

KICK THE LIBERALS OUT



BRING THE REFUGEES HERE

FRANCE

Working class revolt
shuts down the country

GREENS

Coalitions with Labor,
parliament and social change

PENALTY RATES

Coles, McDonalds and
the retail rip-off



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SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

Sydney

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

Melbourne

Melbourne Solidarity meets fortnightly at 6pm Second Floor Union House, Melbourne Uni
For more information contact: Feiyi on 0416 121 616
melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Perth

For more information contact: Phil on 0423 696 312

Brisbane

For more information contact: Mark on 0439 561 196 or brisbane@solidarity.net.au

Canberra

For more information contact: Geraldine on 0458 039 596 or canberra@solidarity.net.au

Magazine office

Phone 02 9211 2600
Fax 02 9211 6155
solidarity@solidarity.net.au

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Things they say

I'm like Donald Trump but without the resources

Liberal candidate for Whitlam Carolyn Currie explaining why she resigned from standing

It's a war on growth, it's a war on capital, it's a war on mums and dads.
Scott Morrison lets his real concern slip as he attacks Labor's plans

If I don't go all the way, and if I don't win, I will consider it to be a total, and complete, waste of time, energy and money.
US Presidential candidate, Donald Trump, not admitting that his campaign has already been worse than an appalling waste already

Obviously a tax cut is a good thing for the economy. The question is whether they will ever be delivered.
BHP Billiton director Malcolm Bloomhead doubts Malcolm Turnbull's promise to deliver his company a tax cut

It is very easy to take a simplistic approach to this and to declare that it is favouring the big end of town.
Michael Chaney, chair of Westfarmers and Woodside admits the obvious truth about Turnbull's budget

That was nothing to us. It was irrelevant to us
National Party leader, Barnaby Joyce, when asked about Queensland National Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, using police to crush political dissent

You can imagine how Australians would feel if an American president were to describe one of our prime ministerial aspirants as barking mad.
Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull taking the attacks on Trump a bit personally

Donna likes to call me chauvinistic from time to time but I see it differently.
Liberal candidate David Kingston tries to explain comments on his blog including some gems about his wife Donna as "Donna got busy with some women's work—washing clothes"

Wages growth is very low and real household income in many cases is actually falling and disposable income is falling
Coca Cola CEO, Alison Watkins, explaining declining Australian sales, and share price, of the famous brand.

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NIKI ARGYRI Greek socialist and organiser for the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement on Europe's refugee crisis and Syriza in power

JOSEPH DAHER Syrian revolutionary (via Skype) on revolution & counter-revolution in Syria

More info and tickets at www.solidarity.net.au/keepleft

INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

WA communities given poison water

Aboriginal people living in remote WA communities are increasingly relying on bottled water to survive after an Auditor-General's report released in May 2015 found that their drinking water was contaminated.

The report found that more than a dozen of WA's 271 remote communities had so much nitrate in their water that it could cause a condition called "blue baby syndrome" that can kill infants. The report also found that 76 communities had their water contaminated with potentially fatal E. coli or Naegleria microbes and four communities had uranium in their tap water. Pandanus Park, 120 kilometres east of Broome, is one of the communities where nitrate in the water is at potentially fatal levels. Community leader Patricia Riley said:

"It made me concerned because I was using the tap water and I could have been killing my grandson and I didn't even know about it, that I could actually suffocate his body." She pleaded, "Just fix our problem please. We're not animals, we're humans. We want to drink healthy water, and clean, pure water."

Sent home for not wearing heels

A RECEPTIONIST at finance company Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) in London has been sent home without pay after refusing to wear high heels. Nicola Thorpe was employed via an outsourced reception firm. The 27-year-old arrived at work in flat shoes, but was told to go and buy shoes with a "2 inch to 4 inch heel".

She told BBC radio, "I said, 'If you can give me a reason as to why wearing flats would impair me to do my job today, then fair enough', but they couldn't. I was expected to do a nine-hour shift on my feet escorting clients to meeting rooms. I said I just won't be able to do that in heels." She also criticised the company's sexism, noting the rules only applied to female employees. After publicising her case Thorpe found many other women had been treated similarly and started an online petition to make it illegal for employers to force female employees to wear heels. It now has over 140,000 signatures.

Cops buy up sound ray anti-protest cannons



POLICE AROUND the country have been adding controversial sound-ray equipment to their arsenals. Police forces in Western Australia, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland have all admitted to buying the technology, along with the Federal Police. Northern Territory and New South Wales police declined to comment when questioned by the ABC's Law Report.

The Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRADs) have been used to disperse protests in the US. The acoustic cannons indiscriminately emit a piercing sound frequency that is unbearable to the human ear. The technology disperses crowds by inducing nausea and disorientation, but has also caused long-term hearing damage.

LRAD cannons have been purchased in large numbers by the Chinese Government, the US Navy and US law enforcement. The Chief Executive of LRAD Corporation, Tom Brown, boasted of a spike in sales to US police forces following the mass protests against police brutality that began in Ferguson in 2014. The devices can blast frequencies reaching 152 decibels. Permanent hearing loss begins with exposure to any sound above 90 decibels. University Professor Karen Piper was left with permanent hearing damage after the acoustic cannons were deployed at the Pittsburgh G20 protest in 2009. After taking legal action against the City of Pittsburgh she settled for damages of \$98,000. Her hearing will never recover.

Economic crisis caused 500,000 cancer deaths

A STUDY published in the *Lancet* medical journal has found that the Global Financial Crisis led to around 500,000 cancer deaths worldwide between 2008 and 2010. The figures were calculated by looking at the observable rise in cancer deaths that coincides with every drop in healthcare spending and every increase in unemployment. According to study author Mahiben Maruthappu, "the economic crisis was associated with over 260,000 excess cancer deaths in the OECD [group of rich nations] alone, between 2008-2010".

"This suggests that there could have been well over 500,000 excess cancer deaths worldwide during this time." Healthcare cuts and skyrocketing unemployment in the EU caused an estimated 160,000 extra deaths. For the US the estimate was 18,000. Dr Maruthappu said, "We found that increased unemployment was associated with an increased cancer mortality, but that universal health coverage protected against these effects. This was especially the case for treatable cancers including breast, prostate and colorectal cancer."

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

Chicken workers forced to wear diapers

GIANT AGRICULTURAL corporations operating in the US have been scorched in a recent Oxfam report that exposes the heinous working conditions in the chicken processing industry.

Workers have been denied bathroom breaks to the point that they have resorted to wearing diapers on the processing line at plants run by major companies like Tyson Foods, Pilgrim's Pride, Perdue Farms and Sanderson Farms. A worker named Dolores who worked at a plant in Arkansas said, "I had to wear Pampers, I and many many others."

The report reveals that workers have urinated or defecated themselves on the line because they can't hold on any more. Managers responded by telling workers to eat and drink less. Corporations are reaping mega-profits by constantly increasing line speed at processing plants. The upper limit on line speed has increased from 70 birds per minute in 1979 to 140 today. In order to inflict this inhuman squeeze on workers, chicken plants tend to operate in southern states with strong anti-union laws and systematically employ vulnerable groups like migrants and prisoners. As well as being denied bathroom breaks, chicken plant workers suffer repetitive strain injuries at ten times the average rate for US workers.

Phillip Ruddock bust in kids' playground

PARRAMATTA COUNCIL has voted to install a commemorative bust of Howard-era Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock in a children's playground. Children playing in the park, renamed the "Phillip Ruddock water playground" last year, will be gazed at by a stone effigy of the man responsible for implementing the so called "Pacific Solution". From 2001 the policy began the brutal imprisonment refugees, including children, in offshore camps on Manus Island and Nauru.

EDITORIAL

All out to make sure it's time up for Turnbull

THERE'S NOW a real chance the Liberals will lose the election on 2 July. As the election campaign has dragged on, it's become clearer and clearer that Malcolm Turnbull stands for handouts to big business and the top end of town.

Multimillionaire Turnbull's new advertisement claiming he and his father "didn't have much money", an attempt to shift his image as wealthy and out of touch, has backfired. Turnbull went to an expensive school on Sydney's North Shore and inherited millions from his father.

The lynch-pin of his "jobs and growth" slogan is to hand big business \$50 billion in corporate tax cuts. But a Sky News poll found just 3 per cent rated corporate tax cuts as a priority for government. Polls show childcare is the most important issue in marginal seats, and Bill Shorten's promise for a small increase funding has struck a chord, as have promises to spend on Medicare and schools.

The polling turnaround is all the more remarkable considering Turnbull was riding high as recently as November. Since then disapproval of Turnbull has risen from just 16 per cent to 42 per cent, according to the Fairfax/Ipsos poll.

In a sign of their desperation, the Coalition has increasingly resorted to stunts and scaremongering. Both Peter Dutton and Barnaby Joyce clumsily tried to incite fear about more refugee boat arrivals under Labor, in a calculated effort to win votes by scapegoating refugees for job losses and the strain on services. But their crude, racist comments also backfired.

Treasurer Scott Morrison and Mathias Cormann embarrassed themselves with some creative accounting, claiming Labor had a funding black hole of \$67 billion. When questioned however, they backed down, saying the figure was "more like \$32 billion"!

Big business

The Liberals have denounced Shorten as "anti-business" and the chief executive of the Business Council of Australia said she was "gobsmacked" by the "anti-business" and "dangerous" Labor campaign.

If only Labor's promises were that good. Their rhetoric is a lot stronger than the detail. Shorten has rejected Turnbull's corporate tax cuts as based on "theories tested before by Thatcher and by Reagan". But these are neo-



Above: Taking the fight to Turnbull

liberal ideas that Shorten basically supports. The Liberals have used the fact that Shorten argued for corporate tax cuts while a Minister in the Gillard government in 2011.

In the Treasurer's debate, Labor's Chris Bowen stressed Labor's economic conservatism, saying that, "a surplus can only be earned through tough decisions", attacking the Liberals for running up government debt by over-spending and pledging "a credible pathway back to [budget] balance". In other words, Labor supports cuts, too.

Labor was forced to admit it would not restore the cuts to the Schoolkids bonus, after promising to do so for the last two years. It also revealed it will keep the Liberals' \$2.5 billion cuts to pensions over four years. Bowen justified the cuts by saying Labor was being "responsible".

The Greens have managed to embarrass Labor over penalty rates, promising to legislate to maintain them. This exposed Labor's unwillingness to do anything should the Fair Work Commission decide to cut penalty rates. The Greens received support from the head of Victorian Trades Hall, the AMWU and the ETU.

While The Greens are threatening Labor in seats like Grayndler in Sydney and Batman and Wills in Melbourne, some unionists will go back to voting Labor this election. Some will vote Labor just to be sure

to kick Turnbull out. Others will vote Labor because The Greens alienated many unionists by giving Turnbull a greater chance of passing anti-union ABCC legislation, when they made Senate voting reform a higher priority than opposing the ABCC.

But those who do vote Green usually do so on the basis of their policies on refugees, health spending, public transport, climate and ending tax breaks for the rich like the capital gains tax discount and negative gearing.

Solidarity supports voting 1 Greens 2 Labor. The Greens should be directing their preferences to Labor across the board, to make it clear that they support a Labor government over a Liberal victory, instead of allowing talk about running "open tickets".

Kicking out the Liberals after one term will be a blow to Australia's ruling elite. But no matter who wins, it is the struggles outside parliament that will determine whether we can close the detention camps on Manus Island and Nauru, defend penalty rates and reverse all of the Abbott's cuts to hospitals, the public service and welfare. We need to build socialist organisation that takes building such movements, and class politics, seriously.

There will be rallies for refugees, and for equal marriage, before the election. These will help force the issues into the campaign and keep up the momentum for the fight that will certainly be needed after the election.

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A Sky News poll found just 3 per cent rated corporate tax cuts as a priority for government

Changes target negative gearing rort, but housing still unaffordable

By Jean Parker

NEGATIVE GEARING saves the rich billions in tax each year. It allows those who can afford investment properties to reduce their tax.

It's good Labor has announced that it would end negative gearing for existing properties after 2017. Combined with a reduction in the tax discount on profits on sales of investment housing, \$32 billion of tax will be bought into government coffers over the next decade.

In 2013-2014, 60 per cent of investment properties made a loss. This means rent income was less than the interest on the mortgage, costs for rates and utilities and other expenses.

Under negative gearing that loss is covered by Australian taxpayers as a deduction on the owner's income tax bill. The average loss was roughly \$10,000. So someone earning \$170,000 would only pay tax on \$160,000. In 2013-14, \$11 billion in losses were claimed through negative gearing.

Turnbull has tried to paint negative gearing as something essential to average people by noting that the majority of those who access it have taxable earnings below \$80,000.

This is pure trickery. Firstly, while average full-time earnings approach this amount, most Australians live on less than \$50,000.

Secondly, stressing "taxable" income already factors in the effect of negative gearing. You could earn \$110,000, take \$30,000 off it through negative gearing losses (the average reduction for surgeons) and have a taxable income below \$80,000. The Grattan Institute have found that half of the tax saved goes to the richest 10 per cent.

Labor will allow negative gearing on newly-built properties only.

In 1999 Howard's Treasurer, Peter Costello, changed the tax paid on the profits made from selling an investment property (Capital Gains Tax) so that half the profit is tax-free. This costs taxpayers \$6 billion every year. Labor has pledged to reduce the tax-free portion rental properties (purchased after 1 July 2017) from 50 per cent to 25 per cent. They should go further and tax capital gains just like our wages and other income is taxed—in full.

The Liberals claim that Labor's policy will crash the housing market.



Above: Housing prices are increasingly beyond the reach of many people

Two-thirds of Australians either own their home outright or have a mortgage. This means many people are susceptible to fears that their house might devalue. With the government also claiming rents will increase under Labor's plan, renters are also being told they will lose out.

Impacts

Both claims are overblown. When Hawke and Keating suspended negative gearing from 1985-1987 rents rose in Perth and Sydney, but they either fell or remained constant in all other cities.

The ratio of Australian house prices to incomes in Australian cities are now some of the world's highest, and prices in Sydney and Melbourne have grown by nearly 13 per cent in the last year. Negative gearing has helped push prices up by encouraging more investors to buy a second, third or fourth home, competing with people trying to buy a home to live in.

Housing costs are increasingly unaffordable.

To cope with the mortgage on a median house in Sydney you need to earn \$106,000 a year—more if you have children.

The growing size of deposits needed for a mortgage is locking younger people out of homeownership, even if they have a reasonable wage. Those without family wealth struggle to pay the deposit.

Debt is also a major problem. Interest-rates only have to increase a couple of points from current historic

levels for many mortgages to become unmanageable.

Last year for the first time there were more people buying housing as an investment than to live in themselves.

But negative gearing is not the key driver of housing investment. Globally huge amounts of capital have flowed into housing because of the lack of profitability in productive sectors. Low interest-rates since the GFC make credit virtually free. With demand in some capital cities outstripping supply, the rise and rise of Australia's housing market is taken by investors as an article of faith.

For these reasons Labor's negative gearing changes are unlikely to significantly reduce house prices.

Modelling by the McKell Institute shows price growth would continue, slowing from 3.09 per cent to 2.6 per cent annually. Labor wants to promote its changes as aiding affordability. But a 0.5 per cent reduction in price growth is little help.

Housing is too important to be left to the market. Public and social housing has been decimated since the 1980s. This must be reversed.

Rather than attempting to induce investors to build new houses, Labor should pledge to build new public housing stock itself and invest in maintaining the existing supply.

This would not only provide downward pressure on property prices, it would also ensure that good quality housing is provided to those that need it.

.....
The ratio of Australian house prices to incomes in Australian cities are now some of the world's highest

By Tom Orsag

Construction union's pay victory what Turnbull wants to stop

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS in Victoria have secured a 5 per cent pay rise each year for three years in a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) signed with major builders.

Over 5000 building workers, members of the CFMEU, met in Melbourne to ratify the agreement, signed off by 20 major building companies including Brookfield, Multiplex, Probuild, Hickory, L.U. Simons and Built.

The EBA locks in a 36-hour week, and guarantees a rostered day off every second week for five years. It delivers a 5 per cent pay rise for the first three years and 3 per cent in the fourth year, balanced out with minor productivity trade-offs.

Average wage rises over the year to March nationwide were just 2.1 per cent. But private sector commercial building work in Victoria is "robust", with a 13 per cent increase in the second half of 2015 on a year before. Major building companies are making healthy profits. So workers are entirely justified in taking more of a share.

Malcolm Turnbull claimed the agreement was "shocking" and that builders were "basically stood over", demonstrating again his pro-business attitude. Undermining Turnbull's claims of its extravagance, the EBA was agreed by builders without one single strike day, despite the opposition of the Master Builders Association.

A re-elected Turnbull government plans to end agreements like this through re-instating the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), with its powers of interrogation of union members.

The ABCC legislation also includes changes to the national building code, which would apply retrospectively to agreements signed after April 2014. Builders seeking work on Federal Government contracts would be required to have agreements that comply with the code.

John Setka, CFMEU Victorian Secretary, said, in contrast to other states, "We refused to put [a renegotiation clause] in," to apply should the code come into force. "We reserve the right to terminate this agreement, go on protected action, go out there and fight with all the builders and let's see how we go."

The union needs to take the same attitude if any of the builders call upon the services of a re-instated ABCC to come onto their sites to harass the union.



Above: Victorian CFMEU Secretary John Setka addresses a construction workers rally

Finalising the EBA before the election and before Turnbull can reintroduce the ABCC may avoid the

impact of the code, but the union still needs to prepare for action to stop the ABCC itself.

Victory as Safe Schools founder reinstated

IN AN attack on academic and political freedom, Roz Ward, co-founder of Safe Schools, was suspended from her position at La Trobe University for misconduct.

In a private Facebook post, Ward had described the Australian flag as racist. But just days after her suspension, a combination of a legal challenge, staunch union support, and a wave of anger on social media, forced La Trobe management to back down and drop the allegations.

The Turnbull government, the Murdoch press and the Christian Right have led a vicious, homophobic assault on the Safe Schools program, which seeks to combat homophobia in schools.

After the government cut back the program's content and withdrew future funding, *The Australian* has targeted Ward, who is a member of Socialist Alternative. This is in an attempt to discredit the program in Victoria, after the Labor government promised to keep funding it.

Ward had already voluntarily resigned from another position advising the Victorian government over the Facebook comments, before La Trobe took the step of suspending

her. Its decision clearly came at the behest of figures like Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham, and former Liberal Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett (who threatened to withdraw funding from Beyond Blue for Safe Schools related research projects at La Trobe if Ward was allowed to continue in the job).

The suspension was not only another attack on Safe Schools, it was also an attack on workers' rights.

For academics, the issue is tied up with threats to academic freedom as universities become increasingly reliant on corporate and private funds. NTEU Victorian Secretary, Colin Long, pointed the finger at the university administration, saying, "That La Trobe University has apparently allowed itself to be cowed into participating in this anti-intellectual, anti-democratic attack reflects the dismal state of intellectual capacity at the senior management level."

The NTEU's strong response and the solidarity that flowed in for Ward is a lesson in the power of union and grassroots action to stop victimisation, defend Safe Schools and beat back the right.

Geraldine Fela

.....
Turnbull claimed the agreement was "shocking", demonstrating again his pro-business attitude

By Ian Rintoul

IN TRUE Liberal fashion, as the election gets closer and Turnbull sags in the opinion polls, they have reached for the refugee card.

In a disgraceful, scare-mongering display, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton went on Sky News to declare that when it comes to refugees, “For many people, they won’t be numerate or literate in their own language, let alone English. These people would be taking Australian jobs, there’s no question about that.

“And for many of them that would be unemployed, they would languish in unemployment queues and on Medicare, and the rest of it.”

It was reminiscent of Kevin Andrews’ attempt to play the race card prior to the 2007 federal election, when he tried to scapegoat African refugees saying, “some groups don’t seem to be settling and adjusting into the Australian way of life”. Before the 2013 election another Liberal, Fiona Scott, notoriously claimed refugees were to blame for hospital queues and overcrowded traffic on the M4.

This time, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull wasted no time defending Dutton, calling him “an outstanding Minister.”

But most people thought Dutton was racist, divisive and wrong. Deng Thiak Adut, the Sudanese refugee chosen by Liberal NSW Premier Mike Baird to give the NSW Australia Day address this year, quickly responded, “I have voted Liberal ever since I could vote,” but, “The Liberals have lost my vote because they are actively trying to deter the public from empathising with refugees.”

Dutton’s comments alienated established migrant and refugee communities and brought widespread condemnation from ethnic community leaders. Even Channel 9 Today show host, Karl Stefanovic, lambasted Dutton.

Two days later, Dutton was not willing to repeat his claims about refugees taking Australian jobs. It was a good sign that he had gone too far and that anti-refugee slurs were not going to work for the Liberals.

Dutton was responding to The Greens’ policy of increasing the annual refugee intake from overseas to 50,000, agreeing with a 2GB shock jock that it was “crazy”. But 50,000 is only slightly more per head of population than the number Australia willingly accepted in the early 1990s. And rather than taking jobs, refugees create net demand in the economy.

Dutton’s racism backfires, but refugees are an election issue



Above: Peter Dutton's scapegoating of refugees for taking jobs backfired

Malcolm Turnbull talks about “jobs and growth” but he is only interested in jobs for his big business mates and growth in profits.

Turnbull and Morrison’s answer to increasing youth unemployment is \$4 an hour “internships” for working up to 25 hours a week, potentially creating a cheap labour pool with no penalty rates, sick leave, or superannuation. Meanwhile the Liberals have cut funding for TAFE and apprenticeships.

Refugees are not taking jobs. Australian bosses are doing the job cutting. In the last six months of 2015, three banks, Westpac, CBA and ANZ together cut 2547 full-time jobs. More than 50,000 mining jobs have been lost as the big mining companies protect their profits amid reduced commodity prices.

Labor policy trouble

Labor leader Bill Shorten rightly condemned Dutton’s comments, accusing Dutton of “insulting the migrant community” and reviving the “Pauline Hanson rhetoric of the past”. But all he demanded was that Turnbull pull Dutton into line.

Shorten has been desperate to keep a low profile on refugee issues. He has promised to maintain offshore processing and continue the turning back of asylum seeker boats if Labor is elected. But an increasing number of Labor candidates—up to 21 according to *The Australian*—have been openly critical, or have been actively

involved in things like the “Let Them Stay” campaign.

Sophie Ismail, Labor’s candidate against Greens MP Adam Bandt says, “I have concerns about turnbacks, I don’t think they should be on the table.” Murray Watt, the lead Labor Queensland Senate candidate, moved the resolution opposing offshore processing at the Labor conference last year. He says that he supports current Labor policy “for the election”.

Even Shorten’s rhetoric about offshore processing has changed. He now says that a Labor government would urgently seek third countries to resettle the people on Nauru and Manus Island. They won’t find third countries. But the changed rhetoric has raised expectations that Labor will get the refugees off Nauru and Manus.

The failure of Dutton’s refugee-baiting and the cracks in Labor’s policy are a direct result of the campaign that the refugee movement has waged against the Liberals and against Labor policy.

Regardless of the election result, the campaign will have to fight hard to end offshore processing. But the success of the Let Them Stay campaign, keeping the 267 people from Manus and Nauru in Australia, has shown that we can just as successfully fight to close Manus and Nauru for good.

Rallies to close Manus and Nauru are planned for the start of Refugee Week, Saturday 18 June in Brisbane and Melbourne; and 19 June in Sydney.

Refugees are not taking jobs. Australian bosses are doing the job cutting

The Big McRipOff—retail workers stripped of penalty rates

By Amy Thomas

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST companies are raking in profits while keeping their workers some of the lowest paid in the country.

McDonalds, Coles, Woolworths, Big W, Kmart, Bunnings and Target have all signed agreements with the shoppies union, the SDA, that undermine penalty rates for weekends and shifts.

In the midst of a long-running business campaign against penalty rates that has made it an election issue, a Coles trolley worker and the Meatworkers' union successfully challenged the agreement between Coles and the SDA in court in the Fair Work Commission.

Workers have been paid penalty rates lower than the workplace award. Under the Fair Work Act, an agreement has to mean workers are "better off overall" than under the award rates. Fair Work found that the Coles-SDA agreement failed the test.

Coles took \$70 million a year out of the pockets of its workforce—a whopping 77,000 workers were worse off.

Their workforce is predominantly casual or part-time, and female.

Coles has responded by continuing to refuse to pay penalty rates, instead reverting back to a previous agreement. Wesfarmers, which owns Coles and Bunnings, is Australia's biggest company. They made \$2.44 billion profit in 2015.

Dodgy deals

The spotlight is now on a number of dodgy agreements that undermine penalties. We spoke to a young worker at McDonald's who is also paid through an agreement with the SDA.

Under the award, McDonald's workers would get penalty rates of 25 per cent on Saturday, 50 per cent on Sunday, and more for casuals.

Yet Victor, 18, doesn't get any penalty rates at all, unless he works between 1am-5am, when he gets a 10 per cent loading. "I mostly work in the café making coffee, but also work in all stations. I get paid \$17.65 an hour, inclusive of casual loading," he explained. If he was working full-time, the wage would be \$14.23 an hour.

A 14-year-old worker in NSW



Above: Coles has short-changed thousands of workers by cutting penalty rates

makes \$10.08 an hour. So it takes her an hour to pay for a meal she serves hundreds of in that time (a large Big Mac meal costs \$9.90).

Overall, workers in NSW are on average \$4000 a year, or \$76 a week, worse off under the deal.

According to McDonalds spokesperson Chris Grant, "We're a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week business and our employees tell us they love the flexible working hours."

But Victor, who does four to five shifts a week, averaging 25-30 hours (on top of full-time study), doesn't see it that way.

"You'd have to be in denial of the obvious reality that working weekends remains unsociable and inconvenient...penalty rates are as justified as they have ever been. Even if Australia is transitioning to a 24/7 economy, why it is expected that minimum wage earners like us should have to bear the proportionally large cost?"

He has to work on weekends, as he studies Monday to Friday. "[I'm] consistently working Saturdays and Sundays. For me, penalty rates would be the difference between being able to live independently in a share accommodation rather than being dependent on my parents ... I'll be at university for five and a half years, and I really can't rely on that support for that long."

In 2015, Employment Minister Michaelia Cash claimed Sunday penalty rates were hurting tourism, forcing

businesses to shut and denying jobs to students and women.

Now, under pressure, the Coalition's line is they will respect the decision of a Fair Work Commission ruling on penalty rates.

Labor is promising to protect penalties, but they too have promised to accept a Fair Work Commission ruling, regardless of the outcome.

Some trade union leaders, including ACTU President Dave Oliver, have defended this, and the SDA's deals. They are the biggest union affiliate to Labor.

Rightly, a Greens' proposal to legislate to guarantee penalty rates has won the support of some union officials.

According to Victor, "If Labor wants to continue positioning itself as the party for workers, it needs to have their needs in mind ... they can't make exceptions for the lowest paid workers employed by one of the most profitable and largest corporations in Australia.

"Penalty rates, amongst the other workers' rights achieved through the labour movement were [won] by protest ... I hope Labor would continue that fight and stand in solidarity for McDonald's workers, regardless of any ruling by FairWork.

"The workers' fight for \$15 in the US is an international inspiration for me. I think that people like me have to put pressure on politicians and on McDonalds, either with or without the SDA."

.....
Wesfarmers, which owns Coles and Bunnings, is Australia's biggest company. They made \$2.44 billion profit in 2015

New nuclear waste dump fight begins in South Australia

By Caitlin Doyle-Markwick

SOUTH AUSTRALIA is being targeted as the potential site for two new nuclear waste dumps.

The most immediate threat is to Wallerberdina Station in South Australia's Flinders Ranges. On 29 April, the federal government announced that the shortlist for a dump to hold national waste had been reduced to just this one site. This has angered local traditional owners, of the Adnyamathanha people, and other parts of the community.

Previous plans to put such a dump at Muckaty in the Northern Territory and at Woomera or elsewhere in South Australia have been defeated through community opposition.

The dump will be used for the long-term storage of low-level nuclear waste and temporary storage of intermediate level waste. The nature of radioactive waste means that the dump will remain on the site forever and any leakages would be potentially catastrophic for the area.

The site is on crown land, 500 kilometres north of Adelaide, on a perpetual lease to former Liberal Senator Grant Chapman.

While native title does not apply to the land, some heritage protections do. Yappala Station, which borders Wallerberdina Station, is one of just 72 sites nation-wide listed as an Indigenous Protected Area of cultural and environmental significance. Remains and artefacts from Aboriginal inhabitants of the area thousands of years old, including an ancient Aboriginal skull fragment, have been found in multiple locations around the site.

Regina McKenzie, who lives on Yappala Station, says that a 70 kilometre song line runs through Wallerberdina all the way to Lake Torrens.

"We were devastated" to hear of the plans, she says. "We've got cave paintings in around the corner, and we've got archaeology and we've got rock carvings up there on that hill... we've got ancient graves".

The waste dump could devastate the environment and many of these sites, most of which have not yet been officially listed. Local Aboriginal people still hunt and gather and carry out traditional ceremonies around the area. McKenzie argues that the dump would be a "desecration of our belief system".

Conservation Council SA Chief



Pia McKenzie, Vivianne McKenzie and Regina McKenzie on Adnyamathanha land near the proposed dump site

Executive Craig Wilkins says the dump would create "a maximum of just six on-going jobs" and would also seriously risk damaging jobs in the tourism industry around the iconic Flinders Ranges. Farmers are also concerned about the effect the dump will have on agricultural land.

The government says that no final decision has been made. Locals had just 120 days to learn about the plans, gauge community sentiment and organise opposition to the dump before it became the sole candidate for the dump site. CEO of the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association Vince Coulthard claims that the Federal Government has twice cancelled meetings with his board members at the last moment.

The news of the plans came just as Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commissioner Kevin Scarce handed a report to the SA government recommending that it construct another waste dump for high-level international waste. Its location is yet to be decided. The Royal Commission claimed that the dump could generate large amounts of revenue for the SA economy.

Anti-nuclear Alliance

In May, a "No Dump Alliance" was launched in Adelaide. It is made up of unions, community groups and traditional owners, including the Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Conservation Council, Maritime Union of

Australia and the Uniting Church.

The alliance believes waste dumps in the state would violate Aboriginal rights and put public health, the environment and the state's finances at risk and are calling for greater community consultation about the plan.

Radioactive racism

The Commonwealth's "out of sight, out of mind" approach to dumping radioactive waste on remote Aboriginal lands shows the racism and contempt with which they continue to treat Aboriginal people. Federal and state governments have been trying to use Aboriginal land around the country as dumping sites for decades, often with the promise of funding long-neglected essential public services in return.

But plans have been beaten back many times in the past as Traditional Owners have refused to see their lands desecrated. Most recently a proposed dump at Muckaty, near Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, was defeated by a strong movement led by local Traditional Owners. The movement reached out to and won the active support of trade unions, community and environmental groups across the country and succeeded in forcing back the Commonwealth and the Northern Land Council. This campaign showed the way forward for the fight against nuclear dumping and environmental destruction—a fight that is just beginning in the Flinders Ranges.

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Yappala Station, which borders Wallerberdina, is one of just 72 sites nation-wide listed as an Indigenous Protected Area

Watch out, democracy: Casino Mike on the warpath

By James Supple

THOUSANDS took to the streets in Sydney in May to vent their rage at “Casino Mike”—NSW Premier’s Mike Baird, so dubbed thanks to his kickbacks for Sydney’s casinos and developers amidst his repressive lockout laws, Westconnex motorway plan, boosts to police powers and tree clearing in Sydney’s east.

The rally followed his most recent, shocking affront to democracy—the sacking of elected councillors across NSW. Forty-two councils and have been sacked and the new amalgamated councils will be run by Liberal government-appointed administrators for the next 14 months, with no elections until September 2017. Baird has appointed Liberal cronies including mining industry and pro-development figures.

The administrator of the Inner West council, replacing councils previously opposed to the Westconnex motorway, is Richard Pearson, a former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Planning. This is the very department that signed off on Westconnex.

Former Nationals Deputy Leader and Shadow Mining Minister John Turner is the administrator of the new Mid-Lakes council, incorporating Gloucester Council, which was opposed to coal seam gas mining. He is still on the payroll of mining companies including Glencore and Whitehaven Coal helping run their “community consultation”.

Baird’s plan is designed to slash jobs and services across the merged councils, as part of a neo-liberal cost cutting exercise. He has the same rule for the rich agenda as the federal Liberals under Malcolm Turnbull—cut spending on services and boost business profits through tax cuts.

The decision on which mergers would proceed was made with an eye to boosting the Liberals’ chances at the federal election. A number of councils in Liberal and marginal seats have avoided forced mergers, such as Hills and Hawkesbury councils in Sydney’s north-west, and Kiama and Shoalhaven councils.

Barnaby Joyce, facing a close race with Tony Windsor in New England, has avoided the merger of local councils in his seat.

Mergers will mean savage job cuts



Above: The “Sack Mike Baird” rally in May

as the merged councils “streamline” services. A study commissioned by Marrickville Council on the planned merger with Leichhardt and Ashfield revealed the promised “savings” would come from cutting 200 of the 1150 full-time staff positions.

The government will also save through slashing the number of

elected councillors. The merged Inner West area, for example, will go from 36 to 15 councillors.

The United Services Union, which represents council workers, is arguing there should be five-year job guarantees for workers. It says it has secured support from the crossbench MPs in the NSW upper house, Fred Nile and the Shooters and Fishers Party, to put this into law. Delaying the cuts for five years is seriously short-sighted. The union has taken no serious action against the amalgamations.

Council amalgamations in Victoria and Queensland both meant major job cuts through sackings and contracting out services. The Australian Services Union estimates 11,000 council jobs were lost in Victoria after Kennett rammed through mergers in 1994 and more than halved the number of councils. The state government forced the contracting out of 50 per cent of all council services.

Two of the new super-councils have had their first meeting shut down by angry protests. Around 200 residents occupied the meeting venue of the new Inner West council, forcing administrator Richard Pearson to abandon the meeting after less than five minutes. Activists have promised to shut down its June meeting as well with Greens MP Jamie Parker telling the crowd “this Inner West Council will be ungovernable. It will not work”.

A similar protest shut down the first meeting of the new Mid-Lakes Council as chants of “out, out, out” filled the room. Similar action will be needed to defend services and jobs when the new councils being rolling out cuts.

Baird’s shocking new police powers

THE BAIRD government has announced another set of shocking new police powers. Fresh from passing laws aimed at coal seam gas protesters it has introduced two new draconian measures.

New “serious crime prevention orders” can be issued by a court to control a person’s daily life through restrictions potentially on use of computers, telephones and even carrying cash. These are designed to target serious criminals, yet can be imposed without the need to prove they have committed any crime.

Even more alarmingly, under new “public safety orders” senior police can order a crowd or individual at any public event or premises to move on where they “pose a serious risk to public safety”. The decision as to what amounts to a serious risk will be entirely in the hands of police.

This could easily be used to target protesters. Although the laws have been justified as designed to deal with terrorism, these kinds of measures would not be out of place in a police state.

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Sacked councils will be run by Liberal government-appointed administrators for the next 14 months

European Union: Britain should leave this bosses' club

By Tom Orsag

DIVISIONS IN Britain's governing Conservative Party have forced a referendum on 23 June over whether to continue membership of the European Union (EU). The EU is a capitalist institution with neo-liberalism hard-wired into it that the left should not support.

The major institutions of British capitalism from the Confederation of British Industry to the Bank of England and the Institute of Directors all want to remain in the EU.

The heads of the International Monetary Fund and NATO, as well as US President Barack Obama, have all backed Britain remaining in the EU. The governments of France, Germany, Australia and even China demand the same.

Reflecting the interests of big business, leading figures of the ruling Conservative (Tory) Party such as the Prime Minister David Cameron, and the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party, also support remaining.

But the Tory Party is bitterly divided over the issue. While Prime Minister David Cameron and 16 of his ministers are for staying in the EU, five are not, as well as about half of all Conservative MPs.

These Tory Eurosceptics have been joined by racist xenophobes like Nigel Farage's UKIP party in calling for "Brexit", a British exit. Opposition to the EU is strong on the ideological right of the Tory Party, driven by hard-line nationalism and the longing for a bygone era of Britain as an independent world power.

Some of those campaigning to leave the EU, like former London Mayor Boris Johnson, are using it as a platform to make a run for deposing Cameron as PM.

Britain has always had a more detached attitude to membership of the EU than the core states like France and Germany.

British capitalists invest more overseas than they do at home—some 39 per cent of the UK's direct investment abroad is in the US and almost 31 per cent in Europe.

Britain has much higher foreign investment than other European countries, and big firms from the US and Japan have based operations in Britain as a bridge into the Eurozone. The City of London has built itself into a global financial centre partly as a base



Above: Prime Minister David Cameron and all Britain's major capitalist institutions want to remain in the EU

of operations in the EU for banks from around the world.

Bosses' club

Many on the left support EU membership, seeing its Europe-wide scope and measures like the abolition of internal border controls as a blow against nationalist prejudice. There is a hope that the EU can somehow be reformed into a supra-national state that can impose progressive labour and environmental regulations and end conflict in Europe.

But in practice the EU is a bosses' club that enforces austerity on working class people.

This is shown clearly in the ruthless measures the EU has imposed on Greece, including privatisation, massive cuts to the public sector and pensions. The EU institutions took no notice when Greeks voted against these measures by electing Syriza and rejecting a bailout deal in a referendum—simply imposing further austerity anyway. Similar measures have been imposed on Spain, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus.

The EU was established in order to form an enormous free trade bloc, designed to give European businesses access to a market and labour from across Europe.

While allowing free movement inside its borders, the EU has become responsible for Fortress Europe poli-

cies against refugees, with the murder of migrants in the Mediterranean through cutting back rescue operations, whether those arriving are from North Africa or feeling the civil war in Syria. The EU border force, Frontex, is now organising to turn back asylum seeker boats to Turkey.

Despite the EU's brutal austerity assault on Greece, many union leaders and left wingers claim the EU guarantees workers' rights in Britain.

In fact the EU supports the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a free trade deal with the US being negotiated in secret. It would boost the interests of corporations through attacking environmental regulations and allowing them to sue governments that act to hurt their profits. The EU also imposes restrictions on renationalising the railways or the steel industry, which is currently sacking thousands of workers.

The socialist Left in Britain is calling for a "No" vote in the referendum, forming the "Left Leave" campaign to argue to exit the EU on an anti-racist and pro-worker basis.

A vote to leave the EU would be one in favour of workers and migrants and would destabilise the Cameron government, which is pushing austerity and attacking workers' rights with anti-union laws. That's something the left should support.

The EU has imposed privatisation, and massive cuts to the public sector and pensions on Greece

By Dave Sewell

A WAVE of strikes and protests to defend workers' rights is causing a crisis for France's Labour-type government. President Francois Hollande's proposed Work Law increases working hours and gives bosses more power to sack workers.

Oil refinery workers have walked out against the law. Only violent police attacks on roadblocks outside fuel depots have partially defused a severe petrol shortage.

The government is depleting its strategic reserves in an attempt to weaken the strike. But the majority of oil refineries remain on strike.

Bosses at the oil import terminal in Le Havre tried to release supplies for airports on the orders of prime minister Manuel Valls. So workers walked out there too.

CGT union rep Fabian Bourdoulous said, "Since they opened the valves, we pulled all our members out on strike. They're not exactly going to restart the economy with what's left in those tanks."

Nuclear workers at the Nogent-sur-Seine are also hitting bosses hard. The plant functioned at less than half capacity, with production down by over 1000 megawatts.

CGT rep Olivier Michard said, "We didn't quite know what mood the police would be in, so we came in early to set up our barricades in peace."

The escalation of strikes against the proposed Work Law has demonstrated vividly how workers keep society running—and how they can shut it down.

The eighth day of nationwide mobilisation against the laws was held at the end of May. Only one newspaper was in shops, the left wing *l'Humanite*. Print workers refused to print any of the others after they refused to publish an article by CGT union leader Philippe Martinez.

The "Nuit Debout" movement of city square assemblies—meaning "up all night"—was also triggered by the revolt against the work laws. Its activists have joined workers' actions. Some hospital workers have also joined "Hospital on our feet" assemblies, launched out of the Nuit Debout movement, including one third of the workers at Le Havre hospital.

Attrition

The government and police are waging a war of attrition on the sectors leading the strikes.

But hundreds of thousands of

The French resistance that could take down a government



Above: Workers on the march against the new Work Law in France

people are marching—and more sectors are joining the fray.

Bus workers in Paris are set to begin an indefinite strike, while dockers plan to walk out for a day.

A three-day aviation strike is also set to begin. Rail workers have begun an indefinite strike and say they are prepared to disrupt the Euro 2016 football tournament. Nearly half of train services have been cancelled.

The Work Law is set to be debated in France's senate, where the right-wing opposition has a majority.

Between horrifying police repression and concessions to split off some

groups of workers, the government is gambling that the movement will run out of steam.

Union leaders' aim of "bringing them back to the negotiating table" makes this a real possibility.

The CGT union leaders cannot be trusted to call the general strike that would defeat the Work Law and open up a new potential for resistance to austerity.

But activists are going all out to build more strikes for the movement's first national demonstration on Tuesday 14 June when the Senate debate begins.

Work Law would eliminate crucial rights

THE FRENCH government's proposed Work Law blows a hole in workers' hard-won rights. It's a bosses' charter for cheaper layoffs, longer hours and lower wages.

Firms could lay off workers they no longer see as profitable. All firms will be able to start restructuring programmes currently restricted to those firms in financial crisis.

The law's central measure is Article 2. It allows workplace agreements to undercut national or sector-wide agreements.

This effectively ends national bargaining and allows a race to the bottom.

Bosses long to roll back French workers' rights. The European Union's leadership recently issued

recommendations encouraging the French government in its attack.

The government has demobilised some sectors of resistance by offering concessions.

This has also given others more incentive to fight, and pushed the powerful bosses' union and hypocritical right-wing opposition to come out against the law.

Between this and a backbench rebellion, the government lost parliamentary support for its reform. It has used a part of the French constitution which allows it to suspend parliamentary debate.

But this further inflamed anger and gave the movement new life. It raises the possibility of a vote of no confidence toppling the government.

The strikes demonstrate vividly how workers keep society running—and how they can shut it down

Authoritarian thug the Philippines' new president

By Jason Wong

THE PHILIPPINES has a new president-elect. Brash and controversial, Rodrigo Duterte claims to represent the interests of regional areas against the dynasties of “Imperial Manila” and has described himself as a “socialist”.

But his populism is a dangerous ruse, and his victory has exposed the crisis of Philippine capitalism and its political elite.

Duterte began his political career in Davao City on the island of Mindanao, the site of several armed separatist movements involving the indigenous Lumad and Moro peoples and militias of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). He is popular locally as mayor for supporting indigenous representation in government and negotiating peace with rebels.

However, he is widely believed to have founded the Death Squads that roam the city conducting summary executions of criminals. Duterte has promised to bring the same approach to the Presidency. He says he hopes to kill “100,000 criminals” and boasts that their corpses will “fatten the fish in Manila Bay”. Even journalists are not safe, as Duterte thinks they are “corrupt”.

Duterte claims that crime declined under his mayorship, although Human Rights Watch has said only petty crime has fallen while the murder rate has risen. Death squads are paid per kill, and many victims are mere petty thieves and drug addicts. Misidentifications are not uncommon.

The paradox of Duterte’s populism shows through elsewhere. He is notorious for making sexist comments and making advances on journalists and fans, even as he pledges to have rapists shot on sight. He is on record supporting unrestricted access to contraception and LGBT rights, including equal marriage rights.

During a presidential debate, Duterte called for dialogue with China over the South China Sea border dispute, before declaring that he would ride a jet ski to the Spratlys and plant the Philippine flag there.

The Duterte phenomenon shares similarities with Donald Trump’s success in the US—both share systems dominated by the political establishment, and a backdrop of growing inequality and neo-liberal policies.

Under the incumbent President



Above: The Philippines new President, Rodrigo Duterte

Benigno Aquino III, economic growth focused on extractive industries, tax-free Special Economic Zones, urban construction, the service industry and overseas foreign worker remittances, the latter of which pumps \$30 billion into the economy yearly. Short term contracts and casual labour are the norm.

Despite strong economic growth the poverty level, at 26.3 per cent, has not changed throughout Aquino’s time in office. Yet the wealth of the country’s 40 richest people has more than tripled to \$71.4 billion, according to Forbes magazine.

The economy remains firmly in the control of a small elite. Industry giants, landowners and political clans are closely linked, often by blood, marriage or schooling. Duterte is no exception. He is closely related to no less than three major political families in Mindanao and Visayas. It was recently revealed he has \$4 million in an undeclared bank account.

Left alternative?

The left was unable to offer a coherent alternative. The CPP, still the strongest of the left parties, continues its guerrilla “people’s war”. Its leader in exile, Jose Maria Sison, effectively endorsed Duterte, who has offered them cabinet seats, on the condition that their militias disband. Others on the left also suggested that Duterte was some kind of lesser evil to the

usual candidates of the political elite.

Duterte’s populist honeymoon won’t last long under the business families’ watch. He has already committed to Aquino’s neo-liberal policies, including fewer limits on foreign ownership of firms, more Special Economic Zones, and lower corporate taxes. He also broke a key promise by refusing to sign a union petition against contract labour. After promising deregulation to the rich, safety to the middle class and a voice for the poor, the poor are set to lose once more.

This makes his authoritarianism all the more concerning. Duterte has promised to shoot unionists that go on strike against his policies. This is a man who has advocated a hero’s burial for former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, just as Marcos’ son narrowly lost the vice presidential race.

Surveys show the main factor behind Duterte’s support was a protest vote against President Aquino. But it would be a huge mistake to see him as any alternative to the existing corrupt political elite. His authoritarian fantasies are no solution.

The Philippines has a rich history of movements from below from the “people power” revolutions that overthrew the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 to the mass protests that forced out President Estrada in 2001. The hope for changes lies in independent movements of the working class against poverty and exploitation.

Duterte has promised to shoot unionists that go on strike against his policies

‘Like a war zone’: PNG activist speaks on student strikes

AFTER FIVE weeks where students have boycotted classes at four universities in PNG, police in Port Moresby have shot several students at a peaceful protest.

“The planned peaceful march to Parliament was stopped by heavy police presence in front of the main gate,” explained UPNG academic, Patrick Kaikua.

“These policemen were heavily armed to the teeth. After giving several warnings for students to go back into the campus tear gas canisters and live rounds of ammunition were fired to disperse students.

“In the confusion female students were trampled on. Shrapnel from the ammunition hit students. One student got a wound in his stomach and another in the head ... It was like a war zone.”

Students are demanding that Prime Minister Peter O’Neill step aside and face investigation for corruption by the Police Fraud Squad. Investigators believe O’Neill is connected to a scam that saw \$30 million of public funds paid to the company Paraka Lawyers for work never done.

Corruption is rife in PNG. And while Australian companies make millions from mining in PNG, it is the most unequal country in Asia-Pacific.

Solidarity spoke with Patrick about the background to the student protests.

What is your background and what role are you playing in the current student movement?

I teach in the Political Science department. Part of my interest in this student-led protest is to try to communicate to my students that a spirit of activism is healthy for PNG’s democracy.

In the current UPNG-led student protest, I am writing up Media Statements and providing strategic advice ... I use social media to try to inform other citizens about the issues the students are protesting about ... I have lent my support in connecting with other NGOs and civil society groups.

How did this movement emerge? What are the main concerns of the protesters?

The movement emerged out of student’s frustrations with our political leaders, especially the Prime Minister and what we perceived as undue influence on institutions such as the police and the courts. When the Police Fraud



Squad investigated the fraud allegations against the Prime Minister Peter O’Neill, the public became concerned the investigations ... were deliberately being sabotaged.

At the UPNG, there is long tradition of student activism. Students since the 1970s have always protested against unpopular government decisions and issues affecting the nation. We are basically demanding that the Prime Minister step aside and allow for investigations to continue undisturbed.

How much support do the protests have amongst the student population and the broader community?

There is overwhelming support by students ... all provincial leaders voted through consensus that the protest be staged. Certain sectors of the community are too afraid to come out for fear of being reprimanded by the Prime Minister. Students are up against a government that is capable of manipulating the media and other areas of society to its advantage.

However when the students went out for public awareness in the provinces in the last two weeks, they received support.

What role has the student movement played historically in PNG?

Student-led activism has always been vibrant. In the 1980s we had the Melanesian Solidarity, a student-led movement in the UPNG that was vocal on national issues. In the early 2000s, the death of three University students in the anti-land mobilisa-

Above: PNG students have been protesting for weeks against Prime Minister Peter O’Neill over corruption allegations

tion agenda of the government is a celebrated event.

Australia has a long history of colonialism in PNG. What role do you see Australia playing now in PNG?

The corporate interests of Australia in PNG are centred mainly around the extractive sector. From the days of the Bougainville Copper Limited to the Ok Tedi mine, Australian companies are mostly investing in the mining, and presently the LNG sector of the economy.

There is a campaign in Australia against the detention centre that the Australian government has established on Manus Island. Do you have any comments about this?

The establishment of the centre was protested against from day one! PNG’s state institutions has its very weak points in terms of upholding basic principles of human rights. When the refugees are brought in, it creates additional stress on the incapacitated institutions and agencies already here in PNG ...

We have heard reports of Australian army personnel and other Immigration officials coming into PNG circumventing the laws of PNG. For instance, the rape of a Manus woman by an Australian security guard has gone unpunished because the Australian was able to flee the country before criminal investigations were conducted. So it is really a sell-out deal. A longer version of this interview is available at: bit.ly/UPNG_Soli

.....
“We are demanding that the Prime Minister step aside and allow for corruption investigations to continue undisturbed”

A GREENS-LABOR COALITION?

PARLIAMENT, ELECTIONS AND RUNNING THE SYSTEM

The Greens are right to side with Labor above the Liberals, but taking part in coalition governments is no way to win meaningful change, argues **James Supple**

WHEN THE Greens began speculating about the prospect of another Greens-Labor government, a war of words resulted. Greens MP Adam Bandt told Q&A that, in the event of a hung parliament “I would like to see Greens working with Labor”. Bill Shorten was so desperate to deny the possibility that he signed a pledge from Murdoch’s *Daily Telegraph* not to deal with The Greens to form government.

The Labor Party wants to distance itself from the more left-wing policies of The Greens and also from the period of the Gillard Labor government and the carbon tax in particular, since it was deeply unpopular.

But The Greens are right to declare their preference for having Labor in power. In his contribution to the new book *How to vote progressive*, Bandt acknowledges that most progressive Greens voters want the party to side with Labor against the Liberals. This remains controversial within the party.

Rightly, Bandt also points out that, “there is something significant about Labor that doesn’t apply to the Liberals. Many in Labor consider it a party of the left and there are strong connections to unions and community groups.”

The Liberals are the open party of Australian business. While Labor rules for the rich when in power, their working class base distinguishes them from the Liberals. Becoming a left alternative to Labor means appealing to that base.

But The Greens’ approach is increasingly about electoral gradualism. Leader Richard Di Natale says the party’s aim is to “see many Greens in the Lower House of Parliament” and hit 20 per cent of the vote within a decade.

The Greens are a chance this elec-

tion to expand further into the lower house by taking seats such as Batman and Wills in Melbourne, and Grayndler in Sydney.

Di Natale also told *Lateline*, “we’re not just targeting Labor seats, we’re targeting ... Labor seats, Liberal seats, National seats”.

Chasing Liberal or National voters means watering down policies like supporting taxes on the rich. The Greens have already junked support for an inheritance tax.

Labor has led a campaign declaring there is a “Greens-Liberal deal”, arguing that a vote for The Greens risks letting a Liberal government back in.

The confusion is allowed to persist because The Greens have not made clear an intention to preference Labor above the Coalition in every seat and in the Senate.

Di Natale has raised the practice of issuing “open tickets” on election day, meaning not clearly preferencing either major party.

Former Greens leader Bob Brown also entered the debate to make a point of backing open tickets across the board, saying Labor must “work for their vote”.

Preferencing decision-making is decided on a seat-by-seat basis in The Greens. But if they recognised they cannot afford to appear neutral about a Liberal or Labor victory, a national decision could be made.

Coalition governments

All the discussion about a Labor-Greens coalition assumes the way to make change is by The Greens’ gradually increasing their vote and entering coalition governments. This demonstrates how electoralism is pulling The Greens in a conservative direction.

Adam Bandt has cited the experi-

.....
Chasing Liberal or National voters means watering down policies like supporting taxes on the rich
—————

ence of the German Greens, governing in coalition with the equivalent of the Labor Party, as delivering great strides on climate change. But this entailed abhorrent compromises.

The German Green Foreign Minister presided over the first German military operation abroad since the Second World War when the country joined the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. This so-called “humanitarian intervention” involved the mass expulsion and ethnic cleansing of refugees and killed 1500 civilians.

The German Greens even supported a major neo-liberal attack on pensions and unemployment benefits known as Agenda 2010.

The price of participating in government is concessions that would make The Greens resemble the major parties, or go the way of the Democrats after they passed the GST.

So while Adam Bandt genuflects to “strong social movements working together with Parliamentarians” in his book chapter, he doesn’t see any need for The Greens to be building such movements. Rather his focus is on elections and the “pressure points...in the numerous Greens/Labor marginal seats that exist around the country”.

So activists should put their time and energy into electioneering, a deprioritise social movement activity. Bandt argues it’s the only option, asking, “what is the alternative strategy to get the climate action we need in the time the science demands?”

The alternative is seeing the movements outside parliament as the key to forcing change, not the deals that can be extracted on the basis of The Greens’ parliamentary numbers.

It was the demonstrations and public anger that sank Tony Abbott’s first budget, and eventually meant he was ousted as Prime Minister. Similarly it is consistent campaigning for refugee

rights that has begun to shift public opinion. And it was not action in parliament that won the overwhelming public support that now exists for equal marriage.

Parliamentary activity and running in elections should be subordinate to championing and building social movements, not a substitute for them.

Greens MPs have drawn exactly the wrong lessons from their period in alliance with the Gillard Labor government. According to Adam Bandt this was “one of the most productive periods” in Australian politics.

Their Agreement itself only committed The Greens to keeping the government in power through supporting confidence and supply motions. In return it committed the government to a climate change committee, a debate on the war in Afghanistan and an investigation into spending on dental care.

But The Greens were drawn to the right, as their desire to prove that they could be a reliable parliamentary partner saw them defending an unpopular and indefensible Labor government.

They constantly talked up the “achievements” of the Agreement and what The Greens extracted from Labor.

The focus was now on working with Labor to extract minuscule reforms that Labor would find acceptable, not on fighting for The Greens’ principles against the parliamentary consensus.

The Greens attached themselves to a climate change committee to negotiate a carbon tax. Yet the limits of such a committee were obvious; it was only ever going to adopt something acceptable to Labor and big business.

The carbon tax that resulted was not only useless for reducing carbon emissions but deeply unpopular too. Even as it was launched, Greens deputy leader Christine Milne admitted that the \$23 a tonne carbon price “isn’t high enough to drive the revolution in renewables that we need”. Yet The Greens were left trying to sell the policy as their key achievement.

As Labor’s popularity plummeted, The Greens were pulled down by association.

The Tasmanian experiment

In entering coalition governments, The Greens risk repeating the experience in Tasmania, where they have now supported three minority governments.

Most recently, The Greens had two ministers in the cabinet of Labor



Above: The Greens have celebrated their Alliance with Julia Gillard as a model, yet the experience was a disaster

Premier Lara Giddings from 2011 until early 2014.

The consequences became clear as that government moved to implement austerity with \$1.4 billion in spending cuts including 1700 job cuts in the public service, \$100 million in cuts to health, \$190 million in cuts to education and an increase in public housing rent.

The Greens supported the budget, with Greens leader Nick McKim defending it by saying, “Just as the Greens supported previous Labor and Liberal minority governments when tough remedial budget action was required, we have rolled up our sleeves to take on a similar responsible role once again”.

As Education Minister, Nick McKim was responsible for implementing the closure of 20 government schools. The government backed down after a union and community backlash, forcing the Education department to find \$24 million in savings elsewhere instead, meaning a slow trickle of job and program cuts. Bizarrely, McKim was rewarded with a move to the Senate, where he now sits amongst other things as the Greens spokesperson for schools!

The Greens had been in a similar situation before. Between 1989 and 1991 they supported their first Labor government in Tasmania.

The Greens gained environmental concessions from an Accord with the government but as a result were pres-

sured into supporting Labor’s budget. This included spending cuts and school closures to deal with Labor’s claims of a budget “black hole”.

Labor directly breached the Accord by raising the wood chipping quota in October 1990. But The Greens continued to support the government until the end of 1991 when they moved a no confidence motion over forests policy. They belatedly moved a bill to save some of the schools from closure, but did not try to bring down the government over the damage to the schools system.

The Greens entered a less formal arrangement supporting a Liberal government between 1996 and 1998. Christine Milne, who was leader of the Tasmanian Greens at the time, has claimed this period as a success for achieving gun law reform, LGBTI law reform and an apology to Tasmania’s Stolen Generations. But it meant again passing a budget that contained public sector cuts at the same time as reducing land tax and stamp duty for the rich.

Tasmania reveals graphically what joining governments under capitalism means. Instead of being on the side of those fighting the priorities of the system, The Greens have been on the side of those implementing them.

The Greens face a major question about their direction—be pulled into the parliamentary mainstream or continue to oppose the consensus around neo-liberalism and refugee bashing

1936 AND THE OCCUPATION OF THE FACTORIES HOW WORKERS' UNITY SET FRANCE ON FIRE

Workers' unity was able to defeat fascism and take control of the factories, but a Left government made sure France's 1936 movement was derailed, writes **Feiyi Zhang**

FRANCE HAS recently been rocked by mass strikes, paralyzing fuel and power supplies and threatening to bring down the government. This is the latest in a history of dynamic workers' struggles.

One of the high points took place eighty years ago, peaking in June 1936 with a wave of factory occupations that posed the issue of workers' control. This was triggered by the victory of a Left government in the form of the Popular Front, including the Communist Party.

But far from aiding the workers' struggle it was the Left government that was responsible for bringing it to an end.

Fascist threat

The Great Depression came to France in 1931. Unemployment, bankruptcies, falls in real wages and the collapse of agricultural prices created turmoil in French society.

The economic crisis gave fertile ground for fascists to win over sections of the disenfranchised middle class and poor. In February 1934, thousands of armed fascists and royalists staged a riot in Paris forcing the resignation of the middle class Radical Government headed by Edouard Daladier. It was replaced by a more right-wing "government of national unity".

The fascists believed they were on the path to power, after Hitler's rise to power in Germany the year before. This had meant the crushing of trade unions and workers' organisations, with union, social democratic and Communist leaders alike all sent to concentration camps.

The fascists did not expect resistance from the French working class, which had suffered a series of defeats during the Depression. But these events pushed the left parties into struggle due to pressure from the mass

of their membership and supporters.

Millions of workers were determined to avoid the mistakes of Germany where left disunity had allowed the rise of Hitler.

The French Communist Party (PCF) followed the disastrous line from Stalin, denouncing social-democratic parties like the French Socialist Party (SFIO), the equivalent of the Australian Labor Party, as "social-fascists", while the real fascist threat continued to grow.

The trade unions were also split between these two parties. Under increasing pressure the Socialist Party aligned General Confederation of Labor (CGT) trade union federation called a general strike for 12 February.

The Communist Party and its union (CGTU) joined the strike at the last minute. They organised separate demonstrations, but when the two marches met, according to one observer, "After a silent, brief moment of anguish, to the astonishment of the party and union leaders, this encounter triggered off a delirious enthusiasm, an explosion of shouts of joy. Applause, cries of 'Unity, Unity'."

The strike was a resounding success. 30,000 out of 31,000 postal workers stopped work. Transport did not run. Building sites were empty. The Citroen car plant was shut down. Newspapers failed to appear. Overall some 4.5 million workers went on strike and one million demonstrated. It was the beginning of a period of mass workers' struggles.

The Popular Front and workers power

The new desire for unity also led to a new alliance to resist the threat of fascism.

The Popular Front, feeding off workers' desire for change, was a primarily electoral alliance designed

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The electoral victory further boosted the confidence of workers. There was an explosion in strikes

to bring the left into power. But it consisted of not just the working class parties, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, but also the middle class Radical Party. Their politics were similar to the moderate wing of the Liberals in Australia.

Maintaining the Popular Front meant watering down its policies and subordinating workers' interests to whatever was acceptable to the Radical Party, who opposed nationalisation or attacking profits of capitalists.

However the growing unity forced the healing of the divisions in the trade unions between the General Congress of Trade Unions (CGT) affiliated to the Socialist Party and the United General Confederation of Labor (CGTU) tied to the Communist Party. This united union gave workers even more confidence to struggle.

Between March and May 1936 a quarter of a million workers joined the CGT. On May Day 1936, 120,000 engineering workers struck in Paris. On 3 May the Popular Front scored a big victory. In an electoral landslide, the Socialist Party became the biggest group in parliament and the Communists won 72 seats.

This electoral victory further boosted the confidence of workers. There was an explosion in strikes. In June 1936 there were 1.8 million strike days, beating the previous annual record of 1.3 million in 1920.

Over three quarters of the strikes involved factory occupations. These were particularly prominent in the airline industry. On 11 May 1936, 500 workers at the Breguet airplane factory downed tools, shut down their machinery and took over the plant.

This spread across the metal industry in Paris in a direct challenge to capitalist control of the workplaces, posing the question of workers' power.

Most of the factory occupations were led by Communists. Communist

Party membership skyrocketed from 800,000 in 1935 to four million in 1937.

Instead of responding to the working class upsurge, which pointed the way towards socialism, the Left government set out to derail the movement. The leadership of the Socialist Party was interested in reforming capitalism not overthrowing it. Similarly, the leadership of Communist Party, cravenly following the line and foreign policy interests of the Stalinist dictatorship in Russia, stated it was not time for workers to take power.

Matignon: reigning in the struggle

The ruling class was desperate for the Popular Front to diffuse the workers' struggle. As soon as President Leon Blum was sworn in he attempted to rein in the movement with the Matignon Agreement.

It granted a 7 to 15 per cent wage rise, a reduction in the working week from 48 to 40 hours with no loss of pay, and no penalties for going on strike.

These were major concessions. But the effect of the wage rises were to disappear within two years as a result of rising prices. And the agreement also meant workers occupations had to end and workers to return to work.

As news of the agreement was breaking the movement was reaching new heights with workplaces under workers' control. The Russian Revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote that "the French Revolution has begun". The strike wave had spread across almost every industry from construction to department stores, hospitality and textiles.

Yet Communist Party leader Maurice Thorez argued that if it was important to know how to lead a strike, "it's important also to know how to end one".

As the strikes receded, the Popular Front Government moved to the right. They dropped policies of economic expansion and social reform and moved to deflation and re-armament. In the face of financial crisis, Blum resigned after just a year in office in June 1937 and a second Popular Front government with a Radical Party President was formed.

The Popular Front government collapsed completely in early 1938. The new Government, aided by the employers, proceeded to launch an attack on workers' conditions.

The CGT called a general strike, but its support was patchy after this



Above: Workers at the Renault car plant take part in the strike movement of 1936

period of sell-outs. Renault workers at Billancourt outside Paris fought a 24-hour battle with 1500 riot police. After their defeat, workers were forced to march out of the factory giving the fascist salute and shouting "Vive la police!"

Union membership collapsed from a peak of four million members to one million.

Just over two years later, Northern France was occupied by the Nazis and Marshal Petain's pro-fascist Vichy regime was established.

Revolutionary potential

While the June 1936 movement ended in defeat, it had the potential to develop into a workers' revolution.

This potential was clear in two ways. Workers wanted to go beyond the bounds of the strikes themselves and the sell-outs of the Popular Front Government.

In Marseilles, the socialist deputy R Vidal noted, "each time we negotiate the end of a strike, ten more are born out of it; or even the strike we have succeeded in stopping breaks out again a few days later".

French Trotskyists Danos and Giblin, active in the Socialist Party at the time, argued:

"There was, then, a distinct tendency for the masses to pursue strikes beyond the objectives originally assigned to them. But this tendency was no more than half-filled, for no new

slogans were raised in the absence of a new leadership which could give political expression to workers' aspiration."

Secondly there were embryos of workers' power, which could have turned into soviets, if they had been consolidated and argued for on a national level.

At the Hotchkiss engineering plant, one of the most radical and organised workplaces, there was a strike committee which included representatives from 33 neighbouring factories. The high level of organisation can be seen in how the occupations were disciplined, and rarely armed or violent.

The politics of the left parties at the time meant there was no organised effort to develop the struggle in this direction.

While many on the left see the election of Left governments such as Syriza in Greece as way to move towards socialism, the experience of the Popular Front shows how Left governments that take power through parliament end up subordinating workers' interests to the needs of capitalism.

The history of June 1936 shows the potential of workers to create a socialist society run in the interests of the majority.

That potential lives on in the workplaces and streets of France today as they are again rocked by a mass movement and strikes.

ROBOTS, UNIVERSAL INCOME AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

The way to deal with the threat to jobs from new technology is to build union power in the workplaces, argues **Miro Sandev**

CONCERNS ABOUT new technology and the unemployment associated with it are almost as old as capitalism itself, as the example of the Luddites sabotaging the introduction of weaving machines in the UK in the 1800s shows.

The technological revolution that was unleashed from the 1970s with the growth of personal computers and later the Internet has made some of these concerns more severe, as computers and robots take on an ever-greater share of tasks previously done by workers.

In many countries workers are going backwards in their standard of living, fuelling anger over inequality. The automation of routine tasks, the application of machine learning and the rise of robot production threaten to make matters worse.

Union leaders have warned that the introduction of self-driving trucks and cars could eliminate millions of jobs. For example, in the US there are about 3.5 million truck drivers, forming the largest job category in 29 states.

Other estimates paint an even bleaker picture of potential job losses. Forty per cent of US employees are in occupations where at least half their time is spent doing tasks that could be automated by adapting technology already available, according to research from McKinsey Global Institute.

These include the three biggest occupations in the country: retail sales, store cashiers and preparing and serving food, totalling over ten million people. But are the doomsday scenarios realistic?

Firstly, just because it is technologically feasible to replace a set of human tasks with work done by a robot, doesn't mean that it is cost effective for a company to do it. Installing new technology has to be cheaper than

employing the workers it replaces. And there is still a lot of cheap labour in the world—which is why many existing labour-saving technologies are not being implemented.

And job losses may be offset by the growth of jobs in new sectors. A study by accounting firm Deloitte based on 140 years of UK census data concluded that technological innovation had created more jobs than it had destroyed. The dominant trend was of shrinking employment in agriculture and manufacturing, being offset by growth in the care work, creative, technology and business services sectors.

The study points to the large increases in the numbers of bar staff and hairdressers over the last 50 years as evidence that when one sector enters a decline, opportunities open up for workers in other sectors.

But the obvious response to this is that the wages paid in hospitality and hairdressing industries are much lower than the skilled manufacturing jobs that have been destroyed.

Another point the study makes is that technology has boosted jobs in knowledge-intensive sectors, using the example of accountancy where there has been an eight-fold increase in the percentage of the workforce who do that job. However, this is a bad example, as accountants are one of the most likely professions to be automated in the near future according to the McKinsey study.

Automation has been used in the process of capitalist re-structuring since the 1970s to decimate well-paid unionised workforces and push workers into non-union jobs and industries that are paid less and often casualised.

This is because the control of new technology remains in the hands of the CEOs of the major corporations

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One of the main reasons for automation is to give managers greater control over production

and the tiny super-rich minority that own them—the class that controls production. When new technology is implemented—and for whose benefit—is determined by these class relations.

This means that automation almost never leads to the creation of jobs that are as well paid or better paid than the jobs lost because of it.

Automation and class struggle

Cost effectiveness isn't the only reason why capitalists might wish to automate production. As Marx wrote: "it would be possible to write quite a history of the inventions made since 1830, for the sole purpose of supplying capital with weapons against the revolts of the working class."

One of the main reasons for automation is to give managers greater control over production. This desire for control is driven by the desire to extract greater productivity from workers and hence higher profits. Their preferred tactics for such control include detailed division of labour, simplification of work tasks and deskilling of workers, all of which fit in with increased automation.

The other reason why managers want to increase their control is to weaken trade union organisation. So bosses are constantly searching for ways to deprive workers and their unions of any control they may have over the organisation of work, and to devalue workers' knowledge of the job.

Strong union organisation generally means higher wages, which limits the level of exploitation, and can also lead to union control over allocation of work and hiring. The best organised unions are able to build up the power in the workplace to decide who gets work on a job, how the work is

divided up, who gets overtime and so on. Some of this control is still retained in Port Botany in Sydney by the Maritime Union (MUA), which is currently in a dispute with the port operator Patrick Stevedores, owned by Asciano.

As Asciano company boss John Mullen told the financial press: “Five years ago the union decided who worked what shift, the union allocated overtime, the union picked the members that worked the emergency shifts that earn triple time.”

Automation can be used as part of a union-busting exercise, to make union members forcibly redundant and then reintroduce more non-union workers later down the track. Increasing pressure on the workforce through the threat of redundancy is another reason for introducing automation. The Asciano boss explains:

“Our terminal in Melbourne is not automated. It has a highly productive, motivated work force. Could we automate? We could. But the bang for the buck is not there. Port Botany is the opposite story. We have extremely difficult relationships with a militant arm of the union and so we have invested in automation.”

Universal Basic Income

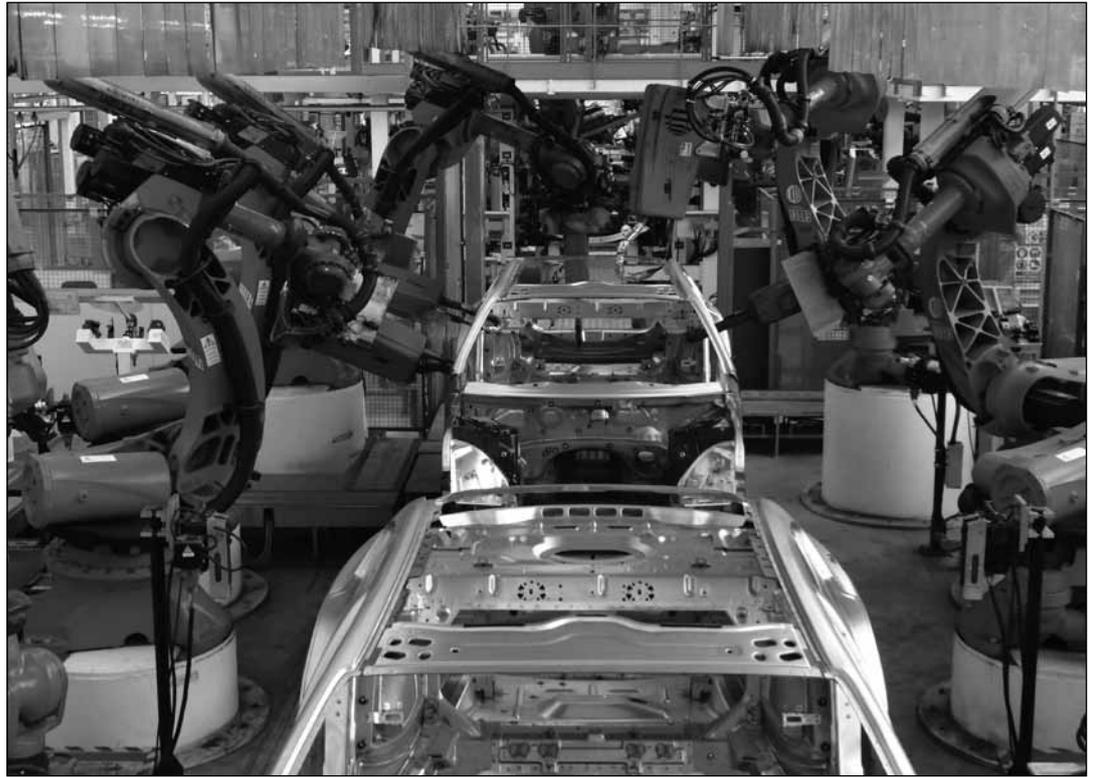
In response to job losses through automation, people from diverse political backgrounds have begun advocating a Universal Basic Income (UBI) as the solution.

Switzerland recently held a referendum on the idea (although it was overwhelmingly defeated) and there are small pilot programs planned in Finland, the Netherlands and Canada. Support for the proposal has come from the left, as well as libertarians and right-wingers. Milton Friedman famously proposed a version of it with his negative income tax.

The details of the proposals are as diverse as the people backing them. The more left-wing version suggests UBI be introduced on top of already existing unemployment and welfare payments.

The right-wing version puts it forward as a replacement of all other welfare payments, as a way of cutting the public sector administration of welfare and opening new areas to marketization. In either case every member of society, regardless of wealth, would be paid a certain amount of income without having to work.

But capitalism could never tolerate a UBI high enough that people would not have to work to have a



Above: Robots in car plants have already eliminated many jobs

decent life. That would require an enormous amount of taxation—for example the proposal in Switzerland would cost roughly one third of annual GDP.

It would also mean there was no compulsion on workers to take badly paid or stressful jobs and this would threaten capitalists’ ability to run production. It poses such a serious challenge to capitalism that winning it would effectively require a revolution.

UBI cannot be separated from the question of what attitude socialists should take toward automation, and some on the left like Alex Williams and Nick Smicek, authors of *Inventing the future: Post-capitalism and world without work*, have even joined the two together in the slogan “demand full automation, demand UBI.” But this completely misses how reforms are won in the first place—by coordinated mass struggle in the workplace and on the streets.

Accepting automation in a capitalist society means accepting attacks on workers’ control of production, on the ability of unions to organise successfully on the job and allowing greater surveillance and pressure on workers. In other words, it means accepting attacks on the very power that can deliver reforms such as UBI and much better reforms.

Fight for the jobs

Socialists aren’t opposed to automation on principle, but we are opposed

to automation introduced by the bosses for the benefit of the bosses. So, in a capitalist society where bosses introduce new technology as a form of class warfare, workers have to resist it.

Workers are faced with the prospect of technologies like driverless trains and trucks which will reduce jobs. In response, we should demand no job losses and a reduction in the hours in a working week with no loss of pay.

The MUA is currently demanding a modest increase in the workforce at Port Botany in Sydney, after automation has destroyed hundreds of jobs, and the company is bitterly resisting it.

Socialists have to start by unequivocally fighting for well-paying, union controlled jobs and for full employment across the economy. Winning more jobs and more union power at work provides the working class with a powerful position from which to then fight for better pay and conditions, and a shorter working week.

In a socialist society where the economy was democratically controlled, technology could be used for the benefit of everyone to reduce working hours, eliminate drudgery, and allow people to have basic needs met without spending whole lives in alienating work.

But this requires a fight to take control of the economy off the capitalists and that fight can only be won from a position of strength in the workplace.

Muhammad Ali—the life of a people’s champion

By Brian Richardson

MUHAMMAD ALI captivated the world when he became world heavyweight boxing champion in 1964. He mixed extraordinary grace and speed in the ring with a larger than life personality outside it.

He combined overt radical politics with an obvious pride in himself.

As Mike Marqusee, author of a brilliant biography *Redemption Song* suggests, he was somebody who characterised “the spirit of the 1960s”.

Born Cassius Clay in Louisville, Kentucky on 17 January 1942, he first came to international prominence when he won the light heavyweight boxing title at the 1960 Olympics in Rome.

Despite returning to his homeland as a champion, he was still subjected to the humiliating institutional discrimination that blighted the lives of black people in the US. He was refused service at a “whites only” restaurant and was set upon by a gang of racists. He had trouble finding a hotel to stay when he travelled to fight.

He shocked the sporting world by beating Sonny Liston to become world heavyweight champion.

Interviewed in the ring immediately after the fight, he said, “I don’t have a mark on my face, and I upset Sonny Liston, and I just turned twenty-two years old. I must be the greatest.” His own assessment of himself stuck.

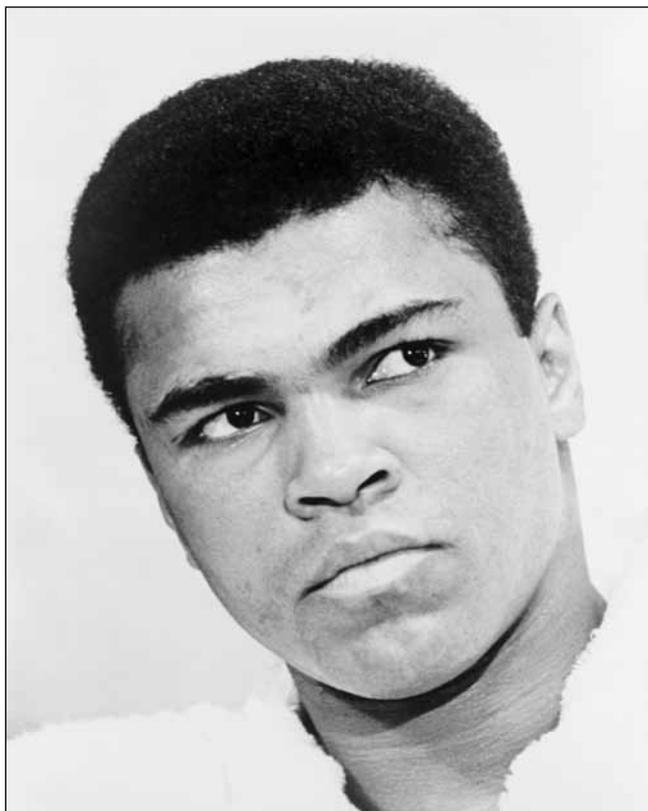
But the following morning he delivered an even more stunning blow when he confirmed the rumours of his involvement with the Nation of Islam. This militant black separatist movement was growing in influence and challenging the hegemony of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement. Clay was being mentored by Malcolm X, the Nation’s most charismatic figure.

He announced that he was changing his name. “Cassius Clay is a slave name. I didn’t choose it, and I didn’t want it. I am Muhammad Ali, a free name—it means beloved of God—and I insist people use it when speaking to me and of me.”

As a result Ali’s white corporate sponsors, the boxing authorities and others roundly denounced him for his lack of respect and gratitude.

Military

Nobody could beat Ali in the ring, but three years later the US military tried to rein him in by drafting him to fight



Above: Muhammad Ali in 1967

in the Vietnam War. Ali’s response was clear and emphatic, “No, I am not going ten thousand miles from home to help murder and burn another poor nation simply to continue the domination of white slavemasters of the darker people the world over.”

The price Ali paid was a heavy one. He was convicted by an all white jury of evading the draft and sentenced to five years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Though he never actually served time in jail the threat remained until his conviction was eventually overturned in June 1971.

Meanwhile he was stripped of his titles and governing bodies across the world revoked his licence to box.

Ali’s principled stance was indicative of a growing mood of opposition to the Vietnam war.

His defiant declaration that he had nothing against the Vietnamese, “They never called me nigger, they never lynched me, they didn’t put no dogs on me...Shoot them for what? ...How can I shoot them poor people, Just take me to jail.”

Power

Other sporting and cultural figures were to follow his lead including the athletes who gave the famous Black Power salute at the 1968 Mexico

Olympics.

I still cherish the early childhood memory of Ali’s bouts in the mid 1970s, particularly the famous 1974 “Rumble in the Jungle” when he reclaimed his world title from George Foreman. Back then very few black people appeared on TV and when they did it was invariably as villains, who were swiftly dispatched or buffoons to be ridiculed.

For millions of us across the world, regardless of whether he was officially recognised or not, Ali was our champion, handsome, brash, brilliant and with a razor sharp wit.

He was not without fault. The manner in which he goaded his great rival Joe Frazier, dismissing him as an “ugly and ignorant gorilla” was spiteful and played to racial stereotypes. His decision to carry on fighting well beyond his peak was partly due to his own vanity. But the primary reason was because of the greed of those who had exploited him throughout his career, stripping him of much of his wealth.

Ali finally retired after humiliating defeats against his former sparring partner Larry Holmes and a journeyman Trevor Berbick in 1980 and 81. By this time he was already suffering the early onset of the Parkinson’s Syndrome that was to afflict him so dramatically in later life.

As is so often the case with radical figures, there has been a concerted attempt to reinvent and sanitise Ali. He was chosen to light the torch at the opening of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. He appeared as proud and defiant as ever, but watching him struggle to raise the torch, one could not help but contrast the trembling figure with the magnificent athlete of his heyday.

The passage of the baton to a new generation is intended to symbolise the Olympic ideal but there was also a wider significance. Here in the Deep South, the triumph of this black man was a further example of the enduring appeal of the American dream.

The act of reconciliation was supposedly completed by the presentation to him of a replacement gold medal.

Whether he was “the Greatest” as he himself so frequently claimed is a moot point amongst sports fans.

What should not be in doubt is that he was an outstanding figure in the struggle against racism, war and imperialism.

Socialist Worker UK

.....
“They never called me nigger...How can I shoot them poor people, just take me to jail.”
—Muhammad Ali

Must see insight into the reality of offshore detention

Chasing Asylum
Directed by Eva Orner
In selected cinemas
now

CHASING ASYLUM provides a powerful and emotional look at the human impact of Australia's cruelty to refugees. The film skillfully mixes statements from former Liberal and Labor Prime Ministers, Immigration Ministers and Navy commanders with the brutal realities for refugees. This contrast sharply exposes the political rhetoric as callous contempt for the lives of others.

The Australian government has gone to great lengths to hide what is happening inside offshore detention, banning journalists and lawyers, and threatening whistle-blowers with two years' jail.

The film breaks open that secrecy. The damning footage filmed inside the offshore detention camps is one of the film's strengths.

It includes smuggled-out interviews with detainees and snapshots of the appalling conditions, and bleak daily life for imprisoned refugees. Indefinite detention has caused many to develop mental illnesses, a few have even returned home, only to flee again to seek asylum elsewhere.

The film covers many of the well-known crimes of offshore detention from the murder of Reza Barati to the death of Hamid Kehzaei, but even people familiar with those stories will gain new insights into Australia's efforts to break people.

The interviews with former detention centre workers are compelling. They speak about their journeys from naivety to outrage at what is being done to the people they



thought they were there to help. Their stories add to the grim and heart-breaking first-hand footage.

Chasing Asylum also shows the impact on UNHCR refugees left in limbo in Indonesia by Australia's "stop the boats" policies.

One man stuck in Indonesia seems to be coping with daily life, despite an inability to work, study or get health care—until he talks about being indefinitely separated from his son in Australia.

It is a poignant vignette, but only begins to scrape the surface of life in limbo in Indonesia. Stories have emerged of unaccompanied minors selling their bodies to survive and of refugees bribing their way into Australian funded Indonesian detention centres as they run out of funds.

The film is not perfect. There a couple of interviews that go nowhere in particular, like the interview with Reza Barati's parents.

Barati's parents say that he was looking for a better life, but the film doesn't point out that

Barati was part of the persecuted Kurdish minority in Iran who are not recognised as citizens.

The film condemns offshore processing as a failed response to "deaths at sea", but it never explicitly challenges the

idea this is genuine concern of the major parties. Deaths at sea and offshore processing are not two evils that must be weighed against each other. The same politicians who deliver offshore cruelty delivered policies that made deaths at sea more likely by making voyages less safe (from burning of boats to criminalising people smuggling) and set the tone for rescue services responding too slowly or not at all.

SIEV 358 is a good example. The WA coroner found that 16 distress calls, including news that the boat was taking on water, were ignored for two days by Australian authorities. Over 100 people drowned.

Chasing Asylum ends with a dedication to Malcolm Fraser, who is interviewed in the film saying that Australia took 100,000 refugees from Vietnam because "it was the right thing to do". But this glosses over the reality of the time.

Fraser supported the Vietnam War which caused the refugee crisis. He did a deal for Australia

to take more refugees so long as Malaysia and Indonesia would stop the boats travelling on to Australia. This left much greater numbers languishing in camps like Galang in Indonesia, which was only closed in 1996.

Resistance

While the film shows some of the inspiring resistance of the refugees themselves (though strangely not the mass hunger strike of 800 on Manus Island in January 2015), the refugee movement fighting for change in Australia is absent.

This would have been a useful antidote to the film's interview with *Age* journalist Michael Bachelard who claims that the detention horrors have happened because "we let them"—implying that it is the Australian electorate to blame.

Bachelard's claim ignores both how anti-refugee sentiment has been whipped up by politicians and the mainstream media, and how the refugee movement can shift public opinion. It did so under Howard, and is beginning to do so again. Recent polls over the 267 people from Nauru and Manus currently in Australia, found that 40 per cent wanted to "Let Them Stay" with 39 per cent against and 21 per cent undecided.

Despite minor criticisms, the film remains a must see for its exposure of the offshore detention cruelty that the Australian government is desperate to keep hidden.

After the Refugee Action Collective showing to a packed cinema in Melbourne, as in many places around the country, people came out asking what they could do. That part is up to us.

Chris Breen

Damning footage filmed inside the offshore detention camps is one of the film's strengths

WE CAN SHUT OFFSHORE DETENTION

By Ian Rintoul

ON 14 May, hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees joined together for the biggest protest inside the Manus detention centre since the mass hunger strike of 2015.

The protest followed the PNG Supreme Court ruling that the Manus Island detention centre was unlawful and immediate steps should be taken to close it.

But after almost two months, the detention centre remains open. The uncertainty surrounding the fate of the asylum seekers and refugees there has brought increasing tensions. The hundreds of people who have endured the brutality and deprivations of Manus Island have been told that their detention is unlawful, but they remain prisoners.

It is an untenable situation and slowly but surely the management of the centre is breaking down. The questionable legality of Broadpectrum or Wilson Security's authority in the centre has created a power vacuum that they have tried to fill by using the PNG police. PNG police have become the de-facto power in the detention centre and are a constant presence in the centre and at the gates of the various internal compounds.

That has also meant increased repression as police now use powers of arrest to maintain control. So, one Iranian man was arrested for being in the internet room "out of turn"—and is now facing charges of assault. Two other Pakistani men were charged with assault over a trivial exchange with a Wilson Security guard who blocked their entry into one of the internal compounds.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, at least seven detainees are in the Lorengau police watch-house waiting for court.

The police shooting of students in Port Moresby has raised fears of the same lethal force being used against refugees on Manus. Police-supported vigilante action on Manus in 2014 left Reza Barati dead and around 80 others wounded.

Despite the Australian government



Above: Manus Island refugees and asylum seekers are fed up, with the centre now declared unlawful

stalling over the closure of Manus, it is just a matter of time. The PNG government has restated that Manus will close.

Supreme Court

The Chief Justice of the PNG Supreme Court has joined two constitutional cases challenging the Manus centre. The Namah case, which was the basis of the finding in April that the agreement between Australia and PNG was unconstitutional, has been joined with the Ben Lomai case that actually represents the hundreds of detainees on Manus.

The joining of these two cases opens the way to further court orders as early as 16 June, or the full bench hearing on 30 June, that the Manus detainees must be released and returned to Australia.

No matter which party wins the federal election, there will be no avoiding that offshore processing on Manus is finished.

Meanwhile, the conditions deteriorate. With its future uncertain, Broadpectrum seems to have cut back staff already. There are long queues for meals and the food is bad. The same chicken is served twice a day and it

smells off. Around 520 refugees now have to eat in the one mess areas in Oscar compound, and sometimes the food runs out.

The absurdity of the situation is shown in the Orwellian language changes—"detainees" or "transferees" are now "residents" and compounds that still hold asylum seekers prisoner are now East and West "areas".

But the language change can't hide the reality; residents are still arrested. And there are still restrictions on movement between compounds. Mobile phones cannot be taken outside the camp. People are scanned and property is searched for contraband when they come back from "outside".

One refugee told *Solidarity*, "They say we are free but we are not free. In reality is stricter than before."

But the end of Manus Island is closer than it has ever been. There will still be a fight over what the Australian government does with the people from Manus Island. But the refugee rallies at the start of Refugee Week are an opportunity to tell the government that they have no option other than to "Bring Them Here," to the mainland. No ifs, no buts.

Despite the Australian government stalling over the closure of Manus, it is just a matter of time