

Solidarity

Issue No. 41 / December 2011

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**REFUGEES, US BASES, URANIUM,
SAME-SEX MARRIAGE:**

**HOW LOW CAN
LABOR GO?**



**BAIADA WORKERS AND
VICTORIAN NURSES SHOW
HOW TO FIGHT**

Pages
10 & 12

SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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Thursday December 1

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Thursday December 8

**Imperialism in the 21st century: Gillard,
Obama and the US-Australia alliance**

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how can we beat the bosses' laws? with a
guest speaker, Baiada delegate**

Trades Hall, Lygon Street, Melbourne

Melbourne Solidarity meets 6.30pm every
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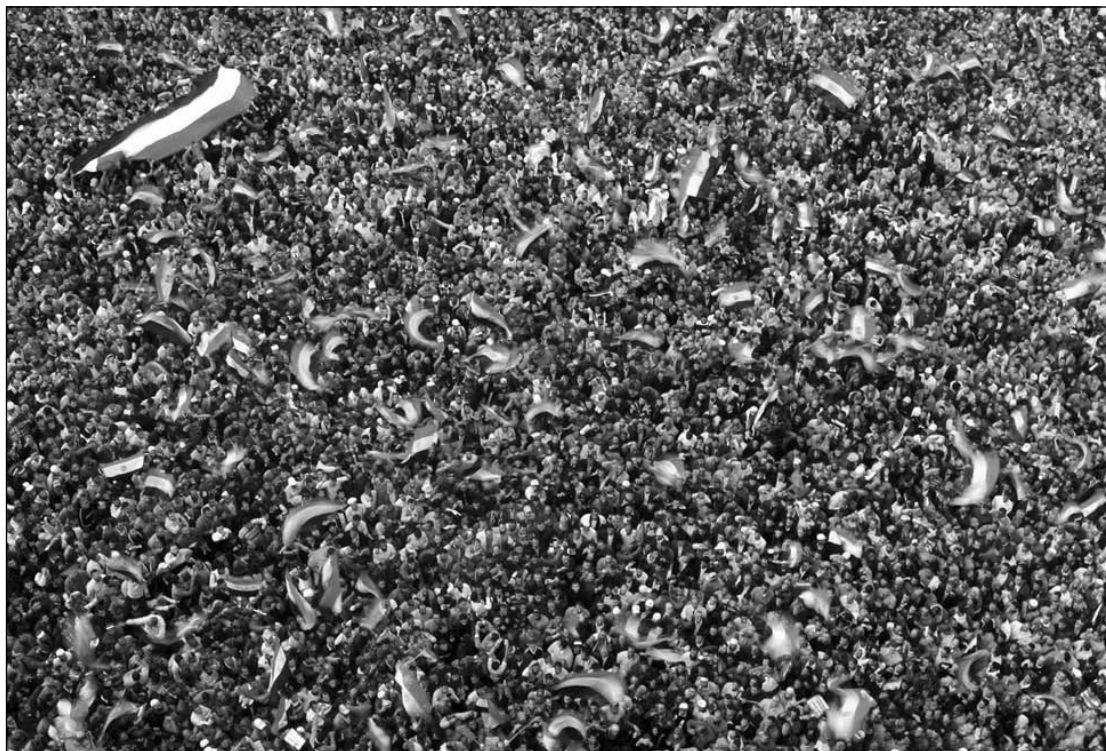
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Things they say

Nearly every major CEO in the country has given us a letter of support with the courageous decisions we've made to resolve this. I've been overwhelmed by the emails coming in.

Qantas CEO Alan Joyce's lockout was heavily admired by the top end of town

Here is a guy under attack from some powerful and protected interests. He doesn't shirk his responsibility. He doesn't cower or run. He stands firm and takes it up to them. He's an Aussie if ever there was one. Make him Australian of the Year.

Howard-era Minister Amanda Vanstone barracks for the underdog, multi-millionaire anti-union thug Alan Joyce

It made me realise it's not just about me. There are others to think about.

Andrew Bolt on a visit from friend Tony Abbott a few days after the court case that found him guilty of dishonest journalism. Abbott told him "the country needs you"

Julia Gillard hasn't beaten the conservatives. She's joined us instead.

Bolt, again, this time with some rare insight

It's three agencies of government when I get there that are gone—Commerce, Education and the um, what's the third one there? Let's see. Oh five—Commerce, Education and the um, um...

US Republican Presidential nominee Rick Perry can't remember which government departments he wants to slash and burn if elected

Egypt is turning into a hot bed of radical Islam. The current protest is another coup attempt. We should never have abandoned Mubarak.

Donald Trump demonstrates his contempt for democracy in Egypt

Such an appointment should delight the markets.

The Economist offers its endorsement of the imposition of an unelected banker, Mario Monti, as prime minister of Italy

Gillard clings to homophobia in same-sex marriage debate



By Clare Fester

THE LABOR Party is gearing up to debate its position on same-sex marriage at its December conference. A motion to change Labor's platform to support same-sex marriage may be passed.

But in a spineless move Gillard has recently reiterated her support for Labor backing a conscience vote for Labor MPs on same-sex marriage in parliament. In her defence she has reiterated the same tired arguments that "the institution of marriage has come to have a particular meaning and standing in our culture and nation and that should continue unchanged".

A conscience vote would keep same-sex marriage off the cards for the foreseeable future. The Liberals and some Labor right MPs would unite against it.

Gillard lags far behind much of the Labor Party and the public. Aside from NSW, all state and territory Labor branches support same-sex marriage. In October, Victorian Labor reaffirmed its 2009 motion, calling on the ALP to change its national policy.

A recent Neilsen poll shows that 62 per cent of people support same-sex marriage, a 5 per cent increase over the last year. At 71 per cent, Labor voters are overwhelmingly in favour of changing the law and Greens voters similarly support the change at 86 per cent. Even 50 per cent of Coalition voters support the change.

Above: A placard that says it all at one of the many same-sex marriage demonstrations

Yet despite this widespread support Gillard is still too cowardly to defend gay rights.

Pushing for a conscience vote rather than changing ALP policy on same-sex marriage is a way for Labor's leaders to have their cake and eat it too. Their plummeting polls mean Labor is looking for a way to regain the left votes it lost to The Greens. Labor MPs like Tanya Plibersek and Anthony Albanese in inner city seats with widespread support for same-sex marriage can use their conscience vote as left cover, while MPs in more conservative electorates can retain their own homophobic stance.

Equal access to marriage is a civil right and by refusing to take a consistent position against the same-sex marriage ban, Gillard is sending a signal that homophobia in society is acceptable.

In a society where almost 40 per cent of same-sex attracted young people experience discrimination due to their sexuality, 15 per cent are physically abused and 35 per cent have practiced a form of self-harm, Labor's regressive stance on same-sex marriage can only reinforce homophobia.

The push at the conference for a conscience vote over same-sex marriage is another example of Gillard's craven politics. We cannot rely on the government for marriage equality.

We will have to keep demonstrating are we generate the pressure required to win same-sex marriage and strike a blow against homophobia.

EDITORIAL

Gillard digging Labor's grave: build the left alternative

DAY BY day, Gillard is dragging Labor further to the right—and closer to oblivion.

US President Obama's visit was a disgusting display of US militarism. Gillard was all-too-happy to parade as US imperialism's "deputy sheriff" in the region every bit as much as Howard did.

In a move that will ratchet up military tensions in the region, thousands of US marines will now be based in the Northern Territory.

Gillard also used Obama's visit to announce that Labor is ready to start selling uranium to India, in violation of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. This is a sop to the US, which is courting India to help keep China in check. As an added bonus, it will make the mining companies happy.

If Labor thought that Obama's visit or the carbon tax was going to give them any permanent lift in the polls, they were mistaken. Gillard is now as equally unpopular as Abbott. Gillard has enlisted the support of Image Media Services to improve her image but nothing can hide the fact that her right-wing politics are set to hand Abbott a landslide.

It says everything that Gillard is going to the Labor conference to push to sell uranium to India, to oppose same-sex marriage and to change the party platform to allow sending asylum seekers to Malaysia.

Seventy-one per cent of Labor voters support same-sex marriage but Gillard has arrogantly declared "As I have said many times, I support maintaining the Marriage Act in its current form, and the government will not move legislation to change it."

The Labor Left says it will fight to ensure Labor policy is committed to changing the law to support same-sex marriage and to stop uranium sales to India and Labor for Refugees will fight to change Labor's refugee policy.

But the limitations of Labor and parliament are graphically on display. While the fight inside the party is not insignificant, it is almost certain that the conference will agree to sell uranium to India and vote down the pro-refugee resolutions. Even if same-sex marriage becomes policy, Gillard is doing her best to make sure it won't become law.

On top of this, the mining tax has now passed parliament, but only after



Above: Gillard has proven herself a craven supporter of the US-Australia alliance

Labor gave into the mining bosses, handing them back billions of their super profits.

As the Eurozone crisis deepens, the Australian economy is slowing and budget revenues are set to drop. According to Access Economics, next year's projected budget surplus of \$3.5 billion is now likely to be a deficit of \$1.9 billion. Treasurer Wayne Swan is already preparing cuts to maintain the surplus. He's prepared to make us pay, but not the mining bosses.

Fightback

All this is evidence enough that hope for change doesn't lie in parliament.

Even The Greens' parliamentarians were astonishingly silent when Obama visited. While they are for a debate about withdrawal from Afghanistan, during Obama's visit they said nearly nothing about the US military alliance, about Guantanamo, or about Bradley Manning, kept naked in solitary confinement in a US military prison for allegedly leaking information about US atrocities to Wikileaks.

Disillusionment with the political establishment is growing. An ANU poll taken in September found the level of dissatisfaction with democracy had almost doubled since Labor won the 2007 election, from 14 to 27 per cent.

There is an urgent need to build the left. Internationally, Occupy shows there is a mood for real change from the grassroots. And in the streets and factories of Egypt, workers are fighting to keep alive the hopes of the February revolution that toppled Mubarak.

Occupy Australia, too, showed the potential to build movements here to oppose rampant corporate greed, to fight for union and refugee rights and for action to stop climate change.

In November, student protests at Sydney University won back the Department of Political Economy, under threat from widespread university cuts. More will be needed now the university is talking about 7.5 per cent cuts across every department next year.

Qantas boss Alan Joyce may have got what he wanted by forcing that dispute into arbitration. But the nurses in Victoria have not backed down after threats from FairWork. The determination of low-paid workers at Baiada to hold their picket line against cops and bosses won an impressive victory.

It is in these struggles we see the possibility for building an alternative to Gillard and to Abbott.

Solidarity is committed to building every bit of resistance to link the struggles together in a fight to change the system. We need you to join us.

Hazara killings show deportation will cost lives

SCORES OF Hazara refugee applications are being rejected because of Australian government claims that one or other part of Afghanistan is safe. One Hazara asylum seeker was recently deported to Pakistan.

But Hazaras face constant danger, persecution and fear of mass killings in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. A doctor in Quetta reported to *Al Jazeera* in October that, "People are scared to even go to the other town for funerals. And when they go out, they make sure it's not a Hazara bus they travel in. They recite their prayers, not knowing whether they will make it."

Since 2003 nearly 500 Hazaras have been killed and over 1500 injured as a result of targeted killing in Pakistan.

On October 4, 13 Hazaras on a bus in Quetta were brutally executed. Ironically, on September 3, 42 Hazaras were gunned down in a Quetta square overlooked by an Australian immigration propaganda poster warning of the dangers of getting a boat to Australia.

In August 2010, 18 Hazaras were killed by Afghan police in Kabul.

In late June 2010, Reuters newsagency reported that the bodies of 11 men, with their heads cut had been found in Oruzgan.

On June 3, 2011, Jawad Zahak, the head of Bamiyan Provincial Coun-

Hazaras face constant danger, persecution and fear of mass killings in both Afghanistan and Pakistan



Image at right: Hazaras protest the killings in Pakistan and Afghanistan

cil and was kidnapped and killed on his way from Kabul to Bamiyan in Ghorband. The killers, alleged members of Hizb-e Islami, have significant numbers in the Afghan parliament and government. For the past five years the Bamiyan road to Kabul through Wardak was essentially closed because the "Taliban" kill anybody who looked like a Hazara.

Even the US State Department says that "no part of Afghanistan should be considered immune from

violence" and that the "security environment remains volatile and unpredictable".

Earlier this year, *The Age* reported that up to 20 of the 179 asylum seekers returned to Afghanistan after the 2001 Tampa controversy had been killed by the Taliban.

In January, 73 organisations in Australia condemned the MOU, a deportation agreement between the Afghan and Australian governments.

Ian Rintoul

War crimes evidence shows Tamils not safe in Sri Lanka

EVIDENCE OF Sri Lankan government war crimes during the civil war in 2009 continues to grow.

An initial UN report in April held that there were credible reports that should be further investigated. But Sri Lanka has refused to address these claims or allow an independent investigation.

In October, the Australian government welcomed Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa to Perth for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). At the same time, the International Commission of Jurists revealed it had passed on new evidence of war crimes to the Australian Federal Police, and called for Rajapaksa to be investigated.

The Sri Lankan government's civil war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, better known as the Tamil Tigers, ended in 2009. The Australian government stood by as Rajapaksa hemmed 200,000 Tamil civilians into

Sixty five thousand remain displaced, with thousands prevented from returning to their homes

the Jaffna Peninsula and proceeded with a ruthless bombing campaign.

While Gillard "raised concerns" about the Sri Lankan conflict at CHOGM, she declared her confidence in the Sri Lankan government's "Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission". Amnesty International says this is, "fundamentally flawed and provides no accountability for atrocities". Even the Canadian government is more vocal, saying it will boycott when Sri Lanka hosts the next CHOGM in 2014.

Australia is deeply interested in maintaining its ties with President Rajapaksa. As the *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter* noted, "there are 38 Australian companies which have operations on the island, equating to tens of millions of dollars worth of investments".

A 2009 US Senate report noted that, "Sri Lanka is located at the nexus of crucial maritime trading routes in the Indian Ocean connect-

ing Europe and the Middle East to China and the rest of Asia."

The persecution of Tamils continues. Despite the release of over 280,000 from detention camps, they remain subject to constant military control, denial of political freedoms and freedom of movement. According to Tamil National Alliance MP Sumanthiran, "there is one member of the armed forces for approximately every ten civilians in the Jaffna Peninsula". Sixty five thousand remain displaced, with thousands prevented from returning to their homes.

The Australian government has played a disgraceful role throughout the Tamil genocide. It should be no surprise that it wants to deport Tamil refugees back to Sri Lanka, and leave others languishing in detention centres.

But their persecution remains very real—as does the need to welcome them here as refugees.

Feiyi Zhang

Political challenges for the Occupy movement

By Amy Thomas

FOR THE past two months, the Occupy movement has electrified US politics and inspired movements in its image around the world.

The occupations themselves have been relatively small, but hugely popular: a sign of the deep crisis of legitimacy facing those that run the world. It is an indication of the radicalisation taking place around the globe, starting with Tunisia and Egypt's revolutions and now flowing into the Greek strikes and Spain's "indignados" movement.

After the evictions of occupations across the US, including the centrepiece in Wall Street, the movement will face a new challenge to grow and deepen.

Here in Australia, the Occupy movement was always dealing with a different scenario to the US and Europe because the economic crisis has not hit here in the same vicious manner (yet). Nevertheless, it showed the potential for radical politics and the growth of movements challenging Labor's right wing agenda. But it has been held back by its own political limitations.

Firstly, there has been an issue with the movement's attitude to police. The crackdowns in Melbourne and Sydney showed that police will use calculated violence to defend the 1 per cent.

But too often, people mistakenly thought that we could persuade them to sympathise with our cause or that they were part of the 99 per cent. This attitude has often led to disunity and confusion in the face of police.

One protest in Sydney chose not to march to police lines that had hemmed us into Martin Place so the police would not be aggravated. But that did not stop a dawn raid the following morning.

Even more crucial have been the debates about how to build the movement. While only small numbers were prepared to actually occupy, a much greater number turned out on the streets of Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and elsewhere for Occupy demonstrations around the slogan "human need not corporate greed". Yet a trend of elevating the tactic of occupying to a sole principle had the effect of cutting the movement off from these bigger numbers of people.

The occupations have been a visible show of defiance, but it's politics



Above: MUA members join one of the major Occupy rallies in Sydney

and outreach that has inspired people well beyond the occupiers themselves.

An Occupy Wall Street organiser explained how it happened New York: "We now have groups in all five city boroughs doing outreach and agitation. We are organising on so many levels—on our campuses, in our communities and in our workplaces. Hundreds of thousands around the city have had a crash course in radical activism."

Reaching out to unions

There have been important attempts to link the movement with the concerns of working class people. In Sydney and Melbourne, the stance against the greed of Qantas boss Alan Joyce and with the striking Baiada workers pointed to how our challenge to the 1 per cent could be made concrete.

It also points to the real power in society to challenge the 1 per cent: the power of strike action to bring the system to a halt.

The movement could have taken on broader demands that resonate with a wider audience, like an increase to corporate tax, no to public sector pay caps, spending on renewable energy, and an end to the refugee bashing they use to divide us. Yet there has been a hostility to taking on political issues.

Alongside this, the consensus

decision-making process in the general assemblies, where 100 per cent agreement was required on everything, led to drawn out meetings dominated by discussion about process, rather than politics or collective activity.

Most people who were at meetings would recognise that the process didn't really engage most of people there. Ironically the process led to passivity, as participants were repeatedly told not to "block" a decision unless it went against the "core values of the movement", stifling debate and discussion and discouraging dissent.

Making decisions by simple majority votes is not just more commonplace and understandable, but also more democratic. Rather that decisions being dependent on a tiny minority, a majority can act together.

In Spain, similar issues crippled some of the camps. But the parts of the movement that reached out into the suburbs, campuses and workplaces have had the most success in building the movement.

While the immediate future of Occupy is uncertain, the potential to build the confidence and the organisation of people into a movement to fight the ruthlessness of capitalism has not gone away.

We can take the spirit of Occupy down the Baiada picket line, into the fight for refugees, and onto the campuses in 2012. There are important struggles ahead.

Punitive school attendance plan centrepiece of second Intervention

THE FEDERAL government has moved to extend most major NT Intervention powers for 10 years beyond their July 2012 expiry, with new laws introduced into parliament in November. The *Stronger Futures* legislation, and associated amendments to the Social Security Act, have been labelled a “second Intervention”.

One of the main new measures is a plan to harden already punitive policies around school attendance. Under the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM), trialled in six NT communities since 2009, welfare payments of parents whose children don't attend school can be suspended for 13 weeks.

While there has not been a detailed assessment of the SEAM trial, school attendance rates overall have dropped since the Intervention began. The axing of bilingual programs in many schools has contributed to this decline.

Paddy Gibson spoke to **Nadine Williams**, central Australian organiser with the Australian Education Union, about the new school attendance measures for the radio program *The Thin Black Line* on 2SER. Part of the interview is below.

Along with the Intervention there's been some other major changes that have had an impact on education programs in Aboriginal communities like the dismantling of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), the closure of community councils and the cutback to bilingual education. What has happened since 2007 to schools in Aboriginal communities in the NT?

The communities that are listed in the government announcement about tougher Income Management measures—most were strong bilingual schools. They are now struggling to maintain any bilingual programs against a massive barrage of ridiculous curriculum interference and removal of staffing positions.

One of the most heartbreaking parts of the rollout of federal government legislation including the Intervention is the loss of employment for Indigenous people in schools.

We know that 200-300 who were supported on CDEP funding through work of 30 hours a week or less are no longer working. At the same time we've had the loss of governance and control through school councils.

These issues have all been com-



Above: Rally against Intervention policies in Sydney earlier this year, which are set to be entrenched for the next ten years

pounded with the Intervention and the further humiliation and trying to tell people how to live. This loss of control and loss of a stake in local schools has been extremely distressing for people. By far the majority care deeply about their child's education.

Can you explain what the reforms are the government is proposing with this “second Intervention”?

The reforms that were announced in the *Stronger futures in the Northern Territory* package include something called FAST [Families and Schools Together], a training package for parents at schools which have been identified as having very low attendance rates.

They have workshops run for them about parenting skills and how they can be involved in their children's education. Trying to educate people is laudable but what is being actually asked for by Indigenous parents? Many people I speak to, who are parents of school age children, say we want to have a voice.

School councils [have been removed] in almost all schools. The reason people are not engaging in the schools where their kids go is that they feel they are outsiders since the end of where every aboriginal parent, elder and grandparent actually had decision making power.

The problem with the whole rollout is it's patronising, suggesting parents have no idea how to look after their children.

From next year if a child misses

ten or more days in a school term, after a compliance notice has been sent to the parents who receive welfare benefits, their payments will be suspended. They plan to send Centrelink staff to people's homes if they're breached to make sure their children go to school.

The original Intervention legislation said if 90 per cent attendance wasn't achieved it would result in suspension of payments. There are also fines that can be served on parents for their children's non-attendance of up to \$2000. If they do not pay that fine they would go to jail for non-payment.

There is one very big hitch to this: schools are responsible for sending all of the enrolment and attendance data to Centrelink.

Already there are people who have had their payments suspended and have attacked, either verbally or physically, education department principals. I am very concerned that if efforts are made to put these compliance statements in place, [there will be] an increase in aggression and anger towards the school staff including the principals of small schools in remote places. That is not going to help anyone get to school.

Aboriginal people are very aware of the judgements being made about them [all as a group], that they don't send their children to school. Education and respect has got to be both ways. But they see absolutely no respect for their own system of education that has lasted many more thousands of years than our system.

.....
Loss of control and loss of a stake in local schools has been extremely distressing for people

They all admit it: the carbon tax means gas



Above: Bob Brown and Julia Gillard front a press conference celebrating the passing of the carbon tax legislation

By Erima Dall

THE CARBON tax is law. This is Gillard Labor's "historic reform". Their "dollar float". According to Treasurer Wayne Swan it is "Labor to the bootstraps".

As soon as the carbon tax was successfully passed through the Senate, Gillard declared that "Today's vote does mean that we will commence creating our clean energy future". It's a lie.

Despite all the rhetorical celebration of our "clean energy future", just two days after the tax passed Labor leaders were hailing it as a victory, not for solar or wind power, but for the gas industry.

The comments were made in response to The Greens re-declaring their opposition to gas and their call for 100 per cent renewable energy. Gillard's reply was unambiguous: "There will be a diverse range of energy sources. We believe coal seam gas will be part of the energy mix of the future." Climate Change Minister Greg Combet echoed her, saying "with the market mechanism, gas is clearly an important fuel source."

Gas is anything but a clean energy. A damning report on true gas pollution levels in Australia, commissioned by the renewables research group Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE), has been suppressed.

The company that produced the report, Worley Parsons, is now refusing to hand it over. They are knee-

deep in the gas industry, with \$580 million contract with gas giant QGC and plans to build two natural gas trains and a gas plant in the Pilbara region.

BZE requested the report in order to compare the entire life cycle emissions from coal seam gas and shale gas with other energy sources. During gas extraction, vast amounts of methane can escape from wells and bores. Methane is an extremely potent greenhouse gas, over 70 times worse than carbon dioxide over a twenty year time scale—this "leakage" needs to be accounted for when calculating emissions from gas, but often isn't.

But Labor is giving this polluting industry green cover and their carbon tax is going to encourage the gas boom going on across the country.

The Greens have backed themselves into a corner by sowing illusions in the carbon tax and the myth that it will assist clean energy (see box). Christine Milne has called the carbon tax legislation a "huge victory" that "gets us ready for historical investments in clean, renewable energy".

The Greens have not prepared their supporters for the real consequences of the carbon tax.

Alongside this, the tax has created a scepticism of climate action among those who know they'll be feeling the pinch of increased living costs.

We should take up the Greens call to move towards 100 per cent renewables, but to win this we have to be prepared to tell the truth about the carbon tax.

Funding a clean energy future?

LABOR'S CARBON price legislation includes the establishment of a Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC).

The government claims this means \$10 billion in funding for renewables, but a quick look at the scheme reveals what a farce this really is.

For starters, while the carbon tax will take effect in mid-2012, the CEFC will not see a dollar of funding until a year and a half later. Secondly the CEFC is, as the name suggests, not a government funding scheme but a corporation to make investments and loans in the renewables industry. It may also end up borrowing money, and like a bank will have to make a commercial return on those investments. This means investing only in profitable projects.

But large-scale renewable projects are presently unattractive for those only interested in profits. Baseload concentrated solar thermal plants are currently four times more expensive to build than coal-fired power stations.

These kinds of investments may well be deemed too risky by the CEFC. The government has already been grilled about the fact that a similar scheme in the US saw \$535 million of public money evaporate when solar company Solyndra went bankrupt.

On top of this, at least half the money in the CEFC is not even for renewables, but will be frittered away on energy efficiency measures and "low emissions" technologies.

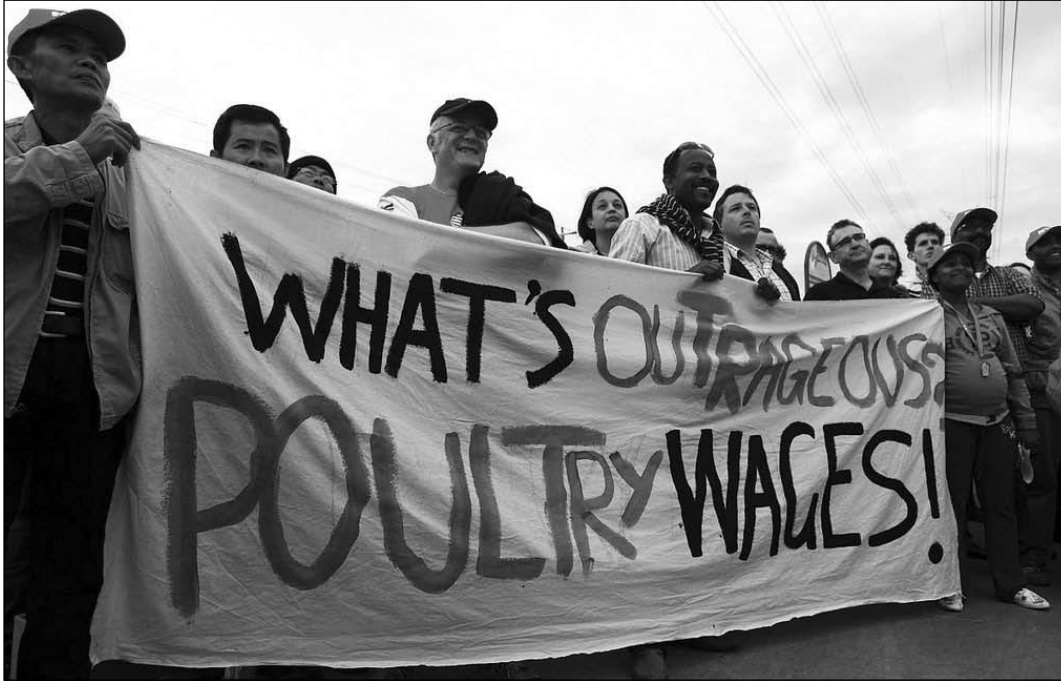
The government has also appointed corporate heavyweights with no climate change credentials, like Jillian Broadbent, member of the Reserve Bank board, the Woolworths board and the ASX board, to chair a review into how the scheme will work.

The CEFC is set up so that investment in renewable energy is conditional on whether renewable companies can make the same grotesque profits as fossil fuel giants. But our future should not hinge on their profits. Instead of a climate corporation, we need unconditional government funding for renewables.

Erima Dall

.....
Labor is giving the polluting gas industry green cover

Baiada workers win fantastic victory against bullying bosses



By James Supple

BAIADA POULTRY workers in Melbourne have won a major victory for fair pay and job security after 13 days on strike.

These 300 mostly migrant workers stuck together in the face of harassment and intimidation from their bosses, the media and police to humble a major corporation through indefinite strike action.

Hundreds of supporters joined the 24-hour picket line set up by the workers, members of the National Union of Workers (NUW), outside their factory at Laverton North in Melbourne.

Management at Baiada had been moving to casualise its low-paid, mostly migrant workforce, shifting employees onto insecure contracts and cash-in-hand work.

Forty per cent of the current workforce are paid either cash-in-hand as contractors or employed as casuals through labour hire firms. Cash-in-hand workers have been paid as little as \$8 an hour, according to signed statements by current and former workers.

Jersey, one of the striking workers, told *Solidarity*, “They force us to work public holidays, with no holiday pay. They sacked 60 permanent people and replaced them with cash in hand workers [on] \$10 an hour!”

Above: Workers built support for their struggle amongst other unions and in the community

The workers have shown how major companies can be brought to heel

But they have now won equal pay rates for casuals and contractors and the right for casuals to convert to permanent positions after six months, as well as a 4 per cent pay rise for both of the next two years. Their redundancy pay will also double to a maximum of 42 weeks and there will be increased union and delegate rights.

Baiada workers in Adelaide refused to unload chicken from Melbourne—and were sacked by the company. But they have now won reinstatement.

Corporate bully

The workers who went on strike have shown how major companies and their multi-million dollar profits can be brought to heel. Baiada controls 35 per cent of the poultry market nationwide, supplying well-known brands like Lilydale and Steggles to Coles, Woolworths, Aldi and KFC. The company is owned by the Baiada family, whose wealth was estimated at \$495 million by *BRW* magazine earlier this year.

Baiada had a reputation as a vicious, bullying employer—which the workers tapped to win community support for the strike.

A Baiada delegate addressed workers at Sensis (see page 11), who sent messages of support down the

picket line and took a collection. Activists from Occupy Melbourne helped hold the picket line, and there were solidarity demonstrations inside Coles in Melbourne and Sydney.

Conditions at the factory are shocking and dangerous. Last year Sarel Singh, who was only 34, was decapitated while cleaning a fast-moving poultry machine. Not only were his workmates made to clean up his body, they were then forced to work overtime to make up for the time lost due to the accident. A Worksafe Victoria report confirmed that Baiada Poultry had contravened the Occupational Health and Safety Act, operating the machine at top speed of 183 birds a minute.

Worker Phuoc Dang told *The Age* that management harassed her and repeatedly asked her to resign from the NUW. *Crikey* reported earlier this year that it was using US-style anti-union tactics, calling in “ringleaders” for one-on-one meetings and pressuring them to resign from the union.

Support from other workers and the wider community proved vital in holding off management attempts to violently break through the workers’ picket line. First a security guard tried to drive his car through the picket line early in the dispute, severely injuring one worker’s arm. It later emerged he was acting on the instructions of management, who had promised to pay for any damage to his car.

Then on Friday November 11 police launched an attack on the picket, attempting to bring in two vans of scab labour. But in a victory for the strikers the police were pushed back. A number of workers Baiada had recruited to scab refused to cross the picket line and signed up to join the NUW.

The police attack followed a court order that banned NUW officials from joining the picket.

One worker had to be rushed to hospital after police trampled on his legs in their assault on the picket. Yet the media demonised the workers as “violent”, with Miranda Devine complaining of a “violent attack by union heavies” on the security guard. Julia Gillard, too, joined the chorus, decrying “violence”.

The brave stand by Baiada workers shows how to fight to defend jobs and pay. It is an example for workers everywhere.

NSW teachers willing to fight, but strike called off



ON NOVEMBER 19, the State Council of the NSW Teachers Federation carried a branch executive resolution to “defer” a planned strike for November 29—a strike that had been endorsed by thousands of enthusiastic teachers at stop work meetings the week before.

Outgoing President Bob Lipscombe told the media that although “the government is yet to provide a fair and reasonable salaries offer”, “developments indicate that progress towards this may be possible.”

But at the Council, Lipscombe admitted that the negotiations were a limited window of opportunity. Some Federation organisers believe that industrial action will soon be back on, even before the end of this year, or at the start of the school and TAFE year in late January 2012.

The number of “ifs” and “maybes” in the leadership’s statements reinforces the view of the rank-and-file Activist Teachers Network (ATN) that calling off the strike is completely unwarranted.

O’Farrell has shown nothing but contempt for teachers. A rush to call off the strike just to talk is no way for us to win. It sends the wrong message to other teachers and public sector workers who are looking to us to break O’Farrell’s IR laws and wage cap.

Turning the fight on and off like a tap runs the risk of dampening the magnificent momentum that has built up since O’Farrell announced his attacks, with thousands of teachers attending the Unions NSW rally

More information and details of ATN activities can be found at activistteacher.com

in September and then the stop work meetings. The Federation has recruited well over 1000 new members in the past three months.

At Council, dissenting Executive members John Morris and John Gaucci spoke strongly for going ahead with the strike, arguing that O’Farrell has not made a reasonable offer; that the only reason he has offered talks is because of our threat of strike action; and that mobilising the membership is the best way to win our claim of 5 per cent a year over three years.

While the motion to call off the strike was backed by some organisers, many ATN members and other rank-and-file teachers insisted that their colleagues were eager to go ahead with the strike. A Councillor from Parkes asked the simple but telling question: “How am I going to explain calling off our action to our colleagues when we have got nothing from the government?”

An impressive 20 per cent of the floor voted to continue with the strike. Now the ATN needs to respond by deepening its connections with teachers across Sydney and in country areas. At the November 2 stop works, the ATN’s publication, *Class Action*, was distributed at more than 20 venues, an unprecedented effort.

An Executive meeting on November 29 will consider the result of the Federation’s talks with O’Farrell and Education Minister Piccoli. ATN members and others have repeatedly argued that no settlement will be acceptable if it trades off conditions, excludes TAFE, or ignores the need to also make the government agree to sign up to a new state-wide staffing agreement.

This is no time for stepping back. O’Farrell’s pay cap can be broken, but like the Victorian nurses, NSW teachers will need to use their industrial power to do that.

Mark Goudkamp

Lively protest at Sensis for union agreement

OVER FIFTY Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union (AMWU) members held a lunchtime protest to stop Sensis undermining their union agreement (the Advertising and Design Agreement), by rolling it into a larger non-union one (the Enterprise Agreement 2).

Starting in the lunch room, union members marched through the open plan office picking up people as they went. Then there were some short speeches before we marched with placards around the Sensis building on Lonsdale Street in Melbourne. We chanted “Not happy Jan, our say, not Sensis plan” and “Our agreement, our say—let Sensis scrap it, no way!”

It was a first time protest for many. It has increased members confidence, thanks to the number of participants and their enthusiasm. It has sent a signal to Sensis that AMWU members are prepared to fight for their say.

One of the Community Public Sector Union (CPSU) delegates on the non-union agreement was at the protest to support AMWU members. The CPSU has some members on the non-union agreement and they want to turn it into a union agreement.

Sensis recently made 80 workers on the non-union agreement redundant. Sensis print revenue has declined and earnings before interest and tax fell by 14.7 per cent, from \$1.02 billion last year. But at \$871 million this year, Sensis is still hugely profitable, so it is an outrageous decision. Job security will be an important issue in the fight.

The AMWU has focused on the possibility of winning a scope order in FairWork Australia, but the decision to hold a protest and mobilise members has turned up the heat. Members have shown they are prepared to knock some sense into Sensis and will do so again if Sensis persists in trying to undermine the union agreement.

A Sensis worker

Bus drivers’ trade-offs set bad precedent

NOT LONG ago, NSW unions were talking about breaking O’Farrell’s 2.5 per cent pay cap. Then the PSA settled for 2.5 per cent. Disgracefully RTBU officials are crowing about their deal—but the union have sold conditions to get a pay rise of 3.25 per cent a year for the next three years. Under the new deal, trainee drivers will be forced to work for a fortnight without pay and they will remain on the lowest pay rate for two years, a year longer than before.

A rush to call off the strike just to talk is no way to win

Joyce declares war on Qantas workers, but Victoria's defiant nurses show the way



By Ian Rintoul

QANTAS CEO Alan Joyce got what he always wanted when he grounded the Qantas fleet on October 29. After being sent back to work for 21 days of negotiations that went nowhere, Qantas workers will now have to deal with binding arbitration in FairWork Australia.

It is a process that will likely take months and leave the unions without the job security guarantees that they were fighting for. Qantas will likely emerge with unrestricted power to cut jobs, outsource or use contractors to undermine pay and conditions.

In the meantime, the five million dollar man who grounded the airline has become the pin-up boy of Australia's bosses. Joyce was given a rock star reception at a recent Business Council of Australia dinner.

On October 29, exactly who holds the real power in society became very clear. One Qantas boss grounded all the airline's planes, stranding tens of thousands of passengers in Australia and overseas.

Joyce quite literally held the country to ransom. He wanted to pressure both Fair Work Australia to issue an order to terminate all industrial action and impose an arbitrated agreement, and pressure the Labor government to support him.

To make it perfectly clear, when it seemed that FairWork may only suspend, rather than terminate industrial action, Joyce declared that unless the industrial action was terminated, he would use his managerial control of Qantas to keep the airline grounded. It was a naked exercise of corporate power.

The unions meekly went along with the FairWork order, with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) secretary declaring, "Our immediate priority now is to work with management to get the planes back in the air."

The Transport Workers Union (TWU) secretary complained about

Above: A portrait of the 1 per cent

Nurses defy FairWork to fight for jobs

VICTORIAN NURSES have shown how to stand up to Fair Work Australia and a nasty Liberal state government. Thousands at a packed mass meeting on 21 November voted to defy orders to stop their industrial action that has closed public hospital beds.

ANF state secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick said nurses are willing to have their pay docked and to face fines. The nurses union has already received around \$3500 in unsolicited public donations.

The nurses are fighting to "maintain and improve" existing nurse-patient ratios and are refusing to trade them off for a wage increase.

the lockout by saying that the TWU had only been on strike for eight hours over eight months of negotiations—which said more about the union's timid strategy than it did about the Qantas bosses.

Gillard pathetically backed Joyce and called for FairWork to terminate industrial action and Joyce got his way.

Aftermath

Since the Qantas example, more bosses are considering whether FairWork Australia can be used to their advantage. There were even rumours that the Victorian government was thinking of locking out Victorian nurses (see box).

In a move that could potentially open another front in the war, TWU workers in Qantas catering division are presently balloting for strike action for their enterprise agreement. But Joyce now knows that he holds the whip hand and can threaten to ground the airline again if he needs to keep the union in line—unless the TWU and other unions are willing to defy the law.

Qantas is one of the most profitable airlines in the world, making a \$552 million dollar profit last year, plus another \$169 million from wholly-owned Jetstar. But strike action that seriously disrupted flights or grounded the airline would hit it very hard.

Joyce was banking on the unions accepting the FairWork order to terminate industrial action. If the Qantas unions had been willing to defy the order and escalate industrial action against Qantas—for example, by spreading the strike to Jetstar and stopping the "fly-in, fly-out" flights of mine workers—Joyce would have been forced to cave in. Without the right to strike, workers are at the whim of the bosses and the courts.

There is every sign that the rank-and-file are willing to fight. Public opinion is against Joyce. But there is little sign that the union leaders are up to the challenge. Too much of the union leaders' statements have been part of a media campaign about the unions being concerned to save the Qantas brand, rather than actually fighting to save jobs.

Taking a leaf out of the Victorian nurses' book by defying FairWork and backing strike action by Qantas caterers could still wipe the grin off Joyce's face.

Euro crisis tipping the world back into recession

By James Supple

POLITICAL AND economic turmoil is engulfing Europe. In the space of a few days in November the governments of Greece and Italy fell after the financial markets judged them incapable of tackling the sovereign debt crisis.

Europe is now effectively being run by a cabal including Germany's President Angela Merkel, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and the heads of the IMF and the European Central Bank (ECB).

They first forced Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou to resign after he made the mistake of announcing a referendum on austerity measures. This panicked the markets with the prospect that Greek workers would vote it down. So much for democracy.

Then in Italy, Silvio Berlusconi was forced from office. Despite his professed love of the free market he was, "incapable of agreeing on, and then steering through parliament, the necessary measures" as the *Economist* put it—in the form of deep enough austerity cuts to please the markets.

Both were replaced by so-called technocratic "governments of national unity", in a blatant effort to override democracy and ensure both countries deliver even more savage austerity measures. The new Greek Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, is a former vice-president of the ECB, while Italy's new leader Mario Monti is an economist and adviser to Goldman Sachs who used to be an EU Commissioner.

New wave of panic

The trigger for the latest round of panic is the spread of the sovereign debt crisis to Italy. Interest payments demanded on Italian government debt have reached 7.5 per cent, above the level that required the bailing out of Greece, Ireland and Portugal.

Once the interest payments required on government debt get that high the worry is that the debt cannot be repaid and will spiral out of control. Italian government debt, at almost €2 trillion, dwarfs the size of Greece's €330 billion—and is far too large for a complete bailout.

If the Italian government becomes unable to repay its debts and is forced into a default, effectively declaring itself bankrupt, it would drag down banks across Europe, leading to a



Above: Berlusconi (left) and Papandreou (centre) were deposed by the likes of Angela Merkel (right)

cascade of bankruptcies across the financial system.

French banks, with large holdings of Italian debt, are particularly at risk, leading to fears France will lose its AAA credit rating.

Economists insist that Europe can still find a solution to the debt crisis, if Germany is prepared to pay for it. Across the EU as a whole, the level of government debt to GDP is lower than in the US or Japan. Sufficient action now could still prevent a disastrous Italian default on its debts.

But France and Germany, backed by the European Central Bank and the IMF, have been unwilling to release the necessary funds without ironclad guarantees they will be repaid. They have released bailout funds only in small doses, provided the governments of Greece, Ireland and now Italy impose sufficient budget cuts.

This has meant that so far they have been unwilling to release the funds necessary to solve the debt problems, eighteen months after they first emerged. The supposed once and for all fix announced at the end of October has already failed. It planned to increase the size of the EFSF bailout fund, by using €250 billion of funding to "leverage" €1 trillion in funding through issuing yet more debt. But the money markets would not even buy the first €3 billion of debt the European Central Bank tried to offer.

The euro crisis threatens to drag the whole world economy back into recession. European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso warned of a crash that could wipe out half the value of the European economy. Professor Simon Johnson, a former IMF chief economist claimed the world is, "looking straight into the face of a great depression".

Already the European Commission has downgraded its estimates for growth in the Eurozone in 2012 from 1.8 per cent to an anemic 0.5 per cent. Italy's economy is tipped to grow by just 0.1 per cent.

The austerity being demanded of governments will cut the prospects for economic growth further, depressing consumer demand as workers lose pay and their jobs.

"The scale of cuts they are talking about is staggering and would involve tremendous sacrifice from workers. Some 60,000 civil service jobs are under threat [in Greece]", according to Greek socialist Panos Garganas. Greek workers staged their largest general strike since the crisis began at the end of October, with close to a million joining strike rallies across the country.

A new wave of resistance will be needed to demand a solution that puts workers' wages, pensions and living standards first—not the bankers' balance sheets.

A crash could wipe out half the value of the European economy

Mixed feelings as Tunisia goes to the polls

UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS of voters queued in Tunisian streets in October for the first democratic elections of the Arab Spring. The world watched, hailing Tunisia an “example” to the region and an historic “experiment” in the transition from dictatorship to democracy. The majority vote went to the moderate Islamist party Ennahda, despite the insignificant influence of Islamists during the revolution nine months earlier.

The six-month anniversary of the revolution was marked by protests and riots across the country targeting state property—namely police stations—demanding jobs and the resignation of the interim and justice ministers.

The elected constituent assembly will draft Tunisia’s new constitution. Candidate lists included those aged under 30, to give higher representation to the country’s youth and an equal number of men and women as specified by the post-revolution Gender Parity Law.

Over 100 new political parties and 14,000 candidates emerged on the electoral landscape but only just over 50 per cent of the eligible population signed up to vote. There is widespread disillusionment with post-revolution political structures still influenced by the old regime.

The electoral debate focused on questions of religion and democracy, not the social and economic concerns raised by the Tunisian masses in their revolution. But with many voting for the first time, for some it was a positive collective experience.

The Tunisian people awarded Ennahda 89 of the 217 seats in the constituent assembly. They were followed by the centre-left Congress for the Republic (29 seats) and the Popular Petition (26 seats).

Ennahda’s victory has been controversial, described by some as a “serious defeat of the left”. The party has an ambiguous position on the rights of women. But despite the claims of France, they are not hostile to Western powers—they are strongly pursuing economic co-operation with Western capital. In fact they recently described workers’ demands for higher salaries as “counter-revolutionary”.

But nevertheless, industrial action is intensifying. A series of strikes rocked the country around election time. Workers in one of Tunisia’s most



Above: Tunisians take to the polls in October

important oil refineries paralysed production with a strike under the slogan “employment or death”.

Employees of the Brewery and Refrigeration Company of Tunis also struck in several cities across the country, as did postal workers demanding wage rises and increased staff.

Nine months after the revolution that made Ben Ali the first domino to fall in the Arab Spring, Tunis also hosted its first Occupy event in November.

Mokhtar Ben Hafsa commented that it was the first time since the revolution that “all the [political] currents participated strongly in a protest [under clear] slogans: the people want to abolish the debt, no to the Jasmine Plan of the G8, we are the 99 per cent etcetera. I hope that this development gives fruit to the coordination and militancy on social and anti-capitalist questions, no longer falling into the hands of the counter-revolution”.

Olivia Nigro

New protest

THE EGYPTIAN revolution has dramatically re-entered its heartland, Tahrir Square. Riot police and the armed forces besieged a demonstration on November 18 of hundreds of thousands calling for an end to military rule.

Since then, battles have raged to defend Tahrir Square in the face of state violence that has killed 33 and injured over 2000 people. Demonstrations have followed in Alexandria, Suez and elsewhere and more were planned in Cairo as we went to press.

The Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) has ruled Egypt with an iron fist since Mubarak’s fall, trying to put a lid on demands for more than cosmetic change by outlawing strikes. They have tried 12,000 people in military tribunals and in October participated in a massacre of Coptic Christians, in a clear attempt to divide

In *Solidarity* Issue 35, we interviewed textile workers in Soliman, 40 kilometers south west of Tunis, about their terrible conditions at work. Here, the workers explain how they have made gains by striking.

You have recently conducted strikes in your workplace.

After January 14, we took confidence [from the revolution] and began to organise ourselves spontaneously outside the union who had collaborated with the boss. We discussed the possibility of launching a strike to present our demands to the boss.

Our demands were well defined. Workplace safety, the right to occupational health and safety standards as well as permanent contracts for all workers and the guarantee of work itself. After the strike that we, all the workers, launched following January 14, the boss did not concede.

After one month, we launched another strike. We made another demand that we wanted to be paid at the beginning of the month not on the 15th of each month. The boss did not accept. We also demanded that workers not lose their contracts. Before I was not permanent. Almost every month I would have to renew my contract. After working here seven years, now I have a six month contract.

After the second strike you began to make gains?

The boss began to give workers per-

A series of strikes rocked the country around election time

s shake Egypt's military rule

and rule.

Egyptians are scheduled to elect a new parliament from November 28—but executive powers would still remain with the army until a presidential election, which may not happen for a year or more. The complicated and difficult process of running in the elections is designed to exclude ordinary Egyptians and give Egypt's elite the upper hand.

The protests are a sign of exasperation at the army and the “little Mubaraks” clinging onto power. Ministers have offered to resign and the army has rushed through a new law to prevent those charged with corruption from running in the election. But Sameh Naguib, an Egyptian socialist, explains this is “nowhere near enough. Various political leaders came into the square today to talk to people. But they were seen as col-



Above: A protestor makes the 'v' for victory symbol with two bullet cases amidst the revolt in Tahrir

laborators because they had not come out strongly against the military. They were surrounded and beaten up.

“This is happening against a backdrop of economic crisis. The regime is in serious economic trouble. They are running out of foreign currency, partly because tourists are staying away. Prices are rising and wages are still at poverty levels. This is fuelling workers' struggles. There is real chance of another big strike wave.

“Political struggles can feed into the workers' movement and generate renewed confidence for economic battles. These in turn can strengthen the movement on the streets.”

The mainstream opposition is struggling to catch up with Egyptians. The Muslim Brotherhood has refused to join the calls for an end to SCAF's rule. SCAF Western backers are happy to talk up February's revolt while trampling on everything it stood for. Now Egyptians are claiming it back.

Amy Thomas

Textile workers strike for jobs and wages in Tunisia

manent contracts and pay overtime.

A factory council, a parity council was established. It was composed of representatives of both workers and the boss to debate the questions put forward by the workers. All representatives were elected by the workers themselves. It was composed of eight members, four members representing the workers interests and the others represented the boss.

Did the union or UGTT [Tunisia's trade union federation] help you with the second strike?

We decided alone. The union was at the first strike but it didn't do anything. The union is not there to realise the workers demands. The UGTT is a bureaucracy. They are a weakness in the struggle... In this factory, we decided to take the matter into our own hands and impose our demands on the boss. It is better than waiting for the bureaucracy to move.

Was it difficult to mobilise the workers to strike?

It was very difficult. We are not used to doing it. In 15 years, the workers had never tried to self organise to strike. Before ... the director of salaries ... would say “go to Ben Ali”, just like that, “go to Ben Ali”.

Were you able to achieve wage rises?

For full-time hours our wage is 80-100

dinars a month, almost €50. This is against the law. A young worker earns half a dinar, 500 cents, per hour. After he is 20 years old, he becomes a worker and earns almost 2 dinars an hour.

After the second strike, we received a wage increase of 5 per cent, as specified under the collective bargaining law. It is an increase of 30 cents per hour. We are now asking the boss for a further increase of 18 per cent. We are thinking about striking again next week to ask for this increase.

We demanded that the boss pay us during periods of “technical unemployment”. For example, factories work in busy periods and then production slows down and the workers find themselves without work [in “technical unemployment”]. They must have something to support their life no? So we demanded that the boss pay us 75 per cent of our salaries during these periods of low employment. This was achieved through the second strike.

What will you demand in the third strike?

We will demand information, the right to be informed about the future of the factory.

Do you collaborate with workers in other factories?

In the family you find people who work in other factories. In the evenings, we contact each other and ask

how it is all going.

Do you coordinate strikes together or offer solidarity to each other?

Another factory struck with us for the first strike. We contacted them by telephone that day. The other factory is four times bigger than ours. We took the idea from them. There were clients waiting for their merchandise and so we took that as an advantage [to strengthen our struggle].

Would you consider displacing the management and taking control over the factory?

Not at the moment, although there is another factory that did this after the revolution in Soliman. The director has no influence over the workers. The workers took total control over the management but instead of ousting the management, they neutralised it. They have taken the management role into their own hands. It works well and it is moving forward.

Is there a political party that represents your interests?

No... [They use] populist slogans but they don't focus action on the real contradictions in Tunisia at the moment [which concern] those who want to reappropriate the means of production and those who want to abandon these means in the hands of large business through illegal treaties.

Three month strike hits Freeport's West Papua mine

By Tom Orsag

OVER 8000 workers have been on strike for three months at the giant Freeport mine in West Papua. Workers have decided to remain on strike until December 15, after first going out on September 15.

Five strikers have been shot and killed by Indonesian police, who have admitted that they are paid "pocket money" by Freeport. This so-called "pocket money" boosts their pay by between 25 to 50 per cent and amounted to a total of \$14 million last year.

Freeport's Grasberg mine is the biggest and most profitable gold and copper mine in world. It is 90 per cent owned by the US-based Freeport McMoRan and 10 per cent by the Indonesian government. Australian mining company Rio Tinto also has a stake in the mine, through a joint venture on a 1995 expansion.

The strikers are asking for the minimum wage to be increased from \$1 per hour to \$4 per hour, after initially seeking \$7.50. Workers also want a pension scheme and community funds.

They recently rejected a 35 per cent pay increase to "up to \$1.35" per hour. Freeport says this offer is "more than fair by Indonesian standards". But it still doesn't give workers wage parity with any of the other Freeport mines around the world.

Freeport Indonesia has the lowest production costs of all the company's global operations. The mine's workers are paid even less than their colleagues in Mongolia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Soaring Freeport profits have also led to similar work stoppages at mines in Cerro Verde mine in Peru and in Chile.

Independence struggle

The mine has also been a focal point in the West Papuans' struggle against Indonesian rule. West Papua was subsumed into Indonesia in 1962, despite the desire for independence amongst its ethnic Melanesian population. A farcical vote to justify Indonesian control involving just 1022 people, less than 1 per cent of its population, followed.

The independence movement has been brutally repressed by the Indonesian military. Recently six people were killed at the Papuan People's Congress held in October, when Indonesian soldiers opened fire on the



peaceful gathering.

Freeport mine is situated at the top of a 40,000 metre high mountain range, which the company has hewn down by 1200 metres and left marked with a huge crater from its open cut mine. As a result landslides are common.

The company's practice of dumping waste directly into local rivers has meant that they are now "unsuitable for aquatic life", according to a 2002 report for the company that was leaked to the *New York Times*.

In 1996 anger amongst the local West Papuans following abuses and killings by security forces erupted in riots which shut down the mine for three days and destroyed \$3 million worth of company equipment.

Two thirds of Freeport's workforce are Indonesians brought in from Java and other parts of the country, according to the *Washington Post*.

Mineworkers held an earlier eight-day strike in July for a pay rise and are represented by the All Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI). The SPSI is

a tame-cat, pro-government union in the era of the Suharto dictatorship (1965-1998). When the talks promised after the July strike broke down, the workers voted to go on strike again in September.

Freeport management have been spiteful from the start, sacking 138 union shop stewards within a week of the start of the September strike. Managers have tried to coerce strikers back to work with threats of sacking and pressured contractors' employees to scab.

In this context of escalating tensions, the ABC's Radio Australia reported, in early November, that, "Trade unionists from around the world, including Australia, are in Jakarta, to try to resolve the bitter dispute at the Freeport mine", including the CFMEU's Wayne McAndrew.

But the Grasberg strikers can only force Freeport back to the negotiating table by applying the maximum pressure on them through keeping the mine shut. Australian trade unions should be lending their support through international solidarity action.

Messages of support can be sent to SPSI Freeport Secretary Alba Sabang at albar.sabang@gmail.com.

The union representing the Freeport workers is asking for financial donations to support the strikers. Account details for donations available at <http://x.co/bCT8> or solidarity.net.au

Where do corporate profits come from?

Jean Parker continues our series on economics by looking at labour and surplus value

PROFIT IS the motor of capitalist production, the sole reason why any commodity is produced. Without profit a company can't expand and invest in new technology and will quickly be driven into bankruptcy by competitors.

The money any business makes from selling its products can be divided into a number of components. Profit is the excess or surplus left over once a business has paid all the wages of its workers and the cost of all its inputs in terms of raw materials and machines, and interest, tax and rent.

But where does this crucial surplus—for example the \$250 million profit Qantas made this year—actually come from? Sometimes it is assumed that pricing commodities higher than their cost of production is simply something clever that companies do when they sell products on the market.

Alternatively profit is understood as a rightful reward for capitalists in return for supplying the capital—or raw materials, tools, machines, buildings etc.—needed for the production process.

Mainstream economists argue that both “factors of production” (labour as well as capital) create a “marginal output” or surplus. Therefore, according to their theories, capitalists deserve profit just as workers deserve wages.

Labour and surplus value

Both explanations are convenient for capitalists and their defenders, but both are myths. In fact it is only labour that can create value.

All the machines and materials capitalists own are products of previous labour by workers. Marx called capital “dead labour” to make the point.

All the hangars and tools that allow Qantas engineers to do their work and planes that allow pilots to fly, were not built by CEO Alan Joyce and the Qantas management, but by manufacturing workers, office workers and miners.

But all the existing Qantas capital would be useless without the 30,000 workers who turn the offices and machines into a new product that Qantas can sell. The value of the dead labour is incorporated into the cost of Qantas flights as an input, but only the



Above: Marx showed how all workers are exploited under capitalism by being paid less than the value of their labour, not only those with the very worst working conditions

living labour of the current workforce can produce new value, and create a surplus for Qantas.

That is because wages bear little relationship to the value workers can produce in a working day. A baggage handler might get \$20 an hour for services Qantas charges its customers \$200 for. This is what Marx called exploitation. It is the source of profit as the only part of the production process that capitalists consistently get more value from than they pay for.

And the longer and harder we work for our wage, the more surplus the capitalist makes, and the more profit. That's why Alan Joyce is fighting so hard to hang on to the low wage model of Jetstar.

The situation where cabin crew fall asleep working 15-hour return flights between Sydney and Bali and cleaners were ordered to keep working around a dead body on a plane, is created by the push to extract the maximum surplus value from the workers.

But it's not just Joyce's personal greed for a \$5 million salary that drives his vicious campaign to increase the exploitation of his workforce.

Joyce knows that all the other airline bosses are doing the same thing to their workers around the world. If one

company fails to produce sufficient surplus from their workforce, and cannot afford to plow enough into the latest technology, then other companies will steal the market and the company will fold.

The ruthless logic of capitalist competition forces bosses into a race to find ways to extract more from workers and pay them less. Or as Alan Joyce puts it:

“Retaining outdated maintenance practices, or paying Jetstar pilots at Qantas rates, would exacerbate the cost gap between Qantas and its competitors. The reality is that businesses can and must change. No company can be fenced off from economic realities.”

Unfortunately for Joyce and all other capitalists, the labour that they depend on for every dollar of profit is produced not by commodities, but by conscious human beings who can fight every step of the way to improve the conditions of their work.

This constant class struggle can also lead to strikes where workers begin to feel the power they have as the ones really running the system, and begin to understand that Qantas's capital is not the plaything of Joyce and shareholders, but wealth created by workers that needs to be used to benefit society as a whole.

.....
Wages bear little relationship to the value workers can produce in a working day

FOUR YEARS OF LABOR: WHAT WENT WRONG?

The smell of death is hanging over Labor. **Mark Gillespie** looks at how they got themselves into such a mess

FEDERALLY LABOR'S popularity has slumped to record lows. At the same time, in every state Labor has either been dumped or is fighting for its life. This is a complete turn around from 2007 when the Liberals were in absolute disarray.

Labor pundits put this down to inept leaders who can't sell the government's message. "All leaders of any substance have been capable of telling a story," argues Paul Keating. Labor's problems, however, are much deeper than their leadership or style of communication. Rudd and Gillard's approval ratings plunged for same reason that Paul Keating was swept from office in 1996.

Labor's working class support base feel betrayed by a government that constantly pushes pro-business, pro-market, "growth at any cost" policies and ignores their concerns. Numerous surveys show that people want governments to invest in schools and hospitals and think that privatisation and deregulation leads to job losses and insecurity.

Labor ignores these facts at their own peril. Queensland Labor's popularity dropped almost overnight after it announced its plan to privatise \$15 billion worth of state assets. The final nail in NSW Labor's coffin was its attempt to privatise electricity generation in the face of massive opposition.

Not an aberration

So why does Labor persist with this pro-business agenda when it obviously hurts and alienates its own support base? Some will argue Labor has moved away from their roots. But there is a long history of Labor turning on its supporters once in office.

The Scullin Labor government was swept from office in 1931 after implementing savage wage cuts and

austerity in the name of maintaining "investor confidence".

In 1949 the Chifley Labor government ran a vicious red scare campaign against striking coal miners and used troops to break their strike. Labor's betrayals aren't aberrations but a result of deeply flawed politics.

The parliamentary road

Labor was established in the 1890s by the trade union movement to fight for a better lot for workers. The unions funded the party and supplied the bulk of the personnel. To the extent that workers identified their interests as being in opposition to the employers and saw the need to organise separately, this was a step forward.

But the strategy for advancing workers interests was to utilise parliament.

This turn to parliament came in the wake of some serious defeats where state power was used to smash strikes and was more a sign of desperation than of strength.

While it was right to challenge the capitalist class politically, the problem with the parliamentary strategy is it separates the political struggle off from the economic struggle—where workers have power—into a domain where they have no power.

When elected, Labor governments don't take power, they take office. The real levers of power, the economy, the media, the state institutions and so on, remain firmly in the hands of the capitalist class.

Rather than challenge capitalism, right from the beginning Labor accommodated and set out merely to manage it in a more compassionate way.

Managing capitalism continues to be its goal, guided by what its MPs call "Labor values".

There is a long history of Labor turning on its supporters once in office

Reforms

But managing capitalism means accepting all the rules of capitalism, in particular the need to compete and to maintain a strong national state.

This isn't such a problem when capitalism is expanding and firms are making good returns and governments run surpluses year after year. In these circumstances capitalism can deliver workers moderate reforms.

But what happens when the system moves into crisis, when profit rates fall, unemployment grows and government surpluses disappear? Those wanting to manage the system end up being the doctor applying the medicine trying to nurse it back to health, rather than being its gravedigger.

The Whitlam government was elected at the end of the post-war boom and initially introduced reforms like free tertiary education. At the time such reforms were both affordable and beneficial to capitalism.

But once the 1973 recession hit they rapidly retreated from any progressive reform agenda. Indexation was introduced to restrain wage demands while Bill Hayden replaced Jim Cairns as treasurer and implemented a budget so austere that even the Liberals left it unaltered after Whitlam's dismissal.

The 1973 recession was the beginning of a global slowdown in profit rates. The solution imposed from the top was neo-liberalism—productivity gains and trade-offs to make us work harder and longer, alongside privatisation and deregulation.

When the Hawke Labor government came to power in 1983, the economy was once again in a deep recession. Hawke Labor took up neo-liberal economic reform with enthusiasm.

Their goal was to make Australia

more competitive by opening it up to market forces. They floated the dollar, destroyed free tertiary education, privatised government assets, cut corporate tax, cut tariffs, revived uranium mining, watered down Aboriginal Land Rights, destroyed national workplace awards and when necessary, smashed unions.

Paul Keating often boasts about the prosperity the Hawke and Keating governments created, but it was all concentrated at the big end of town. The share of GDP going to wages during these years fell from 61.1 per cent to 55.4 per cent, while the share going to profits increased from 18.1 per cent to 23.2 per cent.

Labor's traditional blue collar support base was decimated as thousands of full-time jobs in the steel industry, on the waterfront, and other sectors were slashed. Casualisation grew significantly while the average working hours increased from 38.24 to 41.1.

Labor was crushed in the 1996 election receiving its lowest primary vote since 1906.

Continuing the tradition

The Rudd and Gillard governments have continued this tradition of managing capitalism and both have actually held up the Hawke and Keating years as a positive model.

One of their claims to fame is the "scrapping" of WorkChoices, but the changes are very moderate with plenty of flexibility for employers. Individual contracts remain in a different form, bargaining continues at the enterprise level, industry-wide agreements are banned, union access to work sites and to industrial action remains restricted, exemptions from unfair dismissal laws still exist, while special laws still apply to construction workers.

Their other great promise was to tackle climate change but their "solution" has been to be as inoffensive to the interests of capital as possible. They've adopted a market based system—with plenty of exemptions and compensation for big business—that allows industry to pass on the costs to consumers. At the end of the day, it will do little to cut emissions.

The Gillard government doesn't even try to sell the carbon tax as a social reform, but rather as an "economic reform" in the Hawke-Keating tradition, designed to give business "certainty".

On the few occasions when Labor has stepped outside of parameters laid down by business interests they've quickly retreated. Rudd's Resource Super Profits Tax, for example, which



Above: Gillard with the rest of the team that's leading us towards an Abbott victory

was more about redistribution across capital than to workers, was quickly gutted once big business flexed its muscles with a \$22 million advertising campaign against it.

Labor, too, initially broke the mould on refugee policy (in however a moderate way) but quickly reverted back to the xenophobic status quo as soon as the press barons began highlighting breaches of "border security".

So long as Labor continues to work within the limits of capitalism it will continue to disappoint its support base.

Wayne Swan is currently planning cuts to bring the budget into surplus by 2013, while Julia Gillard recently told a business leaders' forum at APEC that the future workforce, "will need to be a workforce that is highly adaptable, highly resilient because the pace of change will stress people". These measures will hardly win back the heartland.

Where's the hope?

In 2007 Kevin Rudd was able to harness much of the growing discontent with the Howard government and raised people's hopes that a Labor government would be different. While Rudd was careful not to raise hopes too high, consistently calling himself an "economic conservative", he nonetheless articulated concerns about WorkChoices, climate change and other issues. Hundreds of thousands of people were mobilised, particularly by the union movement, to help Rudd get over the line.

All that enthusiasm has been

squandered. Labor's strategy of managing capitalism has demoralised its support base. Some will break to the left and vote for The Greens but the initiative has been captured by Tony Abbott with most people shifting their support to the Liberals in the polls. Just as the Hawke and Keating governments laid the basis for 11 years of Howard, Rudd and Gillard are laying the basis for a right-wing Abbott government.

How can things be turned around? The worst thing we could do is fall in uncritically behind Labor thinking they'll somehow stop Abbott. This will just allow Labor to move further to the right and deepen the demoralisation.

The hope is in the struggles outside of parliament. When the Qantas workers made a stand against outsourcing, the public began to rally to their side. This gives us a glimpse of the potential and we should not underestimate how rapidly things can transform if a section of the movement decides to fight. In the US, for example, hope was fading and the Tea Party was on the rise until the Occupy Wall Street movement burst onto the scene, and the US labour movement rallied behind it. This movement is putting pressure on Obama from the left.

In Greece, too, workers are not accepting the betrayal of PASOK (equivalent to Labor) and their resistance has already brought down one prime minister.

It's the movements outside parliament, not relying on Labor politicians, that are the key to challenging the system.

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Those wanting to manage the system end up being the doctor applying the medicine to nurse it back to health

MARXISM AND ANARCHISM

Anarchist and autonomist ideas have influenced many recent movements, including Occupy. **Lachlan Marshall** takes a look at a new booklet that weighs up their merits.

Anarchism: A Marxist Criticism, by John Molyneux, Bookmarks Publications, 2011.

AT THE Occupy Sydney camp at Martin Place amongst the banners and placards was a sign bearing the words, “Bakunin was right”. Nearby another said “Marx was right.”

As founders of the anarchist and Marxist traditions respectively, these two revolutionaries both articulated the hope for a different society that continues to appeal to new generations of activists.

The end goal for anarchists and Marxists is very similar, namely an equal and classless society free of oppression. It is in their approach to reaching that goal that they differ. In this short and very readable booklet, British Marxist John Molyneux outlines the philosophical and historical background to anarchist thought and practice and shows that despite its worthy aims, its approach cannot succeed.

Molyneux explores in five sections anarchist theory and its history in practice, appraises the types of anarchism found today and concludes with a discussion on the way forward.

He examines the recent revival of interest in anarchist politics, situating it particularly within the increasing realisation by many of the bankruptcy of parliamentary democracy.

In Spain and Greece mass youth unemployment has resulted from our rulers’ efforts to leave the working class with the burden of paying for the economic crisis.

For many of the marginalised youth of inner city areas experiencing unemployment and homelessness, “anarchism symbolises their rejection of a system that has rejected them.”

Anarchist ideas

Despite anarchism’s diversity there are a number of features common to all its permutations: “(a) hostility to the state in all its forms, including



the idea of a revolutionary state; (b) hostility to leadership in all its forms, including revolutionary leadership; (c) hostility to all political parties, including the idea of a revolutionary party; and (d) a tendency to individualism.” As Molyneux points out, the literal meaning of anarchism is “no rule”, so rejection of the state and government in all forms is elevated to the level of a creed.

Anarchism is correct in asserting that human societies can exist without hierarchies—as they did for the majority of the history of the human species.

When it comes to the state however, anarchism falls flat. At its core, the state is comprised of “special bodies of armed men”—the army and police, but also civil servants, judges and so on. Some anarchists dismiss

any need to even recognise the state’s existence, espousing individual or collective abstention, for instance forming “autonomous” communities and communes. But these inevitably peter out under the broader pressures of capitalist society.

Those anarchists who advocate a revolutionary overthrow of the state by the masses have more in common with Marxism.

Marxists believe that workers must create a revolutionary state to ensure the continued progress of the revolution until the threats to its existence are removed and a state is no longer needed. Anarchism assumes that once the capitalist state has been destroyed, society can simply continue in a classless fashion.

Such an inadequate understanding

of the state fails to see that the ruling class will inevitably resist its dispossession.

As Molyneux notes, “The history of every revolution shows that not only will the old ruling class stop at nothing to retain the power it has got, but will also stop at nothing to try to regain the power it has lost.” And in this endeavour it can rely on the support of ruling classes internationally.

Molyneux shows that in order to combat the reactionary opposition that it will inevitably face, a revolution requires centralisation and coordination—in short, a state.

He puts the question starkly: “Can a revolutionary people defend the revolution against such counter-revolutionary activity without the aid of a workers’ militia or army, without any form of legal system to ensure that the will of the people is respected, without a system of centralised decision making and authority, that is without creating a revolutionary form of state power? No, it cannot.”

However a revolutionary state, or workers’ state, would be radically different to a capitalist state. Molyneux shows how previous periods of revolutionary upheaval have thrown up “organs of revolutionary power which are... both democratic and egalitarian” that can form the basis of a revolutionary state.

If this still doesn’t sound concrete enough, he offers a lucid comparison of a revolutionary state with struggle on a smaller scale, where organisation is just as vital: “In principle it is the same as when workers on strike organise a picket line to prevent a minority of their own ranks from scabbing. In the final analysis a workers’ state is simply a picket line raised to the highest possible level.”

To the anarchist contention that a state would ossify into a privileged elite, Molyneux points to historical examples where certain principles arise that preclude this happening. One method is limiting the pay of public officials to that of an average worker and making them instantly recallable. Such was the case in 1871 during the Paris Commune, and again in the Russian soviets (workers’ councils) in 1905 and 1917. This limits the chances of attracting careerists or other opportunists into public office.

In the Russian revolution, it was not something inherent to the idea of a revolutionary state which produced its degeneration. Rather the context of a civil war against foreign capitalist armies left the country decimated and allowed Stalin to establish a dictator-

Claiming to abolish leadership merely conceals it and obstructs channels of accountability, ultimately undermining democracy

ship which led a counter-revolution that .

Leadership

One of the clearest marks of the influence of anarchism on the Occupy movement is skepticism or outright hostility towards “leadership”. Again this sentiment is completely understandable, when for most people what is meant by “leadership” is the unprincipled and spineless behavior of elected politicians, or the conservatism of union officialdom.

But rejection of leadership does not make it disappear. Regardless of whether it is recognised or not, leadership is a fact. As Molyneux argues, it arises, “from the fact that people differ in their experiences, and therefore in their levels of political consciousness, commitment, knowledge, courage and so on.”

Rather than increasing democracy in the movement, claiming to abolish leadership merely conceals it and obstructs channels of accountability, ultimately undermining democracy. Failure to acknowledge this means unelected and unrecallable leaders. Moreover, as Molyneux asks, who are the famous anarchists if not leaders of anarchist movements? This is also explored in the famous article “The tyranny of structurelessness”.

The record of anarchism

Molyneux presents a scorecard on anarchism in various historical events that have tested anarchism at its strongest. He begins with Mikhail Bakunin, the famous 19th century anarchist who is sometimes called the father of anarchism.

Bakunin’s focus on radical actions isolated from a real mass support base led to him being serially incarcerated. One such action was a coup he conducted in Lyons in 1870, upon which he declared the state abolished. The state, unstirred, reacted promptly. He was arrested, and, “excluded from participation in the real workers’ revolution, the Paris Commune the following year.”

As an illustration of the contradictions inherent in anarchist attitudes to leadership, Molyneux relates how Bakunin headed a small, conspiratorial and hierarchical group based on absolute obedience to himself, despite his denunciations of organisation.

The Spanish civil war of 1936 revealed anarchism’s weakness in dismissing the notion of state power. During the war the anarchist trade union, the CNT, boasted a million members. Workers were effectively

in power. But because the anarchist leaders lacked a clear orientation to the state, they did not encourage workers to destroy the old capitalist state and take over society. Some anarchist leaders even joined the Republican capitalist government.

This government proceeded to clamp down on the working class, claiming this was necessary to fight the war against fascism. This demobilised the one force that could have defeated the fascist General Franco—a working class fighting for its own liberation and control of society.

Decision making

Molyneux’s comments on consensus decision making will resonate with many activists in the Occupy movement. Consensus is a form of decision making popular in some social movements, where decisions cannot be made unless everyone reaches agreement.

Of course, reaching maximum agreement is a worthy aim. But often consensus is not possible. In this case either a decision cannot be made or decisions are made by attrition where one group wears down another.

Molyneux’s observation that, “‘Consensus’ also allows a very small but inflexible minority to block and stymie a large majority and thereby paralyse a campaign or organisation” will be familiar to participants in the often frustrating Occupy general assemblies.

For some in the Spanish “indignados” or “indignant” movement, the slogan of “real democracy now” applies exclusively to the plaza occupations, which are seen as embryos of “real democracy.” But wider society, the economy and the state remain outside of popular control. To realise “real democracy” requires a strategy for changing wider society. The path to real democracy requires, “at a minimum: (a) displacing or dismantling the existing state system and replacing it with one based on direct democracy; and (b) amassing and mobilising the popular power capable of bring about this change, i.e. a revolution.”

It demands reaching out from the occupations. This has begun happening in Spain, where *indignados* have reached out to workers, resulting in some teachers occupying their schools.

Molyneux’s booklet is valuable and timely reading for anarchists and Marxists alike, along with anyone who wants a better world. He shows that only a Marxist analysis can equip us to fight the system, and bring about a different society.

DISSECTING MURDOCH'S HOLD ON THE NEWS

**Quarterly Essay 43
"Bad News"**
By Robert Manne,
Black Inc, \$19.95

ACADEMIC ROBERT Manne believes that Rupert Murdoch's Australian media empire should be broken up, with the mogul's control of newspapers reduced from 70 to 25 per cent.

He made the case as one of the first witnesses to front the federal government's inquiry into the media, which was prompted by the hacking scandal that has enveloped Murdoch's British newspapers.

Manne's evidence drew heavily on his arguments in "Bad News: Murdoch's *Australian* and the shaping of the nation", published as issue 43 of the *Quarterly Essay*.

Manne's proposition is simple: despite *The Australian's* low circulation, it plays a critical role as the only national paper that sets out to shape the political agenda.

Relatively few people read it—its daily national circulation Monday to Friday is 130,000, compared to 674,000 for the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* in Victoria alone. But among those who do are politicians, journalists, senior public servants and business people—"the political class" and the main agenda-setters. As a result, Manne argues that *The Australian* is the country's most important newspaper.

"It is an unusually ideological paper, committed to advancing the causes of neo-liberalism in economics and neo-conservatism in the sphere of foreign policy...

"*The Australian* is ruthless in pursuit of those who oppose its world-view—market fundamentalism, minimal action on climate change, the federal Intervention in indigenous affairs, uncritical support for the American alliance and for Israel."

Manne assigns responsibility for this direction

to the editorship of Chris Mitchell. Mitchell, former editor of the *Courier Mail* in Brisbane, has been in the role since 2002.

Dishonesty and bias
"Bad News" is a forensic piece of research. In it, Manne assembles an impressive dossier on *The Australian's* bias, ideological agenda and devious bending of truths. It will provide a handy reference for some time to come.

Manne focuses on the paper's record on seven questions: the History Wars; the Iraq war; ABC's *Media Watch*; climate change; Kevin Rudd; its treatment of individuals, including Aboriginal academic Larissa Behrendt; and The Greens.

He reminds us, for instance, that the paper created a national figure out of Keith Windschuttle, an otherwise little-known historian who, in his book *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, argued that Aborigines were victims of their own dysfunction rather than of British colonisation.

And he goes, fact by fact, through the way that *The Australian* slavishly promoted every argument, and every falsehood, that was put forward by the USA and its allies in making the case for the invasion of Iraq.

Foreign editor, Greg Sheridan, for example, wrote after the release by British prime minister Tony Blair of a dossier supposedly detailing the existence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction: "Either Tony Blair is a monstrous liar or Saddam Hussein is. Take your pick." As Manne points

out, the paper has never acknowledged its errors.

On global warming there is, on the face of it, a curious disjuncture between Murdoch's public statements that human-induced climate change is real and *The Australian's* passionate scepticism.

The paper has argued repeatedly that "climate change may be a mirage", that "it remains to be proved that the rise ... [in] the levels of carbon dioxide ... [is] the major driver of global warming" and that "the scientific evidence is being questioned around the world".

Manne writes: "*The Australian* has conducted a prolonged and intellectually incoherent campaign against action on climate change, which has undermined the hold in public life of the central values of the Enlightenment, Science and Reason."

For Manne, the gap between Murdoch's position and Mitchell's flows from the secondary nature of the climate question, unlike matters like neo-liberal economics or the Iraq war, where Murdoch cannot tolerate dissent.

But a more likely explanation is that while Murdoch is expressing on a global stage the genuine concerns over climate of the world's capitalist rulers, *The Australian* is arguing the sectional interests of Australia's miners.

Perhaps the scariest section is the one detailing the witch hunt launched against Larissa Behrendt, who made a throwaway comment about another (but pro-Intervention) Aboriginal activist on twitter, for which she promptly apologised.

The Australian launched a massive assault, including front page articles and editorials that argued (in shades of Andrew Bolt) that Behrendt was a "sepia-toned" big-city activist, unfit to lead the Gillard government's enquiry into indigenous higher education and raising doubts about her role at the University of Technology Sydney.

And perhaps the most interesting section is the one discussing the relationship between Mitchell and Rudd. Manne argues that Mitchell believed Rudd was "his man". *The Australian* backed Labor in 2007, but warned progressives that the, "Daydreaming Left is in for a big surprise".

But when Rudd responded to the Global Financial Crisis in February 2009 with an essay in *The Monthly* that argued, in milk and water terms, the case for social democratic regulation of the market, *The Australian* turned on him like a jilted lover.

It launched wave after wave of attacks, principally over the emissions trading scheme and the mining tax that, arguably, helped lay the basis for Rudd's toppling and Labor's shift even further to the right.

Agenda setting

How can this be, given the paper's modest circulation? Why should a rather bookish, self-important broadsheet that few read carry such weight? There are two key reasons, the first flowing from the substantial resources Murdoch has poured into the paper.

As Manne writes: "*The Australian* now dominates



Labor leadership. As ABC's 7.30 program recalled earlier this year about that era:

BOB DUFFIELD, FMR SENIOR JOURNALIST, *THE AUSTRALIAN*: The instructions relayed by the editor were: "Rupert Murdoch wants us to go balls and all for Whitlam."

CHRIS UHLMANN: On 9 December, 1975, journalists on *The Australian* went on strike and issued a statement, saying: "We cannot be loyal to a propaganda sheet." It was the first time in Australian history that journalists had gone on strike for such a reason.

Other journalists have used their collective weight to influence editorial decisions since then. Journalists on *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* went on strike over editorial standards in 1998 and did so again (in defiance of anti-union laws) in 2008, when Fairfax announced massive job cuts that also threatened quality journalism.

Indeed, it is no coincidence that the most active defenders of press standards have been Fairfax journalists, who have a very high rate of unionisation, rather than News Limited staff, among whom union membership has dropped to about 30 per cent.

Rebuilding union membership within News Limited—and a genuine spirit of journalistic integrity and independence—is part of the much bigger project of challenging neo-liberalism in all its forms. When the unions and movements mobilise, Murdoch's broadsheet attack dog will lose its bite. Read an edited highlight of "Bad News" at <http://bit.ly/poXmz7>
David Glanz

the Canberra press gallery not only in the number of journalists employed—at some press conferences half of those attending are from *The Australian*—but also in the aggression its reporters display and their capacity for teamwork in pursuit of their prey."

A quick scan of the paper shows that this isn't paid for by advertising revenue. Murdoch is making a political investment. But money and staff numbers alone cannot guarantee influence. What takes *The Australian* to the next level is its political clarity and single-mindedness.

Among the mass of the population, there continues to be a strong social democratic opposition to the neo-liberal model of market primacy, reflected in sympathy for union action (Qantas, the Victorian nurses, the NSW teachers, etc), the Occupy movement, refugees, and so on. This mood is also expressed politically in the vote for The Greens.

Among the ruling

class, there is effective unanimity for the neo-liberal project. Expressing this, however, is a challenge. Most politicians feel the need to pay at least lip service to popular support for the welfare state and the "fair go". Similarly, most sections of the mass media have a commercial imperative to balance between the neo-liberal views of their owners and the doubts of many of their readers and listeners.

The Australian Financial Review is, like *The Australian*, a national neo-liberal paper, but one that focuses tightly on serving its business audience. So *The Australian* is alone in prosecuting the pure neo-liberal argument, unhampered by commercial imperative, national in reach and highly polemical in style.

The result is that it sets the agenda for other media, including those (like the Fairfax press and the ABC) whose staff have little sympathy with the

paper's project.

As Manne writes: "*The Australian* is a remorseless campaigning paper ... (influencing) the way the much more widely read News Limited tabloids, like the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Herald Sun*, report national politics and frequently (setting) the agenda of commercial radio and television and the ABC, even the upmarket breakfast program on Radio National."

How can the monster be tamed? This is where Manne is disappointing. He is dismissive of union solutions, suggesting instead that senior journalists within *The Australian* should tap Mitchell on the shoulder. But Mitchell could not have prospered for so long without Murdoch's approval.

Murdoch can be taken on, but it takes collective dissent and collective action—something that journalists on *The Australian* pioneered in 1975, when Murdoch decided to destroy Gough Whitlam's

Above: Murdoch continues to feel the reverberations over the hacking scandal in the UK

The Australian is alone in prosecuting the pure neo-liberal argument, unhampered by commercial imperative, national in reach and highly polemical in style.

AS GILLARD SINKS THE BOOT IN STOP THE DEPORTATIONS FREE THE REFUGEES

By Ian Rintoul

JULIA GILLARD has always been willing to go that extra mile when it comes to putting the boot into refugees. In spite of being nominally in the Left, she sided with the Labor Right at the 2004 national conference to vote against Labor for Refugees motions. December's national Labor conference is going to be no different.

Gillard and Bowen will put resolutions to the conference to remove the section in the present Labor Party platform that stipulates, "Protection claims made in Australia will be assessed by Australians on Australian territory."

The motion will open the door to revisiting the Malaysia Agreement. It will also allow Gillard to avoid answering internal charges made against her by a Victorian Labor for Refugees member that the Malaysia solution violated Labor's rules.

Although Labor for Refugees are bound to lose, they will put resolutions to the conference to (i) end both mandatory detention, (ii) end the excision of islands such as Christmas Island that allows the offshore processing of boat people, and (iii) review the refugee processing system itself.

To build the campaign against Gillard and Bowen, we will need to harness the opposition inside the Labor Party conference in the growing campaign outside the conference. While many union leaders will be represented inside the Labor Party conference, it's among the rank-and-file of the unions that the campaign needs to build to counter the poison spread by Gillard, Abbott and sections of the media, like *Today Tonight*.

It will be crucial to mobilise the union movement if the threat of deportations is going to be stopped.

Deportations

In a shocking development, Gillard moved to begin deportations of asylum seekers to both Afghanistan and Sri Lanka in November.

Sending Afghans back was something not even John Howard did. But Gillard has used the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Afghan



Above: 300 marched through Sydney in October calling for an end to mandatory detention

and Australian governments in January to begin forced deportations. The removal of Afghan asylum seeker Ismail Mirza Jan from Villawood in November was only stopped by last minute legal action.

Stopping the deportation was a major win for the campaign but it is only a reprieve.

Only days after Ismail's attempted deportation, the Immigration department took the first steps to remove a Tamil asylum seeker to Sri Lanka.

The lie was put to any idea that Afghanistan is safe when two days before Ismail was scheduled to be removed, rockets slammed into Kabul, Afghanistan's capital. Afghanistan is becoming less safe and less secure (see page 7).

But increasingly, Afghans' refugee claims are being denied because offshore processing is discriminatory and open to political manipulation. Against the weight of information, assessors and reviewers are insisting that regardless of where the particular person may be from, there is another section of Afghanistan where they will supposedly be safe, particularly Kabul.

Tamils, too, are still persecuted in Sri Lanka (see page 7). But Julia Gillard happily welcomed Sri Lankan

President Mahinda Rajapaksa, the butcher of Tamils, to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOHM) in Perth in October.

Forced deportations are a brutal process. Physical restraints are used to shackle asylum seekers to plane seats, along with chemical restraints that leave them unable to resist. The Edmund Rice Centre in its 2004 publication *Deported to Danger* records that up to nine people were killed after the Howard government sent them from Nauru to Afghanistan.

Neither the courts nor the Labor government are about to end mandatory detention, end offshore processing or free the refugees.

Gillard and Abbott will continue to face off over who can best stop the boats.

But increasing numbers of people are disgusted with political parties preying on the fate of vulnerable people. And that's where the hope for the future lies. The worst of Howard's policies were stopped by a people's movement committed to fighting for humanitarian policies. The refugee movement once again faces the challenge to grow. Gillard is pushing further to the right, but even as she does so, the ground is moving beneath her feet.

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Deporting Afghans back to Afghanistan was something not even John Howard did
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