

Solidarity

Issue No. 132 / November-December 2019

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CLIMATE, WAGE INEQUALITY MORRISON FIDDLES WHILE AUSTRALIA BURNS



LABOR

Election review confirms
Albanese's shift right

WORLD IN REVOLT

Understanding the
new wave of protest

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Gandhi's non-violence: a
guide for today's movements?

Solidarity WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

Capitalism is a system of competition, crisis, and war based on exploitation of workers, producing for profit not human needs. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over production or distribution. Through environmental degradation and climate change capitalism has become a threat to humanity's future and life on earth.

Workers power and socialism

The working class has the power to challenge the existing system and create a better world. We stand for socialism, a society based on democratically elected workers councils which would control and plan the economy to produce for human need. The authoritarian states like Russia and China are not socialist but forms of state capitalism where workers have no power.

What about elections and parliament?

Parliament, the army, the police and the courts are institutions of the capitalist state that maintain the dominance of the ruling class over the rest of society. The capitalist state cannot be taken over and used by the working class, it must be smashed. Workers need to create their own state based on workers councils.

While parliament can be a platform for socialists, real change doesn't come through parliament. It is won by mass action in strikes, protests and demonstrations.

We are internationalists

The struggle for socialism has no national boundaries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from another; we campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose borders and immigration controls, and welcome migrants and refugees.

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

Australia is an imperialist power established through genocide on stolen Indigenous land. We support the continuing struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for land, justice and self-determination.

Oppression and liberation

We oppose sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. We fight against all forms of discrimination and the oppression of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. We oppose discrimination against Muslims and people from the Middle East.

Linking up the struggles

We are active building movements for environmental and social change and economic equality. We are active in our unions and work to build the organisation and self-confidence of the rank and file. We work to bring activists together to strengthen each movement and build a common struggle against capitalism.

Educate, agitate, organise

Socialism cannot be introduced from above, by parliament or parties. The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself.

Solidarity is an organisation of activists, anti-capitalists and revolutionary socialists committed to socialism from below. We are part of the International Socialist Tendency.

A democratic revolutionary party is necessary to deepen resistance to capitalism and to build a movement to overthrow the system. Solidarity members are beginning to build such a party out of today's struggles against the system.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

Sydney

Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown
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Things they say

Textbook populism, no more acceptable in the mouth of someone who calls themselves left wing than in the mouth of Donald Trump.

Thatcherite former British Labour Prime Minister and war criminal Tony Blair on Jeremy Corbyn's election campaign

SKY NEWS: You have previously said the Bureau of Meteorology—you've accused it of rewriting weather records to fit in with the global warming agenda.

RENNICK: That's right. Yep. LNP Senator for Queensland Gerard Rennick speaks on climate change during the bushfires

But our view is that further rate cuts will not lead to a pick-up in economic activity.

Commonwealth Bank boss Matt Comyn and Westpac boss Brian Hartzer watch on as Australia's gloomy economy keeps sagging

It is hard to predict exactly how this might work out but the answer is not well.

Reserve Bank of Australia Governor, Philip Lowe, obviously not convinced about relying on central banks' policies of cutting interest rates to zero.

Can I also acknowledge, as is my habit, anyone who is serving in our defence forces and certainly those who are veterans, and simply say on behalf of a very grateful nation, thank you for your service.

Prime Minister Morrison modifying the acknowledgement to country to promote the state's armed forces

I want to thank the President [Erdogan from Turkey] for the job they have done... We are keeping the oil. We have the oil. The oil is secure...

Donald Trump welcoming the Turkish Prime Minister to the White House, just to be clear.

US forces in northeastern Syria are there under an authorisation to fight terrorism specifically to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. That is their overall mission.

US special envoy on Syria, James Jeffrey, two days before

CONTENTS

ISSUE 132 NOV-DEC 2019



Fires expose Morrison's climate failure

5 Editorial: Climate jobs and funding needed to deal with bushfire crisis

6 Unprecedented fires expose reality of climate change

11 Oil companies only see chance for profit in melting Arctic

Australian politics

7 Labor election review confirms lurch to the right

8 Refugees Medevac catch-22

9 Woolies warehouse workers win pay gains

9 Casuals step up fight at Melbourne Uni

20 Outrage at police killing in Yuendumu



International

10 NZ workers fight to bring back penalty rates

12 British election to decide fate of Brexit and Corbyn



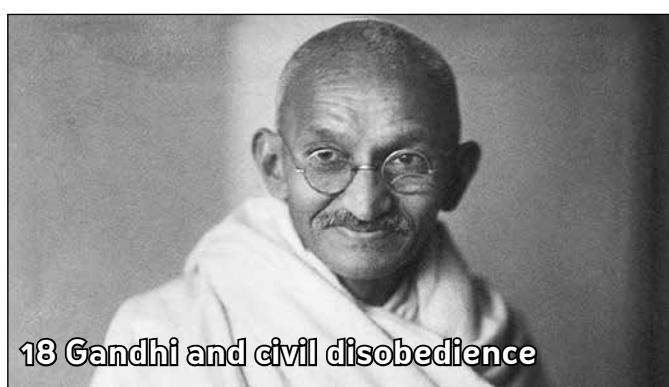
Features

13 Australia's defence of colonialism and racism at Versailles

18 1619 and the birth of slavery in the US



16 Exploring a world in revolt



18 Gandhi and civil disobedience

INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

Banks' greenwash exposed as fossil fuel lending grows

TWO OF Australia's big banks, ANZ and Westpac, have increased their lending to fossil fuel projects in the last year, showing their boasts about climate action are a fraud.

ANZ advised staff that they could seek leave to attend the Climate Strike in September, and has publicly supported the aims of the Paris Agreement.

Philip Tapsall, Westpac's head of Sustainability Governance and Climate Change, boasted earlier this year that it was, "the first Australian bank to recognise the importance of limiting global warming to less than two degrees".

According to campaign group Market Forces, Westpac increased its lending to fossil fuels projects by 8 per cent, and ANZ by 9 per cent.

Westpac has funded Woodside's gas projects on the northwest shelf off WA, among other lending.

As Market Forces' Julian Vincent put it, although the banks talk up their support for climate action, "You can't take those comments seriously when they're doing the opposite".

Wealthy warned of global turmoil ahead

ONE OF the world's largest banks has warned that tensions around inequality, slow economic growth and globalisation are "all heading to a boiling point" in the next decade.

The Bank of America Merrill Lynch analysis says that, "We enter the next decade with interest rates at 5000-year lows, the largest asset bubble in history, a planet that is heating up, and a deflationary profile of debt, disruption and demographics."

Policies in response to the economic crisis of 2008 meant, "the economic spoils went to holders of capital not workers", with the result that, "A portfolio of bonds and stocks rose from \$US100 to \$US223, while \$US100 of wages rose to \$US125."

The surge in inequality globally will mean growing demands for government policies attacking the rich, they warn. And the backlash against globalisation is also likely to grow. Things are clearly getting serious when the people who run the system warn times are ripe for change.

Strip search scandal shows NSW police out of control



POLICE ARE under fire in NSW over a massive increase in strip searches—including on girls as young as 12 years old.

In the past 12 years there has been an explosion in the use of strip searches in NSW, alongside the wider use of sniffer dogs. In the year to November 2006 there were 277 strip searches performed, but that grew to 5483 in the year to November 2018.

This included searches on 122 girls under the age of 18 in the last three years, including two 12-year-olds and eight 13-year-olds. A Indigenous boy just ten years old was also strip searched.

A report for the Redfern Legal Centre found only 30 per cent of strip searches in 2017 and 2018 resulted in any charges.

A police Law Enforcement and Conduct Commission hearing was held in October into the allegedly illegal strip search of a 16-year-old girl at the Splendour in the Grass music festival in 2018. All the 19 searches conducted at the festival may have been done illegally, one police officer told the hearing.

One 16-year-old woman who was strip searched said in a statement to the inquiry, "I could not believe this was happening to me; I could not stop crying; I was completely humiliated. A strip-search is by necessity a grave intrusion of a citizen's privacy and dignity."

NSW Deputy Coroner Harriet Grahame has also called for the scrapping of the use of sniffer dogs at festivals, saying the practice of over-policing was risking lives by encouraging "panic ingestion" of drugs.

Greedy companies rot tyre recycling system

TYRE RETAILERS have been rotting a recycling scheme and simply dumping tyres, a Nine Media report has revealed. Motorists have been charged a \$5 fee for disposing of old car tyres, told that this would pay for the costs of recycling them. Consumers have already been charged \$100 million under the scheme.

Under government legislation, used tyres must be taken to a collection company with environmental approval.

Tyre recycling company TyreStock estimates that just three million out of 22 million passenger car tyres thrown out each year are being recycled. Most simply end up in landfill.

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

Indigenous child removal in NSW 'unethical'

A REVIEW of Indigenous "child protection" policies in NSW has uncovered widespread illegal and "unethical" practices. The state government-commissioned review, prepared by Megan Davis, an Indigenous law professor at UNSW, looked at the experience of 1144 Indigenous children in out of home care.

It found mothers whose babies were removed at birth had been given, "no opportunity to take photographs, keep a memento (such as a cot card) or give anything special to the baby".

Nearly one in ten of the Indigenous children examined were taken within two weeks of birth.

The report also called for adoption to be removed as a possibility for Indigenous children in the child protection system. Davis said the, "alien nature of adoption to Aboriginal culture, the horrors endured by the members of the Stolen Generation and the enduring impact of the trauma and loss of connection to culture caused" should rule adoption out.

This is a direct rebuke to the NSW Coalition government, which last year passed new laws to make it easier to adopt children in the system.

Union fined for demanding female toilet

THE CFMMEU construction union has been fined \$50,500 for taking industrial action in 2015 to demand a female toilet on a construction site. The company had insisted a woman working on the site could use the male toilets while a man stood guard outside.

The union has now had half a million dollars in fines imposed on it this year under Australia's draconian anti-strike laws.

EDITORIAL

Climate jobs and funding needed to tackle bushfire crisis—but Morrison's in denial

CATASTROPHIC BUSHFIRES fuelled by extreme heat have swept through northern NSW and Queensland—even before summer has officially begun.

Four people lost their lives and almost 500 homes have been destroyed.

Scott Morrison and the Coalition are desperate to shut down discussion of the link between the fires and climate change.

While they deny any connection, yet another report in November fingered Australia as among the G20 group of economies “furthest off track” on meeting its Paris targets, with the second most emissions intensive energy sector among the group.

Instead the Liberals are lashing out against climate activists, promising new laws to stop consumer boycotts against corporate climate criminals like Adani and their contractors. Laws like these would have criminalised the boycott of apartheid South Africa or fashion brands that use slave labour.

Meanwhile the economy is getting worse. Wage growth in the private sector is down again. Interest rate cuts and tax cuts have done little to increase consumer spending. Yet the Morrison government is refusing to bring forward government spending.

Instead they are continuing their war on unions with the Ensuring Integrity Bill—a further attack on the right to strike. Their new proposal for a demerit points system could ban officials after two or three breaches of industrial laws, including late filing of paperwork such as annual reports.

But its real target is union militancy in defiance of anti-strike laws. In November the NUW was fined \$173,000 after taking strike action in response to Woolworths’ effort to make all new staff labour hire casuals—because the union wasn’t in a bargaining period. Australia’s anti-strike laws are now so draconian that such actions require breaking the law.

Climate jobs

The Coalition’s other line of attack on climate action is to present it as a threat to jobs and regional communities—the same line they ran on Adani during the election. Energy Minister Angus Taylor seized on suggestions that the Portland aluminium smelter



Above: Morrison is under pressure for failing to act on climate change

in Victoria could close to blame energy costs for threatening jobs.

Taylor claimed more serious climate targets would mean, “killing off these export industries and the regional jobs that go with them.” But power prices are only high because of privatisation and the decision to turn the power system into a plaything for the free market.

Instead of standing up to them, Labor remains in retreat. Its election review confirmed the party’s move to the right.

Instead of rejecting the Liberals’ attempt to muzzle debate about climate change’s role in the bushfires, Albanese weakly insisted, “I’m not seeking to politicise this at all”. Instead of arguing for a job-creating transition to renewable power, Albanese has conceded to the Liberals’ attack over jobs, saying he wants coal and gas mining to continue indefinitely.

The money needed to transition to 100 per cent renewable energy should come from taxing the rich and big business—including the super profits of the power companies.

It is the Liberal government in NSW that is responsible for destroying jobs in fire risk management. The immediate need is for more funding for firefighters and hazard reduction work. This means not only reversing the cuts but more jobs to deal with the consequences of a hotter climate. This could mean jobs on country for Indigenous communities to help care for the land as well as more staff in

national parks.

Instead of privatisation, we need government investment in renewable energy and public transport to slash carbon emissions. This could deliver jobs in manufacturing and construction as well as directly in renewable energy.

The fight for jobs and a just transition should be at the centre of the climate movement’s demands.

Such a commitment is crucial to winning support—including amongst the workers and regional communities that delivered Morrison’s election win. It is something unionists would be willing to fight for—and it is organised workers who have the industrial power that we need to force change.

A fight from below is going to be needed to halt Labor’s slide to the right. While Morrison is on the offensive, the official union campaign against the Ensuring Integrity Bill has been confined to lobbying and an online campaign.

Strike action can win gains. Almost 1000 workers at a Woolworths’ warehouse won a pay rise of 8 per cent in the first year of their new deal after threatening indefinite strike action. Workers on offshore oil and gas platforms won an immediate 20 per cent pay rise in their new agreement.

This is the kind of action needed to end stagnating wages, defy the Liberals’ anti-union laws and build the fight for real action to stop climate change.

The Liberal government in NSW is responsible for destroying jobs in fire risk management

Catastrophic fires expose Morrison's climate failure

SCOTT MORRISON has tried to stop discussion about the link between the bushfires and climate change.

Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack even denounced the idea climate change was a factor as the, “ravings of some pure, enlightened and woke capital city greenies”. Other Nationals including NSW leader John Barilaro and Barnaby Joyce have tried to blame The Greens, recycling the old myth that they were stopping backburning in national parks. Barnaby Joyce disparaged two people who died in NSW saying they “most likely” voted for The Greens.

But the NSW Coalition has actually cut the number of park rangers, who carry out reduction burns, by a third since 2011. The parks service has been unable to meet reduction burning targets this year because of the cuts, the Public Service Association says, including a budget cut of \$80 million this year.

The state government has also cut \$40 million from Fire and Rescue and the Rural Fire Service budgets compared to last year.

Morrison’s efforts to avoid the climate issue have fallen flat after former NSW Fire and Rescue Commissioner Greg Mullins went public to say the coming summer was set to be “the worst I have ever seen” and was part of “a new age of unprecedented bushfire danger”.

Carol Sparks, Mayor of the northern NSW town of Glen Innes where two people died, said bluntly, “It’s climate change, there’s no doubt about it.”

Climate change is producing hotter and drier conditions that are making bushfires more dangerous and more frequent.

NSW issued its first ever warning of “catastrophic” conditions in November, the first since the new warning level was introduced in 2009.

The fires we are seeing are far from normal. The bushfire season is starting earlier and running longer, beginning in September this year in eastern Australia—far before summer had begun. The current drought has produced the lowest rainfall on record between January and August across the Southern Downs in Queensland and the Northern Tablelands in NSW.

The consequences of climate change are on display for all to see. Scott Morrison’s pathetic refusal to adopt any serious climate policy is becoming ever harder to justify.



Above: The Nationals tried to blame a lack of backburning, but they have cut the workers who carry it out in NSW

Here we Joh again: Queensland Labor cracks down on protest

THE QUEENSLAND Labor government pushed through new laws aimed at environmental protests in late October. Protesters caught using complex lock-on devices will face massive fines or even jail—up to \$6500 or two years in prison for people who block transport infrastructure.

To justify these new laws Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk made unfounded claims that devices were being used as booby traps and were “designed to harm”. She claims the new laws are not an attack on “peaceful protest” but on “extremists”.

The Premier enjoyed the support of the Queensland Resources Council, the LNP, and shamefully, every Labor MP in the state parliament. Greens MP Michael Berkman was the only MP to vote against the laws.

But there is widespread opposition outside parliament—including within the ALP and the union movement. The state ALP conference voted unanimously to back the right to protest and to encourage “freedom of speech and assembly”. The Woolloongabba and Annerley branches also opposed the laws. The Annerley branch warned that, “as union members, we should be extremely concerned”, as the laws could be used on picketers.

The Queensland Council of

Unions (QCU) supported a rally opposing the laws. CFMEU members on some inner city construction sites stopped work to attend and numerous other unions were also represented at the rally.

Michael Clifford, the QCU acting General Secretary told the rally unions were there to support “not only our own rights” but also “the rights and civil liberties of all protesters”. The union movement believes we, “have a right to push back and to protect and defend our rights and create a better country” and that, “today the benefits we have in our workplaces, the things we enjoy as a society have come through protest, through action that disrupts”.

Legal academic and activist Aiden Ricketts also spoke at the rally. He said, “it was one thing to stand up here and fight against Joh [former National Party Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen] and be arrested but it is another thing to come here with the shame of a Labor government, passing anti-democratic protest laws”.

“Every time Labor capitulates to the right” he warned it, “simply allows the right to become more right wing”. And to prove him right, Scott Morrison has since flagged the idea of laws to crack down on environmental boycott campaigns.

Mark Gillespie

Election review confirms Albanese's rush to the right

LABOR'S POST-ELECTION review has confirmed the party's shift to the right which began when Anthony Albanese became leader.

Gone is the use of the term "big end of town", which Bill Shorten used to summarise the Liberals' plans for tax cuts for big business and their unwillingness to call a Banking Royal Commission.

In comes an emphasis on Labor "as a party of economic growth and job creation. Labor should adopt the language of inclusion, recognising the contribution of small and large businesses to economic prosperity".

Virtually no one expected Labor to lose the election. In one regard, the result was tight—decided by 220,000 voters on a two-party preferred basis, with the Coalition gaining a majority of just three.

But while there were swings to the ALP in Victoria and in inner-city seats, Labor was routed in Queensland and Western Australia, where it now holds only 11 of 46 seats. Its one Senate seat in Queensland is its worst result since 1949.

It is these results that drive the post-election review. The authors write: "Labor did not adequately acknowledge the legitimate desire of Australians for improved living standards for themselves and their children through their own hard work and initiative, even though this has always been integral to the Labor story."

This is not-so-subtle code for a full-scale retreat from tax increases on the wealthy (franking credits and negative gearing), abandonment of ambitious plans for public school funding and a new emphasis on the suburbs.

As the review argues: "Labor should broaden its support base by improving its standing with economically insecure, low-income working families, groups within the Christian community and Australians living in regional and rural Australia."

None of this is new. In 2003, Mark Latham, now leader of One Nation in NSW, wrote a book entitled *From the Suburbs* shortly before becoming Labor federal leader. In it he argued: "The powerful centre of our society, concentrated in the international heart of the major cities, talks a different language from suburban communities. In lifestyle and political values, they are poles apart."

Labor is looking to its past in



Above: Labor leader Anthony Albanese has already been moving the party to the right

other ways, too. As Albanese put it in a major speech in late October: "Like Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, I understand that building the future means we must first and foremost be in the business of creating wealth, as well as ensuring it is distributed fairly.

"Labor is proudly and resolutely pro-growth. We understand that successful businesses and a vibrant economy are essential prerequisites for job growth."

The Labor review is significant also for what it doesn't say. There's no reference to increasing Newstart, even though the Coalition is entirely isolated on the question.

There's only a nod to the union movement—instead there's a statement that "Labor's policy formulation should be guided by the national interest, avoiding any perception of capture by special interest groups".

The emphasis on "suburban values" signals a retreat on refugees, discrimination against LGBTI school staff, the right to protest and other so-called politically correct issues.

Climate change

Yet the review argues that Labor should make these changes in direction "without compromising existing support".

The issue where the ALP faces the biggest challenge to walk both sides of the street is climate change.

The review argues: "Labor's ambiguous language on Adani, combined with some anti-coal rhetoric, devastated its support in the coal mining

communities of regional Queensland and the Hunter Valley."

Yet it insists that: "A modern Labor Party cannot neglect human-induced climate change. To do so would be environmentally irresponsible and a clear electoral liability."

The result is total incoherence, that will continue to satisfy no one.

In his keynote speech last month, Albanese tacked left, arguing that a shift to renewables can generate new jobs. "The world is decarbonising. With the right planning and vision, Australia can... enjoy a new manufacturing boom."

Yet in the next breath, he tacked right, celebrating the export of liquid natural gas—a fossil fuel—to south-east Asia and the use of metallurgical (coking) coal to produce wind turbines.

Labor could break out of this impasse—moving to 100 per cent renewables while creating good jobs for fossil fuel workers along the way.

But it would mean junking the market and making massive public investment in new power stations, batteries and other storage, and improved transmission networks, funded by taxing big business.

Albanese's turn to the right rules out such a solution. So Labor will continue to wallow, pleasing no one and giving Scott Morrison the easy run he doesn't deserve.

We will need a revitalised, fighting union movement and stronger social movements around climate change, refugees and for public services in order to shift politics back to the left.

REFUGEES

Australia's Medevac catch-22 means no medical help for refugees

By Ian Rintoul

DESPITE THE extensive efforts of Peter Dutton to discredit the Medevac legislation—slavishly supported by the Murdoch press—an opinion poll in Tasmania shows a large majority, 63 per cent, in favour of the Medevac legislation (27 per cent backed repeal, 10 per cent were unsure).

This is a small improvement on the 60 per cent finding of the national February 2019 poll run by the same company. But we can expect more of the government selectively leaking refugees' confidential details to the media before the final parliamentary sittings of the year begin in the last week of November.

So far, since February, just 160 people have been transferred from Manus and Nauru for medical treatment.

Most of those transferred are being held in closed detention, in detention centres and two motels in Brisbane and Melbourne.

As part of its campaign against Medevac, the government is deliberately delaying medical treatment to those being transferred. The vast majority are not getting medical treatment at all.

For those with mental health problems, closed detention is making their situation worse; for others, detention in Australia means they are still being deprived of medical attention despite being transferred to get it. It's a particularly twisted Medevac version of catch-22.

But while the political focus has been on Medevac, the first moves to so-called "community placement" are underway in PNG, as the Australian government tries to further distance itself from its responsibility for refugees' care. Refugees are being moved out of the Granville Motel, where scores of asylum seekers and refugees have been housed since being transferred from Manus detention, into hotels in residential areas of Port Moresby.

"Community placement" will leave refugees with fewer services as well as being more exposed to danger.

Most significantly, it shows that the government is no closer to providing the safe resettlement for the around 290 people left in PNG (or for the around 270 people on Nauru).

There will be no security at their



Above: Rally to save the Medevac law in Sydney

new housing areas. They will now have to provide food, water, phones, and all necessities for themselves; forcing them to shop. They will be exposed to assault and robbery every time they are forced to leave the hotel.

No transport will be provided to the Pacific International Hospital (PIH), the only place they can get medical treatment. With only two taxi vouchers a month, they will be at risk every time they are forced to use public buses.

With a support allowance of just 200 kina (about A\$100) a week, "community placement" will also drive refugees into poverty, and leave many more to become prisoners in their rooms.

Bomana Starvation

More revelations about the conditions in the Bomana detention black hole in PNG have confirmed the rendition-like conditions of a Guantanamo Bay. Asylum seekers are denied visitors, phone access, fans, pens, or books (even playing cards were confiscated), while the starvation rations have seen them lose between 12-15 kilograms in a couple of months.

There are now 43 asylum seekers still being held in the Bomana detention centre in an effort to force them to sign to go back to their home countries.

Rallies in Sydney and Melbourne on Saturday 7 December will take up the government's onshore war against asylum seekers, calling for permanent, not temporary, protection visas, for family reunion and for an end to the fast-track assessment system.

New Zealand to the rescue?

AUSTRALIA'S MOST prominent and internationally-recognised offshore refugee, Behrouz Boochani, has managed to get to New Zealand on a one-month visa to attend a writers' festival in Christchurch.

The move has highlighted the brutality of Australia's offshore detention policy, but it has also graphically exposed New Zealand's complicity with Australia's offshore detention policy.

If the New Zealand government had the political will to defy the Australian government, it could have taken refugees from Manus and Nauru years ago.

If New Zealand can issue a visa for one Manus refugee, it can grant visas to many others. The demand for New Zealand to take a stand

against Australia and help free the refugees will grow.

Behrouz's arrival in New Zealand will also likely re-open debate about the Australian government's "lifetime ban bill" and its paranoia that New Zealand will become a back-door for the refugees that Australia expelled to Manus and Nauru.

Anything that breaks through the facade of Australia's policy is welcome.

In Australia, the refugee movement will need to keep up the campaign to "Bring them here." The more pressure that can be applied in Australia, the bigger the hole that can be punched in Australia's border protection policy and the sooner all the refugees on Manus and Nauru will be free.

The government is deliberately delaying medical treatment to those being transferred

Strike wins big pay rises for 1000 Woolies workers in Sydney

By Jess Whittall

WOOLIES WAREHOUSE workers in Sydney have won a 16 per cent pay rise over three years after a solid 24 hour strike.

The strike by 1000 workers at the Minchinbury distribution centre, “sent a clear message to management” union delegate Matthew Mattaio said. Both permanent and casual staff completely shut down the warehouse, with hard pickets stopping trucks from entering the strategic Western Sydney centre.

Management’s attitude to the workforce was on display during the strike, as they set up a large mobile surveillance camera set up in close proximity to the picket line. Workers have face bullying and intimidation from managers, triggering a spontaneous illegal walk-out earlier this year.

But in the face of further indefinite strike action set to begin on 15 November, management gave in on many of the workers’ demands.

The 16 per cent wage increase over the three year enterprise agreement includes a front-loaded 8 per cent in the first year, followed by 4 per cent annual increases afterwards.

The big pay increases followed a campaign, “to get equality pay with all the other Woolies people that do similar workloads”, Matthew told *Solidarity*. The workers’ initial claim was for 16 per cent in the first year and 28 per cent over three years. Workers at warehouses in Victoria are paid 16 per cent more than the workers in Sydney.

But in the context of record low wage growth for workers of just 2.2 per cent a year, the result is a “really good outcome”, Matthew said.

The pay increase will provide much needed assistance to the Sydney workers, with the highest cost of living of any city in the country. The workers are members of the newly-formed United Workers Union (UWU), formerly NUW members.

Workers have also secured increased redundancy entitlements of four weeks for each year’s service, now capped at 82 weeks total as opposed to 40 weeks previously for redundancy payouts. This will help protect workers against the threat of job losses from automation.

There will also be more transparent pathways for casuals to become permanent, with length of service a deciding factor. This was a great reflection of the solidarity of the picket



Above: Workers at the Woolies warehouse in Minchinbury on the picket line

line where casuals—some who were not even rostered on for that day—stood side by side with permanents on the picket line. As many as 400 of the

workers at the warehouse are casuals.

The result showed how strike action and strong union organisation can win serious gains on pay and conditions.

Melbourne University casuals fight back

CASUAL WORKERS at the University of Melbourne have delivered a blow to the myth that they are too insecure and vulnerable to fight for their rights.

Over 2019 NTEU activists have organised casuals across the university into a rank and file “casuals network”, campaigning on a number of issues. Earlier this year, after the university refused to reimburse casual tutors for the compulsory working with children check, we rallied and won reimbursement in every school and faculty. Since then we have fought for an end to the illegal “piece rate” payment for marking and for casual tutors to be paid for lecture attendance.

On 1 November over 100 casual staff members, alongside students and permanent staff, rallied outside the Dean of the Faculty of Arts’ office. We intended to deliver a petition signed by over 300 staff calling for casual tutors to be paid for lecture attendance.

When the Dean refused to meet us, we decided to take the petition to him. Staff members filed into the Dean’s office and occupied it for several hours. When he continued

to refuse to meet with us we rallied again the following Friday. Once more over 100 permanent and casual staff marched across the campus.

Following these two successful actions University HR declared a “dispute” and called a meeting with the NTEU branch. NTEU casuals refused to be demobilised by negotiations behind closed doors. Over two days around 40 casuals attended these meetings to tell their stories of exploitation and insecurity and to hold the university to account.

For too long sections of the NTEU leadership have put the issue of casualisation in the “too hard” basket. This is disastrous given the high rate of casualisation in the sector.

At the University of Melbourne insecure workers make up 74 per cent of the workforce. But the casuals network has shown that insecure workers themselves, organised and fighting alongside permanent staff, have the power and potential to win an end to casualisation and the permanent jobs we desperately need.

Casuals will keep fighting until we have a clear victory.

Geraldine Fela

In the face of further indefinite strike action, management gave in

INTERNATIONAL

Back to the weekend—NZ workers fight to get back penalty rates

HUNDREDS OF SkyCity Casino workers in Auckland, New Zealand have been striking every weekend since September to win back weekend penalty rates. Since the 1991 Employment Contracts Act was introduced workers there have lacked any minimum legal standards including weekend or late night penalty rates.

Solidarity's Erima Dall spoke to **Tina Barnett**, who works on the game floor at the casino. Tina has worked at SkyCity for 16 years and is an executive delegate with SEA UNITE (SkyCity Employees Association of UNITE union), which has 900 members at the casino out of 3500 workers.

Can you tell us about the Back to the Weekend campaign and what you are fighting for?

The strike is about bringing back penalty rates for nights and weekends, at time and a half. It was going to cost the company a maximum of \$40 million a year. They didn't budge one bit.

Those are the hours when most of their profit is being made. It's about appreciating the sacrifices we make. Our quality time and family time is being taken away. When customers come to the casino it's our job to make that as enjoyable as possible, but when it comes to our leisure time it's a real struggle.

SkyCity workers fought against zero hour contracts and then it became national legislation, so if we win this, the UNITE union will push for it for everyone.

We have been striking for two months now. Every weekend we strike. Management are trying to say it doesn't have an effect. But they always overstaff now! So in my mind we're winning. Some workers just take the whole weekend off now to be with their families.

Every strike has a theme. We had a strike to go watch the rugby, we had a masked ball after the fire [at the convention centre]. And we're going to have a "back to the beach" action.

What was it like the first time you walked off the game floor?

You have to be prepared that the players are going to get upset. But they were really supportive. As each dealer walked off there was clapping and celebration. The management started to follow us around with security! It was very empowering.



Above: SkyCity workers walk out to join the Climate Strike on 20 September

The strike also covers cleaners, housekeepers, security guards and other staff at the casino. Our first picket back in early September had 250 people participate. Now the pickets have diminished in numbers. But we ask members to come out for at least one or two hours to picket every strike. What's sad is there is another union on the site that covers the overtime of our strike. But we have to stick to our Kaupapa—the cause. Even if we keep going over Christmas and New Year our members want to keep fighting.

The workforce at SkyCity is very diverse. How have you made sure the union is inclusive?

There was a time when recruitment got quite tough. A major barrier was not being able to speak the language, say of our Chinese and Indian workers. Because two Māori women were leading for a long time—myself and my friend—a lot of workers thought it was a Māori organisation. So I chose to step down and encourage more of our migrant members to step up. And that's been a really big improvement. We're all workers doing what's been asked of us by a corporate machine.

Tell us about walking out for the Climate Strike and your demands for public transport.

We've negotiated in our previous agreements more public transport for

the staff so there are less cars on the road, and now SkyCity are promoting a raffle to win a Lamborghini for customers!

The majority of staff bring in their own cars. There is a shuttle service every two hours, but we need more public transport. Auckland is growing rapidly. The congestion at peak hours is phenomenal. So we're demanding "free and frequent" public transport to the city.

In Auckland we had 80,000 at the climate strike. We were the first workers who went on strike for the climate! It was awesome.

Can you tell us about the fire that broke out in the convention centre?

The fire started on a Tuesday night. There was smoke coming into the casino and staff were told to continue to work for up to five hours—now that is thick, black, toxic smoke.

After two days off there was a rush to get staff back to work. Our union was demanding the health and safety report that gave clearance for the precinct. No report has been given. They sent out a message for anyone pregnant or with respiratory problems to stay at home. But everyone else was expected to be back at work.

So we had strike action that weekend. We are demanding Work Safe do an independent investigation into the long term impacts of the smoke inhalation.



Tina Barnett

As climate change melts the Arctic, oil companies see only new chances for profit

By Ruby Wawn

DONALD TRUMP is moving to sell off leases over 1.6 million acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, opening the area up to oil and gas exploration for the first time.

Fossil fuel giants will stop at nothing to get their hands on new oil and gas reserves in the most pristine parts of the world.

They even see climate change as an opportunity to access fossil fuel reserves that were previously unreachable.

The Arctic environment is already rapidly changing, with the region heating twice as fast as the rest of the planet. Half of the ice coverage on the Bering Sea between Alaska and Russia disappeared during a two-week period in February 2018. For the last 30 years, Arctic ice levels have been declining at a rate of 10 per cent per decade.

Oil and gas companies are rushing to exploit the area. The melting ice is opening up new trade routes and energy supplies north of the Arctic circle.

It is estimated that fossil fuels extracted from the Arctic could add up to five million additional metric tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year—equivalent to another million cars on the road.

These include hard to reach oil fields in Siberia, and a new proposed supply route from Russia to Europe. The Northern Sea Route along the Arctic coastline sits along an important economic area for Russia, already accounting for between 10 per cent and 30 per cent of its GDP. Control over Arctic oil and gas shipping routes could create a 21st century Suez Canal geo-political battle.

Increased ship movements will further damage the area. The International Maritime Organisation is considering a ban on the burning of heavy fuel in Arctic waters, in an attempt to quell environmental degradation from oil and gas shipping routes including increasing amounts of black carbon, ice pollution and oil spills.

Scramble for the Arctic

A struggle is emerging over drilling for oil and gas in the Arctic, with Russia, China and the US leading the charge, staking claim at the new opportunities for resource extraction.



Above: Russian efforts to exploit the resources of the Arctic

The Arctic contains up to 90 billion barrels of oil and 47 trillion cubic metres of gas. This equates to 13 per cent of the world's undiscovered oil and 30 per cent of undiscovered gas. Russia owns 58 per cent of Arctic resources while only 18 per cent is owned by the US.

US Energy Secretary Rick Perry has called for "free nations" to resist attempts from those "that seek to dominate the Arctic from the outside"—a reference to the growing influence of Russia and China, the self-described "near arctic" power, in the region.

The US has ambitions to become the world's leading Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) exporter—projected to be producing 100 million tonnes by 2024, fuelled by expected growth in demand in Asia. But the US faces higher extraction and transportation costs to get fossil fuels to markets in Asia and in Europe.

Since 2017, global fossil fuel giant BP has been lobbying the Trump Administration to re-open the Arctic for oil and gas exploration, with BP and Exxon-Mobil committing \$20 million in May this year to develop LNG in Alaska.

Trump's plan to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge threatens habitat for threatened polar bear species and porcupine caribou.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has accused the Bureau of Land Man-

agement (BLM) of underestimating the impacts of the proposed oil leases on the climate. Contrary to popular scientific consensus, the BLM suggested in their environmental impact statement for the project that global warming is cyclical, rather than human induced.

China also has a stake in the game, publishing a white paper in 2018 outlining its interests in the Arctic. To support an economy dependent on gas imports for use in manufacturing, China is desperate to secure and control new oil and gas supplies.

Russia too is aiming to expand its influence in the gas and energy market through companies such as Total SA and Novatek PJSC.

In June 2019, Russian and Chinese companies commenced a joint venture to manage a fleet of ice-breaker tankers to move Arctic LNG to markets in Europe and Asia.

Fossil fuel companies using climate change as an opportunity to open new sources of profits is an obscene example of the logic of capitalism and the scramble for profits.

They will keep pumping out new sources of carbon emissions even as the world goes to pieces underneath them—unless we stop them.

It's time to demand that people and the planet come before profit and to put a stop to the extraction of oil and gas in the Arctic—and everywhere else.

Arctic ice levels have been declining at a rate of 10 per cent per decade

Dramatic British election to decide on Brexit and Jeremy Corbyn

By James Supple

BRITAIN IS headed to the polls on 12 December in an election that will determine not just the fate of Brexit but the future of Labour's radical shift to the left under Jeremy Corbyn.

Corbyn, a lifelong socialist, launched his campaign by saying it was, "a once in a generation chance to transform our country to take on the vested interests holding people back".

Labour has promised to set up a "national transformation fund" by borrowing \$750 billion to fund schools, hospitals, council houses and a green transformation fund for energy and transport. It supports widespread nationalisation including of Royal Mail, water, the railways and the energy grid.

Tory Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants the election to be a referendum on Brexit, promising to "get Brexit done". British politics has become increasingly polarised around the issue after two years of negotiations with the EU and protracted parliamentary brawling.

The Liberal Democrats have seen their support grow by positioning themselves as the most pro-Remain party, while the Brexit Party has also attracted support through demanding a more dramatic break with the EU.

Johnson, who became Prime Minister after former Tory leader Theresa May failed to get her Brexit deal through parliament, had threatened the EU with a chaotic "no deal Brexit". But he has now managed to both strike a Brexit deal of his own and convince the hardline Brexiteers on the right of the Tories to back it.

Johnson poses as defending democracy and the popular vote to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum—against opposition from parliament and the political elite. His firm stance in favour of Brexit has seen the Tories rise in the polls.

The Tories have also been strengthened by Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage's decision not to stand candidates against them in Tory seats.

Labour and Brexit

By contrast Labour's position on Brexit is muddled and unclear. Its promises to negotiate a new Brexit deal if it wins government and then hold another referendum, in which remaining in the EU and overturning Brexit would be an option. It cannot



Above: Left-wing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has struggled over Brexit

even say whether it would campaign for Brexit or Remain if this referendum happened.

There has been pressure on Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn to back remaining in the EU from many party members who see Brexit as encouraging racism and British nationalism. But the key reason for Labour's muddled position is the insurgency against Corbyn by right-wing Labour MPs. Most Labour MPs back remaining in the EU because they support big business and its desire to remain part of the European market.

Corbyn was elected Labour leader due to popular support from party members, but his socialist policies remain deeply loathed by the bulk of Labour MPs.

Corbyn stalled down a motion to support Remain at Labour's Conference in September. But he has conceded to the Labour right's demands, supporting a softer Brexit where the UK would remain in a customs union with the EU and seek full access to the European market.

He has also watered down his support for free movement of people within the EU, in a concession to Tory scaremongering about immigration.

The Tories have a comfortable lead in the polls. But Corbyn came from behind in the last election in 2017 too, surging during the campaign by 11 per cent. This was thanks to Labour's most left-wing manifesto

in a generation. Corbyn toured the country speaking at mass rallies, creating wide enthusiasm about the prospect of radical change.

Years of Tory austerity since 2010 have created enormous bitterness. They have cut 1.1 million jobs in the public sector and imposed pay freezes cutting paramedics' pay by \$11,000 and teachers' by \$8000. Council budgets have been cut by 20 per cent. Funding for schools, the elderly and the disabled have all been slashed. The number of children in poverty has risen by half a million.

Corbyn's chances depend on creating a strong class feeling of opposition to the Tories and excitement about Labour's program for change. Compromises on its radical program or choosing to run a conventional stage-managed campaign will make this more difficult.

A defeat for Labour would almost certainly spell the end of Corbyn's leadership, and take Labour veering back to the right. But were Labour to win, this would only be the first step in fighting to deliver change.

The super-rich are already talking of taking their money out of the country if Labour wins, and big business would fight Corbyn's efforts to seize any of their wealth.

The power to resist such sabotage does not lie in parliament—but with mass protests and workers' struggle outside it.

Tory Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants the election to be a referendum on Brexit

Versailles—How Australia demanded colonies of its own

Tom Orsag looks at Australia's rotten role in the Versailles Peace Conference 100 years on

FOLLOWING THE First World War, the Treaty of Versailles imposed ruthless terms on Germany including crippling reparations. It laid the basis for renewed world war a few decades later.

Australia played a major role at the 1919 Peace Conference that devised the treaty.

Prime Minister William Hughes attended in person. Carl Bridge, in a recent biography, called it his “finest hour”. Defence think-tank the Australian Strategic Policy Institute similarly published an article in April by Ann Moyal entitled “1919: the triumph of Billy Hughes”.

But Hughes’ “triumph” was only a victory for militarism, colonial domination, and vicious anti-Japanese racism. He was a strong supporter of imposing crushing economic sanctions on Germany to meet the full cost of the war.

Hughes was initially a Labor Prime Minister, but was expelled from the party in 1916 over conscription, before forming a coalition with the conservatives. Arriving in Britain a few months before the war ended in 1918, he spoke widely, drumming up support for the war effort with rabid pro-Empire nationalism, demanding ruthless indemnity payments from Germany.

Hughes was also the loudest voice against Japan’s proposal for a clause affirming racial equality in the Covenant of the new League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations.

Japan felt the US and European nations didn’t regard it as an equal. Hughes refused even to accept a watered down version of the clause, leaving the Japanese deeply humiliated.

This strengthened the hand of Japanese nationalists who wanted a more aggressive military policy. Privately, Hughes’ director of military intelligence, Major Edmund L. Piesse, wrote that, “We have been perhaps the chief factor in consolidating the whole Japanese nation behind the imperialists”.

For Hughes, the whole war against Germany had been fought with an eye to the supposed threat from Japan—Britain and Australia’s wartime ally. As he put it in a 1916 speech full of racist paranoia, “We have lifted up on our top-most minaret the badge of white Australia, but we are... a drop in a coloured ocean ringed around with a thousand millions of the coloured races.”

Hughes’ main objective at the Peace Conference, however, was to se-

cure Australian control of the German colonies in the Pacific it had seized in September 1914 at the outbreak of war.

They included the northern half of New Guinea and all the main islands to its east—Manus, New Ireland, New Britain, and Bougainville—as well as the guano-laden island of Nauru.

This produced a clash with US President Woodrow Wilson, who insisted on the right of self-determination for small nations and wanted former German colonies to be administered by the League of Nations. This reflected not a commitment to democracy, but the US desire to break up the old European empires.

Wilson argued Australia was a small country of five million people. Hughes, relying on estimates that Australia suffered more casualties in the war than the US, replied unabashedly, “I speak for 60,000 dead. For how many do you speak?”

Hughes wanted the outright annexation of the German colonies Australia had seized. He told the Peace Conference, “Strategically the northern islands (such as New Guinea) encompass Australia like fortresses. They are as necessary to Australia as water to a city.”

Germany had also surrendered its colonies north of the Equator—the Carolinas, the Marianas (except Guam), the Marshall Islands and Palau. But Australia never occupied them.

The Japanese navy, entering the war as Britain’s ally, took control there. It was “understood” in Australia that the Japanese had gone into occupation, “only until Australia could assume control”. However Hughes accepted Britain’s decision giving Japan control there on the proviso that Australia received those south of the Equator.

Although Australia was part of the British Empire, Hughes had won separate representation at the peace conference along with other Dominions including New Zealand and South Africa. The Australian ruling class was determined to assert its own distinct interests over-and-above loyalty to Britain.

1905 racist reaction

With Japan’s defeat of Russia in their war in 1905, Hughes and a section of the Australian ruling class became obsessed with Japan as a possible future

imperial rival.

Hughes’ adviser Major Edmund L. Piesse, wrote, “In no country did the success of Japan against Russia in 1905 produce a greater impression than in Australia.”

Fitzhardinge, a favourable biographer of Hughes, admitted bluntly that Japan’s victory established it, “in place of China as the main embodiment of the ‘Yellow Peril’.”

Behind Hughes’ actions, he concluded, “lay his conviction that sooner or later, population pressure must drive Japan towards the open spaces of Australia.” In April 1916, Hughes wrote to Senator George Pearce, the acting Prime Minister, after talks with the British Foreign office which to him confirmed, “all our fears—or conjectures—that Japan was and is most keenly interested in Australia.”

This had no basis in reality. It ran counter to Japan’s main imperialist desires for control of areas much closer to home in Korea, Manchuria and China, and later in the 1920s and 1930s for control of rubber in British-run Malaya and oil in Dutch-run Indonesia.

Even during its push southward during the Second World War Japan rejected the idea of invading Australia, a fact the Australian government knew by mid-1942.

Australian imperialism

Australia had already begun to assert its own local imperialist interests, and was determined to dominate the islands to its north. Queensland attempted to occupy part of New Guinea for the British Empire in 1883. There was also a clamour in the Australian colonies demanding the seizure of the New Hebrides in 1886.

It took a legal compromise to break the deadlock with US President Wilson.

A system of “mandates” to control territory from the League of Nations was proposed. Australia would receive a “C-class” mandate where all its laws would apply to its mandated territory—including the White Australia policy. It was, “the equivalent of a 999 years’ lease as compared with freehold”, Britain’s Cabinet Secretary declared. Hughes had what he wanted.

Australian control of Papua New Guinea lasted until 1975. And the imperialist effort to dominate the south Pacific continues today.

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**The whole
war against
Germany had
been fought
with an eye to
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Japan**

EXPLORING A WORLD IN REVOLT

With huge anti-government movements erupting across the globe, **Sadie Robinson** looks at the root cause of these protests and how the struggles have the potential to win

AN INSPIRING wave of revolts is posing a serious challenge to the “business as usual” of capitalism.

It also exposes the lie that we can’t seriously challenge the system. In recent months, mass demonstrations have taken place in Lebanon, Chile, Hong Kong, Haiti, Ecuador, Iraq, Sudan and Catalonia.

Each revolt had a spark. In Chile, it was a rise in the cost of metro fares, and in Haiti it was shortages and corruption. Protesters in Ecuador were fighting an austerity package while those in Iraq took on poverty and corruption.

What’s interesting is how many protests have quickly developed into movements demanding much more far-reaching changes.

In Haiti, the fight against the government is drawing in new forces, which is producing arguments about how the movement can win.

In Haiti, thousands of Catholics held an anti-government march through the capital Port-au-Prince. A spokesperson for the Haitian Conference of Religious said, “Can we advance with the current political regime and this system in place? We should build anew.”

But other protesters rallied against the non-violent mobilisation, and argued that direct action was necessary.

In Hong Kong, protests have lasted for months. They began in opposition to a law that would allow extraditions to mainland China. Now, people want the fall of the government, more democracy, and the disbanding of the police force.

In Lebanon, huge protests began over a planned tax on WhatsApp calls. Within days protesters were chanting, “Revolution, revolution.”

Why does there seem to be such an eruption of struggle now and why does it feel so militant?

The protests haven’t come out of nowhere. In Haiti, there have been

waves of protest since president Jovenel Moise took office in 2017. They initially called on Moise to fix things—now they want him to resign.

And in Hong Kong demands for more democracy aren’t new—the 2014 Umbrella movement occupied streets to call for it.

In many places the current explosions are the latest phase in a longer term struggle.

Revolts keep bursting out because the system can’t deliver what people want.

They follow a decade of austerity, political turmoil and economic instability following the financial crash of 2007-8.

The impact has been horrific. Across the Middle East and North Africa, youth unemployment rates have been the highest in the world for over 25 years. They reached 30 per cent in 2017.

Over two thirds of people in Algeria are under 30. More than one in four of them were unemployed in the first quarter of last year.

In Algeria, protests earlier this year were sparked by the decision of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to seek a fifth term in office. But there is also deep bitterness at youth unemployment that has been simmering for years.

Austerity

Economic crisis and austerity has meant harsh wage cuts, more unemployment, attacks on services and benefits, and lower pensions.

Although not on the same scale, actions such as the Yellow Vest movement in France or general strikes in Greece are more signs of the anger.

The impact of austerity isn’t the same everywhere. But the attacks have fed a general discontent with the system.

On top of that, growing awareness

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Today there is a general economic and political crisis—not just in one country but across the globe

of climate change means wider layers of people feel that the system isn’t working.

The current wave of revolts isn’t a blip that can be easily overcome.

The revolutions of 2011 were a product of a long-term revolutionary process caused by the crisis and instability of the region. The latest uprisings are part of that process—and more revolts are likely until radical change succeeds.

The revolts are rooted in the inherently unstable nature of the system. The revolutionary Karl Marx explained how capitalism repeatedly goes into crisis.

Economic slumps feed political crises. Imperialist wars add to the instability. And pressure on profits encourages bosses to attack workers.

There are waves of resistance because the factors behind them are generalised—and what happens in one place affects things elsewhere.

Today there is a general economic and political crisis—not just in one country but across the globe.

This means there is more anger and bitterness at the system, and less faith in the people at the top.

At such times, protests can quickly develop to become a challenge to the system. And seeing struggle erupt in one place can make people elsewhere more confident to fight.

This is what happened during the 2011 Arab Spring. Protests began in Tunisia in December 2010 over unemployment and high prices. They became a revolution that forced out dictator Ben Ali, who had ruled for 23 years, within a month.

The Tunisian uprising sparked a revolution in Egypt, where people had suffered repression and hardship for 30 years under dictator Hosni Mubarak. He was gone in 18 days.

The Egyptian revolution then led to more uprisings—in Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria.

Similar waves of struggle have taken place throughout history.

In 1968 movements for black power and women's rights combined with the anti-Vietnam war movement, student revolts and workers' strikes.

There were mass strikes and protests in France, riots in the US, the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia and civil rights battles in Ireland.

The First World War ended with revolution in Russia.

There was widespread anger at the hardships that people had endured during the war, and a determination to get change.

Revolutionary situations and revolts broke out across the globe in the years that followed.

Capitalism is a volatile system that encourages struggle. But we can't just sit back and wait for the revolution.

Discontent with the way things are can be pulled in a right wing direction. The election of Donald Trump in the US, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and big votes for far right parties across Europe are worrying signs.

And anger at the system doesn't mean that people will automatically fight back.

Workers create the wealth under capitalism and have immense potential power.

But the system makes us feel powerless and alienated. This also makes people more vulnerable to ruling class ideas.

So how can we encourage struggles that can win?

Some people fighting today have learnt some lessons from the Arab Spring.

Changing a few faces at the top isn't enough to transform society. Instead there needs to be a confrontation with the ruling class and the states that protect them.

But brutal counter-revolutions against the Arab Spring, backed by Western powers, have shown what our rulers will do to try and crush resistance.

In order to win a different kind of system, we have to be prepared to take them on.

It can seem impossible when faced with the might of armies, militarised cops and the like.

But ordinary people far outnumber the rulers and their backers. And workers have the power to shut down their system.

Workers have played an important role in the recent revolts.

There have been general strikes in



Chile, Catalonia and Sudan, and workers have also struck in Hong Kong.

Workers

More involvement of workers self-consciously as organised workers is what can drive these movements forward.

In each of these movements, there are tensions between different groups of workers.

In every movement there are arguments about tactics.

Reformists try to steer revolts into a safer direction that keeps the system intact. Some argue that workers should leave things to "experts".

The danger in this can be seen across Latin America, where the left reformist "pink tide" governments that came to power in the early 2000s have all caused disappointment.

Left-wing President Evo Morales was driven from power by a coup in November. Poverty halved over his time in power but he also worked with energy multinationals to expand gas exports, leading to clashes with some of the social movements that helped bring him to power.

Instead of urging his supporters to join mass protests against the coup Morales fled the country and urged them to "respect the peace" and "resolve all differences with dialogue and discussion".

Revolt has the most chance of success if it's based on workers acting for themselves—and it refuses to

Above: People take to the streets in Chile as part of the revolt there

compromise with the old ways.

In Sudan the Sudanese Professionals Association, made up of independent unions, has helped to develop the movement there.

In Algeria, a general strike pushed the movement forward. In Egypt, workers' strikes were key to forcing out Mubarak.

And in Chile, the main union federation CUT backed a second one-day general strike in mid-November, supported by dock workers, teachers, public sector workers, and workers from a number of the country's copper mines.

As well as the new constitution the wider movement is fighting for their demands included an increase in the minimum wage and the pension level, a reduction in working hours and a halt to privatisation in education.

Workers have the numbers and the skills to overthrow capitalism and organise a socialist society.

Instead of looking to elect left-wing figures to parliament, a new way of running society can emerge based on workers' direct control of their workplaces, and democratic institutions established out of the workers' struggle itself.

Building up revolutionary organisations committed to the fight for a socialist society to fight for this can make a crucial difference in the struggles.

Socialist Worker UK

GANDHI AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

A STRATEGY FOR MOVEMENTS TODAY?

Lachlan Marshall reviews a new book that examines Gandhi's ideas and the role of his non-violent civil disobedience in the struggle for Indian independence

GANDHI IS the best known advocate of non-violent civil disobedience, the approach championed today by groups like Extinction Rebellion. The idea that risking arrest through mass non-violent action can bring down governments has become popular in the climate movement.

In 1931 Gandhi said, "I believe myself to be a revolutionary—a non-violent revolutionary... my means are non-co-operation."

Talat Ahmed measures this claim, and the effectiveness of his tactics, in her new biography, *Mohandas Gandhi: experiments in civil disobedience*.

Gandhi was an important figure in the movement for Indian independence. But his distrust of ordinary people consistently led him to rein in struggles when they became too radical.

Gandhi dismissed strikes and mass protests outside his control by saying, "mobocracy is autocracy multiplied [a] million times." Behind this was his aim of simply replacing British rule with the rule of a new Indian elite—while leaving the underlying oppression of workers and peasants untouched.

Born into a middle-caste family in a trading and money-lending community, Gandhi wasn't from a wealthy background. But he was privileged enough to receive an education in London, where he began his training as a barrister in 1888.

A strength of the book is its attention to the ideas that shaped Gandhi's politics. Ahmed concludes that rather than being a uniquely Indian philosophy, "Gandhism" borrowed from a variety of ideas current in London at the end of the nineteenth century.

As a Hindu, Gandhi was raised a vegetarian, and in London his first political activism was in the Vegetarian Society.

This was an elite organisation that, according to Ahmed, was "interested

in change through individual effort and moral fibre." Here Gandhi was introduced to American philosopher David Henry Thoreau's ideas on civil disobedience.

Gandhi corresponded with the Russian writer and Christian anarchist, Leo Tolstoy. He immersed himself in the New Testament, and was impressed by the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus preached the virtue of turning the other cheek.

Gandhi returned to India after qualifying as a lawyer, but, unable to find employment, accepted a job in South Africa in 1893. In Durban he became a victim of a kind of racism that he hadn't experienced in London or even India.

It was in South Africa that Gandhi became a political leader.

Here Gandhi's political strategy of Satyagraha (literally translated as "truth-force") took shape. In Gandhi's words, "pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy... And patience means self-suffering."

In 1913 Gandhi led a mass movement against restrictions on Indians' freedom of movement. After the arrest of women defying the travel restrictions, 20,000 Indian workers came out on strike in their defence, closing down sugar mills, hotels and restaurants.

There was even the prospect of black workers joining the revolt. However, Gandhi did not want this, stating, "I saw it reported that we might even ask the Kaffirs to strike. But such is not our intention at all. We do not believe in such methods."

Ahmed concludes that Gandhi oriented towards, and campaigned for the interests of the Indian merchant and trader elite in South Africa. But to do so, he had to resort to mass mobili-

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Gandhi usually accepted the legitimacy of the state's use of violence

sation to overcome resistance from the authorities.

Non-violence

Gandhi is best known for his espousal of non-violence. Yet, as Ahmed documents, his calls to non-violence were always directed at oppressed people fighting back, not at the powerful.

Gandhi usually accepted the legitimacy of the state's use of violence.

So in 1914 he urged Indians to fight in the First World War. He believed Indians couldn't demand the full rights of British citizens unless they demonstrated their loyalty to the Empire.

In 1915 Gandhi returned to India. During the war, laws allowing internment without trial and press restrictions were introduced. Most of Punjab was brought under martial law.

On 13 April 1919 the British General, Reginald Dyer, led British Indian Army soldiers to a gathering of Punjabis in Amritsar near the Golden Temple. Without warning they opened fire, killing 379 people and injuring 1200.

The Amritsar massacre was a turning point for British rule in India. Rage at the British brought thousands of people onto the streets.

However, protests in Ahmedabad that attacked government buildings were denounced by Gandhi as, "utter lawlessness bordering almost on Bolshevism."

Such disdain towards the actions of the masses also shaped his approach to the labour movement.

In 1921 he explained that strikes, "do not fall within the plan of non-violent non-cooperation... In India we want no political strikes... We must gain control over all the unruly and disturbing elements... We seek not to destroy capital or capitalists, but to regulate the relations between capital and labour. We want to harness capital

to our side.”

Once again Gandhi demonstrated his opposition to broader system change.

Salt March

Britain held a monopoly on salt production and imposed a tax on all sales, inflating prices. In March 1930 Gandhi walked 240 miles from Ahmedabad to the coast, where he declared a campaign of defiance of the salt laws. He made salt by boiling sea water and implored Indians across the country to follow his lead. Millions broke the salt laws by making salt or buying it illegally.

This tapped into a deeper mood of resistance, inspiring defiance of forest laws and other unpopular taxes.

The British cracked down heavily. When a Muslim follower of Gandhi was arrested in April 1930, crowds gathered in protest. The British opened fire, killing over 200 people.

On 4 May Gandhi was arrested, and with his permission, a mass raid on a salt works in Gujarat took place. One of Gandhi's followers instructed the crowd, “You must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten, but you must not resist: you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows.”

What followed was a sickening attack on defenceless protesters. A journalist reported on the carnage: “From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls... Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders.”

The movement forced Viceroy Irwin to release Gandhi from prison. But instead of calling for the protests to escalate, he ordered a halt to the campaign once he had been invited to talks on constitutional reform.

The resulting pact brought an end to the boycott in exchange for the release of prisoners arrested during the campaign; permitted coastal residents to make their own salt; and allowed the picketing of shops selling foreign cloth or alcohol. However, the salt tax remained in place.

Much more could have been achieved had Gandhi been willing to extend the movement. But, as Ahmed explains, “Compromise was the hallmark of Gandhi's tactics, even though to reach such a compromise he had to both mobilise the masses and ensure that their actions did not lead to the overthrow of the authorities. The price of his partial victories was to be measured in the bashed-in heads



and broken bodies of his non-resisting followers.”

Quit India

Gandhi would not play the role of recruiter for the British Empire again in the Second World War.

In August 1942 Gandhi launched the Quit India campaign. The British recognised the threat and imprisoned him from 1942 to 1944.

The movement that would ultimately lead to the collapse of British rule operated largely independently of Gandhi. It was not his non-violent tactics but strikes and mutinies that proved effective.

While he was in prison Subhash Chandra Bose established the Indian National Army (INA), sponsored by the Japanese in an effort to drive the British out of India.

When a Muslim INA leader was jailed after the war, it sparked what has been called “the almost revolution.”

A mutiny began in the Royal Indian Navy, involving 20,000 Muslim, Hindu and Sikh sailors. They pulled down the Union Jack and hoisted the flags of Congress, the Muslim League and the Communist Party. They were supported by a general strike of 300,000 people. The revolt spread across India and into areas that would become Pakistan.

However, the independence leaders wanted to bring the movement back under their control. As Congress leader Patel wrote on 1 March 1946, “discipline in the army cannot be tampered with... We will want [the] army even in free India.”

Gandhi condemned the mutineers

Above: Gandhi during the struggle for Indian independence

as “thoughtless and ignorant”.

The unity demonstrated in the mutiny was squandered, paving the way for the horror of partition. One million people died in communal rioting between Hindus and Muslims.

Britain whipped up divisions along religious lines in an effort to undermine the independence movement. They created separate religious electorates that leaders of the different communities exploited for their own advancement.

Gandhi staunchly opposed partition and supported Hindu-Muslim unity. But he had helped call off the kind of mass movement across the religious divide which could have prevented it. He also opposed efforts by the left in Congress to appeal to Muslims on a class basis, leaving a vacuum which the Muslim League could exploit to recruit Muslims on the basis of religion.

Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist in January 1948. His efforts had helped shake the foundations of the British Empire.

However his non-violent tactics did not succeed in bringing down British rule—and at times proved disastrous. Gandhi did not aim to challenge capitalism or change the system. Yet it is this kind of radical change that we will need to deal with the climate crisis today. This will require mobilising the power of mass protest and workers' strike action that Gandhi was so determined to avoid.

Mohandas Gandhi: experiments in civil disobedience
By Talat Ahmed, Pluto Press, \$27.95

THE ORIGINS OF RACISM 1619—HOW SLAVERY IN THE US BEGAN

Four hundred years ago the first Africans were sold into the future United States. But at that point racialised slavery, and racist ideology, were yet to develop, argues **James Supple**

IN AUGUST 1619 the first African slaves arrived in the colony of Virginia. Colonist John Rolfe recorded in a letter to England the purchase of these “20 and odd” labourers from English privateer ship *The Golden Lion* in exchange for food and supplies.

They had originally been seized from the Kingdom of Ndongo in present day Angola, transported across the Atlantic by Portuguese traders.

The event’s 400 year anniversary has been marked with commemorations and discussions of the legacy of slavery across the US—including a multi-media 1619 project by the *New York Times*.

Virginia, the first permanent English colony in North America, had been established in 1607.

Britain was a latecomer to the European invasion of the Americas. Spain and Portugal had already carved out enormous empires following Columbus’ arrival in the Caribbean in 1492, bringing death and destruction. The Indigenous population of the island of Hispaniola, where he established a colony, was reduced from millions to just 200 within 50 years.

Portugal pioneered the African slave trade from the 1450s, establishing its first slave plantations on islands off the African coast.

Spain too made widespread use of African slaves shipped across the Atlantic.

It is often assumed that racism has always existed.

But it was only in the British colonies in North America and the Caribbean that a systematic racist ideology developed on the basis of skin colour. Racism emerged as a product of capitalism, to justify the treatment of slaves on plantations producing immense wealth through crops like sugar, tobacco and cotton.

Slavery had been an accepted practice in the Ancient Greek and Roman world. But in these societies slavery was never confined to particular races—virtually anyone could be enslaved. While they held prejudices against other peoples, the main dividing line was not race, but whether someone was considered “civilised” or “barbarian”. People were capable of becoming civilised—as shown by the incorporation of many different groups into the Roman Empire, including the population of north Africa as well as previously “barbarian” peoples in modern day France and Britain.

Even in 16th century England, small numbers of black Africans were employed at the royal court and by tradesmen due to valued skills as musicians, salvage divers and sailors. The idea that they were innately inferior to whites did not yet exist.

For almost the first century, Africans in the British colonies had the same rights and status as white indentured servants brought from Britain. They faced no special discrimination on account of their black skin.

Initially, Africans were a small minority of the labour force in the colonies that would become the United States. For decades, British indentured servants were far more numerous than Africans. A census in 1624/25 recorded 507 “servants” living in Virginia, of whom just 23 were Africans, out of a total population of 1218 adults.

Most servants signed on for a limited term of up to seven years in exchange for their passage from Britain. They were, in effect, temporarily enslaved.

The number of indentured servants in Virginia surged from the 1620s as tobacco growing boomed. Britain was emerging as the world’s first industrial capitalist nation, generating huge

demand for the new product.

Rich investors were granted land in exchange for importing servants to the colonies to work their plantations.

The conditions for indentured servants were incredibly brutal—they were under the almost complete power of their masters. But this treatment was imposed on European and African servants alike.

The racialised system of slavery for life, confined exclusively to blacks, had not yet developed.

In fact the plantation owners in Virginia initially preferred to purchase British servants, since they were cheaper for most of the 1600s. The appalling death rate in the early years of the colony also meant most servants did not survive to the end of their term of service.

Indentured servants received their freedom once their term expired, and were also entitled to land grants or “freedom dues”. This same right was initially granted to African servants.

There is evidence that a number of freed black men received land, and even imported their own indentured servants. A man named Anthony Johnson was granted 250 acres in 1651 after buying five indentured servants. His son, Richard Johnson, who was also an indentured servant for three years, later gained the right to 100 acres of his own.

A series of new laws gradually enshrined discrimination against African-Americans.

One key step was imposing lifetime slavery on African indentured servants. Rich planters began to impose this as a way of increasing the amount of labour squeezed from their servants, in an effort to increase profits.

Increasing a servant’s term of service was a common punishment for escape. The first record of a punish-

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**Racism
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ment of lifetime servitude—turning someone into a slave—is in 1640 on an African named John Punch. In 1661 the Virginia Assembly passed a law which recognised that Africans could be slaves for life.

But the fact these laws had to be passed at all shows that initially, Africans were not the subject of lifetime slavery or special discrimination. Racist ideology, which held Africans to be inferior or even subhuman, had not yet been invented.

Social control

Virginia's colonial rulers shifted to reliance on African slaves instead of European indentured servants in response to a series of uprisings.

As more indentured servants began to survive their terms and gain freedom, there were increased problems with social control, with a growing number of poor tenant farmers and labourers.

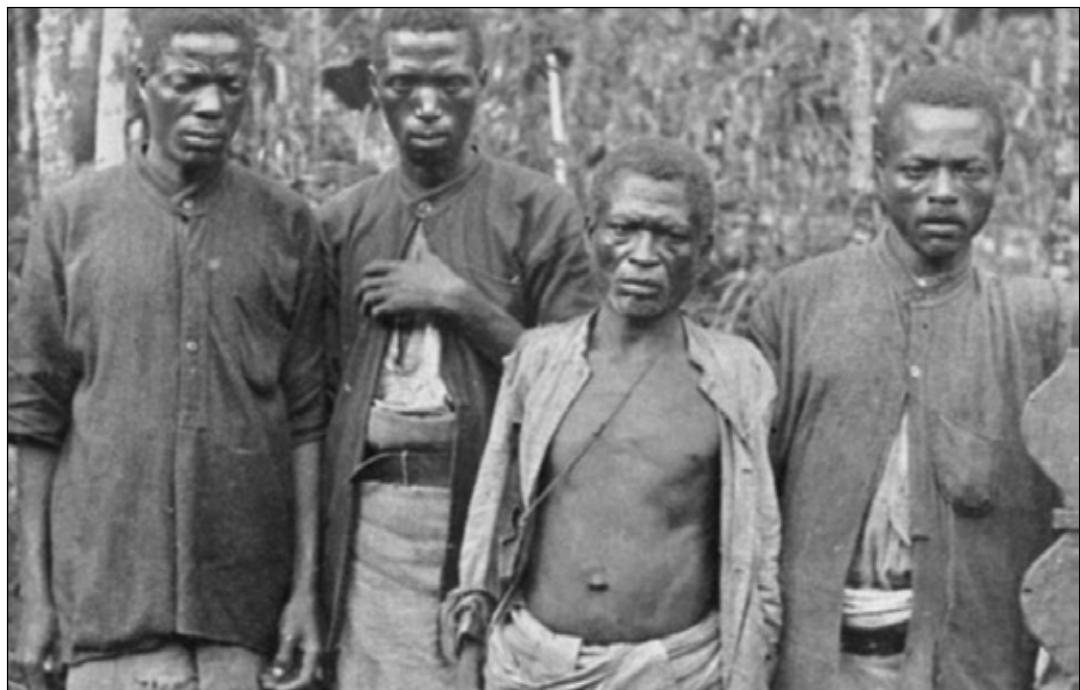
The situation exploded into successive rebellions. The most famous is Bacon's Rebellion of 1676, in which several hundred rebels almost succeeded in taking control of the colony. The rebels burned Jamestown to the ground and forced Governor Berkeley to flee.

It was led by Nathaniel Bacon, a large landowner and one of the elite. His initial demand was for an expedition to slaughter more of the local Indigenous population in order to seize more land for colonisation. Bacon mobilised both white and black indentured servants as well as poor freedmen with promises of land and economic justice.

The prospect of such a multi-racial rebellion terrified the colony's rulers. North America's distance meant it took four months for British troops to arrive to restore order. And there was the threat that a future rebellion could enlist one of the other European powers, each with their own empires close by, to secure independence.

Their solution was to turn increasingly to the use of African slaves on the plantations, and to promote an ideology of white racial superiority in order to divide and rule. The poor white population received few material privileges, with a small planter class controlling most of the wealth and land. But their freedom and white identity became, as academic Theodore Allen put it, "a mark of social status".

Between 1660 and 1705 the Virginia Assembly passed a barrage of laws that imposed racial discrimination against blacks—both slaves and free. They were banned from acting



as witnesses in court, serving in the militia, possessing arms, intermarriage with whites and even from "lift[ing] his or her hand" against any white man or woman. According to Theodore Allen, parish churches were instructed to read aloud these new laws twice a year, as were court sheriffs, so that, "the general public was regularly and systematically subjected to official white supremacist agitation".

By 1680 there were still just 3000 blacks out of a population of 44,000 people in Virginia. But by 1770 there were 409,500 black slaves across the Southern British colonies.

Britain also established large plantations in the Caribbean based on black slavery from the 1650s.

Ideology

Initially, plantation owners simply imposed the shackles of lifetime slavery on Africans because they could. Unlike British servants, who expected some rights in the courts and only accepted their temporary loss of liberty in exchange for passage to North America, African arrivals in the colony had already been sold into slavery against their will.

It was only the development of the ideas of freedom associated with the bourgeois revolutions in France in 1789 and the American War of Independence in 1776 that made ideological justification of slavery essential.

Brutal treatment at the hands of the ruling class had been a fact of life for peasants in Europe for centuries. Outright slavery was simply one of a series of brutally exploitative situations.

Above: A photograph of black slaves in a Georgia plantation

But the new capitalist societies based on "free" waged labour proclaimed that "all men are created equal", as the US Declaration of Independence put it. This meant that the existence of blacks born into perpetual slavery, and the scale of the barbarities inflicted on them, required special rationalisation.

The plantation owners began to justify their use of black slaves by claiming they were not really human. This was developed into a theory of racial differences with a supposedly "scientific" justification.

There was enormous wealth at stake in the continuation of black slavery. Not only did plantation owners in the Americas make huge fortunes, British merchants profited enormously from slave trading. The production of huge volumes of cotton fed the development of textile factories as part of Britain's industrial revolution.

The slave trade expanded rapidly between 1650 and 1700, with just under one million transported. At its peak 3.5 million slaves were transported within 50 years.

As Robin Blackburn put it, "In the late 18th century Britain was awash with the profits of empire. The profits of the plantations and the slave-based trades probably constituted the largest single source of imperial gains."

The trans-Atlantic slave trade stands as one of capitalism's greatest crimes. Not only did it unleash unbelievable brutality against fellow human beings, it created racist ideas to justify it that outlived slavery itself—and are with us still.

OUTRAGE AT POLICE KILLING FORCES MURDER CHARGE

By Ian Rintoul and Paddy Gibson

A WAVE of outrage and protest has forced murder charges against police officer Zachary Rolfe, after he shot 19-year-old Warlpiri man, Kumanjayi Walker. The shooting happened in his grandmother's house, in front of his girlfriend and family on Saturday 9 November.

Protests in Yuendumu, the Aboriginal community 266 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs where he died, were followed by protests in Alice Springs and then in more than 30 Aboriginal communities. Many carried banners saying "Black Lives Matter".

At Lajamanu, the second biggest Warlpiri community in the Northern Territory, the whole community joined a protest, "We got all the kids out of school too, and walked to the police station," Valerie Patterson, a community educator told Solidarity.

More than 200 people marched to the police station in Tennant Creek. A national day of action on 13 November saw thousands rally in capital cities and regional centres across the country.

The murder charge was announced that night, while a huge mobilisation of Warlpiri people was moving into Alice Springs, including more than 150 cars. More than 1000 people marched the following day, the biggest Alice Springs demonstration in decades.

The decision to charge Rolfe is rare, and a significant breakthrough. But there is a long way to go before there is any justice.

A Senior Constable charged with murder for shooting Aboriginal teenager Robert Jongmin at Wadeye in 2003 had the charge downgraded and eventually dropped.

Rolfe's release on bail was unusual for such a serious charge. As many have pointed out, there is no way an Indigenous person would have been released. He has been allowed to return to Canberra where he was raised in a wealthy, well connected family.

What we know so far suggests an attempted police cover-up. Police spokesmen initially said two shots were



Above: Protests across the Northern Territory, including this one in Darwin, helped forced charges against Rolfe

fired, then the story changed to three.

Police Commissioner Jamie Chalker said the officer was stabbed "by a sharp or an edged weapon." Eye-witnesses from inside the house insisted there was no weapon.

Police say Walker was shot around 7.15pm on Saturday night. But there was no formal request for an airlift from the Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS) until 8.15pm. Walker was declared dead soon after. The RFDS never came, saying they had not been assured of their safety.

Medical staff based at Yuendumu had been withdrawn by NT Health on Saturday, citing "community unrest". John Patterson from the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance said, "it is totally unacceptable to not have clinic staff there when you've got a community of more than a thousand people" and also slammed the racism of the decision not to deploy RFDS.

The media has played up Rolfe's history of Army service in Afghanistan. But Yuendumu now looks like a warzone. Police tactical response teams were flown in on the night of the shooting and still occupy the community in large numbers, many brandishing assault rifles.

At protests following the shooting,

Warlpiri leaders demanded the police disarm across all remote communities and leave Yuendumu entirely for at least a year.

Police attempted to create divisions—evacuating non-Indigenous teaching and other staff. "The teachers don't want to go. This is not a black-white fight," Valerie Martin told Solidarity from Yuendumu, "Our issue is with the police. We want them out."

Alice Springs too is heavily occupied. A 23-year-old Central Arrente man was struck by an undercover vehicle after being pursued by the khaki-clad Territory Response Group on 18 November. He remains in a serious condition in Adelaide hospital as Solidarity goes to press.

Since the NT Intervention in 2007, Aboriginal communities have lived under racist, dictatorial controls. Thousands of jobs were cut, community councils abolished and social security "quarantined" onto a BasicsCard. Police numbers increased dramatically and they have the power to enter homes without a warrant.

Valerie Martin said, "We will keep fighting for justice. And we need to get rid of this whole racist system now, scrap the Intervention laws and put power back into the community".

'We need to get rid of this racist system, scrap the Intervention laws and put power back into the community'
—Valerie Martin

Solidarity