

Solidarity

Issue No. 117 / August 2018

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RACIST CAMPAIGN FAILS IN BY-ELECTIONS



TURNBULL

TROUNCED

NOW FINISH HIM OFF

UNIONS

ACTU agenda more than Labor will back

SEXISM

Rape, violence and capitalism

1968 REVOLT

Eastern Europe's Prague Spring



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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.

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Things they say

We are Adelaide Hills people and been in politics here for decades and through multiple elections never come across such abuse. Sharkie supporters have brought horrible hate to our district. Never seen this before. You must all be new arrivals Alexander Downer responds to residents of Mayo who didn't like the suggestion to vote for his daughter Georgina Downer

What you're seeing and what you're reading is not what's happening
Donald Trump dismisses news that his tariffs are costing some businesses money or forcing them to relocate

Tariffs are the greatest.
Donald Trump

Much ado about nothing
Anthony Albanese, Labor frontbencher and supposed Leftist, on the recent ACTU Congress in Brisbane calling for the end of offshore refugee detention

Right now, it feels like there has never been a more exciting time to be a dog-whistling politician or race-baiting commentator in Australia
Outgoing Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Soutphommasane in his final speech

Poor people who live on the peripheries of society, predominantly white people, these are the people I think are ignored
Barnaby Joyce

Did you think yourself that taking money to which there was no entitlement raised a question of the criminal law?
I didn't

Commissioner Kenneth Hayne to NAB's Ms Smith at the Royal Commission into the banks. The money they need to repay is likely to claim to \$850 million. One law for the rich, and another law for the rest of us.

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INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

The Downer dynasty's 'nation building'

LIBERAL GEORGINA Downer's effort to win back Mayo, her father's old seat in Adelaide, spectacularly flopped in the Super Saturday by-election. In a bout of entitled rage following the result, Alexander Downer defended the dynasty, saying "our family have been nation builders. We've helped make this nation great."

This "nation building" took place through the murder and genocide of Aboriginal people. Sir John Downer, the first Downer to enter politics, became South Australian Attorney-General in 1881 and then Premier in 1885. Tony Roberts wrote in *The Monthly* that, "An examination of the injustices and massacres of the frontier period reveals his name more frequently than any other Adelaide politician."

Downer helped ensure numerous police officers and civilians responsible for the murder of Aboriginal people escaped conviction. In 1881 Police Inspector Foelsche actually wrote to Downer asking for immunity from prosecution to carry out a punitive raid in today's Northern Territory, promising to teach the local Aboriginal people "a severe lesson". Downer turned a blind eye to this and countless other massacres.

He ignored official reports detailing the worsening killings. Downer's government even refused to prosecute those responsible for a series of massacres in 1884, despite their names being published in the press. Downer used his skills as a barrister to ensure the notorious rapist and murderer Constable William Willshire escaped justice. He was the only police officer ever charged over frontier massacres in the Northern Territory. All this helped secure the profits of wealthy Adelaide landowners and pastoralists, who were driving Aboriginal people off huge areas of land.

As Foreign Minister his grandson, Alexander Downer, did his best to continue the colonial tradition by negotiating the scandalous Timor Gap treaty, robbing the newly independent East Timor of oil revenue. After resigning from parliament he was handed a lucrative role with Woodside, the oil company seeking to profit off the gas.

Nation state law exposes Israel as a racist state



ISRAEL'S PARLIAMENT has passed a new law blatantly exposing it as a racially exclusive state. Its new "nation state" law affirms the state's Jewish character, declaring the right to self-determination "unique to the Jewish people" inside Israel and state support for Jewish settlement. This implicitly denies the same rights to the colonised Palestinian minority that continues to live there. It also affirms Hebrew as the only official language, reducing the status of Arabic—the main language of the Palestinian Arab population—and declares the whole of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

Introduced as a "basic law" it now forms part of Israel's constitution.

The law confirms what has been true for decades—Israel is a racially discriminatory, apartheid state. Israel was founded on the ethnic cleansing of over 700,000 Palestinians in 1948 in order to establish a state with a Jewish majority. The Palestinian Arab minority still inside Israel face systematic discrimination over access to housing, family reunion and quality of education. The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Adalah, lists 65 Israeli laws that discriminate against Arabs.

The situation in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank is even worse. The killing of Palestinian civilians at protests in Gaza this year has become routine. More than 150 people have been killed so far this year, most shot by Israeli military snipers. Israel has also launched repeated air strikes on Gaza this year, killing four people in two separate barrages in July. And the whole of Gaza remains an open air prison, as Israel's blockade restricts medicines, building materials and basic goods in an act of collective punishment against the civilian population.

Inequality in Australia still increasing

WEALTH INEQUALITY in Australia is growing, a new report from ACOSS and the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW shows. The top 20 per cent of Australians now own almost two-thirds of all wealth, 62 per cent in total, while the bottom 50 per cent hold just 18 per cent.

The average wealth of the top 20 per cent rose by 53 per cent from 2003 to 2016, while the bottom 20 per cent saw a decline of 9 per cent.

In terms of income, inequality is also stark. The top 20 per cent hold five times as much disposable as the bottom 20 per cent, and the top 1 per cent 16 times as much—\$3978 per week on average and \$11,682 per week in 2016, compared with \$735 per week. Income inequality reached a peak during the global economic crisis in 2007-08, after steady growth since the early 1980s.

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

CEO pay highest in 17 years

PAY FOR CEOs is at its highest level in 17 years, up 12.4 per cent last year alone for those at the top 100 listed companies. That's the finding of the CEO pay report released by the Australian Council of Superannuation Investors in July. The pay surge was driven by "persistent and increasing bonus payments", it said.

Domino's Pizza CEO Don Meji saw his pay soar an eye-watering \$15.8 million to \$36.8 million. Ramsay Health's Chris Rex pocketed an extra \$4 million for a total of \$22.3 million. Most workers haven't had a pay rise after inflation since 2009.

High end brands destroy millions worth of clothing

LUXURY CLOTHING brand Burberry burned \$37.8 million worth of its products last year rather than have them sold at discounted prices.

The company, which sells trench coats for \$1800 and polo shirts priced at \$250, revealed the strategy in its annual report.

A number of designer brands destroy their unsold stock in an effort to ensure their products remain "exclusive" and are not sold to the "wrong people" at discount prices, according to the *London Times*.

NATO plans borderless Europe for tanks

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES want to slash controls on troop and tank movements in an effort to face down Russia. At the moment countries need to give up to 40 days' notice in order to conduct exercises in other NATO countries.

The plan, on the agenda at the recent NATO summit, would cut this to five. The Dutch Defence Minister said the change was needed to avoid presenting an image of European division. "Especially when you look at Russia, they would love that," she said.

EDITORIAL

After Super Saturday: Step up the fight to get rid of Turnbull

THE SUPER Saturday by-elections were a major blow against Malcolm Turnbull. Labor's stand for "funding for schools and hospitals not billions for big business and the banks" struck a chord. The Liberals are facing annihilation at the next general election.

Turnbull's tax cuts for big business and the big banks made it clear that he is ruling for the rich. The Liberals failed to win any of the five by-elections, suffering a humiliating swing of 3.6 per cent in the most important contest in Longman.

On first preferences, Liberal National candidate Trevor Ruthenberg lost 9.4 per cent of the vote to poll just 29.6 per cent. Labor won comfortably with 54.4 per cent in two party terms.

As their panic grows, the Coalition are now contemplating abandoning their tax cuts for big business. The government has committed to one last futile attempt to pass the tax cuts through the Senate this month. But Turnbull now won't say whether the government will still take them to the next election.

Racism

One Nation's decision to favour the Coalition by preferencing Labor and The Greens last in Longman, below even the fascist Australia First candidate, did not help them.

One Nation's vote increased to a disturbing 16 per cent, similar to its vote in last year's Queensland state election.

The Liberals pandered to One Nation's racism by campaigning against refugees and immigration.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton announced that he had cut the immigration intake by 21,000 in the last year, claiming he had launched a crackdown and "reintroduced integrity into our migration program". He also joined the scaremongering about "African gangs" in Melbourne.

This racism failed to win votes. But with the Liberals losing votes to One Nation, we can expect more of it all the way to the next election, as the Coalition's desperation increases.

Longman, a marginal seat in outer suburban Brisbane, typifies the seats that will decide the next election.

In Queensland alone, there are seven seats Labor would win if the swing in Longman is repeated—more than enough to kick Turnbull out of office.

Labor also held on in Braddon,



Above: Labor's call for "Money for hospitals not banks" saw a significant swing against the Coalition

despite a comfortable win for the Liberals in the same seat at the Tasmanian election this year. It also held the seats of Perth and Fremantle, where the Liberals refused to stand candidates.

The Liberals also failed to win back Mayo from Rebekha Sharkie of the Centre Alliance, formerly Nick Xenophon's party.

Fight to finish off Turnbull

Labor is now even firmer favourite to win the next election, which must be held by 18 May next year. The Liberals' loss in the by-elections means Turnbull is likely to wait as long as he can before he calls it.

But there is no reason for complacency. We can't just wait for Turnbull to fall over. The union Change the Rules campaign needs to be stepped up to keep up the anti-Liberal momentum. Wage and penalty rates cuts, and Turnbull's anti-union laws and corporate tax cuts have to be actively fought.

The unions campaigned heavily in the seats of Longman and Braddon. But the union campaign can't be limited to electioneering in marginal seats for an election that could be nine months away.

We need more mass stopwork demonstrations like the one that brought 120,000 to the streets of Melbourne in May. The construction union in Sydney has called a day of action for 6 September, and a combined unions delegates meeting on 24 August. Every state should follow the NSW lead. This is the kind of action that can help push Turnbull out. Every union needs to back the rally and

mobilise contingents for the biggest possible turnout.

An ongoing campaign of national stopwork rallies can take on the bosses here and now, and pressure Labor to back the changes that unions and workers really need.

It was great that Labor took a strong stand against One Nation in Longman, but there needs to be a stronger stand against the racism of One Nation and the Liberals. The Liberals will pander to One Nation and increasingly use racism to scapegoat refugees and migrants. Labor needs to clearly stand against this.

A 500-strong demonstration led by South Sudanese youth marched on the offices of Channel 7 in Melbourne, who had just run a disgraceful racist report fearmongering about "African gangs". The Andrews Labor government in Victoria is introducing new "anti-association" laws, making concessions to this fearmongering when it should simply reject it.

When Labor calls for cuts to temporary migration by international students and limits on the temporary visas of foreign workers, it weakens the union movement and legitimises Turnbull's racism. Similarly, Labor's support for the detention of asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru means Dutton's refugee-bashing is unchallenged.

Turnbull has been weakened. Now we need to keep fighting to build a stronger movement to beat the bosses and finish him off. For that we need protests, strikes and demonstrations in the weeks ahead.

.....
The union Change the Rules campaign needs to be stepped up to keep up the anti-Liberal momentum

‘Those campuses that organised got the best outcomes’

Solidarity spoke to **Melissa Slee**, who is running for Victorian division Secretary in the National Tertiary Education Union elections about what’s at stake for the union

The termination of Murdoch University’s agreement was one of the defining events in the most recent round of bargaining. What did you think of the NTEU’s response?

The NTEU over many years has failed to adapt to the dramatic changes on the campuses and allowed its power and numbers to go into sharp decline. In this context, the NTEU’s response to Murdoch could only ever be limited to damage control. The termination of the Murdoch agreement has been a long time in the making. Twenty years ago the sector was nearly 100 per cent government funded and universities worked in relative harmony. Since the mid-1990s government funding has been massively slashed and replaced with the “free” market where campuses operate like warring fiefdoms in fierce competition with each other for income. In that environment, an individual campus like Murdoch can be easily captured by neo-liberal hawks with an extreme agenda. Murdoch is a big wake up call for the NTEU.

Do you think the union’s effort to finalise agreements quickly in an effort to isolate Murdoch nationally resulted in unnecessary concessions?

The rush to cut a quick deal on the campuses to somehow “isolate” Murdoch was a deeply flawed strategy and luckily only partially implemented! There was no evidence that the neo-liberal zealots at Murdoch gave a tinker’s cuss what happened at other campuses least of all those on the Eastern states. Predictably, Murdoch were undeterred by this “strategy”.

Many universities have agreed new enterprise bargaining agreements in the last 12 months. Do you think there were campuses where conditions were unnecessarily lost?

Definitely. Here in Victoria, Deakin and La Trobe have suffered serious setbacks on casualisation, academic workloads, job security and hours of work. It was argued that both campuses had aggressive senior managements. My response: sure, so where was the campaign? To agree to cuts in conditions and not even give members an opportunity to organ-



Above: NTEU members on strike at Sydney University last year

ise to defend themselves is not just poor strategy, it’s immoral.

What kind of approach do you think is needed to build union membership and improve pay and conditions?

Back to basics! Organising. Organising around issues that matter to our members, big and small, and making ourselves visible and relevant. From these campaigns we will grow and we will find new leaders to further build our strength. Enterprise Bargaining campaigns are the perfect opportunity for this. Those campuses that organised got the best outcomes.

Casualisation has become a major issue across the university sector.

How can the NTEU address this?

The NTEU needs to both defend the academic profession and get the

entire profession to turn its attention to the existential threat posed by ludicrous levels of casualisation. There is hot debate within the NTEU about this. Some are promoting low quality teaching and “academic tutor” roles to casuals. At RMIT and Sydney Uni among others, we have insisted on genuine career opportunities for casual academics to full academic roles strengthening the profession and improving staffing levels for everyone.

Do you want to say anything about “Change the Rules” campaign?

Many OECD nations have effective rules that make the abuse of insecure work contracts illegal. 120,000 people marched to Change the Rules in Melbourne on 9 May. The next step is for a mass mobilisation attached to a recommended piece of legislation that will outlaw unnecessary insecure work.



Melissa Slee

All out on 6 September against Turnbull

CFMEU CONSTRUCTION union members in NSW will walk off the job on Thursday 6 September against the Turnbull government’s attacks on unions. Workers from the MUA will shut down the port to join them.

This is the kind of action needed to step up the Change the Rules campaign against Malcolm Turnbull. The bosses are continuing to use the Liberals’ laws against unions. Around 1600 workers at Alcoa in Western Australia have been threatened with termination of their agreement, after demanding job security clauses in a new deal. They began an indefinite

strike in early August.

This kind of industrial campaign could fight the bosses now, and keep up the momentum against Turnbull. But most unions remain committed simply to an electoral campaign in marginal seats.

Every union needs to send delegates to the combined unions delegates meeting in Sydney on 24 August to discuss mobilising for September. And other states should also join the action. An ongoing industrial campaign can help push Turnbull out—and pressure Labor to deliver the changes we need.

ACTU Congress—union demands far more than Labor will deliver

By Mark Goudkamp

THE ACTU Congress in July spelled out the union movement's demands for change on industrial relations, targeted at influencing an incoming Labor government.

There was very little debate at the Congress, with the decisions already finalised by union leaders in the months leading up to the event.

On the first morning, Congress voted in Michele O'Neil, former Secretary of the Textile Clothing and Footwear Union as ACTU President, replacing Ged Kearney.

O'Neil has been a strong voice for both workers' rights and on social justice issues, for example speaking at the refugee rights rally outside the 2015 ALP Conference. She told the Congress: "Our basic human right to withdraw our labour is highly regulated and restricted. We drown in obstructionist rules and processes, choke in red tape and have the effect of our industrial action weakened by the limitations and bureaucracy around it. When all else fails, we simply need the right to strike."

The new ACTU President quickly earned the ire of the Murdoch press. The Australian bemoaned O'Neil's "militant" industrial stand, while The Daily Telegraph's front page screamed, "Unions Bully Bill on Boats", pointing out that the ACTU's refugee policy on both offshore processing and turning back asylum boats is at odds with Labor's position.

Right to strike

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus told Congress that enterprise bargaining was failing. In response its policy calls for the right to sector or industry-wide bargaining—backed up by strike action. Such a shift could address the way enterprise bargaining has weakened unions through dividing workers up at an individual company level.

The ACTU also wants far-reaching changes to remove restrictions on strike action.

Its policy calls for the removal of the Fair Work Act's requirement for secret ballots before strikes, the scrapping of penalties for taking industrial action, an end to ministerial powers to terminate industrial action, and the prohibition of employer lockouts. Unions' right of entry to workplaces would be improved by scrapping the



Above: Michele O'Neil was endorsed as the new ACTU President at the Congress

requirement to give 24 hours' notice.

However, the clause that led to the outlawing of the NSW train drivers' strike (that it posed a threat to the welfare of part of the population) is retained.

Moreover, while the policy states that workers should have the right to take industrial action for any industrial, economic or political objectives, it does not clearly challenge the framework of enterprise bargaining. This bans any industrial action outside limited bargaining periods every three or four years as "unprotected action". While the policy calls for an end to the laws against secondary boycotts, if only protected action is permitted, solidarity strikes would remain unlawful.

The ACTU also wants to pursue increases to basic Award conditions, and to scrap the compulsory Award Review process, which led to the cuts to penalty rates.

It calls for measures to address casualisation through enshrining equal rates of pay for labour hire workers, limiting fixed term contracts to two consecutive fixed terms, and broadening the definition of casual workers to include new sectors such as bicycle delivery drivers.

It also endorsed industrial manslaughter laws, removing the restrictions on what can be included in enterprise agreements, and an end to employers' ability to terminate agreements.

But the ACTU's position on temporary visa workers is a hotchpotch-

-it uses the "Aussie jobs" demand to blame foreign workers for unemployment alongside supporting efforts to organise temporary workers into our unions.

This was contested by an excellent presentation from the National Union of Workers (Victoria), which included migrant workers who are organising for wages and conditions in the agricultural sector.

Labor has already promised changes in a number of areas the ACTU has nominated.

Bill Shorten's speech to the Congress dinner was cheered by many when he announced the abolition of the ABCC, as well as changes to force employers to pay labour hire workers the same as direct employees.

Labor also says it is considering other changes including around industry bargaining.

Despite their limits, the ACTU's policies show the scale of the changes needed to deliver the right to strike. But its Change the Rules campaign is focused on campaigning in marginal seats with a view to getting Bill Shorten and Labor elected. There was no discussion of any industrial response through ongoing stopwork demonstrations—like the one in Melbourne that saw 120,000 march in May.

Labor's final policies will go nowhere near restoring an unrestricted right to strike, something it has already ruled out, or accepting the full scope of the union movement's demands.

Given our very recent experience, when six years of Rudd and Gillard

Turnbull's power plan won't cut bills or help the climate

By James Supple

THE TURNBULL'S government new energy plan, the National Energy Guarantee (NEG), is simply an effort to keep coal plants operating as long as possible.

The Coalition needs all the state and territory governments to sign on, and also has to get the plan through its own party room.

Turnbull remains hostage to the coal fanatics and climate deniers on the hard right of the Liberal Party. So the main thrust of the policy is to put a stop to any new renewable energy.

To justify this, they are trying to pretend the NEG will reduce power bills.

The Energy Security Board, which drafted the policy, claims power prices will be \$550 a year lower over its first decade. Only \$150 of that is actually attributed to the NEG—the rest is a result of, “the connection of new renewable energy projects... in coming years”, it admits.

But the claims about the NEG's effect on power prices have been widely questioned. As Giles Parkinson put it at Renew Economy, “it is all based on modelling that is either incomplete, not released, or complete nonsense.”

Bruce Mountain, of the Victorian Energy Policy Centre, also expressed doubt, noting that the plan, “predicts not a single megawatt of additional generation, renewable or not, with the [policy], than without. How then can it predict wholesale prices to be 35 per cent lower?”

If the government was serious about cutting energy prices it would reverse privatisation. A separate report the ACCC released in July shows how the free market experiment in electricity has failed. Power prices across Australia have doubled on average in the last ten years.

Beginning in the 1990s, most states moved to privatise the power industry and introduce competition between rival electricity companies. As economist Tim Colebatch has written, “the more privatised a city's electricity system is, the more its prices have risen”.

The ACCC pointed to “market manipulation” by big companies like Macquarie Generation and AGL, and misleading and confusing deals offering “discounts” to customers, among other factors.



Above: Installing new wind turbines is now the cheapest form of power

But predictably the ACCC's blind faith in the market stopped it from arguing to break up the big companies or reverse the disastrous experiment with privatisation.

Climate change

The NEG shows that Turnbull has abandoned any serious effort at tackling climate change. It simply adopts the overall emissions reduction target of 26 per cent set when Tony Abbott was Prime Minister, agreed at the Paris climate summit.

Even before the NEG comes into effect, 97 per cent of this target will already be met.

The NEG will actually increase emissions initially, according to the Energy Security Board modelling, with no further reductions until 2028-29 when a further coal power station reaches the end of its life.

This has no credibility as a climate policy. Power generation is by far the easiest place to reduce Australia's emissions. Unless it does more than its share of the load, Australia won't reach its overall 26 per cent reduction target.

And that's leaving aside the fact that the Climate Change Authority called for Australia to reduce emissions by between 45 and 65 per cent by 2030.

Labor under Bill Shorten, as well as the state Labor governments, want a higher target and are threatening to veto the plan. Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg plans to lock the target in

for at least five years, on the eve of an election.

Renewable energy

The NEG completely fails to deliver what is needed—a plan to transition Australia to 100 per cent renewable energy.

The real issue in energy policy is how to replace the country's aging coal power plants—and how soon to shut them down. No one is going to invest in a new coal power plant, because “the cost of coal is always going to be more than the cost of wind and sun”, as the Energy Security Board's Kerry Schott put it.

The NEG does next to nothing to increase the use of renewable energy. From 2022, a year after it comes into force, new renewable energy projects would come to a complete stop.

The transition to renewable energy will cost money. But with the costs of wind turbines, solar power and battery storage continually dropping, a government plan for their rollout instead of leaving it to the big energy companies could reduce the costs.

There is no reason we have to pay for this on our power bills. This effectively imposes a flat tax like the GST.

The government should set a fixed cost for power, and meet the costs of new power plants through taxing the rich.

It's time for a power industry that's run in the interests of ordinary people and the environment, not boosting the profits of big energy companies.

.....
If the government was serious about cutting energy prices it would reverse privatisation

Sudanese youth step up the fight against racist media and politicians

By Jasmine Ali

A DEFIANT 500-strong protest led by South Sudanese youth and students stood up to the barrage of government and media racism, rallying on Saturday 28 July, against Channel 7's airing of the racist "African Gangs" segment on *Sunday Night* in early July.

Channel 7's segment is a shameless continuation of a relentless racist campaign since late 2017, when Federal Immigration Minister Peter Dutton and Victorian Liberal opposition leader, Matthew Guy, began to push the idea that Victoria was "over-run" by "African gangs".

Although Victoria's Chief Police Commissioner rejected the suggestion at the time, the media continues to demonise and racially vilify Sudanese youth.

Rally organiser, Sebit Gurech, countered media misrepresentation, saying, "I have been in situations where I am hanging with my friends and something happens between them—two people—and later, I go home to see that 250 Sudanese youth were involved in an altercation. But that is not the truth."

Flora Chol told the rally, "I am a south Sudanese woman. We did not survive 50 years of civil war, our forefathers did not survive 50 years of civil war, to stand down to Channel 7. We will not do that. We will stand here, and make our voices be heard."

Rally organisers also pointed to the hypocrisy of Liberal politicians' claims about the over-representation of Sudanese people in the crime statistics. Krown told the rally, "If you are talking about crime... you can go to any station in Melbourne and see any nationality is able to commit crime, so why are you pointing fingers at us?"

As Victorian Crime Statistics Agency figures from September 2017 reveal, those born in Australia were responsible for 71.7 per cent of crime, while Sudanese-born were responsible for just 1 per cent.

Wiradjuri woman and Victorian Trades Hall ATSI officer Edi Sheperd also challenged the government's demonisation of Sudanese people, "In the union movement we have a saying, touch one, touch all, your struggle, is my struggle... we are with you all the way because our liberations are bound together... we stand against Turnbull, Dutton, Channel 7, and all of their conservative mates with a clear message,



Above: Protesting against Channel 7 and racist politicians in Melbourne

your time is up."

Flora Chol drew links with Aboriginal struggles, "My solidarity will always be with the traditional custodians of this land, because as black people we know all too well, what it's like to be discriminated just for your skin colour... If we stand together, no one can work against us."

Racist Violence

The Liberals' campaign against Sudanese and African communities has a longer history. In 2007, Liep Gony was the victim of a brutal racist murder.

Yet just three days after Liep's murder, then Liberal Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews implemented an immediate freeze on accepting African refugees. At the time, Andrews claimed that Sudanese migrants were responsible for violence and instilled the idea of "violent Sudanese gangs".

But it was Sudanese people themselves who faced brutal racist violence, as Liep's murder showed. Liep's cousin, Nyawech Fouch, spoke publicly for the first time, explaining, "My whole family is traumatised by what the media has done to our family, to our family and friends and the people around us... they criminalised my cousin when he was dead."

In a replay of events surrounding Liep's murder, the media has shamefully tried to portray the recent death of young Sudanese woman, La Chol as evidence of "African gangs". But

La Chol's family told SBS, "It is with sadness that we have watched the tragic death of our precious daughter be used for political agendas and media commercial interests."

Victorian Labor aids racism

Victorian opposition leader Matthew Guy has distributed a shockingly racist election leaflet. The leaflet, with an image of black men in hoodies in a park was titled, "Stop Gangs hunting in packs", likening black men to animals.

It was later revealed that the images were taken directly from a 2012 *London Evening Standard* newspaper article. Malcolm Turnbull's comments about the existence of "African gangs" has similarly boosted racism.

Responding to these events Krown said, "if it comes to a monopoly game where you need votes, don't do us like that."

But while the Liberals ramp up their racist offensive, the current State Labor government's proposal to introduce the new "Unlawful Association" laws is aiding the Liberals' racism and hysteria.

The new legislation will give police expanded powers to prevent people as young as 14 from associating with other young people. The Flemington Kensington Legal Centre has condemned the bill saying it will escalate police racial profiling of indigenous people and communities of colour.

Victorian opposition leader Matthew Guy has distributed a shockingly racist election leaflet

Boat turnbacks condemn refugees to poverty and despair in Indonesia

By Jordi Pardoel and James Supple

THE GOVERNMENT’S boat turnback policy is leaving thousands of refugees to rot in Indonesia. They are struggling to survive and have no hope of a future, as next to none will get the chance of resettlement.

Refugees from across Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma and even Somalia travel through Indonesia looking for a safe country. Neither Indonesia nor the countries they travel through to get there, like Malaysia and Pakistan, are signatories to the Refugee Convention and do not permanently resettle refugees.

The government’s “Operation Sovereign Borders” has blocked the way for refugees to travel by boat from Indonesia to Australia. Their only other option is to wait for a country to offer them a place through their official government-sponsored resettlement program.

Before 2013, Australia was also the country that resettled the most refugees from Indonesia through its official program. Under this official humanitarian program it will accept 18,750 refugees this year from refugee camps offshore.

However, who makes up that number, and which countries they come from, is at the whim of the Immigration Department—and ultimately the Minister Peter Dutton.

If the government was serious about assisting refugees, and saving lives at sea, it would boost resettlement from Indonesia so there was another pathway to safety for refugees stranded there.

But in recent years, both Australia and the US have dramatically reduced how many refugees they take from Indonesia.

The Australian government announced in November 2014 that it would no longer accept any refugees who applied for resettlement through the UN in Indonesia after 1 July 2014.

At the time that meant that nearly 2000 asylum seekers registered with the UNHCR in Indonesia between 1 July and the announcement in November would never be resettled in Australia.

Not only has the Coalition banned any refugee from settling in Australia who comes by boat. But under these changes those registered with the UN refugee agency in Indonesia, who



Above: Refugees in Balikpapan detention centre, East Kalimantan, have been staging daily protests

would be flown to Australia, are also banned.

In limbo

When the ban was announced, then Immigration Minister Scott Morrison stated, “We’re taking the sugar off the table, that’s what we’re doing. We’re trying to stop people thinking that it’s okay to come into Indonesia and use that as a waiting ground to get to Australia”.

But what that means for the thousands of refugee and asylum seekers is that the Australian government has taken hope for a secure, safe and happy life off the table.

So as the number of refugees and asylum seekers stranded in Indonesia grows, their chances of being resettled are slim. But for a lot of them it is too dangerous to return to the home from which they initially fled.

Consequently, around 14,000 refugees and asylum seekers are currently left stranded. Last year the UN refugee agency began telling them that, with so few countries offering places, “most refugees in Indonesia will not be able to benefit from resettlement”—ever.

In Indonesia they have no rights to work or to study. For many this is the end of the line—their money has run out. Homelessness is high. And people are relying on small NGOs for

their basic needs.

Unable to work and with nothing to do to pass their days, refugees have literally nothing to do but wait for resettlement, if and when it will ever come.

“Indonesia doesn’t give any rights to refugees,” Iranian refugee Mozghan Moarefizadeh, co-founder of the Refugees and Asylum-seekers Information Center in Jakarta, told Reuters. “The challenge is to survive on a day-to-day basis. But most lose hope.”

Mozghan herself has been in Indonesia for over five years.

Indonesia also runs 13 detention centres, with capacity for 1300 asylum seekers. Some have been expanded with money from the Australian government. Refugees in the Balikpapan prison in Kalimantan have been protesting for over 200 days against their conditions and demanding to be released into open social housing.

This situation of refugees in Indonesia shows the hollowness of governments’ claims that ‘stopping the boats’ is for the safety of the refugees. There is nothing safe about forcing people to choose between remaining in limbo or returning to the dangers they’ve fled.

Refugees cannot survive in Indonesia. Stopping the boats doesn’t save lives—it just forces refugees to die somewhere else. We should open the borders and bring them here.

Around 14,000 refugees and asylum seekers are currently left stranded

Trump's European chaos tour will unleash the far right

By Alex Callinicos

THE EXTREME centre, as author Tariq Ali dubbed mainstream neo-liberal parties, is convinced that Donald Trump's European tour confirmed he is unfit to be president. And it's true that his performance has been characteristically erratic, and occasionally idiotic.

But focusing on the admittedly bizarre Trump day-to-day can easily lead to underestimating how dangerous he is. One of his favourite news programmes, the ultra-conservative Fox & Friends, called his trip to Europe the "world disruption tour" and that's exactly what it was.

Trump had in his sights precisely the centre right that currently dominates the European Union (EU).

Given this, it was natural for Trump to focus his fire on German chancellor Angela Merkel. She is the leading political figure in Europe.

His vanity was probably piqued by all the toadies who proclaimed her "the real leader of the free world" after he was elected president in November 2016. But Germany is a target for strategic reasons as well. Trump thinks that the US has been systematically ripped off by its allies and trading partners for the past few decades.

China is a major offender here, hence the trade war Trump has launched. But he also said, "I think the European Union is a foe, what they do to us in trade."

Germany dominates the EU. Not only does it run a huge trade surplus with the US. It also spends only 1.2 per cent of national income on defence, way below the target of 2 per cent for members of the Nato military alliance.

Trump believes that the international institutions the US has built up—Nato and the World Trade Organisation, for example—have actually worked to America's disadvantage.

So he's trying to shake them up—for example by demanding that Nato member states raise their defence spending to 4 per cent of national income. Even the US currently only spends 3.1 per cent.

Vanity

It's here that Trump's incoherence and vanity get in the way. He claimed that he'd got a deal to raise the target above 2 per cent, only to have this denied by other Nato leaders.

But maybe Trump doesn't care



Above: Trump's visit to the UK saw 250,000 protest in London

about the actual policy outcomes because he has other fish to fry.

His attacks on Merkel were semi-orchestrated with the far right governments that have taken office in Europe. They are Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Sebastian Kurz in collaboration with the Nazi Freedom Party in

Austria and Matteo Salvini in Italy.

Similarly, Trump's intervention in the Tory factional struggle over the terms of Brexit was intended to bolster Boris Johnson and other Brexiteers in rebellion against Prime Minister Theresa May.

Trump told the media Johnson would make "a great prime minister" in comments that severely embarrassed his host Theresa May.

As the *Financial Times* newspaper put it, "The US president is clearly intent on forming a new kind of transatlantic alliance with insurgent political forces." Orbán, Kurz, and Salvini are no clowns. They already have Merkel and other leaders of the European extreme centre such as Emmanuel Macron in a headlock.

So Trump is trying to subvert the political institutions of neo-liberal capitalism on both sides of the Atlantic by promoting the forces of the far right. This is very dangerous.

In the first place, neither he nor his European allies have a real economic alternative to neo-liberalism. Their most potent weapon is anti-migrant racism, and the extreme centre is adapting to their demands. Secondly, Trump is giving confidence to genuinely fascist forces, like those on the streets of Britain in recent weeks.

So it's no surprise that his ex-adviser Steve Bannon has called for British Nazi Tommy Robinson's release. We have a tough struggle against racism ahead.

Socialist Worker UK

Trump's embrace of Putin too much for US elite

FOLLOWING THEIR summit in Helsinki, Trump declared that he believed Putin's claim there was no Russian involvement in the 2016 presidential election.

This drew him into conflict with the US security establishment, which claims the opposite.

Within 24 hours, presumably under pressure from advisers, Trump had reversed this. He claimed he had misspoken. By Wednesday Trump was claiming, "There's been no president ever as tough as I have been on Russia." Now he has invited Putin to Washington.

By calling into question the credibility of the US security services Trump overplayed his hand. This was going too far for sections of the US ruling class.

When Trump was elected he surrounded himself with generals and placated organisations such as the CIA. Now Trump has purged all but two generals from his staff and repeatedly attacked the intelligence services.

Trump's strategy of destabilising European liberal politics has converged with Putin's for the time being. That has enraged the Democrats and the US foreign policy hawks who want a more combative stance against Russia.

Trump is caught between appeasing his detractors and appealing to his base. He won his support partly by promising to "drain the swamp" of the same people who are accusing him of treason. He has tested the limits of that contradiction.

**Alistair Farrow
Socialist Worker UK**

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Trump is trying to subvert the political institutions of neo-liberal capitalism by promoting the forces of the far right

Strikes on the rise in New Zealand after long wait for pay rises

RECENT MONTHS have seen a succession of strikes in New Zealand, following the election of a new Labour government under Jacinda Ardern late last year.

More than 4000 public servants in the tax and business and employment departments have held three short strikes since July. Cinema staff at Hoyts have taken action and primary school teachers are planning a full day strike in August, their first in 24 years. In the largest strike so far, 30,000 nurses walked off the job for 24 hours in July, in their first national strike in 30 years.

Danni Wilkinson, a rank-and-file nurses' union activist in Auckland, spoke to *Solidarity* about what's behind the increase in strike action.

Why have nurses in New Zealand been taking strike action?

About 15 years ago nurses received a decent pay rise but since that point our pay has started to slip behind [the cost of living]. By the end of last year our pay growth was 15 per cent behind the median, the minimum and the higher wage. They initially offered us three lots of 2 per cent [over three years] which then increased into 3 per cent [a year] but that still leaves us behind pay wise.

Staffing levels have become unsafe both for patients and for nurses. Taking leave has become problematic, people are called in on their days off or expected to work overtime.

We're fighting for better pay and better working conditions.

How has the nurses' campaign unfolded?

Towards the end of last year we were presented with an offer which our union recommended we take. We declined that offer and then two nurses, one from the north island, one from the south island started a Facebook page. That grew quickly until it had about 50,000 followers. From that a march on 12 May got groups of people organising in each city. I think that got people motivated.

At the same time a petition was presented to the government, again organised by this grassroots group, to say that we wanted staffing improvements.

We voted to take strike action, but the first strike on 5 July was cancelled because the union was presented with



Above: Some of the 30,000 nurses on strike in July

an offer. We declined that offer and went on strike on 12 July for 24 hours.

That was fantastic, there were pickets at most of the major hospitals, and the major cities also had a march.

For the most part public support has been fantastic. We had Unite, First Union and PSA and other unions on strike days when we were marching.

But not a lot happened for the nurses between the strike and the offer that we finally accepted. Union officials made it clear that they did not intend to issue further strike ballots nor organise any further industrial action.

The same offer was presented a third time, though with the pulling pack of a new salary step to three months earlier, and perhaps as a result of wearing down the members, this offer was accepted.

The government did show that they were listening to some extent and signed an accord with District Health Boards, promising to hold them accountable for ensuring that staffing levels were resolved in a timely manner. There is no word on how this will be done however.

Rank and file union members are now looking at the union's structure to see what could be changed to ensure that they are listened to and advocated for better in the future.

When was the last time nurses went on strike like this?

Nurses in New Zealand last went on strike in the 1980s. During the global recession we were told there's no

more money this time but wait until next time, then there were the earthquakes in Christchurch that cost the government a lot of money.

Then we were told, wait until next time and we'll make it an election issue—if a Labour government gets in they'll probably give you more money.

After a lot of promises and a lot of 'wait until next time' now we feel like we've waited long enough.

Teachers are looking to strike as well in the next couple of weeks, I think for similar reasons. They want smaller class sizes and more money. I think across the board the working class are standing up and saying we need to live and pay our bills.

Seeing nurses who never strike taking action has been a bit of motivation, with people saying, if they can why can't we?

Has the fact New Zealand has a new Labour government helped encourage nurses to take action?

I think the promises of 'wait until next time' and being told that we can work with a Labour government has contributed but it's not all of it.

Traditionally Labour have put a bit more money into health and education but they've also talked a lot this time about fiscal responsibility. Having to form a coalition government with New Zealand First has also made a difference. I don't think that they've loosened the purse strings as much as we would expect a Labour government to do.



Danni Wilkinson

Iraq rocked by mass protests over jobs and services

By Mark Gillespie

IRAQ HAS been rocked by a wave of angry mass protests. In the last month thousands have protested and stormed government buildings demanding better electricity and water services, jobs, an end to corruption and to the influence of Iran over their politicians.

Significantly the protests were in southern and central Iraq and consisted of the predominately Shiite poor venting their rage against the Shiite political elite who have dominated the sectarian political system established by the 2003 occupation. The main Shiite parties are all linked to the Iranian government.

It was the sudden cut in electricity supply in Basra on 8 July that brought people onto the streets.

Basra is one of the hottest cities in the world. Temperatures in July regularly exceed 50 degrees. Although the province is rich in resources, supplying about 70 per cent of Iraq's oil, it suffers from high unemployment and poor services. Basra city doesn't have an effective water treatment system and its once vibrant waterways have been reduced to cesspools.

Protesters targeted the oil industry by setting up road blocks of burning tyres on roads leading to the facilities. They also attempted to blockade the nearby commodities port at Umm Qasr and border crossings with Kuwait and Iran.

Unemployed graduate Mohammed Jabbar told Reuters, "If they don't create jobs and improve services such as water and electricity, we will close down Basra and oil production". When people heard that Prime Minister Al-Abadi was in Basra for talks with tribal leaders, they stormed the hotel where the meeting was meant to take place.

The protests spread rapidly into nine predominately Shiite provinces and into Baghdad. In the Shiite holy city of Najaf the airport was stormed and air traffic halted, while in the other holy city of Karbala the provincial government building was stormed. In Samawa protesters tried to storm a courthouse and in Amara they tried to burn a local municipality building.

Protests against poor services have erupted repeatedly in Iraq since the Arab spring in 2011.

In March 2016 populist Shiite cleric Muqtada Al Sadr led demonstrations that occupied the fortified



Above: Thousands have taken to the streets in southern Iraq

government Green zone in central Baghdad. Back then the government used a call for unity during the war with Islamic State to help diffuse the protests, but that excuse has now gone.

The latest protests differ significantly in that no major political party is leading them. Networks of activists and the small Communist Party have taken the initiative.

Corrupt elite

Another feature is the sheer anger directed at the Shiite political elite. All the major Shiite parties from the Islamic Dawa Party and the Badr Organization to the National Wisdom Movement have had their offices targeted, stormed or burnt.

These attacks represent a "profound rupturing of the relationship between the political elites and their core constituency" said Benedict Robin-D'Cruz, an Edinburgh University researcher focused on Iraq.

The Shiite elite have failed to deliver. The official unemployment rate in Iraq is 10.8 per cent and more than double that for youth. Even though Iraq's oil production has more than doubled in the last decade, a quarter of the population live in poverty. Politicians from all backgrounds have pilfered and wasted resources. According to Transparency International, Iraq is the 10th most corrupt country in the world.

Only 44.5 per cent of those eligible voted in May's election, another indication of the deep alienation with

the system. The biggest vote went to the Sairoon Alliance led by Muqtada Al Sadr, who railed against the political establishment. This alliance also includes civil activists and the Communist Party.

Since the election Iraq has been run by a weak caretaker government as politicians negotiate over ministries and the networks of patronage that go with them.

Caretaker Prime Minister Al-Abadi attempted to quell the protests by promising Basra an extra \$3 billion for development and sacking his electricity minister, but people have heard similar promises before.

He also restricted the internet, imposed curfews and sent in extra troops including the US-trained elite Counter Terrorism Service. More than a dozen protesters were killed. This will not endear him with protesters as he negotiates to hang onto his position.

While Muqtada Al Sadr built his electoral fortunes by criticising the political establishment he is now deeply involved in negotiations with that same establishment, and played no role in organising these protests. The Communist Party too, are remaining within his alliance.

Regardless of these political machinations the protests show the potential for building an opposition outside of parliament that breaks with the sectarianism that dominates so much of the politics of the region. They are an indication that the grievances that drove the Arab Spring remain—and can ignite new waves of protest.

WORKERS AGAINST RUSSIAN TANKS THE PRAGUE SPRING OF 1968

Russia's invasion that crushed the mass movement for political reform in Czechoslovakia in 1968 showed the reality of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, argues **Miro Sandev**

IN AUGUST 1968, Russian tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia, putting an end to the Prague Spring; a brief period of democratisation and open discussion by writers and journalists that had broken through the gloom and repression of the authoritarian regime.

The Prague Spring movement rattled the Stalinist regime in Czechoslovakia, but the Russian tanks that had crushed the Hungarian revolution in 1956, again exposed the brutality of the USSR's empire and its refusal to tolerate even mild democratic reforms.

The Russian invasion, and the resistance to it, played a key part in the development of genuinely revolutionary politics and the new left in 1968, that breathed life into the slogan, "Neither Washington nor Moscow".

After the Second World War, the major powers had carved the world into two spheres of influence. The West was dominated by the US and its nuclear umbrella. Russia gained much of Eastern Europe incorporating East Germany, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. These states were economically and politically dominated by Russia, revealing it to be an imperialist power just like the US.

None of these countries experienced a socialist revolution. Instead Russia simply installed pro-Moscow regimes and called them "socialist" states.

In Czechoslovakia in 1948, the local communist party did not smash the existing state structure. Assisted by the threat of the Red Army, it simply took it over in a coup. Communist party ministers, already part of a coalition government, secured control of the police force and used it to shut down all other political parties.

The new regime was state capitalist, just like the regime established in the USSR in the late 1920s when

Stalin came to power. The Communist Party and the state bureaucracy it installed became the new ruling class. In Czechoslovakia 80 per cent of industry had been nationalised even before the coup. This increased to 95 per cent afterwards. But none of it was under workers' control—state bureaucrats were the new bosses.

As in the rest of the Eastern Bloc, the regime built an authoritarian police state where any deviation from the Stalinist orthodoxy was swiftly repressed through military police, the courts and prison camps. Protesting, striking and any independent political activity outside the communist party was totally outlawed, just like in the USSR. Despite the repression, resistance periodically exploded, in East Germany in 1953, and in Poland and Hungary in 1956.

Economic crisis

Czechoslovakia was one of the most repressive of the Stalinist states, lorded over by the party secretary Antonín Novotný. The economy was harnessed to the USSR's effort to compete economically and militarily with the Western powers, forcing them to attack workers' conditions.

Czechoslovakia had an economic boom in the 1950s, taking advantage of its advanced industry to sell engineering equipment to the rest of Eastern Europe. There were substantial rises in real wages. But in the 1960s things began to change. The old markets for its industrial products shrank as other countries in Eastern Europe began to produce their own heavy machinery.

By 1963 the country experienced a recession. Economic reformers amongst the bureaucracy attempted to solve this by eliminating inefficient firms. But the result was that most workers saw real wages stagnate or fall, as inflation exploded. The

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There was an outpouring of open criticism of government policy known as the Prague Spring
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reformers blamed Novotný and the old bureaucrats, arguing they had stifled the reforms.

A faction fight emerged in the bureaucracy between the old guard and the reformers. Both sides felt compelled to look outside the bureaucracy for wider social support.

Prominent writers began openly criticising Novotný. Then students took their chance to protest, with thousands marching in Prague against the poor condition of student housing. The brutal repression of the demonstration by the police only further radicalised the campuses.

The reformers were able to oust Novotný in January 1968 and form a new government headed by Alexander Dubček. They pushed through reforms including freedom of speech and association, the right to travel to Western countries and an end to the arbitrary arrests by security forces. They also pushed market mechanisms like closing down uneconomic firms, which threatened job losses. The reformers hoped to establish a revised version of Stalinism. But in doing so they opened a space for a much more radical critique of the system.

There was an outpouring of open criticism of government policy known as the Prague Spring. Dissident writers and journalist published articles; the state censors asked for their jobs to be done away with and ministers were grilled on television about their failings. Leading bureaucrats were forced to resign their posts. Meetings and debates were held outside of the control of the Communist Party for the first time and new independent political organisations sprang up.

However most of the intellectuals involved believed that they were still living in some kind of workers' state which had to be reformed, rather than overthrown. Others concluded that workers' revolutions would always

lead to totalitarianism. Both perspectives were demobilising. A clear understanding that the 1948 coup was in no sense a workers' revolution was necessary to have any faith in successful working class action in the future.

Meanwhile, workers began to step up their militancy. There were growing numbers of meetings, strikes, and resolutions from the shop floor. Wage claims were put forward. Strikes won improved conditions and forced the resignation of managers. By June 1968, workers had won increases in pensions and maternity and children's allowances, as well as a reduction in the working week.

Some workers were drawing conclusions that led them to align themselves with the more radical intellectuals. Workers Committees for the Defence of the Freedom of the Press were formed in a number of factories. The new party leadership around Dubcek however saw the workers' militancy as a threat, not just to old-guard Stalinism, but also to their own newly-won control over the country.

Invasion

The leaders of the USSR were also increasingly alarmed about where the Prague Spring was headed. In August they, alongside reliable Eastern Bloc allies, invaded with 200,000 troops. Within three or four hours all the main airports, frontier posts, cities and towns were dominated by thousands of Russian tanks. The Dubcek leadership was arrested and flown to Moscow.

As tanks rolled into Prague, hundreds of thousands of protesters occupied the streets. They confronted the invading troops, engaged them in debate, blocked their entry into buildings and removed street signs to confuse them. Workers held a series of sporadic strikes. While there was no armed resistance, this mass passive resistance helped demoralise the invading armies.

Dubcek's faction eventually convinced the USSR that they alone could keep the Czech state machine functioning. The Kremlin released him and returned him to Prague, where he announced that the newly-won freedoms had to be wound back. He proposed a treaty legalising the occupation, tightening up censorship and control over the police and sacking those who had broadcast anti-occupation material.

Dubcek's concessions were met with mass opposition. A resolution carried by 40,000 autoworkers called them "a shameful capitulation". Mass worker and student demonstrations



Above: Workers in Prague threatened by Russian tanks during the invasion that cut short the Prague Spring

shook the country in November, January and at the end of March 1969. Huge crowds demonstrated against the Russians. Collaboration grew and students and workers carried strike resolutions.

As the regime split and under pressure from the workers, the formerly tightly state-controlled trade unions could no longer suppress strikes. But the trade union leaders were more concerned to direct the struggle into support for the reformers, like Smrkovsky, than to organise independently of them. If there was a choice between abandoning reform completely or being removed by the Russians, they chose to abandon reforms.

The million-strong metal workers' union, the miners and the builders all threatened strike action if Smrkovsky or other reformers were removed from office. But Smrkovsky told his supporters to drop their resistance. He issued a grovelling apology to the Stalinist old guard admitting his errors.

In the first months of 1969 there were two rival sources of power, the Russian army and the trade unions. But the reformers were more concerned with their own positions in the state machine and were not about to lead the struggle that was needed.

For their part, the workers continued to look to people who were incapable of leading them—Smrkovsky and the trade union bureaucrats. An independent network of workers' councils, able to lead the mass strike action needed to expel the Russian troops and defend the reforms, did not exist.

The result was that the energy and the anger of the workers quickly dissipated and the bureaucracy wound back the new freedoms.

Despite its eventual defeat, the Prague Spring had a profound impact. In Eastern Europe, two years later, mass strikes rocked Poland and forced the state bosses to withdraw price increases. The mass movements for democratisation gave people a taste of freedom that they wouldn't forget. This resurfaced in the struggles that ended the state capitalist regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The images broadcast to the world of workers and students rising up against the Russian army split many Communist Parties around the world, weakening the hold of Stalinism on the Western Left.

In Australia, the Communist Party leadership publicly condemned the invasion, but a pro-Russian minority split away a few years later to form the pro-Russian Socialist Party of Australia.

In 1968, the world caught fire in Eastern Europe too. In January 1968, around the world, millions had gained an understanding of US imperialism as they watched the Tet offensive in Vietnam and saw the world's greatest military power humbled in the streets of Saigon itself. In August, illusions that Russia and its look-a-like states were socialist were crushed under the tracks of the Russian tanks that stifled the Prague Spring.

The lessons of 1968 are just as pertinent 50 years later. The Prague Spring has given its name to the Arab Spring and the Iraqi Spring for the same reasons—brutally repressive governments have been challenged by struggle from below; and in those struggles we've seen the possibility of the socialism from below that Marx always advocated.

RAPE, VIOLENCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE SYSTEM

Blaming men for sexism and rape obscures the way women’s subordination is structured into capitalism, writes **Lucy Honan**, and our common interest in fighting it

IN THE weeks since Jaymes Todd allegedly raped and killed Eurydice Dixon, the liberal theory that the attitudes of men at large cause violence against women has thickened into an unquestioned mainstream common sense.

The police and those who defaced her memorial poured blame and hatred on Eurydice herself.

But almost every other commentator, including Turnbull, Shorten, Adam Bandt and Clementine Ford has earnestly pointed to men—even the “littlest boys” as Turnbull put it—as those responsible for a culture of hatred and violence against women.

The hypocrisy from Turnbull should have incited outrage. How convenient that those little boys and the people who raise them have to take the blame, while Turnbull’s lesson in misogyny of unaffordable childcare costs and a widening gender pay gap is meant to go unnoticed. When Turnbull says “all men” must learn to respect women, he is shifting the blame to cover up for the sexism of the system.

But from people like Adam Bandt, and other more genuine anti-sexist commentators, the call for men to take responsibility and change the culture only allows Turnbull and those who really are responsible for sexism to bury the real, systemic issues under self-flagellation or demands for interpersonal call-outs.

What could stop rape?

Despite the prevailing common sense, sexism cannot be educated away. Perpetrators of violence against women are likely to hold “traditional and hierarchical” attitudes about women, so it seems to follow that changing their attitudes is the key.

Organisations like the feminist campaign Our Watch promote programs for schools and parents that aim to counter violence by teaching gender equality to children, while universities are promoting consent modules to educate undergraduates.

But Our Watch’s own review of research into gendered violence prevention education reports that programs that fail to “address gendered structures, norms and practices in that setting” don’t work well, and can actually be counter-productive.

Trying to teach students to abandon sexist attitudes in their relationships while leaving unchallenged things like sexist school uniforms, sexist course selection processes, and the systemic undervaluing of teaching as “women’s work” just doesn’t cut through, or worse, provokes a backlash against what is easily seen as moralising hypocrisy.

The same is true in the world outside of educational institutions. The effort to shift attitudes by focusing on calling out men, instead of organising to challenge the ruling elites and the system’s enforcement of family and gender roles, will not work.

The “all men are responsible” approach labels men as potential perpetrators rather than potential allies in a common struggle against a rotten system.

Sexism is structured into our entire society. Calling out men’s behaviour on social media, strategising about ways to confront “casual sexism” in public spaces, or for men to be thinking about how to tactfully show that they really are a good ally of women without appearing to be a poser are stressful, time consuming and a misuse of energy and momentum that should be spent fighting the

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The causes of sexual violence are deeper than the behaviour that interpersonal politics hopes to correct

causes of oppression together.

The causes of sexual violence are deeper than the behaviour that interpersonal politics hopes to correct.

Women are crushed under the burdens of un-paid childcare, underpaid work, and socialised by media stereotypes and objectified sexualities by the same class which exploits and dehumanises men.

Women’s oppression comes from the systematic discrimination against women within capitalism, in particular the role of the nuclear family in the system.

The family plays a crucial social role reproducing and raising the next generation of workers. But the family is fundamentally a service to capitalism not to men.

Men do not have an objective interest in maintaining women’s oppression; male workers do not gain from women’s lower wages or the lack of access to child care or abortion.

Capitalism creates conditions for rape

The way that Eurydice Dixon was raped and murdered was shocking. But most violence against women is inflicted in their home, by a person they know.

Current or previous partners pose the greatest risk of violence for physical, sexual or emotional abuse. On average, a woman is murdered by a current, or former, partner once a week in Australia.

These facts tell us there is clearly something dangerous about the way our most intimate relationships are structured.

Gender roles in the family are still profoundly unequal. The latest Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey shows that heterosexual couples will

share the total amount of time spent in paid and unpaid work almost exactly equally.

But because men spend more time in paid employment, and women are usually paid less, and spend a larger proportion of their time doing unpaid housework and childcare, men have more economic power than women do in relationships. This is especially true of couples with children.

Couples are not structuring their relationships like this because they have backward ideas.

The HILDA survey also showed that agreement with traditional attitudes towards parenting and paid work is relatively low. But women are still paid less than men, so it often makes economic sense for couples that men take on more paid work compared to women. And housework and childcare is a totally private, not public responsibility, so the traditional family roles become impossible to escape.

Relationships sometimes break violently along this faultline of inequality, especially when they come under stress.

The specific circumstances of Eurydice Dixon's rape and murder also point to the need to look beyond the superficial analysis of male violence. Jaymes Todd grew up in Broadmeadows, one of Victoria's youth unemployment "hot-spots".

He has autism, a disability for which no one in Australia receives adequate support. He went to an underfunded school where disadvantage is concentrated.

This context of class oppression is not incidental to his acts of violence. As with other examples of gendered violence, stranger rape is much more likely to occur in a context of social and economic inequality. Poverty degrades and alienates all of us, and leaves people feeling inadequate, and angry.

It also compounds women's oppression. The nuclear family channels the blame for capitalism's social problems onto women.

Our society treats the consequences of poverty like poor nutrition, social isolation and housing instability as a mother's failure, not the system's failure.

Turnbull has just cut childcare subsidies for women who are underemployed or out of education—a punishment for the women and children who most need social support.

Alongside the blame that is heaped on women by structures of



Above: A memorial to Eurydice Dixon as part of one of the vigils held across the country

poverty and the nuclear family, there are oceans of advertising and media creating stereotypes and objectifying women's bodies.

Billions of dollars are spent by ruling class figures (like Rupert Murdoch and Harvey Weinstein) depicting women in humiliatingly dependent situations, as air-brushed, empty-headed, powerless props, a commodity to be bought and controlled by successful men.

It is little wonder in such a society that some men frustrated by social and economic exclusion resort to stealing sex, through rape.

The system is the problem, not men

We can't afford to confuse the interpersonal expressions of sexism for the fundamental social causes, or to regard all men as enemies of women. Despite the fact that our society is organised in a way to guarantee sexist violence, and divide women and men, working class women and men have a common interest in fighting sexism and class oppression.

The struggle for well-funded, fully public services, like childcare, schools, hospitals, disability support, transport and housing are important for all workers. They are important for fighting back against the subordination of women.

All working class children and adults benefit when caring is recognised, valued responsibility for our whole society, not the invisible slave labour of women.

Every fight against privatisation, or for public funding, or equal wages needs to be explicitly understood as an integral part of the fight for women's rights.

People's attitudes are changed in struggles that challenge the fundamental structures of inequality and oppression.

The fight against governments, church leaderships, principals, media and advertising barons and employers is by definition more threatening to the ruling class than the current ineffective approach of asking women and men to reflect on their own internal biases.

The system turns all working people, but women in particular, into objects for the rich to use and discard. To stop rape we need to fight the system that is inherently violent, that subordinates women and creates the conditions for rape.

AGRICULTURE AND THE FIRST STATES

Against the grain: A deep history of the earliest states
By James C. Scott
Yale University Press

THE EMERGENCE of agriculture and the first states were among the most dramatic changes in human history.

Why these changes took place, leading to a revolution in human existence through new technologies such as domesticated grains and livestock, writing, metal-working—and class—continues to be debated.

James C. Scott has produced an accessible and thought provoking account of how the first states arose and functioned. He aims to bring together the, “astonishing advances in our understanding over the past few decades”, of this process that, he says, “have served to radically revise or totally reverse what we thought we knew about the first ‘civilisations’”.

In particular, he writes, the rise of agriculture as a story of the steady “progress of civilisation” has been called into question. Agriculture actually led to worse health and nutritional outcomes for the first farmers, and involved far greater and more intense labour than previously.

The survival of permanent agricultural settlements was also far more precarious than is often realised. The failure of the annual harvest could bring disaster.

Agriculture also brought the first epidemics. Prior to the emergence

of settled communities, there were few hunter gatherer bands large enough to sustain diseases and pass them on to other groups. “Diseases with which we are now familiar—measles, mumps, diphtheria, and other community acquired infections”, he writes, “appeared for the first time in early states”.

As a result early agricultural settlements suffered frequent collapse. Most dynasties in the first city states in Mesopotamia lasted just a few generations, and periods of “dark age” like that in Greece following the collapse of the Mycenaean culture, were common.

All this meant that the development of states was a long, protracted process. The first states developed between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia, centred on modern day Iraq and Syria, “no earlier than about 6000 years ago, several millennia after the first evidence of agriculture and sedentism in the region”, he explains.

All this poses a question. Given the difficulties, why did agriculture develop at all?

For around 95 per cent of the time anatomically modern humans have walked the planet, permanently settled societies were rare. Humans lived in hunter gatherer or foraging groups which moved according to food supplies, living off the land. These were egalitarian societies in which class divisions were unknown. We know this from obser-

The development of states was a long, protracted process

vation of foraging groups who continue to exist to the present day, or until European colonisation in the last few centuries.

Their way of life reflected how they went about acquiring the food and shelter they needed to survive. Humans lived in small groups of only 30 to 40 people, with each member reliant on the whole group to survive.

Friedrich Engels called this “primitive communism”, since these societies were based on egalitarianism and co-operation. Their survival for hundreds of thousands of years is a lesson for those who claim human nature makes us naturally selfish and competitive.

Agriculture

It was between 8000 and 10,000 years ago, writes Scott, that both the domestication of the “founder crops” for agriculture and domesticated cattle, sheep, pigs and goats first appeared.

There were two dramatic shifts. The first was the development of larger communities that settled

permanently in one spot, in order to take advantage of particularly rich food resources. One example is the Natufian culture that developed in the Middle East from 14,500 years ago.

Such settled communities became possible as the climate improved at the end of the last glacial period, when foods like antelope and grains became more widespread.

These societies still engaged in hunting and foraging from the surrounding environment, but began using semi-agricultural techniques.

For Scott, why such settled communities endured is a puzzle, given the frequent collapse they seem to have suffered.

But the main reason is surely the ease of living off the rich resources around wetlands or fields of wild grains, which reduced the uncertainties in gathering food. Scott himself cites the example of wild wheat, which still exists in modern Turkey, where, “as Jack Harlan famously showed, one could gather enough grain with a flint sickle in three weeks to feed a family for a year”.

And as British Marxist Chris Harman pointed out, a return to a foraging lifestyle after hundreds of years living in large towns of up to 5000 people would not have been easy:

“Their communities were too large for them to return to a way of life based on small, wandering bands. That would involve a complete break with an established way of life,

massive social disruption, the learning (or relearning) of survival techniques—and probably starvation on a wide scale at first.”

One possible response to any crisis in food supply was intensifying the use of agricultural techniques.

There is clear evidence that such strains did develop. A series of climatic changes disrupted the new sedentary communities in the Middle East during the period that agriculture was developing.

And the move to fully fledged agriculture after three or four millennia of settled life also came when, Scott writes, “There was growing population pressure; sedentary hunters and fishers found it harder to move and were impelled to extract more, at a higher cost in labour, from their surroundings, and most large game was in decline or gone.”

Class divisions

However Scott’s interest in states, the focus of his own previous academic work, leads him to skip over another crucial development: the emergence of class.

It was agriculture that allowed the first class divisions. Until then societies did not produce enough surplus for them to develop.

Exactly how this happened may never be clear. But studies of still existing agricultural societies in places like Papua New Guinea and the Americas show how emerging elites may have operated. These societies began developing

class divisions but without fully developed states.

It is likely that “leaders” emerged who were able to convince their communities to put them in charge of surplus production. It would have made sense to keep stores of food to cope with crop failures caused by disease or climate fluctuations.

But these “leaders” also used their position to control the surplus, and keep part of it for themselves.

Over time some became hereditary rulers who were able to transfer power and wealth in the form of private property to the next generation.

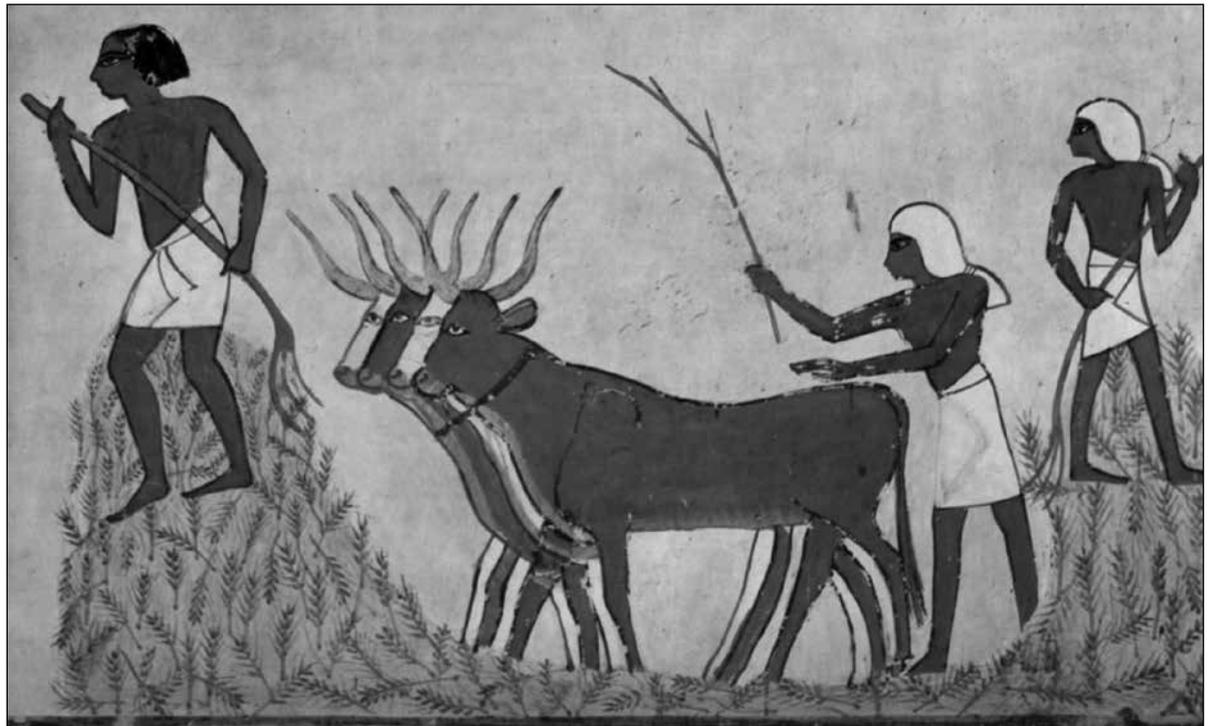
The development of class had far-reaching consequences. For the first time, the mass of the population was exploited in the interests of a minority of society. Some of the exploited were even turned into slaves, with masters who had the power of life or death over them.

Without class, the first states would never have emerged. What defined the early state was a bureaucratic apparatus of officials responsible for collecting the surplus production from its subjects and keeping it in the possession of the new ruling class—using force if necessary.

The state

One of Scott’s main interests is discussing why agriculture in some areas allowed the construction of states, such as Mesopotamia, Egypt and China. Grains, he argues, were a perfect crop for the measurement and taxation which a state required, since the whole crop matures at the same time, is difficult to hide and easy to divide up and transport.

His emphasis is on how difficult it was for early states to survive, in the face of crop failures, disease, environmental degradation and war.



Above: A depiction of early agriculture in Egypt

Scott’s dislike of the state leads him to emphasise its use of coercion against its new subjects. He puts particular stress on the difficulties the new rulers had in maintaining a labour force willing to endure the toil of agricultural labour and the theft of part of their crop in taxes.

He is not the only one to suggest developing agriculture might have been humanity’s greatest mistake. Human foragers, even those in the more marginal environments that remained for study in the last few centuries, had to spend no more than a few hours each day gathering food. One academic has described them as “the original affluent societies”. And they were completely without the oppression of sexism, homophobia or class that “civilised” societies have developed.

But the first states may also have been a response to climate change and food stress, Scott notes, which threatened the ability of early farmers to survive. This helps explain why some communities acquiesced to the con-

struction of states by a new ruling class.

And as Scott acknowledges, fully-fledged agricultural production revolutionised social organisation and human life. It allowed a ruling class and substantial layers of officials to free themselves from the direct need to engage in food production. This promoted advances in technology including improved techniques of food production.

In the face of shortages, allowing an elite the time to supervise production and work to improve crop yields would have made sense to early farming communities. But once a new ruling class was entrenched, it also had the power of force in its hands.

Over time agriculture produced enormous population growth and allowed states to field substantial armies. It also stimulated widespread trade, including with so-called “barbarian” groups who did not practice agriculture. Scott argues that the possibility of raiding settled agricultural groups, and making off with their stores of grain, livestock and accumulated wealth, led to a

“golden age” for barbarian, non-state peoples.

But by drawing them into networks of trade and warfare, the new states also began to reshape the way non-state peoples made their living, eventually incorporating many of them into settled life.

Scott is right to stress the oppression and suffering that the development of agriculture and the state produced for humanity. At the same time, they have allowed phenomenal growth in wealth, technology and human productive capacities.

Despite his recognition of the drawbacks of state-centred societies, Scott believes we are stuck with them.

Socialists disagree. The level of surplus production that exists in today’s capitalist societies makes a truly democratic society free of state and class oppression possible. Class struggles against the state were surely one reason it took millennia for ruling classes to cement their control. And class struggle today holds the hope of toppling them for good.

James Supple

It allowed a ruling class and substantial layers of officials to free themselves from the direct need to engage in food production

HAMID WAS KILLED BY AUSTRALIA: CORONER DAMNS OFFSHORE DETENTION

By Ian Rintoul

IT HAS taken four years, but the Coronial findings on the death of Hamid Khazaei have delivered a scathing indictment of offshore detention.

No one was held liable for Hamid's death. But the inquiry reveals a truly appalling list of medical mistakes (consistently labelling Hamid's medical care on Manus as "inadequate") misjudgements, incompetence, and worst of all bureaucratic delays that prevented Hamid getting the treatment that could have saved his life.

Hamid was first treated at the Manus IHMS clinic on the afternoon of 23 August 2014. Doctors' recommendations to get him off Manus were first made on 24 August: "This client has exhausted all antibiotic treatment that is available on Manus Island. This client is already displaying symptoms of deterioration, despite treatment with available antibiotics". Yet he wasn't even transferred to Port Moresby until 26 August.

And about Port Moresby, the Coroner writes, "It is clear on the evidence that the clinicians working at the PIH [Pacific International Hospital] on 26 August 2014 when Mr Khazaei arrived did not have the necessary clinical skills to deal with Mr Khazaei." When he was finally transferred to Brisbane on 27 August, he was already brain dead.

It is sickening to read about the delays and buck-passing between bureaucrats and medical companies that killed Hamid.

Doctor Dennett was the doctor in Queensland in the International SOS office contacted by the Manus doctors requesting Hamid's transfer to Australia. He told the inquiry, "we knew that if we—if we recommend transferring to Australia, it would not be approved."

The expert doctor assisting the coroner said, "I'm a doctor. I'm not a politician or a bureaucrat, and I must admit I don't understand why you had to get permission to transfer a patient for clinical reasons."

There are many recommendations about the standard of medical care that should be available in offshore detention centres—like having clinics



accredited by recognised Australian medical associations to Australian standards.

But one of the stronger recommendations, and one that could have an immediate effect, is that Border Force bureaucrats get out of medical decisions that affect people's lives. As the coroner put it, "clinical considerations should prevail over all other factors when a recommendation for urgent medical movement is made."

Even since the coronial finding, Border Force is routinely vetoing doctors' recommendations for transfers off Manus and Nauru. Almost every week now, the Federal Court is overriding Border Force to order the government to bring families from Nauru to Australia because of the physical and mental damage that has been inflicted on them offshore.

Death sentence

The responsibility for Hamid's death lies with the Australian government. He was handed a death sentence when he was forcibly transferred to Manus Island.

The coroner put it succinctly, that it would, "be possible to prevent similar deaths by relocating asylum seekers to other places, such as Australia or New Zealand, where better health care would be provided."

The government has said it will review the coroner's finding—but that is code for ignoring it. As far as

Above: This shed is the only hospital available on Manus Island, apart from the scaled-back clinic for refugees at the Lorengau transit accommodation

the government is concerned, offshore detention is playing the role planned for it. And Labor, which restarted this version of the Pacific Solution on 19 July 2013, has been deafeningly silent about the offshore deaths.

For months now, Labor has declared that when it takes office, it will get all asylum seekers and refugees off Nauru and Manus. As pressure mounted with rallies marking the five year anniversary of offshore detention, Bill Shorten went so far as to name Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Canada and New Zealand as target resettlement countries. But this only exposes how vacuous Labor's plan really is.

New Zealand has said that it will take 150 refugees a year. But there is no reason to think that the other countries named will agree to cooperate with Australia's offshore prison regime. South Korea has taken a grand total of 79 people between 2015 and 2017, and they were recognised UNHCR refugees.

The movement's demand to "Bring Them Here" will need to grow even louder over the coming months.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, the inquest into the death of Fazel Chegeni is just winding up. Suppression orders have so far prevented some of the stark revelations of Fazel's mistreatment in onshore detention being publicly revealed. (Some dispatches from the inquest can be read at www.bit.ly/fazeldeathscapes) But Fazel was just as surely killed by mandatory detention.



Hamid Khazaei