

Fight the Liberals' cuts SCA STUDENTS SHOW THE WAY



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NSW left

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Capitalism and
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Gurindji strike



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EMAIL

solidarity@solidarity.net.au

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SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

Sydney

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

Melbourne

Melbourne Solidarity meets fortnightly at 6.15pm Tuesdays Old Quad Room G10, Melbourne Uni
For more information contact: Feiyi on 0416 121 616
melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Perth

For more information contact: Phil on 0423 696 312

Brisbane

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

Canberra

For more information contact: John on 0422 984 334 or canberra@solidarity.net.au

Magazine office

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

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Things they say

I've never seen a time where the public attitude towards big business has been so negative

Good news from the Australian Institute of Company Directors chief executive, John Brogden

Cory Bernadi is like an angry prostitute lecturing us about the benefits of celibacy

Jaqui Lambie questioning Bernadi's sincerity over Chinese donations to Labor Senator Sam Dastyari

Prostitutes are far more honest, sincere, humane, compassionate and better bang for buck than Senator Bernadi will ever be able to deliver.

Senator Jaqui Lambie apologising while reflecting on the finer points of Senator Cory Bernadi's political character.

Jacob Mark and I have criticized "the Australian model" in the media. The Australian asylum policy forces thousands of asylum seekers who are on their way to Australia to live in camps on Pacific islands such as Nauru. The reason why a Danish politician with the name Naser Khader is excluded—without having criticized Nauru or Australia—is anybody's guess.

Danish MP Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen on the Nauru government's decision to ban her and two other MPs from visiting

In the last parliament, I could invariably count on Bill Shorten's support on national security issues. On deploying the armed forces or strengthening anti-terror laws, there were cabinet ministers harder-to-persuade than the Leader of the Opposition!

Tony Abbott, former Prime Minister, talking to the Samuel Griffiths society

Our riders are the life blood of our business and without them we are nothing.

William Shu, Deliveroo co-founder and chief executive, when workers went on strike in London

CONTENTS

ISSUE 94 SEPTEMBER 2016



Turnbull's nightmare continues

5 Editorial

8 Equal marriage plebiscite in doubt

20 Refugees



Features

12 Fifty years since the Gurindji strike

14 Why MPs betray the cause: lessons from history



16 Capitalism and mental health

4 Inside the system

Reports

6 Warning for left in NSW Greens

7 Support floods in for SCA occupation

8 Public servants take 24 hour strike

9 Kalgoorlie



International

10 Striking back in the new economy at Deliveroo

11 Burkini ban shows Islamophobia on the rise

11 Turkish tanks move into Syria

Reviews

19 Unnecessary wars

INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

Apple says \$19 billion in unpaid tax is “crap”

APPLE’S CHIEF Executive Tim Cook has lashed out at an EU decision forcing the multinational to pay a massive tax bill to Ireland. The repayment totals \$19 billion and was based on figures provided by Apple itself.

The company struck a secret deal with the Irish government in 1991 giving it a tax rate that dropped from 1 per cent in 2003 to just 0.005 per cent by 2014. Apple then booked all its profits from across Europe to a company registered in Ireland, allowing it to avoid tax for all its sales outside North and South America.

Apple reacted violently to the ruling by the European Competition Commission. Tim Cook declared, “No one did anything wrong here... Ireland is being picked on and this is unacceptable”. He labelled the ruling, “total political crap.”

The tax repayment is enough to run Ireland’s health system for a year. The company’s response caused outrage on Ireland’s streets. Louise O’Reilly, 57, is a full time carer for her mother who is diabetic and blind. She told the media: “They are doing the wrong thing. They don’t care about the normal people. The money should be spent on the old-age pensioners who worked all their lives and are struggling to survive.”

Nine Vice Chancellors rake in over \$1 million

AUSTRALIA’S UNIVERSITY bosses, the Vice Chancellors, are taking home a fortune. Nine of them earned more than \$1 million last year. The list was topped by none other than Sydney University’s Michael Spence who recently provoked one of the longest student occupations in the university’s history after attempting to close down Sydney College of the Arts. He had the gall to call the art school an “unnecessary expense” while taking home a salary package worth \$1.38 million. His pay has increased by more than 60 per cent since 2010 when he earned \$849,000. Spence was followed closely by Australian Catholic University’s VC Greg Craven who took home \$1.33 million last year.

Unionists banned from using the word ‘scab’



UNIONISTS HAVE been banned from calling people scabs at the Carlton United Breweries (CUB) picket line in Melbourne. The Fair Work Commission made a ruling prohibiting unionists from insulting scabs in relation to the Carlton United Breweries dispute. Unions are holding on ongoing picket and protests at the site in response to the mass sacking of 55 fitters and electricians. The workers were asked to reapply for their jobs and take a 65 per cent pay cut.

The ruling explicitly prohibits unionists from using insults including “scab”, “fuckwit” and “rat” at workers crossing the picket line, which has been running since June. The Electrical Trades Union and Australian Manufacturing Workers Union responded to the ruling by erecting a giant two storey inflatable rat outside the brewery. As ETU Secretary Troy Gray explained, “Unions said if we can’t have our placards we need something that represents the culture that we’re dealing with and they came up with this young gentlemen before us, ‘Scabby the Rat’”.

The unions are also running a high profile boycott campaign against beers produced at CUB—including Carlton Draught, Carlton Dry, VB, Crown Lager and Pure Blonde, as well as Mercury and Strongbow ciders.

Turnbull to unleash more Middle East bombing

MALCOM TURNBULL has foreshadowed legal changes that will allow the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to bomb more indiscriminately in Iraq and Syria. Until now the ADF has formally been limited to bombing Islamic State combatants, vehicles or targets flying fighting flags. But commanders want to bomb non-combat targets such as factories and depots, and believe that Australian laws currently restrict this. This will increase the chances that civilians will die.

Turnbull told parliament he wanted, “the ADF on the frontline of this fight to have the powers they need”. An ADF official spokesperson admitted, “it means more strikes”. In December 2014 a UN Central Command report detailed an ADF bombing raid on a suspected weapons factory where a woman and child were seen in the targeted area 10 minutes after the bombing.

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

Comatose Aboriginal man handcuffed to hospital bed

IN AUGUST corrective services guards handcuffed and shackled Noongar man Nathan Khan to a hospital bed in WA. He was comatose at the time.

Khan collapsed in a court hearing regarding a traffic offence at Midlands magistrates court. He was entering a plea at the time for an offence that carries a sentence of up to 18 months jail. After his sudden collapse Khan was taken to the Midlands health campus. Either in the ambulance or the hospital he choked on his own vomit which cut off his oxygen supply.

The 30-year-old father of two was then placed on life support to a ventilator to assist his breathing and slipped into a coma that lasted for several days.

Despite his extremely serious and utterly incapacitated condition guards insisted on handcuffing his limp body to the hospital bed and fixing shackles to his legs. Khan’s mother Margaret Hansen said, “I just can’t understand it. I said to the guard, ‘How the fucking hell is he supposed to get up and run when he can’t even wake up? He is in a fucking coma and he is tied down like a dog.’”

Top CEOs make \$5.5 million each

AVERAGE CEO pay among Australia’s top 100 companies hit \$5.5 million last year. This is 68 times the average wage.

The bulk of this came in hefty bonuses, with just 7 per cent of CEOs missing out.

Top of the list were the co-chiefs at Westfield, Peter and Steven Lowy, on \$24.75 million. Seek’s Andrew Bassett took in \$19.39 million, followed by Peter Allen at Scentre Group on \$17.86 million and Macquarie’s Nicholas Moore on \$16.3 million.

EDITORIAL

Step up the fightback—Turnbull can be beaten

AS PARLIAMENT resumed, Malcolm Turnbull faced headaches at every turn. His almost election defeat has crippled his political authority.

Turnbull's priority is forcing through more budget cuts. But he is under siege from his own right-wing. Despite Turnbull publicly saying there were "much more pressing priorities", Cory Bernardi ignored him, and pressed on with his crusade to amend s18c of the Racial Discrimination Act and give racists the right to insult and abuse.

Tellingly, Bernardi gained the support of every Coalition backbench Senator, bar one.

Turnbull also lost a string of votes in the lower house when three government MPs left early. Labor almost got the Royal Commission into the banks passed by the House of Representatives.

Coalition MPs are still demanding concessions to the government's superannuation changes.

Tony Abbott has joined the revolt against taxing the multi-million dollar super accounts of the top few per cent. According to one MP, Abbott went "looking for a fight" in a meeting with senior Ministers over the new cap on superannuation balances.

The government's super changes were the one thing the Coalition could point to as a token effort to close some of the tax loopholes for the super rich. But the government is now watering them down to appease its own backbench. There is no talk of backing away from the cuts aimed at workers or the unemployed.

Billions in cuts

The Liberals want Labor to pass a new package of \$6 billion in cuts containing measures they accepted during the election campaign.

The government has gone on a hysterical campaign demanding Labor "honour their commitment" to slash spending. Almost all the cuts are aimed at those at the bottom of society.

The biggest single item is cutting \$230 a year from welfare recipients by scrapping the weekly energy supplement.

ACOSS head Cassandra Goldie has slammed the cut, saying, "people already living in poverty should not be further impoverished". Shamefully as *Solidarity* goes to press, Labor is still considering voting to support the



Above: The campaign to "Let SCA Stay" has shown the fighting spirit needed to push back Turnbull's cuts

Liberals' cut to benefits.

Next largest is a \$1 billion cut to renewable energy funding.

The Liberals haven't changed. Treasurer Scott Morrison reinvented Joe Hockey's rant about "lifters and leaners", saying the new divide was "the taxed and the taxed-nots". And he wasn't talking about Apple, or any of the other tax dodging multinational companies.

Instead his target is pensioners and the unemployed.

Morrison complained bitterly about the opposition that killed off Tony Abbott's savage 2014 cuts, labelling it "budget sabotage".

But that is what we need again. The Turnbull government is weak. As their troubles mount, we need to step up the fight to kill off their agenda of cuts and attacks on unions.

Turnbull will struggle to get anything through the Senate. Already his plan for a plebiscite on equal marriage is in serious trouble, with Nick Xenophon and The Greens both saying they will vote it down. Unless Labor supports it, the idea is finished.

The Liberals are desperately hoping for a win on the anti-union ABCC legislation.

They have been heartened by Pauline Hanson's outburst against "union thuggery", and her support for small business and corporate tax cuts.

Sadly the unions are restricting

their campaign to backroom lobbying of Hanson and other crossbenchers. There has been no attempt to build pressure on the Senate or the construction bosses with an industrial campaign.

Abbott's budget cuts were stopped by mobilising protests and demonstrations—that's what will be needed to oppose the ABCC.

Students at Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) are showing how to fight, occupying administration offices in an effort to stop savage cuts to jobs, facilities and courses.

As we go to press SCA has been occupied for almost three weeks. Celebrity artists, the surrounding community, unions and students from across the university have rallied to support them.

Public sector workers in the CPSU need to take the same fighting spirit into their pay dispute with the government, which has now dragged on for three years. They were on strike across the country on 9 September.

Refugee supporters have also taken to the streets in large numbers, in nationwide protests at the end of August. Years of consistent refugee campaigning is bearing fruit as the pressure grows on the government to finally end offshore detention.

If we step up the militancy and link the fights together, the government can be beaten.

.....
The Liberals want Labor to pass a new package of \$6 billion in cuts

Wake up call for the left in NSW Greens

By Ian Rintoul

FIRST IT was Bob Brown, just after the Federal election, using the media to blame the “old guard” in NSW for a small fall in The Greens’ vote, and to call for Lee Rhiannon to stand down.

Then it was right-wing candidate, Justin Field (promoted by NSW Greens upper house MP, Jeremy Buckingham) being selected to take John Kaye’s tragically vacated seat.

Now, Jeremy Buckingham himself has emerged to attack the left of the NSW Greens, this time by going on the ABC’s 7.30 to declare that there are “unaccountable officials” in the NSW Greens, and to demand that the NSW Greens appoint a leader.

The right-wing of the NSW Greens has declared war on the left. Field’s election was a wake-up call. But it is clear that the right of the party now thinks it can use Field’s election to go the offensive.

It says something about the complacency of the left that it could not get its act together to have a single candidate in the pre-selection. There were eight left candidates, while the right had one. Splitting the left vote certainly helped the right.

There can be no doubt that Field will use his position to continue the efforts to pull the NSW Greens further to the right.

Brown, Field and Buckingham have made it clear that they want to more dramatically shift The Greens toward the middle ground of politics; in particular in seeking to play a role in government, and away from The Greens’ strength of being a protest party.

Dr David Burchall, an academic from Western Sydney University interviewed on the 7.30 segment, singled out the “old Left” that had joined The Greens and who are more focused on “social justice, radical” issues than on the environment.

Of course, in the era of capitalism-induced climate change, this is a false distinction—the environment issue is both a social justice issue and radical—but the reference is code for insisting that The Greens should not be radical at all.

Some see the replacement of Sarah Hanson-Young by Nick McKim as Immigration spokesperson as more evidence of Greens leader Richard



Above: NSW Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham, who has declared war on the left inside the party

di Natale taking The Greens to the “respectable centre” of politics.

Brown famously said he didn’t want to keep the bastards honest, he wanted to replace the bastards. But in the meantime it seems he is willing to play with the bastards.

Different vision

The left of The Greens has been put on notice. Unless they fight for a different vision of the party, the right is determined to go over the top of them.

Buckingham has gained confidence from the election of his former staffer, Justin Field, that he can win state-wide membership votes focused on the issue of a NSW leader.

His focus on the issue of “leadership” is yet another indication of Buckingham’s conservative trajectory.

Specifically, he wants to shift leadership away from the rank and file and from leading NSW Greens politicians like Lee Rhiannon and David Shoebridge who are identified with actively supporting social justice issues.

There is nothing inherently undemocratic or unaccountable about the existing Greens structures.

Buckingham wants “the leader” to set the political tone and priorities of The Greens.

He told the ABC that, “We need to have accountability in leadership, we need to have defined roles so we know what their responsibilities are and we assign them a strategic task to

engage with the membership, to be a focal point in election campaigns potentially.” It is no accident that there is no mention of The Greens’ involvement in social justice movements or of the need to take up working class issues.

David Shoebridge declined to appear on 7.30 to respond to Buckingham’s interview, but Buckingham’s comments have begun a war of words inside The Greens.

In a Facebook post published by the ABC, David Shoebridge’s staffer Tom Raue calls Buckingham “a disgrace”.

Another Greens member, Nick Rowbotham wrote, “I’m just going to say it, Jeremy ought to be seriously sanctioned—or potentially expelled—for this repeated bullshit.”

The origins of The Greens were in the mobilisations of thousands in the fight to save the Franklin River in Tasmania, but The Greens are no longer primarily concerned to mobilise people to fight outside of Parliament; they mobilise people to vote. Electoralism has taken its toll.

The left needs to take the fight to Buckingham, Field and di Natale. Resolutions in branches condemning Buckingham would be a start. But the real task is to extend the discussion about “what sort of party”; to politically orient the Greens on class issues and relate to the unions and disaffected Labor voters; and to actively involve the membership in the struggles outside parliament.

.....
It is clear that the right of the party now thinks it can use Field’s election to go the offensive

Support floods in as students occupy to save SCA

By James Supple

SYDNEY COLLEGE of the Arts (SCA) students were entering their third week occupying administration offices as we went to press.

“We have broken the record of the longest student occupation at Sydney University—Political Economy was occupied in 1983 for ten days”, said occupier and SCA postgrad student Cecilia Castro.

Students are holding the top level of the administration building at SCA, which includes the office of Dean Colin Rhodes. The university wants to close their Callan Park campus, move students to the main campus and slash jobs and facilities.

Tamara Voninski, a PhD student at SCA told a support rally, “We have staff jobs to save, and facilities like glass, ceramics and jewellery to keep within our studio based art practices. Taking away 60 per cent of our staff, and the campus, and our facilities, and 2017 enrolments for the BVA (Bachelor of Visual Arts) is wrong.”

SCA students have already staged one student strike, rallying on the main Sydney University campus with staff unions, the NTEU and CPSU, of 400 people.

They have also held actions to disrupt university Open Day and an Alumni morning tea.

The occupation has further stepped up the campaign. “We wanted to make it clear to the university that if they didn’t meet our demands then we were going to escalate the campaign”, SCA student and occupier Suzy Faiz told *Solidarity*.

Support for the occupation has flooded in, along with widespread media coverage. Students have addressed MUA stopwork meetings and received visits from MUA and CFMEU members, as well as a delegation of UNSW art students. The MUA and CFMEU have donated \$1000 each, with \$200 more from the NTEU at UNSW. The MUA also donated another \$1000 to commission a painting about the struggle.

The occupiers addressed Unions NSW two weeks running, resulting in a union support demonstration on a Sunday that drew just over 100 people. The head of Unions NSW Mark Morey, Labor MP Anthony Albanese and NSW Greens MP David Shoebridge all spoke.

In reprisal, the university attempt-



Above: Student occupiers address a support rally at SCA

ed to suspend the swipe card access of two occupiers who are postgraduate students, Cecilia Castro and Eila Vinwynn. This prevented them entering 24 hour studios and study spaces. But a day later they backed down.

Ben Quilty, a former SCA student and Archibald Prize winner, visited the campus during the occupation, saying, “I’ve come to tell you all not to give up”.

The campaign is pushing more and more people to publicly condemn the university. Even a former Arts Minister for three NSW Liberals, Peter Collins, has attacked the university’s plan.

Their initial plan to close SCA and fold it into UNSW has already collapsed and the university is under enormous pressure. Even its financial justification has come under question, after documents surfaced detailing the Callan Park site’s handover in 1991. They show that the state government pays for the bulk of the upkeep of the buildings, discrediting the university’s claim that the site costs too much to maintain.

Next steps

The challenge now is to widen active support—particularly on the main Sydney University campus, where the heart of university decision making lies.

Student activists have been holding an “Occupation consulate” to build support there. At least ten classes as well as staff in the School

of Literature, Arts and Media have held photo actions to support the occupation.

“The consulate’s been getting lots of support and it goes to show that people are seeing it as a fight for SCA but also a fight for all students and all staff”, student activist Sophie told *Solidarity*.

“There’s been 60 staff cut at the student centre, but also the merger between the Faculty of Social Work and the Faculty of Education with Arts and Social Sciences.” Around 150 people attended a support rally on the main campus on 7 September.

The SCA campaign can become a focus for the anger at cuts right across the university. Escalating on the main campus towards the same kind of militant action seen at SCA through the occupation can build the pressure on the university.

Further student strikes at SCA will also deepen the crisis for the university. While the immediate aim is likely to be another one day strike, the rally on 7 September heard from a PNG student activist, involved in a six week boycott of classes there this year.

While staff have also joined and spoken at rallies, some have been intimidated after being told they cannot speak out. But the university’s EBA guarantees the right to criticise the university, even on “operational matters”. Industrial action by staff could bring SCA to a halt.

As Tamara told the student rally, “To the university management I say we are not finished, we have only just begun.”

The campaign is pushing more and more people to publicly condemn the university

Pile pressure on Turnbull as plebiscite plan falters

THE LIBERALS' plans for a plebiscite on equal marriage are now in serious doubt, with both The Greens and Nick Xenophon's party deciding to vote against it.

Unless the Labor Party supports the plebiscite, enabling legislation will not get through the Senate.

Labor is attempting to move a private members' bill to bring on a direct parliamentary vote on equal marriage, and has yet to decide whether it will oppose a plebiscite if the move for the parliamentary vote fails.

Labor and The Greens are right that the issue should be determined by a direct vote in parliament. There is overwhelmingly public support for equal marriage. The August Essential poll recorded 57 per cent in support.

Turnbull needs to be pressured for this—as campaigners did in Sydney with a sizeable demonstration in August.

A stand-off over the plebiscite could help force Turnbull to allow a vote on a private members' bill. Numbers in the lower house are close; it would only take a handful of Coalition MPs to cross the floor for the vote to succeed.

If a parliamentary vote fails, the pressure to deal with the issue through a plebiscite could grow. The plebiscite was adopted as a tactic to delay equal marriage and keep the homophobic right-wing of the Coalition happy.

Those who hope to get married may not want to wait two years or more, until after the next election, to do so.

A plebiscite would not be the calamity of rampant homophobia that some in the LGBTI community are suggesting. Rodney Croome, who recently set up a new campaign group to oppose a plebiscite, said that the inevitable result of a plebiscite is that someone, "dies at his own hand because of the hate and fear-mongering".

But the homophobes who oppose equal marriage constantly spew hatred. Following the AFL's first gay pride game this year, homophobic leaflets attacking equal marriage were distributed outside games.

An active plebiscite campaign would demonstrate the overwhelming support that exists for equal marriage.

Some campaigners involved in the successful Irish referendum on same-sex marriage have pointed to homophobia during their campaign as a reason to stop the plebiscite.



Above: Rallying for a direct vote on a marriage bill in Sydney in August

But as Gráinne Healy, co-director of the campaign said, the result gave LGBTI people the chance "to come out more comfortably and completely, some for the very first time". A year on, a survey of 1300 young people aged 14 to 24 showed it has made it easier for young LGBTI people to come out, with 49 per cent saying it had given them extra confidence.

The wide public support that now

exists in Australia for same-sex marriage came about because the LGBTI community stood up to homophobia.

The immediate task is to build pressure on Turnbull to allow a direct parliamentary vote. But if there is a plebiscite, we should be confident that a "yes" can strike a blow against the homophobes of the Coalition and the churches and against homophobia in society more generally.

Public servants strike for 24 hours

THOUSANDS OF federal public servants were set to strike as *Solidarity* went to press, continuing the campaign against plans to cut working conditions in exchange for a miserable 2 per cent a year pay rise.

During the 24-hour strike on 9 September union members are protesting outside key government ministers' offices, like Josh Frydenberg in Melbourne and Malcolm Turnbull in Sydney.

It's more than three years since the last APS-wide pay rise. Our campaign needs to aim to escalate with workers taking stronger action.

The early strikes won key concessions like retaining superannuation in Enterprise Agreements, and attaining a fairer definition of productivity along with slightly better pay. More than a year ago we held successful mass meetings but since then the campaign has been lacklustre. One exception has been ongoing action at airports.

This is the fourth half day or full day strike across the APS since May 2015. But without meetings or actions on the strike days since

June last year they have built little momentum. Holding rallies outside politicians' offices is a step forward from doing nothing on the strike days previously. But rallies in the suburbs mean they will be more low key.

While the number of permanent staff has declined by more than 17,000 under the Liberals, agencies have taken on contractors and casuals who are unlikely to join unions. Cuts to the renewable energy agency (ARENA) mean more job losses in CSIRO.

A small number of agencies have now accepted poor agreements. However more than 75 per cent of public servants have not. Major agencies, like tax, Human Services, Immigration and Defence, plus the Bureau of Meteorology have resisted the offers so far with large "No" votes.

The government is in a weak position. We need to demonstrate our industrial strength with large rallies of striking workers in the cities. The union was hoping for a change of government. But the only alternative now is to fight.

CPSU delegates, Melbourne

.....
It would only take a handful of Coalition MPs to cross the floor for a vote to succeed

Kalgoorlie rages against racism after 14-year-old run down

By Paddy Gibson

THE MURDER of 14-year-old Elijah Doughty in Kalgoorlie has shone another spotlight on the brutal racism inflicted on Aboriginal children in Australia. His death came just one month after graphic footage of guards torturing black children in NT detention centres.

Elijah was riding a motorbike when he was run down by a 55-year-old white man driving a four-wheel drive off road. The man, whose identity has been suppressed by the courts, left Elijah for dead. His body was found early in the morning of Monday 29 August. An autopsy report has not yet been released.

Elijah had celebrated his birthday the day before and was due to star in a football grand final the following weekend.

But the media has focused on what they branded a riot in response to his death.

A crowd of more than 200, both Aboriginal people and supporters, marched to the Kalgoorlie courthouse the next day calling for justice and anxious to attend the court. They were led by members of Elijah's family, outraged that the charge was manslaughter instead of murder. The Australian legal system has a long history of charging whites who murder black people with manslaughter and has failed to hold anyone accountable for the deaths of Aboriginal people in cases such as Mulrunji Doomadgee on Palm Island, or Ms Dhu in WA.

Racism in Kalgoorlie is out of control. In recent years, there have been continual comments on popular Kalgoorlie social media sites calling for Aboriginal children to be murdered. Extreme racists, claiming to be angry about petty crime, had been openly saying things like, "how many bodies does it take to fill a mine shaft".

When the protest for Elijah reached a courthouse, police denied entry to some people, including some members of his family. Protesters started banging on the glass doors demanding to be let in. Eventually, the glass was smashed and police attacked the crowd, including some trying to negotiate with pepper spray and batons.

Elijah's aunty Donna Schultz explained to *Solidarity*, "emotions were



Above: The protest in Kalgoorlie demanding justice for Elijah

high because of how Elijah was hunted and run down like he was nothing. Bigger kids saw the little kids getting attacked and they jumped in. They grew up with Elijah; he was one of their own. The majority were actually trying to stop everything, but police were just hitting anyone with batons".

Cost

A number of police car windows were broken, with an estimated repair bill of \$30,000. But this is just the equivalent of what it costs to keep an Aboriginal child in prison for a single month in the state of WA, which locks up Aboriginal children at 53 times the rate of non-Aboriginal children.

An Indigenous man who spoke anonymously to *Guardian* reporter Calla Wahlquist, due to fear of repercussions from his employer said, "I'm not condoning it, not at all, but would you be here if that riot hadn't have happened? Would we have got this level of media coverage of what goes on in this town?"

The crowd dispersed after the court appearance was cancelled and police asked senior members of Elijah's family to address the crowd and call for calm. Police promised they would inform the family about court proceedings, but instead sent the accused to Perth for the appearance without letting them know.

Two rallies calling for justice for Elijah in Perth, on 1 and 5 September,

were addressed by members of his family. Solidarity actions have also been held in Geraldton and Brisbane. Elijah's family and supporters are maintaining a camp at a memorial established where the boy was killed. They are continuing their calls for justice and to defend the site against desecration, after racist graffiti appeared around the town.

Numerous media reports accused Elijah of stealing the motorbike he was riding. While police say that the 55-year-old man who allegedly killed him had reported the bike stolen, there is no evidence Elijah stole it. He was a talented mechanic who often fixed up bikes for friends.

And nothing can justify a vigilante murder over the theft of a bike.

The media coverage, and the racist attitudes it fosters in the community, reflect the way that black children and their families are routinely demonised for their own oppression and poverty. They suffer forced removal into state care or juvenile prisons across Australia at world beating rates. Aboriginal families across WA are currently having services withdrawn from remote communities, to force them into towns like Kalgoorlie where there are no opportunities, simply vicious racism.

The struggle for justice for Elijah goes beyond demands for the conviction of a murderer. It must mean an end to the war on Aboriginal children and self-determination for his people.

.....
There have been continual comments on Kalgoorlie social media sites calling for Aboriginal children to be murdered

Striking back against the new economy at Deliveroo

By Miro Sandev

AROUND 200 workers at Deliveroo in London stopped the imposition of a new unfair work contract in August after six days of strikes.

Their victory showed that even workers in the new so-called “gig economy” can still organise collectively to fight back.

The “gig economy” is being fuelled by the rise of companies like Uber, where workers hire themselves out for individual contracts or “gigs”, such as driving a passenger around or cleaning someone’s home. Many argue that it has fragmented the working class and made organising at work almost impossible.

Deliveroo tried to force their couriers from hourly wages, at an already measly base rate of \$12 (plus \$2 per delivery), onto piecework, paying just \$7 per delivery. After paying for their own petrol, some workers would have earned as little as \$53 for a 12-hour shift. Piecework is a disciplinary tool bosses use to make individual workers compete against one another and hence raise productivity. The workforce has a high proportion of migrants and students.

The company insisted that drivers would welcome the new contract because they are “entrepreneurs” and prefer flexibility. The workers disputed this, with the majority of them saying they would be worse off. And in a coup for the strikers, even the few that stood to benefit decided to support the strike out of solidarity.

Deliveroo has a very high turnover of couriers, with the average staying only three months. This turnover makes union organising in the sector quite difficult.

When the strike broke out management attempted to isolate workers and “negotiate” with them individually but the workers rejected this and began booing the spokesperson sent out to calm them down, chasing him back into the company’s offices.

Eventually the company caved in and said the new rates would be optional.

Although strikers made use of a smartphone messaging application to help organise, it was face-to-face meetings that were crucial in building the strike.

This shows the weak points that still remain in the workplace even where technology, flexibility and



Above: Deliveroo workers celebrate their victory

decentralisation of workers is the norm. Deliveroo workers were able to meet and discuss the new contract on a regular basis because their work required them to assemble together in designated zones while they wait for jobs.

Uber Eats strike

Buoyed by the successful Deliveroo strike, drivers at Uber Eats, Uber’s food delivery service, also took strike action at the end of August. They are demanding the London living wage and rejecting the measly piecework rates that the company offers them.

The company announced it was cutting the payment drivers receive per delivery and in response about 150 couriers, mostly migrants, walked off the job and joined a lively demonstration at the company’s head office, where they chanted “shame Uber shame”. The workers set up a group on a messaging application to discuss tactics. They elected a small committee to have discussions with the bosses.

The bosses tried the familiar tactic of isolating the individuals on the committee by asking to speak to them separately. But they refused, and the strikers supported the decision to fight for collective bargaining.

The rally was addressed by a cleaner from the Thames Cleaning strike, where migrant workers had struck for over two months and won the living wage. Despite the win, they are still fighting to force the company

to drop its plans of sacking almost half of the workforce. Speaking through a Spanish translator, he told the couriers:

“Comrades we fight for a principle here. We started this fight and we’re going to take this fight to victory. We’re never going to give up. We’re going to raise our fists until we win. The main thing is to stay united.”

Late in the day Uber Eats workers found out that one of the main organisers of the strike had had his online account deactivated, effectively meaning that the company had sacked him without even telling him.

“They told me nothing,” he said to the crowd. “Without giving me any reason they have victimised me and they’ve sacked me. Because I can’t log into my account, I can’t see my last week’s earnings.”

The strikers vowed to fight on, and decided to begin targeting the major restaurants that are clients of Uber Eats. They organised a contingent of motorcycle drivers to drive down in front of a restaurant and set up a speak-out, denouncing businesses that collaborated with the exploitative company.

At the time of writing, couriers were deliberating on whether to extend this.

The fact that many of the strikers involved are migrants who are willing to fight also shows that it is not migrants that drive down wages—it is greedy profiteering bosses.

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Deliveroo tried to force their couriers from hourly wages onto piecework, paying just \$7 per delivery

Burkini ban deepens Islamophobia in France

By Jason Wong

SEVERAL BEACH towns in France have banned the burkini, a full-body swimsuit worn by some Muslim women.

Images of armed police forcing a woman in Nice to take off her burkini in public have sparked outrage worldwide. Another woman in Cannes was threatened with pepper spray and ordered off the beach for wearing a headscarf. Both women were fined, and dozens more have been targeted.

This comes after years of restrictions on what Muslim women can wear in France, with numerous attacks on the right to wear headscarves. Some schools have even removed non-pork meal options for children. The crackdown is blatant scapegoating.

The French bans began last month in Cannes, where right-wing mayor David Lisnard ridiculously denounced them as “the uniform of extremist Islamism”. The various bans claim that openly Muslim dress risks “inflaming tensions” and “disrupting public order”, and that the state ought to target swimwear that does not reflect “good customs and secularism”. The bans are the latest in a series of similar bans across Europe, including towns in Germany and Austria.

The ban is simply blatant Islamophobia—perversely turning on its head the usual sexist concern of the state’s moral police with covering women’s bodies. The pictures of police ordering women to disrobe horrified people around the world and graphically revealed the willingness of the French state to discriminate against Muslim women.

Sadly, much of the French left have supported it, in the name of liberating women from religion. Socialist Prime Minister Manuel Valls endorsed the ban as part of, “a determined fight against radical Islam”. Even radical left presidential candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon denounced the burkini as “a sign of militancy” and a “provocation”.

But the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) in France has staged beachside protests, with the slogan “It’s up to women to decide: too covered or not enough!”

Ironically, the burkini ban has caused sales to double in the past week. The Australian inventor of the burkini said the design was partially inspired



Above: Protesting the burkini ban

by hijab bans in French schools.

Moves like this only embolden racists and further alienate the already marginalised Muslim populations of Europe.

France’s top administrative court

has now ruled these bans “clearly and seriously illegal”. Some mayors have tried to defy the ruling. As France gears up for elections, the left must draw a line in the sand on Islamophobia and sexism alike.

Imperialist carve up as Turkish tanks enter Syria

TURKISH TANKS, backed by US air strikes, have swept into northern Syria and attacked Kurdish YPG forces. The YPG has previously been supported by the US in the battles against Islamic State (IS).

The Turkish government is determined to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish area in the north of Syria. They want to stop the Kurds connecting two cantons of Kurdish held territory along its border. Turkey has also moved against nearby areas controlled by IS to stop them falling under Kurdish control.

Turkey has declared that Kurdish forces must not cross to the west bank of the Euphrates river. When the YPG-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces group drove IS out of Manbij, west of the Euphrates, the Turkish government and the US warned them to retreat immediately.

The Kurds agreed, but Turkey took the opportunity to attack them, and the US decided to back the Turkish assaults rather than the Kurds.

However, this raises doubts about

whether the YPG will play the role the US has allotted it of assisting the assault against the IS centre of Raqqa in Syria.

Turkey is pursuing a vicious crackdown against its own Kurdish minority, who suffer oppression and denial of their cultural rights. It fears that a Kurdish-controlled zone along its border could strengthen the PKK Kurdish guerrillas inside Turkey.

The conflict in Syria is now being shaped by the influence of the various imperialist powers. Turkey’s incursion into Syria was preceded by a visit to Moscow by Turkish President Recep Erdogan. Turkey has cleared reached an accommodation with Russia, following earlier tensions that saw the Turkish downing of a Russian fighter jet over Syria last November. The imperialist powers, whether Russia, Turkey, Iran or the US are all jockeying to advance their own interests.

Imperialism offers no hope to the Kurds or the people of Syria.

Modified from Socialist Worker UK

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Images of armed police forcing a woman to take off her burkini in public sparked outrage

FIFTY YEARS SINCE THE GURINDJI STRIKE UNIONS AND THE FIGHT FOR LAND RIGHTS

The Gurindji walk off, which launched the Land Rights movement, showed the potential for fusing trade union and anti-racist struggles, argues **Paddy Gibson**

ON 23 August 1966, black workers launched a strike at Wave Hill cattle station in the Northern Territory. The station was controlled by Vestey's, a major multinational beef corporation owned by a British aristocrat. The actions took place on Gurindji lands and were led by Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji elder. Workers from other language groups pulled into Wave Hill such as Ngarinman, Bilinara, Warlpiri and Mudbara also took part.

The strike was a rebellion by people living in decrepit camps, paid mostly in rations and subject to horrific abuse from both the station and government authorities. Initially, the strikers demanded improvement in these conditions and equal pay with white workers, but went on to demand the return of land to Aboriginal control.

The strike was a landmark moment in the history of black struggle. It helped spark the growth of radical black activism in cities across Australia and put Land Rights on the national political agenda. It was also a watershed for the broader working class and socialist movements in Australia. United campaigning by black and white workers across the continent in support of the Gurindji saw longstanding historical barriers begin to break down.

The action helped to force many on the socialist left, for the first time, to really consider the continuing colonial nature of the Australian state and the similarities with Apartheid South Africa.

Rank and File revolt

The strike at Wave Hill was not just a revolt against Lord Vestey, but against the conservative approach of the trade union officials to the fight for equal pay.

The experience of collective action in the union movement decisively

shaped black struggle throughout the 20th century. Leading members of Aboriginal activist organisations established from the 1920s onward often had extensive union links. Strikes rocked Aboriginal reserves in NSW through the 1930s as unemployed black workers with experience fighting in unions were forced under new draconian laws during the Depression. The Pilbara strike of black stock workers in 1946 was a clear inspiration for Wave Hill. White waterside workers refused to load wool in solidarity with the Pilbara strikers. This kind of active support from white unionists had been very rare in Australian history.

During the 1950s, black workers in Darwin took strike action, pushing the North Australian Workers Union (NAWU) to back demands for wage justice. This helped feed into the efforts of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (later FCAATSI), who made equal pay a centrepiece of their agitation. A FCAA equal wages committee, led by Communists, campaigned for action from the ACTU who backed an NAWU case for equal pay lodged with the arbitration commission in 1964.

Black workers in the NT from different stations had been discussing the need for strike action for many years, meeting during race carnivals since the early 1960s. The arbitration commission ruled in favour of equal pay on NT cattle stations in 1965, but delayed the start date until December 1968.

Rather than satisfy the growing movement, this ruling sparked strike action to demand equal pay immediately. On 1 May 1966, black workers went on strike at Newcastle Waters station, on Mudburra country, 250 kilometres east of Wave Hill. The NAWU had employed an

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Leading members of Aboriginal activist organisations from the 1920s often had extensive union links

Aboriginal organiser Dexter Daniels, who believed many more strikes were possible. The union backed workers at Newcastle Waters. But Paddy Carrol, Secretary of the union and ALP member, wanted action contained while the ACTU tried to expedite pay increases through negotiations with employers and the government in Sydney and Canberra.

Militant black leaders in Darwin, particularly Daniels, talked to communists like the writer Frank Hardy and wharfie Brian Manning about challenging the conservative approach of the NAWU leadership while building support in the union movement. One initiative in July 1966 was the re-establishment of the NT Aboriginal Rights Council, with a meeting of 200 Aboriginal people at Rapid Creek in Darwin pledging support for the fight for equal pay, along with broader citizenship rights and control of reserve land. It was clear that even without formal NAWU backing, there was a network ready to support further strikes.

Daniels knew that workers at Wave Hill were ready for action. He had recently spent time with Vincent Lingiari while in hospital in Darwin and discussed the possibility of strikes. He set off for the station with instructions from Carroll to simply enquire about conditions, rather than pull people out on strike. But by the end of his visit, the Gurindji were ready to launch action.

Frank Hardy returned home to Sydney and organised through communist and broader union networks for a serious campaign in solidarity with the Gurindji. He helped organise a speaking tour of Dexter Daniels and strike leader Luggna Giari, the first of many through the strike, which saw in excess of 60 meetings held to collect money and win support. Many of these meetings were at unionised work sites across Sydney and Melbourne.

Thousands of pounds were collected or pledged to the strike camp.

Land Rights

By the end of 1966, the Gurindji action was already making gains. On a number of surrounding stations, black workers had received significant wage increases from employers fearing further action, and in some places equal pay. Vestey's offered a pay increase of 125 per cent.

This brought the more fundamental nature of the Gurindji rebellion to the forefront. In Frank Hardy's classic account of the strike *The Unlucky Australians*, he explained his gradual realisation that, despite the focus of white supporters on equal pay, for the Gurindji, "Tribal identity and Land are the real issues in this strike".

At the end of the wet season, in March 1967, the strike camp moved to Wattie Creek, a place called Daguragu. Maps were prepared of an area around Daguragu that the Gurindji wanted to claim. This place held deep significance in terms of both Aboriginal spirituality and resistance history. Leaders explained to supporters that the area had many sacred sites and there were bones of Aboriginal people killed in massacres by white settlers held in caves within it.

The Gurindji claim of continuing tribal authority over land was based in a rejection of the legitimacy of colonial authority and the process of dispossession. Strike leader Tom Pincher said, "We Wave Hill Aborigine Native people bin called Gurindji. We bin here long time before them Vestey mob. They put up building, think 'em they own this country. This is our country, all of this country bin Gurindji country".

This was a potentially radical feature of black political consciousness that, as Hardy explained, the socialist movement had been largely ignorant of until the dramatic black-led actions of the 1960s, "I had not really expected that after three generations of white domination the Aborigines would still have a sense of owning the land... [but] they had talked about this all the time and their fathers before them. They wanted their land back".

This consciousness was not just limited to Aboriginal people living in remote areas like Wave Hill. In Darwin, the Larrakia people began fighting for recognition of their rights as the true owners of the land, raising a flag over the Darwin court house in a ceremonial reclamation action in 1971. The Gurindji action gave confidence to black activists in southern



Above: Marching to mark 50 years since the walk off in Daguragu, with Frank Hardy's old truck leading the way

Photo: Jeff Tan

states to start pushing longstanding demands around return of land to the front of the Aboriginal rights agenda.

A "Black Moratorium", mobilising thousands of people across the country in 1972, following the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra, put Land Rights at the front of a comprehensive list of demands around housing, education, employment and self-determination.

The Gurindji action had taken the form of a strike, using their leverage as workers to hit back at Vestey's, a global beef empire. This connected them immediately to organised workers not only across Australia, but across the world. Workers in Vestey's meatworks in London even took a day of strike action and sent donations to the Gurindji. The Black Moratorium saw thousands of workers take strike action to join the march, including wharfies, construction workers, teachers and municipal staff. Many of these unions had been active supporting the Gurindji since 1966.

Much of the popular memory of the Gurindji strike is focused on Gough Whitlam "handing back" Daguragu by pouring sand into the hands of Vincent Lingiari in 1975. But what Whitlam handed over that day was only a 30-year pastoral lease over a tiny area. It wasn't until 1984 that the Gurindji won a more significant claim under the NT Aboriginal Land Rights Act (ALRA). And the ALRA, while undoubtedly an important victory, also aimed to undercut the radicalism of the struggle and split the movement—limiting itself to the NT and explicitly

excluding urban claims like those made by the Larrakia.

Without the more thoroughgoing social transformation being fought for in the 1960s and early 1970s, Gurindji efforts at a co-operative cattle enterprise were easily sabotaged and the community was left in dire poverty. The Gurindji worked hard nonetheless to make a life for themselves in Daguragu, primarily using the Commonwealth funded Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme to build up some housing and local enterprises and services.

Many of these gains have been seriously attacked by the NT Intervention that began in 2007 and abolished CDEP. The government took a compulsory five-year lease over Daguragu and is now refusing to fund any housing maintenance because the Gurindji will not sign a 40-year lease. Many black workers are now paid to work for less than \$10 an hour on the BasicsCard, which limits what they can buy, under punitive Centrelink regulations. Children are forcibly removed from the community due to malnutrition.

But the radical vision of the Gurindji leaders who led the strike in the 1960s remains alive. Many Aboriginal people still refuse to accept the colonial authority of the Intervention regime. The need for defiant action, unity behind a black vision of re-establishing connections to country and creative mobilisation of working class power, are all important lessons from the walk off that remain urgent for the struggles of today.

CAPTURED BY PARLIAMENT: WHY MPs BETRAY THE CAUSE

The nature of parliament exerts conservative pressures on even the most left-wing MP, as the history of sending them into parliament shows, writes **James Supple**

MOST PEOPLE who want change look to parliament to achieve it. We are told the parliament is a democratic body that can represent everyone's interests.

But the history of electing radical reformers to parliament has been a disappointment. The Labor Party started out in the 1890s with the aim of running parliament in the interests of working class people. Today it obsessively courts the approval of big business.

The Greens too, now that they have gained more seats federally, face a conservative pull to become "respectable" parliamentary players, willing to strike deals with the major parties and tone down their policies. Current leader Richard di Natale personifies this drift.

The history of sending left-wing MPs into parliament shows that without strict control of the MPs by a mass membership party, even the most principled MPs face pressures that will pull them to the right.

It is not enough for MPs to be answerable simply to voters. The parliamentary system is designed so that MPs are only up for re-election once every three or four years. In between elections they are basically unaccountable to voters. It is only their political parties that provide even the semblance of regular meetings and mechanisms that can attempt to hold them accountable.

The whole air of parliament encourages MPs to believe they are part of the elite. They receive wages way beyond those of the average worker, of \$200,000 for a federal backbencher, plus their own staff and a raft of expenses.

So many of them begin to believe that they know best, and do not need to always be accountable to ordinary

party members or the people who elected them.

The issue of MPs' accountability has surfaced recently in The Greens' preselection for the NSW upper house.

Some of the existing NSW upper house MPs, Jeremy Buckingham and Jan Barnham in particular, have refused to accept decisions of the party as binding on them. Buckingham is campaigning to get rid of the more left-wing leadership of the NSW branch and move it to the right.

There is a similar problem in Federal Parliament, with The Greens "party room", as the parliamentary caucus likes to call itself, often making decisions without reference to the wider party and arguing for policy changes within party forums.

A similar tension between party members and MPs is playing out within the British Labour Party, with the parliamentary party waging war on new left-wing leader Jeremy Corbyn.

After Corbyn was elected leader through a direct vote of party members last year, his parliamentary colleagues have sought to undermine him at every opportunity.

At stake is his desire to turn British Labour into an anti-austerity and anti-war party, and break with the surrender to Thatcherism that has been triumphant in the party at least since Tony Blair became leader in 1994.

When Corbyn refused to resign as leader after less than a year in the role, the bulk of his shadow Ministry resigned and declared no confidence in him, forcing a new leadership ballot for the second time in two years. His opponent in the leadership race, Owen Smith, gained the formal

The whole air of parliament encourages MPs to believe they are part of the elite

nomination of fully 70 per cent of the party's MPs.

Labor's formation

These problems raised their head right from the inception of the first modern political party in Australia, the Labor Party.

The early history of Labor Party politics in Australia showed that MPs, once in parliament, frequently refused to adhere to the principles and policies they had been elected to champion.

It was NSW that made the running in establishing a Labor Party and winning parliamentary seats. Angus Cameron, the first MP in NSW sponsored by the Trades and Labour Council (TLC), was elected in 1874. He was a prominent unionist who had been the TLC's secretary.

The unions raised funds to pay him a wage, as MPs at the time were unpaid, ensuring only rich men could stand. But within 18 months he renounced any idea that the trade union movement could control how he voted, and the TLC stopped his salary.

It was only after the crippling defeat of the 1890 maritime strike that the unions again turned seriously to standing parliamentary candidates.

The strike was a decisive defeat for the working class, involving unions among dock workers, coal miners and shearers across the Australian colonies. The colonial governments helped to crush the strike, with workers arrested and jailed for up to six months and the military mobilised for use against strikers.

As Vere Gordon Childe explained in his classic study *How Labour Governments*, "The workers had been defeated by the use of the government machinery in the hands of the master class; but in a democratic country, where every man had a vote and the work-

ers outnumbered the employers, there seemed no reason why they should not wrest the machinery from the master's hands and control it themselves."

The unions drew up a detailed "platform" of policies that candidates had to promise to uphold and made it clear that elected MPs were expected to sit together as a third party, in order to trade their votes for concessions from the major parties.

The new party won 35 out of 171 seats in the 1891 election, giving them the balance of power. But at its very first parliamentary caucus meeting, eight of them refused to vote according to caucus decisions.

Worse was to come. The following year a major strike erupted in the mines at Broken Hill. Seven of the miners' leaders were arrested and sentenced to jail. Government efforts to use the police and courts against strikers had been one of the key reasons for the unions' decision to run parliamentary candidates.

The TLC executive instructed the Labour MPs to bring down the government over its handling of the strike. But 11 of them refused, and the government survived. Their number included not just those already shown to be unreliable, but a number of established trade union leaders sent into parliament.

As a result, a party conference in 1893 reaffirmed that, in future, Labor MPs should vote according to the party platform and support common caucus decisions to vote as a block. The unions saw this as the only way to ensure their MPs operated as representatives of the labour movement, not as individual careerists.

The MPs revolted, with only four of them accepting the terms. The other 31 MPs were expelled and refused union endorsement and support. The motion passed at the conference, demonstrating the level of the disgust with the MPs, held, "That they be regarded as traitors to the sacred cause they were elected to support, and treated with undying hostility".

One of them, Joseph Cook, ended up as a Government Minister for one of the old capitalist parties.

Nor was this episode the end of the problems. When a Labor government won power in NSW for the first time in 1910, with a slim majority, two MPs held the party to ransom by threatening to resign over the issue of selling off Crown land. The party's policy was to oppose further sales, but the result was that the government backed down.



Above: Unions in Melbourne march for the eight hour day, one of Labor's early demands

And this was just the first of a series of betrayals where the government refused to implement party policy, over abolishing the upper house (then unelected), and establishing a state-run steel works.

Vere Gordon Childe catalogued the disappointments of those who founded the party.

He explained that, "The fact is that, possessed of a substantial salary, a gold pass on the railways and other privileges, and surrounded by the middle class atmosphere of parliament, the workers' representative is liable to get out of touch with the rank and file that put him in the legislature, and to think more of keeping his seat and scoring political points than of carrying out the ideals he was sent in to give effect to."

Going into government

The difficulties grew once Labor started to form governments and take responsibility for running the state. This inevitably meant betraying its supporters. Time and time again Labor has chosen to side with capitalism and big business, instead of serving the interests of its working class supporters.

During the First World War in 1916 sitting Labor Prime Minister Billy Hughes was expelled, after he attempted to introduce conscription in defiance of the unions and the party. Conscription was the straw that broke the camel's back, after Hughes had

refused to deliver on a whole series of reforms sought by the unions, such as price controls to keep the cost of living under control during the war.

But for Hughes, the interests of big business in Australia in backing the British war effort and sustaining their profits came first. Hughes took a number of MPs with him to split the Labor Party, forming a coalition government with the conservatives.

One hundred years on, Labor in Australia has degenerated to the point where the MPs frequently defy the wishes of the unions and party membership and get away with it.

Participating in government and parliamentary deal making inevitably means taking responsibility for implementing cuts and austerity.

Parliament exists as a mechanism for running a capitalist state. Its role is to promote capitalist economic growth and ensure that big business can continue making healthy profits and investments.

But even a party that seeks to use parliament as a platform to build support for workers' struggles and movements for social change must enforce a tight discipline and control over its MPs.

Labor's failure should serve as a warning: without firm party control and a focus on using parliament to build wider grassroots struggles, the pressure to be "responsible" parliamentary players and help manage capitalism will pull both Greens MPs, and their party as a whole, to the right.

MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE SICKNESS OF CAPITALISM

Mental illness has become incredibly widespread because capitalism is a fundamentally alienating and sick system, argues **Chris Breen**

OVER THE next two years the Turnbull government will cut over \$140 million from mental health services for young people.

Labor Senator Katy Gallagher says, “Headspace’s six early psychosis centres... have been told their budgets will be cut by 25 per cent on 1 July and by 70 per cent the year after that.”

The cuts are not a result of any improvement in mental health. In Australia there are around 3000 suicides a year, roughly double the road toll. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics around one in every five Australians will experience a mental disorder in any given year and 45 per cent will experience a mental disorder in their lifetimes.

Those are staggering figures. The figures are similar in the US and only slightly lower in other developed nations.

How do we explain this? Mental illness is a symptom of a society that breeds unhappiness and anxiety. Another answer is that the definition of mental illness has expanded, as drug companies promote the idea it is an illness that drugs can cure.

As Susan Rosenthal, Professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University, writes in her pamphlet *Marxism and Psychology*:

“Capitalism is a sick social arrangement that damages physical and mental health. And, by expanding the definition of mental illness, more people can be labelled sick and more profits can be made from selling them treatments”.

If there was ever a question about the social roots of mental illness the Australian government has unquestionably answered it with the horrific experiment of offshore processing of asylum seekers.

A 2014 report by International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), who run detention health services, found that around half the asylum seekers and refugees on Manus Island and Nauru suffer from significant

depression, stress or anxiety.

Australian of the Year and psychiatrist Patrick McGorry rightly called them “factories for producing mental illness”.

We have known for a long time that mental illness has social causes; links with poverty, unemployment and homelessness are well established.

This is one reason the Turnbull government’s proposed cuts to Newstart Allowance are particularly cruel.

A study in 2015 by professors of epidemiology in Greece found that in 2011 and 2012 after harsh austerity measures were imposed from 2010, suicides increased by 36 per cent compared with the previous decade.

Any severe trauma from war, to child abuse, to cancer, can contribute to mental distress, but the scale of mental health problems goes beyond those who have experienced trauma and requires explanation.

Most people internalise the values of the society they live in from an early age. This includes the idea of being a “success”, the importance of competition, or their role in a family.

Even people who come to reject particular aspects of this are not unaffected by the values of those around them. The contradiction between daily reality and what the system tells us to expect can cause mental distress.

Life under capitalism can be a stressful and dehumanising experience. Many people perform routine jobs where they have no control over how the job gets done, or the pace and hours of work. They are often unable to speak openly about what is wrong through fear of unemployment.

We’re told that if you can’t find a job that pays enough, or can’t find a job at all, it is your fault. The competition structured into capitalism means difficulties people face are usually explained away as personal failings. We are not taught to blame the system for its inability to provide decent jobs, social support, hous-

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‘Capitalism is a sick social arrangement that damages physical and mental health’

ing, or health care. It is surprising that anyone is mentally healthy under capitalism.

Sick society

Given the stresses and insanity of capitalism, mental revolt against the way things are is quite a natural response. The psychiatric industry, however, is not designed to tell people that their mental illness has social causes.

Instead, as Susan Rosenthal writes, it should be understood as one of the “institutions of social control” that is designed to justify existing society.

It does this through a focus on blaming mental illness on factors within the individual. “Prioritising individual factors,” she writes, “whether wrong thinking, wonky brain chemistry, or defective genes absolves the system of responsibility.”

She continues, “Science has yet to detect biological markers in the brains of people with different forms of mental distress that are not present in people without those forms of mental distress”

Psychiatrists categorise rather than diagnose causes. Physical diseases do not change throughout history, but what is considered “normal”, and how suffering has been able to be expressed, has always been a political question.

What psychiatry considers illness is shaped by the ideology and needs of those who run society. This can be seen in the some of the changes in what has been considered a mental illness.

The condition drapetomania was coined by physician Samuel A. Cartwright in the 1850s. He claimed its main symptom was slaves “absconding from service”, and it was caused by masters who “made themselves too familiar with [slaves], treating them as equals”.

Because he believed in the necessity of slavery, the idea that trying to escape might be a logical response apparently eluded him.

Black people in US today are more

than three times likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia than whites. In the 1960s at the height of the civil rights movement, the definition of schizophrenia in the DSM was broadened to include the words, “aggression”, “hostility”, and “delusions of persecution”. At the same time left wing psychiatrists campaigned to have racism defined as a mental disorder, but this was rejected by the American Psychological Association on the basis that racism was normative.

Even today, as Rosenthal writes, “Psychiatry serves capitalism by diagnosing defiance as a mental disorder. Psychiatrists and psychologists have pathologised the protests of slaves and political dissidents. They have lobotomised rebellious women and tried to convert homosexuals. They have campaigned for the euthanasia and sterilisation of ‘social defectives’. They assist at interrogations and torture.

“They drug soldiers to keep them killing. They drug old people and prisoners to keep them quiet. And they drug rebellious children... Those who suffer, who protest or whose needs undermine productivity are more likely to be labelled mentally unwell.”

Conversely there is commonly regarded as nothing wrong with people who imprison refugees, wage war or order drone strikes. The people who carry out drone strikes however have reported high levels of mental health problems.

Defining mental illness

Official definitions of what constitutes mental illness have also been expanding, particularly in the US where conditions listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) determine insurance payments for treatment.

Doctors Shorter and Tyrer argued in the *British Medical Journal* in 2003 that, “Industry has been busy behind the scenes in this handy convergence of eccentric new diagnoses and the market niching of compounds”.

Well they might, as sales of anti-psychotic drugs top sales of all other drugs. Eli Lilly rebranded Prozac as a pink pill called Sarafem in 2001 after the DSM listed Pre-Menstrual Dysphoric Disorder.

This also allowed it to extend its patent by seven years.

GlaxoSmithKline took a broader approach with the drug Paxil, marketing it with slogans like, “The Paxil treatment, treat one. Treat them all,” and, “look for the Paxil spectrum in



every patient”.

GlaxoSmithKline hid data that showed Paxil as ineffective with risky side effects.

They ended up paying out \$1.3 billion in compensation for suicides and birth defects associated with Paxil. However that was a tiny portion of the \$15 billion they made from Paxil sales between 1997 and 2006.

The psychologist R.D. Laing noted that mental illness is diagnosed by conduct, but treated biologically. The drugs given to people are not treating known biological mechanisms.

As Rosenthal explains: “Parkinson’s Disease, Huntington’s Disease, and Alzheimer’s Disease are all diseases of the brain, they have characteristic biological markers that make it possible to diagnose them reliably. However, the mind is not the same as the brain. The mind is not a physical organ, but develops out of a complex inter-relationship between the brain, the body and the social environment. Mental distress can occur when any of these components or their relationship is disturbed or damaged.”

This means the causes of mental illness are usually more complex than can be dealt with through simple drug-based remedies.

In an article in *New Scientist* in June this year, Clare Wilson questioned the effectiveness of Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI)

Above: Mental illness is usually dealt with as an individual problem, but social solutions are the most effective

drugs (such as Prozac), which are designed to work by increasing levels of the chemical serotonin in the brain.

“While the drugs do boost serotonin,” she said, “there is no proof that low levels cause depression. Anti-depressants do change how we feel, in a way that some find helpful and others don’t, but that doesn’t mean they are correcting a chemical imbalance. Many people find alcohol helps them relax, but that’s not because it’s correcting an alcohol deficiency in the brain.”

Irving Kirsch, a lecturer in medicine at Harvard, went further. He used Freedom of Information requests to get unpublished drug company trial results.

Kirsch argues in *The Emperor’s New Drugs* that when considered together with published studies the results show that most SSRI drugs are no better than placebos.

Others argue that the drugs are slightly better than placebo. Studies in the field are difficult because there is no objective definition of which patients to include, and any improvements are generally self-reported. However when it comes to objective measures such as suicide reduction across a population, the drugs have no effect.

Drug companies are pulling their money from new research. Since 2000 they have reduced spending on new mental health drugs, and in 2011 four big companies pulled out altogether

saying that it was too expensive and had produced no results.

What about genes?

The focus on individual as opposed to social causes of mental illness has led to attempts to explain it as a result of genetics.

It may be that there are interactions between genes and the environment that predispose some people to dealing better or worse with particular situations. But it would be a mistake to think that individual genes for schizophrenia or depression will be found, any more than genes for “intelligence” will be found.

One factor is simply the complexity of interactions between genes, the social and physical environment, and early development.

Some studies have claimed to show a small statistical association with particular gene regions and schizophrenia.

Leaving aside the difficulty of defining schizophrenia, these studies are not predictive. That is, the majority of people who have the genetic variations do not have schizophrenia or any signs of mental illness. There is a greater link between schizophrenia and living in a city than having a family member with schizophrenia.

Working class people are more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia, and as mentioned earlier, so are black people in the US.

People diagnosed with schizophrenia can be unable to differentiate between what is real and what are fantasies.

Rosenthal writes of Schizophrenia: “Human perception is socially constructed. The ideas that dominate society shape what people think, what they want, who they trust, who they fear, who they blame, and what is and is not acceptable.

“Misperception is also socially constructed. Psychologists, advertising consultants and management experts are employed to sell a system based on deception (“It’s a free country”), contradiction (war as humanitarian intervention), denial of lived experience (hard work is always rewarded), and threat (work or starve). While most people accept the unacceptable, they do not like it. Some rebel openly. Others protest through physical and mental symptoms, addiction and suicide. Some escape to a different reality.”

Schizophrenia usually develops during adolescence, when the effort to make sense of the world and one’s



place in it is at its most acute.

Treatment

Mental illness is a disease of society. This means that the best treatment within our existing society is based on increased social support and attention.

As Rosenthal writes “A Canadian study of more than 2000 severely mentally ill homeless people found that providing stable housing was more effective than any other treatment.”

Just as austerity can cause mental health problems, raising living standards can have the opposite effect. Another study in the US found that after a new casino began paying out bonuses that lifted some poor families out of poverty, psychiatric problems among children in those families fell to the same level as in better off families. Their parents could afford to properly look after them and satisfy their needs for the first time.

Other forms of social support are also important.

In the context of the victims of Ireland’s “troubles” Patricia Campbell writes: “The tradition of testimonio—sharing stories in a supportive environment—can help participants view their problems not as personal failings, but as the collective wounds of war. The recognition of shared experiences can alleviate symptoms and promote a sense of belonging acceptance and validation.”

Resistance

In the 1960s as protest and strikes

Above: Rates of mental illness and suicide soared in Greece after savage austerity measures destroyed people’s lives

spread across the globe the psychiatrist R.D. Laing coined the popular slogan “Do not adjust your head, the fault is in reality”.

The best way to deal with the social problems that cause mental health is to fight back, and win victories that begin to challenge them.

Rosenthal gives the example of how: “In the 1980s workers in Poland organised themselves into the world’s largest union, containing one third of the working-age population. As strikes spread and demonstrations grew, hospital psychiatric beds began to empty of workers and fill with sick government officials. This happened because rising class struggle opens the door to solving individual problems collectively.”

Similarly the Arab spring and the toppling of dictator Hosni Mubarak led to his hospitalisation for severe depression.

Capitalism is a system based on deepening inequality which makes life a misery for millions of people. But the global working class has the capacity to end the oppression and poverty it produces, through uniting grassroots struggles everywhere into a fight to overturn the system.

A socialist society run in the interests of the majority is possible. But, as Susan Rosenthal comments, “don’t expect this diagnosis will ever appear in the DSM”.

Marxism and Psychology by Susan Rosenthal is available from www.remarxpub.com/marxism-and-psychology/

The Boer War—Australian atrocities for empire

Unnecessary Wars
By Henry Reynolds
NewSouth
Publishing, \$29.99

THE HELLHOLES on Manus Island and Nauru can trace their lineage from Australia's participation in the world's first concentration camps—more than 100 years ago on the South African veldt.

In the course of the Boer War (1899-1902), troops from the Australian colonies participated in the rounding up by British forces of tens of thousands of Dutch-speaking women, children and old people and their black servants.

The camps, Henry Reynolds tells us, “were hastily prepared tent cities, often on the open veldt, overcrowded, with limited fresh water and primitive sanitation”.

The death rate was catastrophic. “160,000 Boers were incarcerated, 28,000 died, more than 22,000 of them children.

“More than 100,000 Africans were placed in even more ramshackle camps, where at least 14,000 died, 80 per cent of them children.”

The Australian colonies (and from 1901 the new Federal Government) were enthusiastic supporters of Britain's war against two small Dutch-speaking republics, which happened to sit on top of the world's richest source of gold.

All six colonies sent troops in October and November 1899 amid scenes of popular jubilation as detachments sailed from the six capitals, Newcastle and Launceston.

Australian troops quickly established a reputation for carrying out atrocities. A politician from the (British) Cape



Colony, critical of the war, reported that: “These swashbucklers arrested inhabitants, drove off stock and shot a few people without greatly caring who they were.”

Colonial soldiers, “notably Australians”, were disproportionately responsible for assaults on black soldiers and Indian and Chinese civilians.

As the war became more savage and the concentration camps were established, British forces burnt more than 30,000 Boer farms and 40 towns, killing or stealing millions of head of livestock, and destroying dams.

Australians soldiers were willing participants, dragging women and children from their homes and looting without compunction.

One Tasmanian soldier recorded: “All Dutch houses were looted, and the families brought along ... It was a very amusing sight to see our troops returning to camp with all kinds of loot ...

“Had great fun when ‘burring’ things up, breaking glass, cracking wood, hammering, etc ...

Above: British troops in the Boer War

All went out skirmishing yesterday looking through houses etc, several of which were burnt down.”

All these actions were war crimes—in breach of the new (1900) Hague Convention on the conduct of war, which prohibited attacks on civilians and pillage.

The various Australian governments simply ignored their legal responsibilities. Labor, Reynolds records, “outdid their political opponents in their deference to the empire”.

Labor leader JC Watson told the new federal parliament in 1902 that, “never in the history of nations has a war been conducted with a greater regard for humanity than the Boer war”.

Racism

The racist attitudes that underpinned wartime brutality came to the surface with fresh force in 1904, two years after the fighting ended.

News broke that the British were bringing 60,000 Chinese labourers into the conquered Transvaal to work in the

goldmines.

Australian politicians—who had built the White Australia policy into Federation in 1901—were appalled.

Involvement in the war had been justified by claims that British workers in the Boer states were suffering.

But as Alfred Deakin said, if Australia had been told, “it was a war for Chinese miners, what a different aspect it would have worn.”

Reynolds centres *Unnecessary Wars* on the Boer War, but he spends the bulk of the book discussing the contest between the two tendencies that dominated Australian political life in the second half of the 19th century—loyalty to Crown and Empire on the one hand and radical, republican nationalism on the other.

His sympathies are clearly with the nationalists, those who argued that Australia's best defence against foreign aggression was its geographic isolation and that loyalty to the Empire brought the danger of being dragged into Britain's distant wars.

But there was small but vocal opposition to the Boer War from socialists and others on the left. The labour paper *The Clipper* in Hobart and *The Worker* in Brisbane condemned the rush to militarism and war.

In Melbourne, the radical paper *Tocsin* told its readers: “This is not a war of Britain against Boer, but of Capitalists against Kruger's anti-Capitalistic government.”

The sentiment rings true today as the ghosts of the Boer War cheer on the invasion and occupation of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

David Glanz

British forces burnt more than 30,000 Boer farms and 40 towns, killing or stealing millions of head of livestock

NO THIRD COUNTRIES, NO TURNBACKS BRING THEM HERE

By Ian Rintoul

IN SEPTEMBER, Independent Tasmanian MP Andrew Wilkie became the latest politician to be denied a visa to visit Nauru. Wilkie says it shows that the government has something to hide. That's certainly true.

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young was denied a visa in August. Then, a few days later, a delegation of Danish politicians cancelled their visit after three of their six-strong delegation were denied visas.

It is just the latest indication that the government is on the back foot and the pressure to close Manus and Nauru is still growing.

Even Paris Aristotle, one of the original architects of the Pacific Solution II has come out saying that refugees and asylum seekers have to be taken off Nauru and Manus.

Aristotle has a dubious reputation as a fixer for successive Australian governments and was a co-author of the report by the so-called Expert Panel in 2012 that laid the basis for re-opening Manus and Nauru.

But even Aristotle told the ABC, "An effective and sustainable response must involve the option of resettlement in countries including Australia..." Aristotle could maintain the position for long. A minute or so later he said, "It doesn't in the end have to be Australia."

That puts him in tandem with the position pushed by the so-called "eminent Australians", Frank Brennan, Robert Manne, John Menadue and Tim Costello, who are advocating accepting boat turnbacks to Indonesia and finding third countries for the refugees from Manus and Nauru.

Even though it was the Labor Party that restarted offshore detention, in the face of the revelations of the Nauru files it has continued to criticise the government for not finding third countries to resettle the Manus and Nauru refugees.

But these calls are misplaced. If the Coalition was allowed to get away with sending refugees to a third country, it would essentially mean that the Pacific Solution would remain intact—and that Australia had successfully



Above: Refugees in detention on Nauru

excluded asylum seekers, violated their human rights, tortured them for three years and denied them protection.

As the clamour for the closure of Nauru and Manus grows louder, there is only one place that the refugees should be brought—and that is to Australia.

Turnbacks

On turnbacks, too, Aristotle and the four eminent Australians agree. Aristotle says that asylum seekers can be prevented from coming to Australia by using "the Australian border force, our navy, the AFP".

They say we have to accept the political reality—both parties are committed to offshore detention and turnbacks. But we are closer to closing Manus and Nauru precisely because we have fought the political status quo.

Asylum seekers must be able to come to Australia in whatever way they want, or need to, and apply for asylum.

To have Nauru and Manus close, but accept turnbacks, would mean offshore detention and Operation Sovereign Borders would essentially remain in place, to be activated whenever it suited the government.

Asylum seekers who came by plane would be able to apply for permanent protection but any boat

arrivals could still be sent to Nauru. (The PNG Supreme Court ruling that Manus is unlawful rules out using Manus.) The anti-refugee policies of successive Labor and Liberal governments are based on fearmongering and nationalist border control policies focussed on boat arrivals. Of course, things like processing in Indonesia and guaranteed resettlement for refugees can remove some of the need for boat journeys.

But if asylum seeker boats are not welcome, the ideology of Fortress Australia will prevail.

Over the next few weeks, the "Bring Them Here" campaign will step up. The Senate inquiry into the Nauru files will keep the barbarities of Nauru in the media. A "Bring Them Here" selfie campaign is set to take the issue further into workplaces.

There are growing calls for a national refugee summit to discuss "alternative policies" to offshore detention and Operation Sovereign Borders. If the refugee movement is going to break the bi-partisan support for Fortress Australia and win its demands for a welcome refugee policy, it has to re-enforce its demands for an end to mandatory detention; an end to offshore detention and to bring all the refugees and asylum seekers from Nauru and Manus Island to Australia.

.....
There is only one place that the refugees should be brought—to Australia

Solidarity