

## CAPITALISM IS KILLING THE PLANET



**SYSTEM CHANGE  
NOT CLIMATE  
CHANGE**

### REFUGEES

Manus move not the  
end of detention

### BREXIT

Boris's plan sparks  
political chaos

### CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Climate activism and  
challenging the system



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## EMAIL

[solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

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# SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown  
For more information contact:  
Adam on 0400 351 694  
[sydney@solidarity.net.au](mailto:sydney@solidarity.net.au)

### Melbourne

Melbourne Solidarity meets 6pm fortnightly on Wednesday at Kathleen Syme Library and Community Centre 251 Faraday Street, Carlton  
For more information contact:  
Chris on 0403 013 183  
[melbourne@solidarity.net.au](mailto: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](mailto:brisbane@solidarity.net.au)

### Canberra

For more information contact:  
John on 0422 984 334 or  
[canberra@solidarity.net.au](mailto:canberra@solidarity.net.au)

### Magazine office

Phone 02 9211 2600  
Fax 02 9211 6155  
[solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

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## Things they say

*The situation we are facing this summer is nothing short of a potential fish Armageddon.*

NSW Agriculture Minister Adam Marshall on the potential for another huge fish kill in the Barwon-Darling River

*Hands up those who are not compromised in some way, shape or form.*

Barnaby Joyce tries hard to defend his credibility as he positions himself as a moral guardian over abortion

*I hope Scott Morrison gets tough here with a few backhanders.*

Radio 2GB's Alan Jones issues his typical misogynist advice to the PM in dealing with NZ leader Jacinda Ardern

*He's someone you'd like to punch in the head.*

Stewart, a pharmaceutical manager, on Bill Shorten in a pre-election focus group

*He can say that he's not a racist, and I agree with him, OK? And let me explain to you why he's not a racist, 'cause this is very important. He's actually worse than a racist. He is so narcissistic, he doesn't see people as people. He sees them as objects in his field of vision.*

Anthony Scaramucci, former White House communications director (for 11 days) talking about, who else, Donald Trump

*I don't know if climate change is manmade. I'm about practical outcomes, whether that's about having a cleaner environment or giving farmers and emergency services the right tools to adapt.*  
Agriculture Minister David Littleproud can't bring himself to even admit that human activities are warming the climate

*What we're seeing, it's just not within people's imagination. They just didn't believe it could ever get so bad.*

Lee Johnson, former Queensland's fire commissioner, on the horror start to the bushfire season in September

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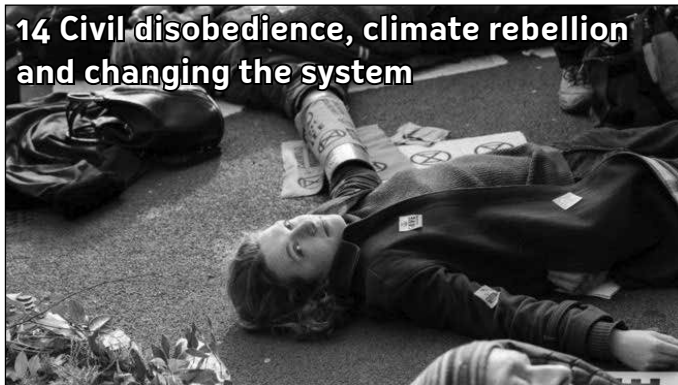


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# INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

## Man wrongly arrested and beaten in terror raid wins damages

AN ABORIGINAL man wrongly arrested during a terror raid in 2015 has received \$400,000 damages, after a judge savaged police and the story they told the court.

Eathan Cruse, then 19, was restrained with cable ties and then beaten by police, with one officer slamming him into a fridge. He suffered concussion, a cut to his ear, bruising as well as depression and post-traumatic stress.

“One or more police officers, armed and armoured, their faces masked, struck Mr Cruse repeatedly on to his head, neck and upper body while he was lying, handcuffed and defenceless, on his parents’ kitchen floor,” Supreme Court Justice Melinda Richards found.

One of the police officers involved claimed he had “lightly been pushed” into the fridge after he had slipped.

Justice Richards said that despite Cruse making a complaint to Victoria’s Police Professional Standards Command back in 2015, no action had been taken. She indicated she would refer the matter to the state’s anti-corruption commission.

Police Minister Lisa Neville said the government would appeal the decision.

## Boats story released to suit government story, Morrison admits

SCOTT MORRISON has admitted the government deliberately released information about refugee boat arrivals from Sri Lanka to “keep the threat of illegal arrivals” in the public eye.

News that six boats had attempted to make it to Australia since May were released amidst the furore over efforts to deport the Tamil family of Priya, Nades and their two children. Altogether the six boats carried just 101 people.

But the fact of anyone trying to make the journey, given the Australian government’s willingness to hand them straight back to Sri Lanka, shows how desperate the situation for Tamils there is.

## Howard’s policy to leave Timorese to their fate



AUSTRALIA OPPOSED plans to send troops into East Timor in 1999, with the government putting its relationship with the Indonesian government ahead of the lives of the Timorese, newly released documents suggest.

Declassified US intelligence documents show Australia lobbied repeatedly against the idea of sending troops. The US had requested discussions on sending in a multinational military force before the independence ballot, fearing the outcome. But Australia refused. It made the decision to send troops only after Timor Leste descended into chaos following the overwhelming vote for independence.

And it was the US that succeeded in pressuring Indonesia to allow the troops to go in, not Australia, after pro-Indonesian militias had gone on the rampage. The documents put the lie to the idea Australian troops went in to liberate the Timorese.

As University of NSW Professor Clinton Fernandes put it, “These cables essentially confirm that the Howard government’s policy was to keep Timor in Indonesia. And at the end it was forced to backflip.”

## Bahamas are on frontline of climate chaos

THE BAHAMAS have been devastated by Hurricane Dorian, a powerful category five storm. They are on the frontline of climate change, which is making the storms stronger and more frequent.

Dorian is one of the most powerful storms on record, with winds reaching 300 km/h.

Rising floodwaters trapped residents, forcing some onto their roofs. Storm surges reached 5.5 metres above normal tide levels.

Around 70,000 out of the islands’ total population of 400,000 are homeless and in need of food relief. Many more homes are damaged. As we got to print 44 people are confirmed dead, but authorities admit the final toll will be far higher.

The disaster is a preview of the impact of climate change, as extreme weather events become more common and more deadly.

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

## Ten companies took 86 per cent of Barwon-Darling water

A TINY number of big irrigators extracted 86 per cent of the water from the Barwon-Darling river system and pushed the river prematurely into drought, a report has found.

Out of 158 licence holders, just ten agribusiness companies took 86 per cent of the water, and four extracted 75 per cent. The level of water taken from the river pushed the system into drought three years early, it said. Most of the water is used by big cotton producers.

In 2012 new water rules were introduced that increased the amount of water that could be taken under A class licenses, with the highest allocation, leading to “a marked increase in the volume [extracted] between 2014- 2017”, the report said.

Water allowed for irrigators was increased by as much as 32 per cent, after an initial water plan from an independent NSW panel was rewritten by the then Minister, according to *The Guardian*.

Professor Fran Sheldon of the Australian Rivers Institute, who produced the new report, was attacked by NSW Water Minister Melinda Pavey, who demanded an alternative analysis from a different government body. The initial review was requested after the devastating fish kills on the river in January.

## Tassie MPs says she’s not paid enough

THE SPEAKER in Tasmania’s parliament is not paid enough, says current Speaker and MP Sue Hickey. Her \$190,000 annual salary isn’t enough to attract the best talent to the role, apparently. The ACT pays its Speaker an outrageous \$260,000, and the NT forks out \$270,000 a year.

“We’re working very, very long hours, seven days a week, and sometimes putting ourselves at great risk,” she lamented. None of her parliamentary colleagues were willing to back up her complaint.

# EDITORIAL

## Workers and the climate movement have the power to strike back

EVIDENCE OF a rapidly changing climate is mounting. In the Bahamas 70,000 people have lost their homes in one of the strongest hurricanes on record. Australia's bushfire season has already begun, with authorities saying it is the worst start to the season in Queensland's history, with over 80 fires burning.

These are exactly the kind of more frequent, more intense disasters that climate scientists have predicted as the planet warms.

Yet Scott Morrison's government still supports burning fossil fuels. Instead of closing coal power stations, it wants to extend the life of the power plant at Liddell.

Tens of thousands will join the 20 September Climate Strike to demand urgent action. This time high school students will be joined by contingents of unionists. In Sydney, university staff, maritime and construction workers, and workers from warehouses and the community sector will attend in numbers. Victorian Trades Hall is also organising a contingent for the Melbourne rally.

High school student organisers have shifted since the federal election to explicitly reach out to workers. This includes adding a new demand, for funding for a just transition and job creation for fossil fuel workers.

This is a crucial development. Drawing in unions and organised workers is vital to mobilising the social power the movement needs to stop business as usual. We will need strikes on a social-wide basis to win system change.

Action to stop climate change will have to be forced from below—the governments and companies that run the system always put their profits before the planet.

Don't be fooled by some businesses expressing support for the Climate Strike. Technology company Atlassian and some others have given staff permission to join the rallies. Ice cream company Ben & Jerry's are promoting the event and closing their stores for the day. They are only doing it because they think that being seen to support the strike will be good for sales.

But thinking that corporations are allies of the movement is a mistake; they are fair weather friends.

Every company will sack workers and cut wages and conditions when they need to boost their profits. Ben & Jerry's is owned by the multi-national



**Above: We need to keep fighting the Morrison government's denial of climate action**

Unilever, which tried to cut Streets ice cream workers' pay by 46 per cent in 2017 through terminating their enterprise agreement.

No amount of greenwashing can disguise that under capitalism workers and the environment are treated as commodities to be ruthlessly exploited to make profits. It is that system that is killing the planet.

A climate movement that is serious about fighting for system change will need to put the fight for new jobs in renewable energy and increased government spending on public transport at the centre of the social-wide climate transition that is needed. The federal election result showed that demands for climate action which ignore concerns about jobs and workers' issues allow the Liberals and climate deniers to pose as workers' friends and pull politics to the right.

We need to demand that coal power stations like Liddell are replaced with 100 per cent publicly-owned renewable energy and that workers in coal communities have guaranteed alternative jobs.

### Economy stalling

The crisis that is stalking the Australian and world economies makes the issue of jobs and living standards even more important. There has been widespread alarm after economic growth in Australia over the last year was just 1.4 per cent, the slowest since the 2009 economic crisis. Wages have flat-lined or gone backwards.

Instead of increasing Newstart from

its current poverty levels, Morrison is only interested in punishing the unemployed. He has revived the government's plan for compulsory drug tests for those on welfare, despite the Senate rejecting it twice before the election.

He also wants to expand the demeaning "cashless welfare card", which forces the unemployed to pay for goods with a special card identifying them as being on welfare. The Australian Council of Social Service opposes the move. Aboriginal communities that have suffered under the policy for years have overwhelmingly rejected it as humiliating.

Morrison is also pushing the anti-union "Ensuring Integrity Bill", due to be voted on in November. Under the legislation union officials who defy the law could be banned from office. This will boost the power of bosses and the government to harass officials and attack union organisation.

If the union leaders called mass stopwork rallies to oppose the bill, Morrison's anti-union offensive could be pushed back.

School climate strikers have shown fantastic solidarity with the union movement, publicly condemning the Ensuring Integrity Bill. We need to take the same defiant spirit into the fight against the bosses and Morrison's anti-union laws.

It is unity between the climate movement and the workers' movement that has the power to challenge the crisis-ridden system of capitalism and fight for a society that puts people and the planet before profits.

.....  
**Thinking that corporations are allies of the movement is a mistake**

# Don't side with xenophobia about threat from China

By James Supple

RECENT WEEKS have seen a growing campaign against “Chinese influence” in Australia, mainly from right-wing figures in the Liberal Party.

China’s government is brutally repressive. This has led some of those involved in the heroic protests for democracy in Hong Kong to back the warnings against Chinese government influence here. Academic Clive Hamilton, who authored the notorious anti-Chinese book, *Silent Invasion*, spoke alongside student activists from Hong Kong at a major forum in Melbourne.

But this campaign only reinforces Australian nationalism, and leads to siding with US imperialism against China.

It has also led to Chinese-Australians being treated as increasingly suspect and disloyal. Clive Hamilton’s book depicts them as a fifth column loyal to Beijing, alleging that, “The Chinese embassy and consulates pull the strings of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Chinese-Australians in sensitive positions.”

This can only encourage racism, as it echoes the hysteria about Chinese migrants and the threat of the Yellow Peril used to justify the White Australia Policy and the Vietnam War.

The US confrontation with China is often portrayed as a new cold war.

Hard right Liberal MP Andrew Hastie made this explicit, declaring there was now “overt geopolitical rivalry across the Indo-Pacific” between the US and China, and comparing Australian thinking to the French complacency about the Nazis in the lead up to the Second World War.

Despite the desire to maintain lucrative trade deals with China, the Australian ruling class is solidly behind the US alliance. Up to 2500 US marines now rotate through bases in Darwin and the US tracking station at Pine Gap plays a vital role in US military operations globally.

US influence in Australia far surpasses anything China is capable of. The US embassy puts great effort into cultivating contacts in the Australian political system. Diplomatic cables released by Wikileaks revealed the regular parade of senior politicians feeding information to the US. Labor powerbroker Mark Arbib was one confidential contact, delivering regular briefings to the US embassy during the Rudd and Gillard governments. Nu-



**Above: Siding with Australian nationalism and US power will not help the struggle for democracy in Hong Kong**

merous other Labor figures, including Bob Hawke (while head of the ACTU) and Bob Carr have done the same.

An annual Australia America Leadership Dialogue brings together hand-picked political figures, journalists and business leaders in an effort to shape elite opinion in Australia.

China is different from the West, the new Cold War warriors say, because it is a dictatorship that threatens “our democratic values”. But the ruling classes in Australia and the US are far more concerned about their own wealth and power than democratic values.

While protests and dissent do not pose any threat they are happy to tolerate them. Otherwise the response is swift. Queensland has just passed draconian anti-protest laws in response to demonstrations over climate change that blocked traffic. Workers are regularly handed individual \$42,000 fines for taking unlawful strike action in Australia—the most glaring example of laws that ban the right to strike.

The Australian government has happily let the AFP trample on press freedom by raiding and threatening journalists. It has approved the prosecution of whistle-blowers who exposed Australia’s bugging of Timor Leste’s government offices.

## US war crimes

The US has a far greater ability than China to interfere in other countries. The US military remains vastly more powerful than its rivals. Its 2018 military spending of \$649 billion was almost three times that of China.

Author William Blum has catalogued how, “since 1945 the US has attempted to overthrow more than fifty governments, most of which were democratically elected, and grossly interfered in democratic elections in at least thirty countries.”

Its military interventions defend the profits of US corporations. In 1953 in Iran the US overthrew the elected government to stop it nationalising the country’s oil. In 1954, the US invaded Guatemala to remove a government threatening the United Fruit Company.

It has killed literally millions of people and left whole countries devastated—including Iraq where at least one million died as a result of its invasion and occupation from 2003.

After the Egyptian army overthrew the elected Muslim Brotherhood government in 2013, the US continued delivering them \$1.3 billion in military aid each year. It supports and arms dictatorships across the Middle East including Saudi Arabia, notorious for ordering the gruesome murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Australia’s alliance with the US has seen the Australian government continually aiding and abetting the US’s dangerous and aggressive moves around the world, mostly recently its efforts to isolate Iran in the Persian Gulf.

We should reject the nationalist cheer-leading and the racism that is part and parcel of the scare-mongering about “Chinese influence”. The real threat to democratic rights in the Asia Pacific is US imperialism and the US-Australia alliance.

**US influence in Australia far surpasses anything China is capable of**

# Australian neo-colonialism and the climate crisis in the Pacific

By Paddy Gibson

THE AUSTRALIAN government's performance at the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) in August laid bare a ruthless agenda of regional domination and profit making at all costs.

As Pacific Island leaders pleaded for strong action on climate change, Scott Morrison and Australian negotiators moved to ensure all references to stopping the expansion of the coal industry were removed from the forum's communique.

Meanwhile back in Australia, at a business forum in Wagga Wagga, Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack complained about, "people in those sorts of countries pointing the finger at Australia and saying we should be shutting down all our resources sector so that, you know, they will continue to survive".

"They will continue to survive," he said, because of "large aid assistance from Australia" and "because many of their workers come here and pick our fruit".

These disgraceful comments were slammed as "neo-colonial" by Enele Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu who was hosting the PIF.

Australia's response to the climate crisis is grounded in more than 150 years of Australian imperialism in the region. Australia is manoeuvring both to ensure exclusive military domination, while also taking new opportunities for exploitation of the labour of Pacific Islanders on Australian corporate farms.

## Imperialism and climate change

The Australian Defence White Paper in 2016 argued that climate change will drive "instability" and "state fragility" as Pacific peoples suffer from large-scale displacement and food shortages.

Speaking to 3CR radio in Melbourne in the lead up to the PIF, Pelenise Alofa, from the Kiribati Climate Action Network, said cyclones and king tides in recent years had caused unprecedented suffering on her islands, while "in other places like the Solomon Islands, PNG, Tuvalu and Fiji, people are already moving" as sea levels rise.

But rather than act to cut carbon emissions, Australia is moving to lead "security" responses to potential social dislocation, to ensure corporate interests are protected first and fore-



**Above: Children on Tuvalu sit in water surrounding a model island to symbolise the threat they face from climate change, during the Pacific Islands forum**

most, and to check the rising influence of China in the region.

In 2017, Defence was at the centre of the launch of a new "whole of government" approach called "Pacific Step Up", with policy documents pledging to "engage with the Pacific with greater intensity and ambition". Australia is the largest provider of foreign aid to the region, and this funding is increasingly being concentrated in grants to police and the military, including the gifting of 19 new patrol boats to Pacific states.

The Federal Police and ADF are integrating their command structures with Pacific states and a new "Australia Pacific Security College" established with the Australian National University (ANU) will be part of a broader push to lead Australian training efforts.

Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama said at the PIF that Australia's "colonial attitude" would push his country closer to China. But despite these threats, in late 2018, Australia successfully secured its position as sole funder of Fiji's new Black Rock military base, which will train military personnel from across the Pacific, against a Chinese bid. Australia is also building a new base on PNG's Manus Island.

## Exploitation

Also central to "Pacific Step-Up" is the creation of a new visa category for Pacific workers to come to Australia for three years, so they can earn money to send back home. This would complement an existing Seasonal Workers Program, which provides a

six-month visa to work in the horticultural industry.

While McCormack presented this as some kind of act of charity, in reality Pacific workers provide the backbone of a highly profitable industry and are often exploited in terrible conditions.

Comparisons can be drawn with the "blackbirding" trade, which saw indentured labourers brought from the islands to cut sugar cane on Australian plantations in the 19th century. Workers today are similarly tied to a single employer and face deportation if they leave.

Alison Rahill, from the Catholic Diocese of Sydney Anti-Slavery Taskforce, says there are "definitely slavery-like conditions" being faced by many Pacific workers.

Workers are routinely paid below award wages and work in unsafe conditions. The program has been marred by 14 deaths of Pacific workers in the last six years.

Climate justice for the Pacific requires a rapid decarbonisation of the Australian economy and a demilitarisation of the Australian response to the unfolding climate crisis. Aid is urgently needed for Pacific-led climate mitigation and disaster response teams. And the people of the Pacific need unlimited rights to work in Australia and to change employers or return home whenever they need.

The "Pacific Climate Warriors", a growing group of youth from the Pacific diaspora, will be at the head of the 20 September global climate strike in Sydney, marching under the banner "we are not drowning—we are fighting".

**The Australian Defence White Paper in 2016 argued that climate change will drive "instability" and "state fragility"**



# Indigenous families fight deaths in custody and police failures

By Nyk Carnsew

ON 21 August hundreds protested in Sydney in an outpouring of support for Indigenous families in NSW who have lost relatives in police custody, or in suspicious circumstances where police failed to investigate.

The rally was organised by the families of 15 victims. Some of the families have been fighting for justice for 30 years, including relatives of Buddy Kelly, one of four boys killed in suspiciously similar circumstances around Tamworth. As Greens MP David Shoebridge explained, “no 16-year-old Aboriginal boy with everything to live for walks out one night and lies on a railway track to be killed by a train. But I know of at least three occasions that the NSW police have signed off on deaths like that and called them suicide and failed to investigate.”

Many of the families gave powerful speeches detailing their cases. Christina, mother of 17-year-old Rayshaun Carr, who died in a car crash near Goondiwindi last year, told the crowd, “my son was in an accident, so they say”. Police failed to investigate properly, but the family have uncovered evidence that their son died as the result of a car chase. The family has succeeded in forcing a coronial inquest into his death, which begins on 28 October.

Another relative, Brittany, added, “we would like to know why [he died] and what happened. We want justice.”

The parents of 22-year-old Tane Chatfield, Colin and Nioka, also addressed the rally. Tane’s trial had finally begun after spending two years in prison awaiting trial, and he expected to be acquitted, when he died in a Tamworth jail cell in September 2017. Corrective Services say he committed suicide, but the family argue he was murdered. Cuts and bruises on his body suggest he was involved in a physical confrontation, and the family is still awaiting a coronial inquest.

Three other Indigenous people died in custody in NSW within two years prior to Chatfield’s death.

While some of these names are already known to the public—such as 14-year-old TJ Hickey who was murdered by NSW police in Redfern in 2004—many of the other victims have gone undiscussed and unremarked upon outside of the Indigenous community. It’s important that we as



**Above: Families who have lost loved ones led hundreds of marchers**

socialists stand in solidarity with the Indigenous community against these heinous examples of state violence, as

the system that so brutally oppresses their community is the same one that we stand against.

## Liberals announce new rights to religious bigotry

THE LIBERALS’ new religious discrimination bill is designed to undermine the victory for marriage equality and promote the right to spread bigotry. A draft bill was finally released at the end of August.

It would roll back some existing state-based anti-discrimination laws in Tasmania and Victoria.

And it would allow employees to express “statements of religious belief” outside work that are bigoted or discriminatory, unless their employer was able to prove the statements caused it “unjustified financial hardship” or constituted harassment or vilification.

This is designed to assist people like Israel Folau, who was sacked by Rugby Australia for breaching its code of conduct. The measures apply to companies with annual revenue of over \$50 million.

Law Council President Arthur Moses warned this protection is not limited to bigotry against LGBTI people, but would also apply to racial hatred.

The bill also grants doctors and medical staff greater ability to object to delivering certain kinds of healthcare. Conduct rules in medical services and pharmacies would only be justified if they were designed to avoid an “unjustifiable adverse impact” on patients. Melbourne GP

Ruth McNair, who works in LGBTI health, told *The Age* there was already a significant problem for LGBTI people accessing “standard healthcare” due to discrimination.

It would also establish a “Religious Freedom Commissioner” to campaign on the issue.

All this goes far beyond a simple ban on discrimination against people because of their faith.

The government says the measures are justified by citing an anti-discrimination complaint against the Catholic Archbishop of Hobart, over a booklet on Church teaching on marriage. But the booklet did not simply oppose equal marriage but offensively claimed that same sex parenting “messes with kids” and that same-sex partners aren’t whole people. And the anti-discrimination claim over it was dropped after mediation.

There is simply no need for the new law—apart from sending a message to the religious right that they can continue to spread bigotry.

The government is still preparing further legislation addressing exemptions from discrimination law for religious institutions and schools—and what rights they should have to expel LGBTI students and sack teachers. The Law Reform Commission is due to finalise its review on these issues in April next year.

**Some of the families have been fighting for justice for 30 years**



# Not ended, relocated: Manus detention transferred to Port Moresby

By Ian Rintoul

WHEN THE newly-installed Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, James Marape, visited Australia in July, he reportedly told the Home Affairs Minister that he wanted to shut down the offshore processing regime in PNG “as soon as possible”.

In the last few weeks, all but five of the people detained on Manus have been transferred to Port Moresby. But the relocation does not signal the end of offshore detention in PNG, and the refugees are no closer to freedom.

Marape also raised hopes with his comment, “These are human beings we’re dealing with. We can’t leave them all hanging in space with no serious consideration into their future.” But PNG and Australian immigration are just shifting the detention deckchairs, there is no future for the refugees in Port Moresby.

Since Marape’s comments, 53 asylum seekers have disappeared into the black hole of the Australian-built high security Bomana detention centre. Nothing had been heard of them since their arrest on 12 August, and access to the Bomana detention centre has been denied to UNHCR and the Red Cross.

There are now around 350 refugees in PNG, with around 70 of them waiting in Port Moresby to be re-settled in the US. That leaves around 280 who have no future.

Successive attempts at settling refugees in Port Moresby have failed. There is not even basic food, accommodation and medical and mental health support to sustain them, let alone provide for the greater needs of refugees who have been brutalised by six years of detention on Manus.

JDA, the company supposedly responsible for refugee support services in Port Moresby, is one of the companies currently being investigated by the Australian National Audit Office over alleged contract irregularities, including billing for services that were not provided.

At the moment, refugees supposedly being settled in Port Moresby get an allowance of 160 kina a week (A\$80), while refugees being housed in one of the hotels get 100 kina. But “settled” refugees have to pay for food, water, and transport. One hundred and sixty kina does not cover basic living costs.

Port Moresby is not safe and the refugees are easy targets. Most have



## Thousands turn out to keep Tamil family in Australia

OVER THE last two weeks, there has been an outpouring of opposition to the government’s attempt to deport the Biloea Tamil family, Priya, Nades and their two children, Kopika and Tharunicaa, to Sri Lanka. Protests were held in 14 towns and cities across Australia the day after an urgent court injunction temporarily halted the government’s attempt to deport them. Over 250,000 people have signed the petition calling for the government to let them stay.

While the Home Affairs Minister and the Minister for Immigration are insistent that they will not use their discretionary power to let the family stay, it was recently revealed in the Senate that ministerial discretion had been used to overturn government policy 52 times to allow people sent offshore to stay in Australia.

The family is being held on Christmas Island, with a further injunction holding them in Australia until another court hearing on 18 September.

been mugged and robbed, multiple times, often at knife or gun point. A taxi to get to the hospital for any medical treatment would easily cost 60 kina return.

There are no jobs, so most refugees in the community become destitute quite quickly and end up homeless. Desperate refugees have even tried to get back to the Manus detention centre, because they could not survive “in the community”.

The precise conditions that refugees will face in hotels in Port Moresby have not been spelled out. But, regardless, like the forced eviction from detention on the naval base to other compounds on Manus Island, relocation is not a solution. The government hopes the shift puts refugees in PNG out of sight and out of mind.

As Shamindan Kanapathi, one of the relocated refugees put it, “I have been waiting six years to leave Manus Island... But those of us who have left, still do not know what our future

holds. We have left Manus to go to... nowhere.”

Meanwhile the government is still pushing to repeal the Medevac legislation so that it would once again have total control over the fate of refugees on Manus and Nauru. “Hands Off Medevac” rallies have been called for Saturday 9 November in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

## Onshore fight heats up

On Saturday 14 September, thousands of refugees on temporary protection visas and asylum seekers still waiting after eight years for an answer to their claims will hold protests for permanent protection in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide.

After the successful demonstrations in Canberra and Sydney, they will highlight the hidden injustice of tens thousands of people in the community on temporary protection visas or bridging visas still waiting for up to eight years.

**Port Moresby is not safe and the refugees are easy targets**

# Concession will not stop movement in Hong Kong

By Sadie Robinson

A MASS pro-democracy movement has forced Hong Kong's chief executive Carrie Lam to grant a major concession. But many protesters are vowing to continue their struggle until all of their demands are met.

The movement began in June in opposition to a new bill that would allow suspects in Hong Kong to be extradited to mainland China. Within days, mass protests forced Lam to suspend the bill.

Now she has made her biggest concession yet, promising that the bill will be formally withdrawn. But since June the movement has grown into a battle to win a different kind of society.

Demonstrators' demands include Lam's resignation, a fully independent inquiry into police violence, an amnesty for all those jailed and more democracy. Now many are repeating the slogan, "The five core demands—we will accept nothing less."

Lawmaker Eddie Chu said that if Lam withdraws the bill "then we will change our slogan to, 'Four key demands, we will accept nothing less'." Protester Claudia Mo said, "This is too little, too late. The die is cast."

Lam's announcement is a testament to the strength of the movement in Hong Kong. Mass protests, strikes and direct action have terrified the authorities in Hong Kong and China.

At least a quarter of the population has taken part in protests. And people have continued their action for over 14 weeks—in defiance of extreme violence from cops and masked thugs.

## Attacked

Police have attacked protesters with batons, tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets. They have fired live ammunition to try and disperse demonstrators. Many protesters wear eye patches in reference to a woman who may lose an eye after being hit by a police beanbag round.

And cops say that they have arrested 1117 people since protests began on 9 June.

Lam has also announced other measures to try and "fully allay public concerns". These include adding more members to the police watchdog group and sending officials "into the community" to listen to ordinary people.



**Above: Hong Kong's wave of protests have lasted over 14 weeks**

This falls short of an independent commission to investigate police violence. Lam admitted that her plans won't "address all the grievances".

Lam's climbdown came two days after some workers, school and university students began strikes and class boycotts. Health workers held protests inside the Prince of Wales and Queen Mary hospitals in support of demonstrators.

University student Krystal Hung said, "This is more important than school. I can catch up on my studies on my own. And if I don't come out this time, I may not have another

chance in the future."

The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions estimated that 350,000 joined a general strike on 5 August.

Some protesters have waved US flags and called on US president Donald Trump to intervene.

But ruling classes in the US and Britain will put their own interests before those of ordinary people.

The movement in Hong Kong is showing the power that ordinary people have when they take collective action. They will have to keep up the pressure to win all of their demands.

**Socialist Worker UK**

## Shipyard workers occupy for climate jobs

AN ONGOING struggle in Belfast has seen militant workers at the Harland and Wolff shipyard call for re-nationalisation of the site and jobs in renewable energy.

Since the closure of the shipyard earlier this year, the workers have occupied the site for six weeks and are refusing to leave, blocking "administrators" from entering the site.

It was the site of the construction of the Titanic in 1911.

The Harland and Wolff union rep, Joe Passmore, told of the breakdown in negotiations with management, saying "we had to go back to tell our workforce there's no future and we're closing on Wednesday night and we're all unemployed. They were furious, so we decided to take matters into our own hands."

The workers are looking to the enormous potential for jobs in wind turbines and tidal energy. A spokes-

person for Unite, the union representing the workers, said: "They're saying they could create thousands of jobs, and that we need a just transition to renewable energy."

Some have made reference to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and a Green New Deal, looking to the dual opportunity of job creation and sustainable energy production.

Harland and Wolff was nationalised from 1977 to 1989 when it was sold off. In recent years 75 per cent of the shipyard's work has been based in renewables. The workers already have the skills required to contribute to the transition to renewable energy sources.

The need for this work is obvious, but with the company sticking to the whims of profit nationalisation is urgently needed—both to protect workers' jobs and for the planet.

**Matilda Fay**

**Since June the movement has grown into a battle to win a different kind of society**

# Tory crisis as Boris threatens Brexit crash out

By Mark Gillespie

BORIS JOHNSON'S determination to exit the EU on 31 October, deal or no deal, has created an enormous political crisis in the UK.

After he caused outrage through announcing he would shut down parliament to try to deny MPs any say, 21 Tory MPs voted with Labour and others in early September to rule out a "no deal" exit.

Rather than be bound by these terms, Johnson wants an election and will expel the rebels.

Parliament is blocking an election until it is guaranteed a "no deal" exit is impossible.

Overwhelmingly big business wants to stay in the EU because it sees access to the European market as key to its profits. If this can't be achieved they at least want a negotiated soft exit. They oppose a "no deal" exit because this would seriously disrupt trade with Europe.

The Tory rebels are doing their bidding. For over 100 years the Tories have fought for the interests of big business. The rebels accuse Johnson of being a cheap populist, putting his personal ambitions ahead of the "national interest" (i.e. business interests).

## Johnson's plan

Johnson hopes to use the threat of a no deal Brexit as a lever in negotiations with the EU. A sudden British departure would also damage EU profits. Johnson thinks this will put pressure on them to cough up better terms. If this fails, his back-up plan is to copy Trump and whip up racism and nationalism and in the confusion introduce radical pro-business measures such as a free trade agreement with the US and tax cuts for the rich.

Johnson has likened Muslim women in burkas to "letterboxes" and "bank robbers" and has called Africans "piccaninnies" with "watermelon smiles".

His cabinet is stacked with arch right wingers such as home secretary Priti Patel. She echoes Trump, wanting strong borders to "tackle illegal immigration", "terrorists" and "criminals". On the day after Britain exits she claims the government can immediately end the free movement of labour. She wants a pro-business immigration program that only welcomes the "brightest and best".

Like Trump, Johnson paints



**Above: Current British Prime Minister Boris Johnson**

himself as an outsider taking on the establishment. The people who voted for Brexit in 2016's referendum "weren't just voting against Brussels" he claimed, but also London.

Johnson wants to frame the coming election as "the people vs the politicians".

For three years the parliament has failed to implement the result of the 2016 referendum. Johnson—the millionaire Eton educated toff—will present himself as a people's champion battling the London elites determined to subvert the people's will. He hopes this will win back votes from Nigel Farage's Brexit Party.

## Jeremy Corbyn and Labour

The crisis in the Tories should be a huge opportunity for Labour. Unfortunately they too are divided and confused.

The majority of Labour MPs are pro-market Blairites who hate left-wing leader Jeremy Corbyn, who was elected by the membership. They want Labour to position itself as a pro-business party and have pushed Corbyn closer to a pro-Remain position.

Much of Labour's rank-and-file who installed Corbyn are also pro-Remain. They rightly detest the xenophobia coming from the Brexit camp but are inclined to paint the EU as progressive. But the EU rules are pro-market and pro-austerity. While there is free movement of people within the EU, there are high walls against entry from outside.

Immigrants are drowning in their

thousands in the Mediterranean because of EU boat turnback policies.

In the 2017 election Corbyn surprised everyone when he won 40 per cent of the vote and forced the Tories into minority government. He was meant to be an "unelectable" socialist.

Corbyn campaigned on a radical program with clear working class demands, promising to tax the rich, abolish tuition fees, implement a minimum wage and put more money into health and education. During the election he called mass rallies and created genuine enthusiasm.

But more recently he has been drawn into parliamentary manoeuvres around Brexit with rebel Tories and others.

His refusal to support an election until the parliament has voted to rule out a "no deal" exit is being used by Johnson to paint him as part of the political elite sabotaging the people's will.

Many of Labour's traditional supporters, particularly in the run down northern industrial areas, voted to leave the EU because its free market policies did nothing for them. Labour is in danger of losing these voters to the Brexit Party if they continue to play parliamentary games with Remainers and former Tories.

The best way to fight Johnson and Farage is with class politics. That means a radical campaign based on the kinds of demands Corbyn's campaign raised in the last general election—and fighting for a left-wing break from the EU.

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**Johnson wants to frame the coming election as "the people vs the politicians"**



# West Papua rises up against Indonesian occupation

By Vivian Honan

WEST PAPUA has erupted as demands for self-determination have fuelled the largest protests in years. Thousands of West Papuans have taken to the streets in the last month to demand a referendum on independence from Indonesia. Indonesian troops have shot dead at least six protesters.

Demonstrations have also taken place in 30 cities across Indonesia.

The protests were triggered by racial abuse on 17 August—Indonesian Independence Day. Papuan students living in Surabaya, East Java were accused of disrespecting the Indonesian flag. Indonesian police stormed their dormitory and fired tear gas while racist slurs, such as “monkey”, were chanted at the students. Several students were injured and 43 were arrested but later released without charge.

In an outpouring of rage protesters threw rocks at government buildings and burnt down the local parliament in the West Papua province’s capital.

West Papuans have faced heavy repression. The Indonesian government has deployed 6000 extra troops and police and cut off the internet.

The protests mark 50 years since the sham “Act of Free Choice”. Following the end of Dutch colonisation, the UN handed administration of West Papua to Indonesia. Indonesia was required to hold a referendum for West Papuans to decide whether to become an independent state or part of Indonesia. In 1969, 1025 West Papuans were hand-picked and voted under threat of violence to become part of Indonesia.

West Papuans are today demanding a real referendum. Papua is one of the richest regions in Indonesia in terms of natural resources, yet its people are the most impoverished. Over 500,000 people have been killed under Indonesian rule as part of a slow motion genocide. When Papuans demonstrated for independence in 1998, they were massacred, and their bodies dumped at sea.

The repression of the latest protests comes only months after a military campaign in the Nduga regency of Papua. The Nduga raids forced tens of thousands of villagers to flee the area and more than 180 civilians died.

Indonesians supporting the West Papuans’ struggle are also facing repression. Indonesian police have arrested Surya Anta, the spokesperson of the In-



**Above: One of the protests that have broken out in West Papua**

donesia People’s Front for West Papua (FRI-WP) for “treason” after joining a protest in Jakarta. Human rights lawyer and Indonesian activist, Veronica Koman, has been named a suspect and could be jailed up to six years and fined \$70,000 under an electronic information and transactions law.

The Australian government has refused to condemn the repression, declaring its ongoing support for Indonesia’s “territorial integrity and sovereignty over the Papua provinces” in a Department of Foreign Affairs statement. But the West Papuans’ struggle for freedom deserves our support.

## Australia backs Trump’s aggression over Iran

SCOTT MORRISON has added Australia to what US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo calls a “global coalition” against Iran. Australia will send a warship and a surveillance plane in what is nominally an effort to “protect shipping” in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

Australia is just the third country to join the US, alongside only the UK and Bahrain. Japan, France, Germany, Pakistan and South Korea are just some of the countries that have declined to participate.

In May and June a series of oil tankers were hit by mines or torpedoes in the area. Despite a lack of evidence the US blamed Iran. The Strait of Hormuz is significant to global capitalism. A third of the world’s liquefied natural gas and almost 20 per cent of global oil production passes through it.

Defence Minister Linda Reynolds said Australia’s contribution will be “modest, meaningful and time-limited”. But it can hardly be what she called “de-escalating tension”. This are entirely a product of Donald Trump’s belligerent decision to tear up the Iran nuclear deal negotiated under Barack Obama and to demand Iran’s complete capitulation.

Iran is the world’s seventh larg-

est oil producing country and has the world’s fourth largest proven oil reserves. US sanctions, imposed last year, have hit exports and foreign earnings hard as part of Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran.

The sanctions have caused misery for ordinary Iranians. They have driven up the costs of basic foodstuffs and caused a shortage of medicines.

Australia’s military commitment is typical of the way the Australian ruling class backs its imperialist partner, the US. As *The Guardian* wrote, “For a fractional commitment of personnel and materiel, Australia can firmly demonstrate its commitment to the US alliance, and it can do so far from the Indo-Pacific, where a more aggressive posture might aggrrieve a sensitive Beijing.” This is another small down-payment on its insurance policy with the US.

Disappointingly, but not surprisingly, Richard Marles, Labor’s Shadow on Defence, “quickly offered the Morrison government bipartisan support.” Once again, Australian backing for the US is enflaming conflict and making the world a more dangerous place.

**Tom Orsag**

**The Indonesian government has deployed 6000 extra troops and police and cut off the internet**

# A dream betrayed by racism and exclusion

**The Australian Dream**  
Directed by Daniel Gordon  
In cinemas now

*THE AUSTRALIAN Dream* is a powerful documentary on racism in Australia, but it misses an opportunity to also expose the racist nature of Australian nationalism.

The film focusses on the much-publicised booing of footballer Adam Goodes, who was relentlessly targeted by fans from opposing teams in 2014 and 2015. His appalling treatment by the crowds has led many to simply blame racist footy fans. But the booing was incited by an orchestrated media campaign launched by the conservative press against him after he called out a spectator for racially vilifying him.

The booing intensified after he was named Australian of the Year in 2014. He used the role as an opportunity to speak out publicly against racism and talk about January 26th as Invasion Day, drawing attention to the massacres and dispossession of First Nations people that were central to the colonisation of Australia.

Andrew Bolt and other hard right commentators savagely attacked him for daring to raise these issues and declared that he was “pedalling the politics of racial division”. For Bolt, and those of his ilk, any mention of racism existing in Australian society is an affront because it undercuts the image of Australia as a fundamentally fair society and its legitimacy.

Bolt and the *Footy Show*'s Sam Newman argued that the booing wasn't racist, and that Goodes was just being targeted because he was staging for free kicks and, in Newman's words, “be-



cause you're acting like a jerk". They would rather people of colour just shut up, copped the abuse and be grateful that they are even allowed to play the game.

The media attacks on Goodes incited AFL crowds so that the racist booing every time he touched the ball kept growing game after game. Tragically, this forced him to take leave from the game during the 2015 season as a result of the stress and pushed him into early retirement.

## Exclusion

Stan Grant, producer of the film, powerfully articulates the response of many First Nations people to the booing which reminded them of their own exclusion from the “Australian Dream”.

The film could've branched out and looked at the not just the ongoing legacy of colonisation but the racist policies which are still in place and maintain this, like the Northern Territory Intervention.

There are some harrowing scenes where Goodes' mother recounts her own experience as part of the Stolen Generation. This would've been even

**Above: Goodes points out a fan responsible for racist abuse**

more powerful if it had been tied to the ongoing theft of First Nations children today, which is skyrocketing around the country.

Throughout the film Stan Grant is at pains to champion the greatness of Australia. He wants an inclusive nationalism, one that can find a place for Indigenous people in the “Australian Dream”. He even describes his and Goodes' criticisms of racism as a type of patriotism—criticising the country you love so you can make it even greater.

But the problem with this approach is that there is nothing progressive about Australian nationalism, which is built on racism and the idea of dominating the peoples of the South Pacific and Asia.

By appealing to Australian nationalism, Grant opens the door for the right-wingers. They say that Goodes' advocacy against racism is dividing the nation along racial lines.

But the truth is that nationalism is inherently exclusionary—it is used to divide workers in Australia from those in our region, to exclude migrants and to pedal the myths that

colonisation was actually beneficial for Indigenous people. They want us to be proud of “our nation”—but there is nothing to be proud of when it comes to the attempted genocide of Indigenous people.

Nationalism also papers over the real division in society—that between ordinary workers and greedy bosses.

The “Australian Dream” is an idea they sell to us to make us think that we are all in it together, when in fact they exploit us for our labour and chuck us on the scrap heap when they're done.

If we want to successfully fight racism in Australia, we have to reject the notion that we have common interests with the Eddie McGuires and Rupert Murdochs of the world, we have to reject the “Australian Dream” as something worth chasing.

When Goodes' treatment finally forced him off the field in the middle of his last season, fans responded by covering the stadiums with pro-Goodes messages, Aboriginal flags and also a standing ovation to mark his absence—the number of his jersey. This mobilisation of white and black fans in support of Goodes points the way forward for defeating racism.

Grant's film is a welcome exploration of the racist media frenzy that engulfs any person of colour who publicly opposes racism in Australia, and how this is tied to the original crime of colonisation. But rather than seeking to incorporate Indigenous people into Australian nationalism, we should use the racism they continue to suffer at its hands as a basis for rejecting that nationalism.

**Miro Sandev**

**We have to reject the “Australian Dream” as something worth chasing**

# BUILDING THE CLIMATE REBELLION CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND SYSTEM CHANGE

Civil disobedience can strengthen the campaign for climate action, but on its own it lacks the power to bring fundamental change, writes **James Supple**

IN APRIL tens of thousands of Extinction Rebellion protesters occupied the streets of central London. The heart of the city was shut down, with over 1000 people arrested as part of a major civil disobedience action.

TV channels and the mainstream media were covered with reports on the protests, their call to declare a climate emergency and to implement radical solutions.

This disruptive action did not isolate the movement, but has inspired many others to act for the first time. The birth of this new radical movement for climate action is a breath of fresh air.

It has now spread to Australia, with Extinction Rebellion activists here set to join an international “week of rebellion” beginning on 7 October.

Protests in Brisbane have already disrupted traffic on several occasions, including an action where 72 people were arrested on one day in August.

Civil disobedience is a way of stepping up the level of disruption and raising the social and political cost of protest action. It involves consciously breaking the law and risking arrest to either shut down or disrupt a specific target.

Many campaigns have used civil disobedience tactics—from the militant protests that tried to storm US consulates during the Vietnam War to the defiance of Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s ban on the right to march in Queensland in the 1970s to the Bentley blockade against coal seam gas mining in 2014.

But such tactics are not always successful. Unless such actions are part of a strategy to draw in wider groups of people, they can leave activists isolated, and hit with large fines and jail sentences.

Environmental campaigns in Australia have often used civil disobedience tactics such as locking on to gates or mining equipment. But these acts can only be carried out by small, specially trained groups of activists or individuals.

What distinguished the Extinction Rebellion actions in London is that they involved mass civil disobedience, consciously open to the involvement of large numbers of people.

The same was true of the S11 blockade of the World Economic Forum in Melbourne in 2000, which involved up to 10,000 people, and the 1000-strong refugee protest that tore down the fences at the Woomera detention centre in 2002.

This kind of civil disobedience is much more effective and can be openly advertised and argued for.

But this kind of mass action is only possible where civil disobedience is organised as part of a campaign with a broader base of support. Without this it is more difficult to defend activists from state repression and ensure those involved in breaking the law are not isolated.

That means direct action needs to be combined with mass protest marches and other events capable of drawing in a wider layer of supporters.

At its best, civil disobedience can deepen support for the movement and shift the debate in society to the left. By bringing home the urgency of the situation and showing the risks activists are prepared to take to demand change, it can push others to reconsider their own point of view and willingness to act.

Actions during the Vietnam War such as “aiding the enemy” through students at Monash University collecting money for the Vietnamese National Liberation Front, in defi-

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## What distinguished the Extinction Rebellion actions in London is mass civil disobedience

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ance of university authorities and the law, helped to drive the movement forward through shifting the debate and shifting public opinion against the war.

### Limits

But it is a mistake to think that civil disobedience on its own can bring down governments or force the kind of action we need on climate change. This underestimates the power of capitalism and the state—and the lengths to which they will go in order to defend their wealth.

Extinction Rebellion has popularised the idea, taken from US academic Erica Chenoweth, that 3.5 per cent of the population taking non-violent action is the key to toppling governments or forcing major social change.

Extinction Rebellion founder Roger Hallam argues that, in the face of sustained non-violent civil disobedience, “After one or two weeks... the historical records show that a regime is highly likely to collapse or is forced to enact major structural change”.

But this claim has no historical basis at all.

The historical experience of civil disobedience shows that there is a limit to its power to force change.

Gandhi’s campaign of civil disobedience against British imperialism is the most frequently cited example of the power of this kind of action.

But it was not non-violent protest that drove the British out of India but mass strikes, mutinies and armed uprisings.

Gandhi called off the “Quit India” movement he had launched in 1942-3 after it led to clashes with the police and the army, peasant rebellions and attacks on police stations.

Britain finally withdrew from In-



dia following a fresh wave of protest involving a naval mutiny in 1946—an action Gandhi condemned. The mutiny triggered strikes in its support across the country, including a general strike of over 300,000 workers in Mumbai.

Martin Luther King's movement against the racist Jim Crow laws in the US South in the 1950s and 1960s is another famous movement of non-violent resistance.

It saw mass protests and sit-ins confront racist police determined to maintain segregation.

But after initial progress in the South around civil rights, the fight spread to mass uprisings in black ghettos across the US.

King himself began to look to more radical action as the civil rights movement ran up against the limits of its ability to deliver serious reforms. King was assassinated as he launched his anti-poverty campaign by backing a garbage workers strike in Memphis, Tennessee.

### Toppling governments

Civil disobedience can help ignite a political crisis in society, but on its own it is not capable of toppling governments or transforming society.

The revolutions from below that have seen governments toppled in recent times, in places like Egypt in 2011 or Sudan in the last few months, have involved mass strikes as well as forms of civil disobedience like the sit-in occupations of Tahrir Square in Cairo or in front of the military headquarters in Khartoum.

But in both countries the old state, in particular the army, has been able to regain control through a process of small concessions and repression against the mass movement.

But these revolutions have given us a glimpse of a kind of power from below that is capable of forcing real system change, and deepening the scale of the challenge to the old order posed by the movement.

In Egypt workers' strikes were crucial to forcing the army to abandon its support for the dictator Hosni Mubarak.

And in Sudan general strikes called by the Sudanese Professionals Association, involving teachers, academics and doctors, also played a key role.

The working class, the millions of ordinary people in the factories, offices, hospitals and other workplaces, does all the work that keeps society running.



**Above: An Extinction Rebellion protest in Britain**

When Sydney train workers threatened to strike for 24 hours last year it demonstrated the potential power of strike action—as employers warned of the threat of economic damage to the whole economy from workers forced to stay at home for the day.

There is a fundamental class divide in society between workers and bosses. It is workers' labour on which the wealth of society and the profits that are central to capitalism ultimately depend.

When workers go on strike they paralyse the ordinary operations of the economy and shut off the flow of profits. This is the most powerful form of collective action there is.

The Climate Strike has helped to raise the need for workers' strike action over climate change, with high school strikers inviting workers and trade unions to join them on 20 September.

Many unions have endorsed the Climate Strike and organised contingents for the day. These are important first steps to drawing more workers into the climate movement.

Climate activists also need to support every strike and union campaign fought around demanding better wages and conditions at work.

Capitalism's drive to increase profits means a constant effort to drive

down wages and push people to work harder.

This means that the system that is responsible for climate change also forces workers into struggle to defend their own standards of life.

Strike action can not only shut down business as usual but also begin to show how ordinary working people can take the control of society into their own hands.

A general strike that shuts down the economy for any extended period forces workers to make decisions about how to meet people's basic needs—such as where to restore power and how to distribute food.

In revolutionary situations in the past such as Chile in 1973, Poland in 1980 or Russia in 1917 this has led to the formation of new grassroots democratic structures to discuss how society should be run.

Such a truly democratic society, run in the interests of ordinary people and the planet instead of the dictates of capitalist profits, could begin the rapid transition needed to deal with climate change.

Civil disobedience cannot be an end in itself. It needs to be used to help build a movement around climate change capable of drawing in the social force with the power to revolutionise society—the working class.

# 100 PER CENT RENEWABLES THE CASE FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

**Penny Howard** argues that public spending and ownership are the only way to ensure a rapid transition to 100 per cent renewable energy—and protect workers' jobs

AUSTRALIA'S ELECTRICITY sector is our country's single largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions at 33 per cent of total emissions. It is also the sector that provides the greatest opportunity for rapid reductions in emissions through the transition to renewable energy.

School climate strikers rightly demand "100 per cent renewable energy by 2030". But the privatised, fragmented and profit driven nature of the national electricity system is making this transition impossible.

We urgently need to take the production and distribution of electricity back into public hands and fight for massive public investment in renewables. This is the only way to ensure a reliable, clean electricity supply at cheap prices. This can also ensure that workers and communities currently dependent on carbon-intensive energy production have a just transition to jobs in a clean energy future.

Between WWI and WWII, Australian state governments systematically nationalised and expanded electricity supply. By the 1960s Australia had an almost universally publicly owned and controlled electricity system which provided some of the cheapest and most reliable electricity in the world.

This all changed in the 1990s when state-based Electricity Commissions or Trusts were broken up, corporatised, and incorporated into the National Electricity Market (NEM) established in 1998. Energy retailers across the country and grid operators in South Australia and Victoria were then fully privatised, and in NSW privatisation began in 2010.

The NEM was established in the same year the Commonwealth Government signed the Kyoto Protocol. Yet the NEM's "objectives" and "rules" do not include any consideration of greenhouse gas emissions.

The grid and the NEM are currently run to facilitate market competition and private investment. Electricity prices in this privatised system have become among the world's highest.

Privatisation and marketisation have meant that the technical oversight and planning of the national electricity network is split into multiple grid operator, generator, and retailing companies—each operating to maximise their own profits. Speculation on price fluctuations is rife, while every player in the game is guaranteed a profit by the market regulator.

There is race to the bottom between energy companies on staffing levels, maintenance costs, and network reliability. Electrical Trades Union (ETU) members have complete safety bans on working in many electricity substations around the country as a result.

Through the many years of privatisation, thousands of skilled maintenance workers have been laid off, and apprenticeship programs reduced or eliminated. Instead, layers of management and marketing and sales departments have been added to chase customers with confusing electricity offers, adding up to \$200 to annual electricity bills. Meanwhile, three of the largest companies in the electricity system made a combined \$2.6 billion in profit in 2018.

## Coal-fired electricity

In the year to September 2019, 70 per cent of electricity supplied to the NEM came from coal-fired power stations, and 9 per cent from gas. There are 23 coal-fired power stations operating in NSW, Qld, Victoria and WA, mostly owned by private companies.

Even though the cost of building new renewable generation is now lower than building new coal-fired

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**There are 23 coal-fired power stations operating in NSW, Qld, Victoria and WA, mostly owned by private companies**

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power stations, existing stations have already been paid for and are relatively cheap to keep running. Companies will not voluntarily stop operating assets that are still potentially profitable—and in NSW these are stations that companies bought less than seven years ago.

Companies are supposed to give the government three years' notice of closure—but this requirement is full of loopholes that mean uncertainty about workers' jobs.

The next coal-fired power station set to close is Liddell in the Hunter Valley, in 2023, then two units of the Muja station in WA between 2022 and 2024. On current estimates 14 coal power stations are still set to be functioning into the 2040s.

If the "transition" to renewables is left to the market, Australia will continue to pump out unacceptable levels of carbon from electricity generation for decades to come.

## Renewable energy in Australia

Last year 19 per cent of Australia's energy came from renewable sources, including both rapidly increasing wind and solar power, and the hydro power stations that have existed for decades in the Snowy Mountains and Tasmania.

Across Europe, renewable energy development in a privatised electricity market was encouraged by on one hand, setting a carbon price, and on the other hand, spending billions on creating investment incentives and reducing risk for private renewable energy developers.

Variations of this model have been exported to North America, Australia, and even China. But this approach has since proven unable to meet the challenge. According to Trade Unions for Energy Democracy, emissions reduction targets are not being met, and

by 2015 \$150 billion of public money had been spent subsidising a system not under public control.

In Australia, a key policy has been the Renewable Energy Target (RET), which set a target for renewable generation by 2020. It issued tradeable Certificates for companies that produce renewable energy which energy retailers and large users were required to buy. This additional subsidy for renewable energy developers was ultimately subsidised by consumers, who paid an estimated \$40 annually to support the RET through energy bills.

Nationally, the Coalition government are winding up the RET. But there are similar RETs in Queensland and Victoria, as well as reverse auctions run by the Queensland, ACT and Victorian governments which effectively guarantee a minimum price for developers.

RETs and reverse auctions have encouraged construction of renewable energy projects, but this has taken place chaotically, without planning where these projects should be located, how they fit into existing energy supply, and what transmission is needed to support them.

In 2018, 38 renewable energy projects were completed owned by 32 different companies. The companies bring in their own contractors for construction, and poor conditions on the worksites are rife. In many cases, licenced electricians are not used and installations do not meet electrical safety standards. Companies must then negotiate the crucial grid connection they need to sell electricity with the company operating the grid locally. This can take years of contractual battles, as both parties seek to reduce their costs as much as possible.

This disorganised system can function at low levels of renewable energy, but as the percentage of renewable energy increases, significant problems are developing.

The conservative dismissal of renewable energy as “intermittent” and their call for “baseload power” is a figleaf for promoting coal and nuclear power. However, it is true that renewable energy supply is variable, and solar energy is concentrated in the middle of the day when the sun is shining.

A renewable energy system requires planning to balance out this variability by using different types of generation, connecting different geographical areas, and by using systems of energy storage such as batteries and pumped hydro to ensure grid stability and that sufficient power is available when needed. The



discussions around the cost of renewables that focus on a single project do not incorporate these system-level costs. A system based on 100 per cent renewable energy would look very different to the current grid that was constructed for more large-scale, continuously run coal-fired power.

In an attempt to better plan the electricity system, AEMO developed its first Integrated System Plan (ISP) in 2018, which is now being reviewed and updated. But the ISP is weak and filled with contradictions. It recommends all sorts of new grid interconnectors—but has no power to build them or to require they are built. NSW Minister for Energy and Utilities Don Harwin said that in 2018, only one in 20 proposed new renewable energy projects in the planning pipeline actually have a grid connection available to them.

Instead of systematically planning where projects should be built and the system needed to support them, regulators have added new fees for remote projects to send a “market signal”.

AEMO says four new projects to upgrade and build transmission lines between NSW, Victoria, SA and Qld are critical to maintaining reliability as some coal fired power stations shut and renewables are brought online. It appears that they are mainly relying on Transgrid to do this work. But Transgrid was fully privatised by the NSW Liberal government in 2015, for \$10 billion.

In order to encourage a privatised Transgrid to do this work, the NSW government is offering them a “funding guarantee”, the South Australian government has offered to put in over

**Above: Australia currently gets 19 per cent of its energy from renewable sources**

\$200 million, and the COAG Energy Council and the Energy Security board are exploring setting up a Fund that could be used to “underwrite” investments recommended by the ISP. In contrast, a public company could just be directed to make this investment, and could access the lowest cost financing available.

### Public investment now

We cannot bet the future of humanity and the planet on trying to create enough “incentives” to convince a small number of private investors to build the new renewable energy systems we need.

A rapid transition to 100 per cent renewable energy is going to require taking the electricity system back into public ownership and ensuring it is properly redesigned and rebuilt for renewable energy. In one sense conservatives are right to say that our electricity grid has become more unstable, but of course they won’t admit that it is their marketised energy policy that caused these problems. They would rather see the planet burn that force the public investment and ownership of the system that is needed.

With public ownership and planning, systems could be put in place for workers to transition directly from high-emissions to low-emissions jobs, and ensure jobs in renewables are secure union jobs. The transformation of the energy network could and should provide the investment that regional Australia desperately needs. Many more social and economic transformations will be needed to prevent catastrophic climate change, but this is a key start.



# THE BLACK JACOBINS HAITI'S SLAVE REVOLUTION

**David Glanz** tells the story of the slave revolution in Haiti that defeated the combined might of European imperialism to win its freedom

ASKED TO name a slave revolt, some people will know of the uprising against the Roman empire led by the gladiator Spartacus from 73-71 BCE—a fight for freedom that ended in suppression and death but whose inspiration has echoed down the centuries. Far fewer know of the slave revolt that won.

Some 150 years before the successful anti-colonial struggles of the mid-20th century, African slaves defeated the forces of the French, Spanish and British empires to establish an independent black republic—declared on 31 December 1803 and named Haiti.

Those who ran and profited enormously from the trans-Atlantic slave trade helped create the central ideological building block of modern racism—the idea that those in black skin were profoundly and naturally inferior, indeed less than human.

Yet the revolt that liberated Haiti was made possible by the organisation and intelligence of a slave population, two-thirds of whom had made the “middle passage” from Africa to the Caribbean—traumatised by kidnapping and enslavement, but born in freedom and determined to reclaim it.

The slavery against which they rose up was a crucial enabler for the rise of capitalism. As Karl Marx put it: “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.”

The rising French bourgeoisie, who were making super-profits from

the trade in humans, therefore had no interest in ending slavery, whatever their talk of liberty and equality.

Instead the slave revolt was to find its allies not among the enlightened upper classes but among the poor French masses. But most of all, it relied upon the courage and determination of the slaves themselves.

Haiti is the western half of a mountainous island claimed for the Spanish king by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and named Santo Domingo.

Columbus brought Christian civilisation, which through slavery, rape and murder reduced the indigenous population of up to one million to 60,000 in 15 years.

In 1517, the Spanish imported 15,000 African slaves to work the lucrative sugar plantations.

Greedy for a share of the spoils, the French seized the western part of the island and their ownership was confirmed by treaty in 1695.

The eastern side remained under Spanish rule. Today it is the Dominican Republic.

The French tried to use whites on the new sugar and coffee plantations but they couldn't cope with the conditions, so the slave trade boomed. In 1666 alone, 108 ships from the French port of Nantes took 37,430 slaves to Santo Domingo, returning 15-20 per cent on the merchants' capital.

The slave trade, and the profits from the plantations that the slaves worked, generated enormous wealth for the rising French bourgeoisie. Echoing Marx, the Caribbean Trotskyist CLR James wrote, “Nearly all the industries which developed in France during the 18th century had their origin in goods or commodi-

.....  
**The plantations that the slaves worked generated enormous wealth for the rising French bourgeoisie**  
.....

ties” for Guinea in West Africa or America.

“The capital from the slave trade fertilised them; though the bourgeoisie traded in other things than slaves, upon the success or failure of the traffic everything else depended.”

As revolution broke out in 1789, French exports from its colonies were worth 17 million pounds, of which 11 million came from the trade with Santo Domingo.

To generate this wealth and to maintain control, French “civilisation” used the most bestial methods. Slaves were whipped and salt rubbed into the wounds. Many were mutilated, including their sexual organs.

CLR James, the main English-language historian of the slave revolt, wrote: “Their masters poured burning wax... boiling cane sugar over their heads, burned them alive, roasted them on slow fires, filled them with gunpowder and blew them up with a match, buried them up to their neck and smeared their heads with sugar...”

When the revolt came, it was a brutal affair. But the slaves' violence was still just a pale shadow of the routine way in which the slave-owners managed their business.

The first resistance came from the Maroons—slaves who had escaped to create free communities in the mountains.

Then, in 1789, revolution broke out in France and everything changed. The bourgeoisie challenged the feudal monarch under the slogan of “Liberty, equality, fraternity”, signifying a fight for the freedom to make profits.

But with the slave trade such a profitable exercise, the slogan was still-born on arrival in Santo Do-

mingo.

The white slave-owners and merchants refused political freedom even for the mulattos, those descended from white fathers and black mothers. They were free and allowed to own property but their skin colour meant they would always be marginalised.

In 1790, the mulattos, led by Vincent Oge, rose up and were smashed. A year later, 100,000 slaves rose up in a struggle that proved much more successful.

On 29 August 1793, the French colonial ruler freed the slaves in the north province (with severe limits on their freedom). In September and October, emancipation was extended throughout the colony.

On 4 February 1794, the French National Convention, under the leadership of Maximilien de Robespierre, abolished slavery in France and all its colonies, in the teeth of opposition from the French merchants.

It was the highpoint of the revolution as the radicalism of the urban poor marginalised the bourgeoisie, winning a decisive victory against both the feudal aristocracy and the slave trade, known as the “aristocracy of the skin”.

### **Toussaint L’Ouverture**

The struggle, however, was far from over. Under the leadership of an educated slave, Toussaint L’Ouverture, the slave armies fought the Spanish, who had taken advantage of the chaos to attempt to retake the west of the island.

The slave army then had to confront the might of the British, who were enthusiastic to add the profits of the sugar plantations to an empire that had recently lost its American colonies.

L’Ouverture’s men fought courageously, at one point winning seven battles in seven days, and the British were driven out in 1798 with the loss of 80,000 soldiers.

The peace was brief. In 1802, Napoleon, having restored slavery in the French colony of Guadeloupe, sent an invading army.

His forces massacred or drowned thousands. The French imported 1500 dogs and taught them to rip blacks apart alive, while whites dressed up and watched the spectacle.

L’Ouverture, who died in 1803, had one major advantage in building his army of ex-slaves—which ever colonial power controlled Santo Domingo, they knew slavery would



**Above: Toussaint L’Ouverture, who led Haiti’s slave armies**

be restored. Only victory would bring freedom. And the ex-slaves fought with all their power.

When, in 1793, royalist French colonists tried to overthrow French Revolutionary rule: “10,000 blacks swooped down from the hills on to the city. The road from the heights ran along the sea-shore, and the sailors who remained on the ships in the harbour could see them hour after hour swarming down ...

“Ten thousand refugees crowded on to the vessels in the harbour and set out for the United States ... it was the end of white domination in San Domingo.”

Against Bonaparte’s men, the ex-slaves burned the country to starve the invaders. Fighting both as guerrillas and conventional soldiers, they took death in their stride.

When a black chief hesitated at the sight of the scaffold, CLR James writes: “His wife shamed him. ‘You do not know how sweet it is to die for liberty!’ And refusing to allow herself to be hanged by the executioner, she took the rope and hanged herself.”

They won a mighty victory. As CLR James put it: “The slaves defeated in turn the local whites and the soldiers of the French monarchy, a Spanish invasion, a British expedition of some 60,000 men, and a French expedition of similar size under Bonaparte’s brother-in-law...

“The transformation of slaves,

trembling in hundreds before a single white man, into a people able to organize themselves and defeat the most powerful European nations of their day, is one of the great epics of revolutionary struggle and achievement.”

Yet, with the rise of counter-revolution in Bonapartist France, it could not be a total victory. France refused to recognise the newly independent country’s sovereignty until 1825, and only then in exchange for 150 million gold francs.

This fee, demanded as retribution for the “lost property—slaves, land, equipment, etc—of the former colonialists, was later reduced to 90 million.

Haiti agreed to pay the price to lift a crippling embargo imposed by France, Britain and the United States—but to do so, had to take out high interest loans. The debt was not repaid in full until 1947.

The 12-year war of liberation by the slaves was fundamentally a class struggle, not a race war. Its fate was tied to the rise and fall of the French Revolution. The greatest freedoms were won when the oppressed on both sides of the Atlantic made common cause.

But most of all the war, and victory, was driven by the commitment and enormous self-sacrifice of former slaves—the one class that could not make peace with French capitalism.

# NSW FIGHTS FOR ABORTION RIGHTS

By Caitlin Doyle and Judy McVey

UNTIL LATE August it seemed as though legislation to decriminalise abortion would sail through the NSW parliament.

After passing the lower house 59 votes to 31, the Reproductive Healthcare Reform Bill looked set to pass easily in the upper house.

But in an effort to appease the bigots in her party, Premier Gladys Berejiklian delayed the vote.

Conservatives, including Liberal MPs Tanya Davies and Kevin Conolly and One Nation NSW leader Mark Latham, are now pushing hard for a ban on “gender selection” abortions, despite medical groups saying the practice is not an issue in NSW.

Other amendments include mandatory counselling for women seeking an abortion and the removal of the requirement for doctors who oppose abortion to refer patients elsewhere.

Davies and Conolly have threatened to leave the Liberal Party, pushing the Coalition into a minority government, if Berejiklian does not support the amendments.

But in a sign of their isolation, they failed to win the support of the NSW Liberal Party conference on 7 September.

If the amendments pass, the bill would have to go through the lower house again, setting the process back by months.

Unfortunately, NSW Labor leader Jodi McKay is considering supporting the gender selection ban.

But this amendment is a clear attempt to smear women who choose

to have an abortion. The decision over whether to do so should lie with the woman involved, whatever her reasons for doing so.

All of the amendments should be opposed by pro-choice advocates and the bill passed in its original form.

Berejiklian has also indicated she will introduce a new version of “Zoe’s law” recognising harm to a foetus as a criminal offence. This would further stigmatise abortion, by setting a threshold, say at 20 weeks, after which a foetus would be considered a legal person.

## Anti-choice bigots on offensive

While a consistent majority of people in Australia support the right to choose—around 80 per cent—the delay has emboldened anti-choice bigots, who have mobilised against the bill.

On the day of the delay the words “choose life” were written in the sky and thousands of anti-choice activists rallied in Martin Place. The protest was addressed by NSW Minister for Finance, Damien Tudehope.

Federal Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce has weighed in heavily on the debate, and even set up a robo-call urging NSW residents to reject the bill.

Pro-choice campaigners reliance on parliamentary manoeuvres to pass the bill, without a serious public campaign to prepare the ground, has given the right an opening to organise.

The weekend rally on 14 September is a good step towards building that campaign. In the context of a global offensive on reproductive rights, particularly in the US, Italy and Brazil, pro-choice activists need

**Above: Pro-choice protesters take to the streets earlier this year in solidarity with women in the US facing abortion restrictions**

to mobilise to beat back the bigots and win the unrestricted right to choose.

Abortion has now been “decriminalised” in most states, yet criminal law still covers certain procedures and in all states there are legislated time limits within which a woman can request an abortion. After this time two doctors are required to give permission; in Victoria after 24 weeks, Queensland after 22 weeks, Tasmania after 16 weeks and the Northern Territory after 14 weeks.

The NSW Bill would set a limit of 22 weeks.

The ACT is the only jurisdiction where abortion has been removed from the criminal code completely, showing that abortion can be regulated under health regulations and available at the request of the woman concerned without restriction.

While around 95 per cent of abortions happen within 14 weeks, late term abortion remains necessary for a variety of reasons.

In most places abortions are provided by private clinics and are often expensive. The average cost of a surgical abortion in NSW is \$460. In WA it is \$795. Medicare covers just one fifth of the cost.

Regional areas are poorly serviced, forcing women to travel long distances and incurring even greater costs. Women in Tasmania, which now has no abortion clinics, must travel to the mainland to access the procedure.

All those capable of becoming pregnant—women, girls, non-binary and trans people—should have access to free, safe and accessible abortion on demand. Australia still does not have this right.

**Conservatives are now pushing hard for a ban on “gender selection” abortions**

# Solidarity