They organised and mobilised working class women in the fight for the vote, and also campaigned over pay, poverty and childcare.

In 1913 Sylvia spoke at a mass rally supporting striking Irish workers, bringing together the three political issues most sensitive to the British state: women's suffrage, Irish independence and the labour movement. Shortly afterwards she was imprisoned and then released.

Weak from successive hunger strikes, Sylvia escaped to France to meet Christabel who was staying in a palace of a Princess and directing the campaign "at a distance". Sylvia arrived, in her words, to "find Christabel nursing a small Pomeranian dog".

Christabel promptly told her that her East London branch was expelled. Christabel was unhappy with the democratic nature of the organisation and its orientation towards working women. She stated that, "we want all

women to take their instructions and walk in step like an army".

The response of the ELFS was to add the colour red to its banner and continue to grow. In 1916 it changed its name to the Workers' Suffrage Federation.

The split within the Pankhurst family was far more than just a family feud. It represents how the movement split along class lines. Sylvia saw that simply winning equality with men in existing society would ultimately only benefit already wealthy women.

### **War, betrayal and revolution**

The outbreak of war in 1914 threw the differences into sharp relief. Emmeline and the WSPU completely dropped the demand for women's suffrage and threw themselves into a nationalist campaign to support the war. They renamed their paper *Brittania* and instead of mobilising women to fight for the vote, they mobilised them to hand out white roses to men who were not fighting to shame them as cowards.

Sylvia, in contrast, was a staunch anti-war campaigner. She understood that no one but the ruling class, hell bent on imperial expansion, would gain from the carnage and bloodshed of WWI. Sylvia and the ELFS continued to campaign for universal suffrage and against the war.

In 1917 in Russia, a working class revolution toppled the Tsarist regime and established a workers' government in a major country for the first time. Mass revolt and mutiny spread through the battlefields of Europe, as soldiers on both sides walked out of trenches and refused to fight.

Sylvia renamed the East London Suffragettes' paper *The Workers' Dreadnought* (from *The Women's Dreadnought*) and spread news about the revolution and workers' councils.

At the end of WWI the spectre of revolution haunted Europe's rulers. In the face of this, the British State made concessions. In 1918 suffrage was extended to include women over 30 and all men over 21, and finally, in 1928, the law was amended again to give all women over 21 the vote.

The role of the war and the radical working women like the Sylvia Pankhurst and the East London Suffragettes is sadly missing from the film *Suffragette*. When leaders like Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst fell into step with war-mongering governments, it was the working women of the ELFS who kept up the fight. In the story of how we won the vote, working class women like Maud are the real heroes.

# MT ISA'S RANK-AND-FILE REVOLT

The dispute in Mt Isa in 1964 saw rank-and-file union members hold out against the company, the government and even their own union officials, writes **Mark Gillespie**

The story of the 1964 Mt Isa Mines dispute is a great antidote for those dealing with anti-union laws and the lethargy of trade union officials today.

Over 40 nationalities were welded together in a mammoth struggle against the company, the government, the media and shamefully, their own union officials.

But around Australia workers backed the miners, as did virtually the whole of Mt Isa. "Almost a carnival atmosphere reigned", wrote strike leader Pat Mackie.

Mt Isa is a company mining town in north Queensland, 500 kilometres inland from Townsville. Mining there meant back breaking work, around the clock, thousands of feet underground in stifling heat. The only attraction was high wages.

The 1964 rebellion was building for years. Management were constantly on workers' backs, driving up production while penny pinching on wages and the provision of amenities.

In 1961 miners were denied a pay rise when the government suddenly passed legislation preventing the arbitration court from awarding weekly "bonus payments". A strike followed, but soon collapsed when the company locked out the workforce for two months. That injustice was still a burning issue in 1964.

There were two methods of payment at the mine: a base rate on the Award or higher contract payments. The bulk of the underground workforce worked on contracts for piece rates, based on how much ore was dug, holes drilled, or timber erected. There were constant disputes when mining conditions changed or new managers started "chiselling" at rates.

A massive turn-over of half the workforce every year was an indicator of the oppressive conditions.

The Australian Workers Union (AWU) covered the miners. Joining the union was a condition of employment but the officials did nothing other than represent workers in the arbitra-

tion hearings.

One organiser looked after 2500 members at the mine and another 1500 in the district. There were only two delegates for underground workers and two for surface workers. Complaints were often left unresolved.

Skilled tradesmen at the mine were represented by a range of more active unions, affiliated to the local Mt Isa Labour Council, known as the TLC unions.

## From little things big things grow

It was a problem with the showers that first got Pat Mackie involved in union affairs at Mt Isa. Mackie had some union experience from North America where he was influenced by the Industrial Workers of the World and their commitment to rank and file democracy.

He confronted management when his shower failed for the third night in row. About to resign, a small group of miners convinced him to stay and fight.

Twenty five members out of 2500 turned up to a union meeting. Mackie convinced the miners to give the company a week to fix the showers and meet again to discuss progress. After some foot dragging the showers were fixed.

This small victory helped rejuvenate the union. Mackie was elected chair and the number of workplace delegates increased to ten. They passed motions requesting affiliation to the local Labour Council and the employment of an extra organiser. As English was the second language of 70 per cent of the workforce, Mackie introduced interpreters. Before long 400 workers were attending the Sunday meetings.

A bombshell burst on the miners in August 1964. First the industrial commission rejected the AWU's claim for a \$50 a week wage increase, on the grounds that, as in 1961, it was a

.....  
**The state government declared a State of Emergency, directing a return to work or the risk of \$2500 fines or six months' jail.**  
 \_\_\_\_\_

"camouflaged bonus payment".

But much more explosive was the AWU hierarchy's rejection, using obscure rules, of their newly elected delegates. Their request for another organiser and more local autonomy, said Mackie, was "filed in the waste paper basket".

According to Mackie, "the Mount Isa membership now clearly saw that the AWU top brass could not be relied on to help".

## Taking action

The workers discussed how to pursue their wage claim. The contract system was central to production so rather than bust a gut working for contracts, they decided they'd all revert to wages. This was their right under the Award and it was also a way of avoiding penalties that came with strike action. Production immediately slumped, with miners' pay also dropping by a large amount.

The TLC unions supported the AWU miners by voting to apply overtime bans if any members were laid off.

In late September the industrial commission stated that it saw their action as an unauthorised strike. The AWU officials promptly recommended that they end the action. They were howled down and the proposal overwhelmingly rejected. The officials walked out and Mackie took control of the meeting.

Pat Mackie was sacked by the company for misconduct in October. He'd taken a day off work to deal with union business, but wasn't a recognized union representative, thanks to the AWU executive. The demand for his reinstatement became a central issue in the dispute. Shortly afterwards the AWU expelled Mackie.

Finally in early December the arbitration court formally directed the workers to revert to contract work or face fines. A mass meeting again refused to comply.

The company responded by shut-

ting down production. The was the excuse for the state government to declare a State of Emergency, directing a return to work on contracts or the risk of \$2500 fines or six months' jail.

As the AWU officials arrived to recommend compliance the Queensland Premier confidently predicted the "miners would be law abiding".

But Gordon Sheldon, the Mt Isa Mines (MIM) public relations officer described how: "as soon as the officials appeared in the hall there was bedlam. The men rose to their feet in hostility, jeering, yelling, catcalling... the Union officials left the stage and went out into the street..."

"Inside the uproar resolved itself into shouts of 'We want Mackie'. Mackie took the microphone and there was instant silence. 'Do you want me as Chairman?' he asked; there was a roar of approval.

"The meeting...obviously solid in its wishes openly defied the State Government".

The dispute became a war of attrition with the company out to starve the miners back to work.

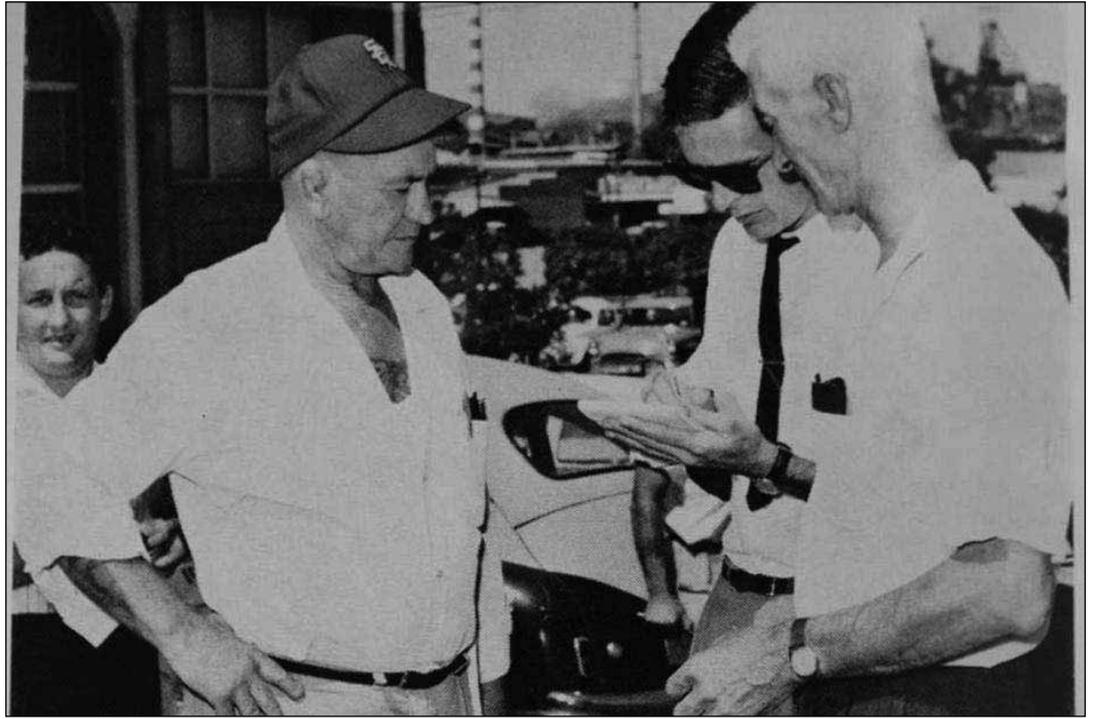
A few sweeteners were added in the hope the movement would collapse. Suddenly the wage case appeal was allowed and within a week the commission agreed to grant a \$40 a week bonus payment, renamed a "prosperity payment". Also extracted were commitments to improve the contract system.

But the workers wanted permanent change. They wanted Mackie reinstated and a direct voice in negotiations. Time and again the workers' elected delegates were excluded from meetings, as the company and the arbitration court recognized only the AWU hierarchy.

### The unionists dig in

Raising money to support the strike was now central and Mackie and John McMahon, the President of the local Labour Council, were elected to travel interstate. "I cannot remember on this entire tour having one hostile word or nasty slur cast at us", wrote Mackie. Tens of thousands of dollars of financial support flooded in.

While they were away the state government introduced yet more draconian laws. Any efforts to aid the strike were made illegal. Police were given the power to seize banners, placards, signs and publications without warrants and to prevent anyone entering or leaving Mt Isa. Extra police were sent to enforce all this.



**Above: Pat Mackie, in his red baseball cap, and unionist John McMahon talk to the media during the dispute**

But the new regulations blew up in their face. The dispute hit the front pages when a plane carrying John McMahon was forced to land and he was removed at Longreach airport to stop him reaching Mt Isa.

Meanwhile unionists around the country, shocked by the heavy handedness, began to rally.

The Queensland TLC called a 24-hour solidarity strike that looked like going national, when suddenly the regulations were suspended and the extra police withdrawn. Three quarters of an hour later, at a press conference in Mt Isa, Mackie made a sensational appearance. He'd avoided the police cordon using back roads with the help of two Sydney wharfies. The next day a huge crowd welcomed back John McMahon.

### Picketing

From 17 February there was a barrage of back to work propaganda. Buses with blocked out windows were used to bus in scabs, but the numbers returning to work were insignificant.

Picketing was stepped up and some arrests were made. The AWU state secretary called for the government to be "more forceful and ban picketing altogether". The government complied.

But workers were getting tired and the strike leadership feared the mine would slowly start operating again as a slow drift back to work combined with new recruits from outside. They wrote to the maritime and rail unions

asking them to ban the transport of copper.

But even the more left-wing officials at these unions refused, citing the fear of fines under the penal powers.

Fearing that militants would all be excluded from work, they looked for a settlement. Mackie announced he would not reapply for work, so the focus was now on making sure no one else was victimized.

The company agreed to take skilled workers back without exceptions, but the AWU workforce would have to apply individually. After the AWU accepted this rotten deal the TLC officials too reluctantly accepted.

But there was still rank and file resistance. The TLC unions carried the decision only by 70 to 40, demonstrating the solidarity that had grown between the predominantly unskilled immigrant miners and the predominately Australian born tradies.

AWU members were simply directed to return to work by their officials. Fifty refused and left the district instead. Another 46 never got their jobs back.

This outcome might seem like a crushing defeat, but the miners' determined struggle did bring change. Wages rose, the contract system was improved and over time the company's attitude moderated. Eventually the right for union representation at the local level was accepted.

What the dispute showed is the capacity to fight, even when the law and your own officials are against you.

# BASHED IN CUSTODY: JUSTICE NOW FOR 11-YEAR-OLD DENZEL

By Adam Adelpour

ON 22 December three prison guards at Wacol Youth Detention Centre in Brisbane brutally bashed 11-year-old Aboriginal boy Denzel, leaving him hospitalised. Denzel's father Morris described the extent of the injuries at a protest rally on 5 January, saying, "three male officers brutally assaulted my child, fractured my child's jaw, gave him two black eyes, broke his hand, and sent him up to Ipswich Hospital in handcuffs."

News of the bashing reached Denzel's family when he contacted his mother Beverly by phone in the evening of 22 December. In an interview with Indigy Bris 4zzz FM Beverly re-told Denzel's account of the bashing: "it was lock-down time and the guard walked in and told him to come out of the room and Denzel said 'No, I'm gonna have a sleep after I eat this ice-block'.

"When he walked out they were holding his arms, and they had his arms tight so he was trying to move and they pulled his legs from underneath him and he fell on his face and then they grabbed his hair and slammed his head into the floor."

Beverly says he wasn't taken to a hospital until three days later despite suffering serious injuries that included a facial fracture. Denzel's face appears bloodied, severely swollen with two black eyes in a shocking photo taken by the correctional centre nurse and obtained by the family's lawyer.

To add to the cruelty, the Child Protection department are refusing to let Denzel return to his family after he was released on bail, ordering him into foster care.

## Protest for justice

Family and supporters rallied on the steps of Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk's office to demand justice on 27 December while Denzel was still in Wacol on remand.

The protestors called for an inquiry into the bashing and for the staff responsible to be charged and stood down. A representative from the Palaszczuk government came out to



**Above: Family and supporters rally for justice for Denzel in Brisbane** Photo: Priscilla Saunders

**Denzel's face appears bloodied, severely swollen with two black eyes in a shocking photo**

address the crowd and promised to act on their demands.

The demand "justice for Denzel" was raised again on 5 January when elders, activists and supporters came together in Brisbane's Post Office Square to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Indigenous resistance fighter Dundalee, captured and hanged in the Square in 1855.

Denzel's father Morris addressed the crowd, saying, "How does that make me and his family feel to know two days before Christmas, my son, their child, is getting bashed by these officers... We need justice in our communities, we need justice for our people." Child Protection explained Denzel's injuries to his father with the claim that guards had slipped and "fallen" on Denzel.

## Systematic brutalisation

Denzel's bashing is an example of the systematic brutalisation young Aboriginal people face in the juvenile detention system.

A report tabled in the NT Parliament in September 2015 found that NT corrections staff at Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre had tear gassed juveniles in their cells in August 2014.

The gassing was in response to an alleged "riot", but several of the inmates were playing cards when gassed. Film shows that during the incident, as one youth tried to escape, a laughing prison officer armed with a riot shield and padding said he would "pulverise the little f\*\*\*er".

In September 2015, an Aboriginal boy called Travis told a youth forum that staff at Don Dale had used chocolate bars to bribe inmates into fighting each other. In one case staff used food to pressure a boy into eating faeces, filmed it and shared it on social media. NT Attorney-General John Elferink confirmed police were investigating the allegations.

This is the reality of a "justice" system that is incarcerating Aboriginal youth at an unprecedented rate, ripping communities apart and creating yet another stolen generation, alongside the rapidly escalating removal of children by "child protection" agencies (see page 6). In June 2015 Amnesty International found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth were 24 times more likely to be locked up than the rest of the population. In WA they were found to be 53 times more likely to be behind bars.