

## Equal marriage, cuts, racism STOP THE RIGHT, TAKE ON TURNBULL



### CORBYN

Stalemate with right despite leadership victory

### RACISM

Liberals legitimise Hanson's Islamophobia

### US ELECTION

What happened to the Sanders revolution?



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## EMAIL

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

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# SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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

### Perth

For more information contact: Phil on 0423 696 312

### Brisbane

For more information contact: Mark on 0439 561 196 or [brisbane@solidarity.net.au](mailto:brisbane@solidarity.net.au)

### Canberra

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

### Magazine office

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

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## Things they say

**I'm a very happy person**  
Turnbull isn't convincing anyone after one year as Prime Minister

**Turnbull has had his training wheels spinning for the last 12 months.**  
Jeff Kennett

**I don't think Malcolm has, is far removed from the conservative side as people think he is. He has great propensity to listen and to act and we've seen that regarding things like Safe Schools, the plebiscite. We have seen that with the superannuation thing.**  
Right-wing Coalition MP George Christensen

**People are paid whatever the market determines they're worth.**  
Channel 9 spokeswoman after news Erin Molan was paid 1/8 of her male counterpart to co-host the NRL Footy Show and flies economy, while the three male co-hosts fly business.

**I will miss my friends and colleagues terribly—our Saturday morning chats, our Sunday night plane trips, our Wednesday night dinners.**  
Stephen Conroy explaining the difficult life of a politician

**It was her maiden speech and I offered her goodwill as I do every other person in the chamber when they give their maiden speech.**  
Turnbull's Minister for Women, Michaelia Cash, explaining her hugging Pauline Hanson after her speech attacking women over the family law.

**Women play a significantly greater part of fulfilling the caring role in our communities which inevitably place some limits on their capacity**  
John Howard on why he thinks it ok for there to be more men than women in politics

**I will be hoping that that 50 per cent [of the electorate vote] to the Right will go to me.**  
Christine Forster, Liberal mayoral candidate for the City of Sydney Council (and Tony Abbott's sister). She lost with less than 20 per cent of the vote

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# INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

## PR firm paid millions for covert propaganda

THE US military paid a British PR firm \$700 million to run a covert propaganda operation in Iraq, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism has revealed. The company's former chairman, Lord Tim Bell, confirmed the contract to the *Sunday Times*, saying, "It was a covert military operation. It was covered by various secrecy documents. We were very proud of it."

The company even produced fake al Qaeda videos, with the aim of tracking the internet address of anyone who watched them, former worker Martin Wells claimed.

Up to 300 staff worked inside the US military base Camp Victory in Baghdad. Other products included scripts for Arabic soap operas and news bulletins made to look like they were produced by Arabic TV stations. Wells described his time with the company as, "shocking, eye-opening and life-changing."

## One in five bosses a psychopath

THINK YOU'VE had a psychopathic boss? Researchers have found 21 per cent of bosses have clinically significant psychopathic traits. This is the same level found among prisoners. The figure is vastly higher than that in the general population of only around 1 per cent.

A forensic psychologist based on the Gold Coast, Nathan Brooks, together with Dr Katarina Fritzon of Bond University and the University of San Diego's Dr Simon Croom, carried out the study as part of PhD research, examining 261 corporate professionals.

## The \$15 million 'Toorak downsizer'

PROPERTY DEVELOPER Mirvac is building a penthouse suite expected to fetch \$15 million as the centrepiece of a new development in East Melbourne. Mirvac's Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz said, "We expect the penthouse will be bought by a Melbourne local, someone from Toorak who is downsizing from their mansion". The apartment includes a 301 square metre balcony, five bedrooms, and a 36-metre marble gallery space.

## Richest schools among most over-funded



Melbourne Grammar gets 144 per cent of its entitlement

SOME ELITE private schools are getting nearly three times their funding entitlement under the federal government's Schools Resourcing Standard.

Loreto Kirribilli, a Catholic girls school near Sydney Harbour that charges over \$18,000 per student in Year 12 is one of the biggest beneficiaries, receiving 283 per cent of its entitlement. Anglican school Radford College in the ACT receives 200 per cent, Melbourne Grammar, with fees of over \$30,000 from year nine on receives 144 per cent and Brisbane Girls Grammar receives 150 per cent. These figures are based on funding for the 2014 school year.

The overpayments are a result of the Gillard Labor government's decision to guarantee that no school would lose money under their new funding model based on the Gonski report. Private schools have been over-funded for years as a result of the funding policies of the Howard government. Liberal Education Minister Simon Birmingham recently pointed out the obvious, that some are "over-funded". Astoundingly, Labor has rejected the charge and set itself up as the guardian of funding for private schools. The figures show how indefensible this is.

## Trump profits from presidential tilt

DONALD TRUMP has paid his own companies at least \$8.2 million for work on his presidential campaign. An analysis by Politico of campaign finance filings shows Trump companies have been paid rent for campaign offices, food and venue hire costs and wages for Trump employees. In total 7 per cent of the campaign's spending has gone to Trump companies so far.

He has used his campaign to promote everything from Trump steaks to his golf courses and a hotel. When Trump called a major press conference in September to address the "birther" conspiracy theory, which he fuelled from 2011 by demanding Barack Obama produce a birth certificate to prove he was born in the US, he turned it into an infomercial spruiking his new hotel.

Cable TV channels CNN, Fox News and MSNBC broadcast the press conference live for 20 minutes while Trump sang the praises of the new hotel hosting the press event. In 2000 Trump predicted that, "I could be the first presidential candidate to run and make money off it".

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

## Anti-union staff join unionists to reject pay deal

EVEN STAFF at the anti-union Fair Work Building and Construction body have been insulted by the federal government's pay offers to public servants. In late September they voted by 63 to 37 per cent to reject an enterprise bargaining deal.

The body is the successor to the ABCC, and is now headed by anti-union crusader Nigel Hadgkiss.

More than 75 per cent of staff in the federal public service are yet to receive an acceptable offer. Some have now gone without a pay rise for three years.

As the CPSU's deputy secretary Beth Vincent-Pietsch said, "this isn't one where they can say there are large numbers of union members there, this is a union-busting agency still rejecting an offer made under the bargaining policy, so this one is really important."

## Australia steals more kids than anywhere in world

AUSTRALIA HAS the highest rates of child removal in the Western world, a NSW parliamentary inquiry has heard.

Australia's rate of 2272 children removed per million is nearly twice as high as the US with 1255 per million, and almost three times the rate in New Zealand of 840.

Mary Moore, of the Alliance for Family Preservation and Restoration, said the lack of regulation in child protection, "breeds an environment of incompetence, misconduct and corruption experienced daily by children and families". There is one obvious reason the rates are so high. One in three children in out of home care are Aboriginal, yet they account for only 5 per cent of children in the population.

# EDITORIAL

## Turnbull flounders—but Labor won't fight his cuts

THE GOOD news is Malcolm Turnbull is floundering. Divisions within the Coalition, his own diminished authority and an unpopular political agenda have seen his standing in the polls drop further.

Newspoll in late September had him trailing Labor 48 to 52, down further from his embarrassing election performance. The Liberals' primary vote was actually lower than its level when Tony Abbott was dumped as leader last year.

Increasingly Turnbull is reduced to being a mouthpiece for the right-wing of the Liberal Party. Only days before Turnbull slashed the backpacker tax, Queensland MP and Pauline Hanson sympathiser, George Christensen, threatened to quit the Liberal party unless the backpacker tax was dumped.

The supposed advocate of climate action then sang from the climate deniers' songsheet following the blackout in South Australia, condemning Labor state premiers for supporting renewable energy. Never mind that even the Energy Market Operator said the use of renewables had nothing to do with the power failure.

Turnbull's hypocrisy is now even more exposed as he opposes an open parliamentary vote and has become a full-on advocate for the plebiscite on equal marriage.

The \$175 million plebiscite was only ever an attempt to appease the Coalition's right-wing and postpone equal marriage rights for as long as possible. With Labor about to vote against holding the plebiscite, an increased protest campaign can keep the heat on Turnbull and push for the direct vote demanded by the LGBTI community.

### Agenda for cuts

Turnbull's agenda to target welfare and schools to balance the budget is also adding to his unpopularity.

Social Services Minister Christian Porter tried to pretend his "new approach" was all about helping people avoid a life on welfare. But it turned out it was just another round of "mutual obligation" that will further punish the poor by cutting them off benefits. The government has even raised the prospect of penalising parents whose children miss school, or those who spend welfare money on alcohol or drugs.

The head of ACOSS, Cassandra



**Above: CPSU members on strike in September outside Turnbull's office**

Goldie, rejected the government's push, saying that when it comes to people on welfare, "What you need is more support."

Porter's talk of new "investment" in helping young carers, young parents and students with a "Try, Test and Learn Fund" was just a publicity stunt. The government says it wants to break "welfare dependency", but its main aim is simply to cut spending by pushing people off welfare.

One recent report showed that it takes an average of five years after finishing study to get a full-time job.

Meanwhile the CEOs of Australia's four major banks appeared in front of the Senate's economic committee. The boss of the Commonwealth Bank, Ian Narev, warned it would be dangerous to regulate the banks' profitability. But he would say that, wouldn't he? The Commonwealth Bank recorded a profit of \$9.45 billion in the last financial year. Narev himself took home \$12.3 million.

But Turnbull's plan is to attack the poor while he boosts business profits by cutting corporate tax rates from 30 to 25 per cent.

### Labor's response

The bad news is that while the Liberal government is vulnerable, Labor has failed to take the fight to Turnbull's economic agenda because it too accepts that cuts are necessary to balance the budget.

To its shame, Labor backed Turn-

bull's \$6.3 billion omnibus package of cuts. Labor agreed to a \$460 million cut to the renewable energy agency. While Labor opposed cutting unemployed benefits, it was quite willing to cut even more money from Family Tax payments.

The unions should be going on the front foot against Turnbull, calling protests against the Liberals' cuts and their anti-union agenda. But after a promising start since the election of escalating industrial action for their pay campaign, public service union officials seem set to accept arbitration after the government got Fair Work orders against its strike action at airports.

There is yet to be an industrial campaign against the ABCC, with the unions focused on lobbying Senators like Pauline Hanson behind closed doors.

Cosying up to Pauline Hanson is a disastrous strategy that can only give One Nation more legitimacy. The shocking poll showing 49 per cent support for banning Muslim immigration shows the urgency of standing up to the anti-Muslim racism from Turnbull and Hanson.

The growing opposition to refugee detention on Manus Island and Nauru can help to do this. There will be further rallies around the country on 30 October and 5 November, with doctors set to lead a march to close the camps in Sydney.

Turnbull's government is weak and divided—it's time to build the fightback.

.....  
**Turnbull's agenda to target welfare and schools to balance the budget is adding to his unpopularity**

# Liberals' embrace legitimises Hanson's racism

By James Supple

PAULINE HANSON used her first speech in the new parliament to further spread racism and hate.

Her embrace by government minister Michaelia Cash following the speech symbolises the Liberal Party's attitude to her revived One Nation Party.

The bulk of Hanson's speech was a diatribe against Muslims, as she repeated her call for a ban on Muslim immigration, new mosques and Islamic schools.

This was mixed with attacks on welfare recipients, blaming single mums for having more children to get extra welfare money, and a men's rights agenda attacking the Family Court and child support payments. She also blamed high levels of immigration for taking jobs and draining government money.

Shockingly, an Essential poll has found that 49 per cent support her call for a ban on Muslim immigration.

Yet not a single senior government figure would condemn her speech, with Turnbull simply dismissing the request to do so by saying, "I'm not going to run a commentary on her". The best Financial Services Minister Kelly O'Dwyer could do was to "politely disagree".

The Greens were right to walk out of the Senate while Hanson spoke.

## Giving legitimacy

Turnbull is happy to say out of one side of his mouth that, "tagging all Muslims with the crimes of a few, is fundamentally wrong". But the Liberals' decision to go easy on Pauline Hanson projects a different message.

The Liberals' constant effort, as Special Minister of State Scott Ryan put it, is designed to avoid, "to convey a disrespect to a person that's been elected to Parliament". This gives Hanson a legitimacy and respect her ideas do not deserve.

This all came hot on the heels of Tony Abbott's cup of tea and fawning video from Hanson's office, where he congratulated her and declared, "Pauline there are half a million people who voted for you and you'll be a strong voice for their concerns".

Abbott's efforts to make up with Hanson are all the more significant given it was Abbott who organised the Liberal Party's legal efforts to crush



**Above: The Coalition has responded to Hanson's election to the Senate by helping legitimise her**

One Nation in 1998.

One obvious reason for the Liberals' embrace of Hanson is that they need her votes in the Senate. When both Labor and The Greens oppose legislation, the government needs One Nation's votes to pass anything.

But some in the Coalition also recognise that Pauline Hanson uses the same fearmongering and xenophobia that they too have used to win support. They hope to coax some of her voters back through stressing their agreement with One Nation.

## Liberals' racism

Hanson's attacks on Muslims are only an extension of the fear campaign about terrorism and securing the borders coming from Malcolm Turnbull and the Coalition. Turnbull himself has blamed "porous borders" in Europe for terrorist attacks, trumpeted his own efforts to keep out refugees. It should hardly be a surprise that some people draw the conclusion that all Muslims should be kept out.

John Howard took a similar approach following the rise of One Nation last time. He conceded to Hanson's concerns by cutting immigration, attacking Aboriginal programs and native title and targeting refugees. Howard even stole some of her policies, including punitive Temporary Protection Visas for refugees.

Some hard right Coalition MPs, like George Christensen, would sit happily inside One Nation. Christensen admitted he had even asked

Hanson not to run a candidate against him at the election. His seat was one of the few in Queensland without a One Nation candidate. Christensen explained that, "obviously, they were not looking at ousting an MP who was advocating the same sort of views espoused by One Nation".

Hanson's speeches do real damage. Her talk of banning mosques and Islamic schools, along with further Muslim immigration, will give confidence to racists, leading to more abuse, harassment and even physical violence against the Muslim community.

Hanson needs to be condemned. But the left also needs to organise to win people away from her racism and lies.

She can't be allowed to pose as standing up to politicians and the elite. One Nation has never done anything to target the corporations and the super-rich—those really responsible for cuts to services and jobs in an effort to boost their profits. Instead they target some of the most vulnerable people in our society—migrants and minority groups.

The fight against Hanson needs to be connected to class issues like the fight for jobs, against cuts to Medicare and privatisation.

The political mainstream is incapable either of dealing with these problems, or countering Pauline Hanson's racism. We need a grassroots campaign to undermine Islamophobia and stop the deepening of racism.

.....  
**Hanson's attacks on Muslims are only an extension of the fear campaign coming from the Coalition**



# Plebiscite failure puts heat on Turnbull over equal marriage

MALCOLM TURNBULL'S release of the details of his planned plebiscite on same-sex marriage has only hardened opposition to it.

The Senate is almost certain to stop the plebiscite going ahead, with Nick Xenophon and The Greens already opposed and Labor set to announce its opposition too.

They are right to do so. The plebiscite is simply a delay tactic dreamed up by the right-wing of the Liberal Party. It is already clear there is overwhelming public support for marriage equality.

The fears that a plebiscite campaign would unleash a wave of homophobia are overblown, with the result more likely to isolate the homophobes. But parliament decided to ban same-sex marriage without any public vote, so there is no reason the public needs to vote to reverse this. It is simply an issue of equal rights.

Turnbull wants to give \$7.5 million each to fund the yes and no campaigns. This is a concession to opponents of equal marriage, who complain they will find it hard to fundraise for their campaign.

The public should not be funding bigoted and hateful propaganda against equal marriage. And funding the campaigns also takes the cost of the whole unnecessary exercise to at least \$175 million.

Even the question "Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry" was shaped by the right-wing of the Coalition, and fails to include all LGBTI relationships.

The defeat of the plebiscite plan will put increased pressure on Turnbull. The issue is not going to go away, and as long as he opposes a direct vote on marriage legislation in parliament Turnbull will wear the blame for the delay.

Already Essential poll has found that 53 per cent want parliament to deal with the issue if the Senate blocks the plebiscite.

There needs to be an escalation of protests to build the pressure on parliament to vote for marriage equality. The Liberals are divided and the government's majority in the lower house is just one seat. A wave of pressure can push Coalition MPs to cross the floor. If Labor changes its policy and binds its MPs to support marriage equality, a bill could pass.

The LGBTI community has already waited long enough.



Above: Marching for marriage equality back in 2011

.....  
**The defeat of the plebiscite plan will put increased pressure on Turnbull**

## Shut down production to win CUB 55 jobs

By Feiyi Zhang

THOUSANDS OF unionists stopped work to march through Melbourne in support of the CUB 55 in early September.

Carlton United Brewery (CUB) laid off the 55 maintenance workers, electricians and fitters in June, offering them re-employment with a 65 per cent cut to wages. Workers are in their fourth month of picketing outside the brewery for reinstatement at their original wages and conditions.

Unions are running a high profile campaign calling for a boycott on CUB-produced beers. Despite the massive amount of publicity, multinational conglomerate SABMiller, which owns CUB, has refused to concede.

One of the CUB 55 told *Solidarity*, "We are here for the long haul until we win this dispute. A lot of other companies are looking at this dispute here and if we don't win this it's going to affect working conditions around the country for a lot of other workers".

Subcontractor Programmed Skilled, which employed scab labour to replace the workers, announced at the end of August that it would withdraw its involvement over the next two months. Programmed said it had been "increasingly concerned" because of the inability to get "normal, safe and secure access to the site".

Unions were hopeful that this would force SABMiller to rehire the CUB 55, but there is no sign of this to date. The unions say this is a "war of attrition" but SABMiller is in a much better position for this than the workers laid off and living on savings.

SABMiller are also backed by the media and the anti-union Turnbull Government. The Herald-Sun has run a smear campaign against the unions, including a front-page write up about a union organiser at CUB attacking a manager, despite there being no evidence or charges laid.

The company have been gradually building up their other major Australian plant in Yatala near Brisbane, trucking beer down to Victoria. The unions have finally started raising the CUB55 dispute in Yatala, holding a rally outside Brisbane CUB offices on 4 August and planning to tour CUB55 workers to the plant.

Some production is also continuing at Abbotsford with hundreds of other workers in other roles still working. The crucial question is whether these other workers inside the Melbourne and Brisbane plants stop work in solidarity. The unions have avoided solidarity action because it would violate anti-strike laws. But the mood for action is clear with workers inside leaving United Voice and joining the CFMEU because of the lack of action from the unions.

Industrial action that strikes hard at SABMiller's production is sorely needed.

# Courts and international law won't end offshore detention

By James Supple

THE SCALE of the abuse revealed in the Nauru files has led many to ask whether there is some way to use the courts, or international law, to end offshore detention.

There have been many domestic legal challenges in Australia. The most recent challenge to offshore processing was decided in the High Court in February. It failed in large part because the government simply changed the law to make much of the court challenge redundant. The Labor Party's support for offshore processing guarantees the Coalition's ability to pass whatever laws are needed to prop it up.

February's case found that it was perfectly legal for Australia to pay for the operation of the offshore camps run by another country for Australia. Previously the High Court has found that indefinite detention is legal for administrative purposes even if there is no prospect of release.

Changes to the law to get around court decisions have been commonplace. Between 1996 and 2002, the Labor Party voted for every change in refugee law that the Howard government wanted; voting for temporary protection visas in 1999.

The Migration Act has been amended time and time again. Among many drastic changes, the 2014 Asylum Legacy Act restricted the definition of a refugee and removed some appeal rights from asylum seekers making application for protection.

Australia's constitution provides little in the way of enforceable rights, with nothing similar to the bill of rights in the US constitution. This means there are few restrictions on the ability of the government to simply change the law.

## International law

Australia is also clearly breaching a number of international agreements that it has signed.

Sometimes the government pretends to meet the letter of the law, while completely violating its spirit and purpose. For instance asylum seekers arriving by boat directly from Sri Lanka and Vietnam are now routinely "screened out". They have their asylum claims swiftly rejected in a farcical assessment performed at sea. "Enhanced screening" allows the government to claim that they are not



**Above: The fact that seeking asylum is legal under international law has not stopped the Australian government ignoring this**

returning people at risk of persecution.

The UN Human Rights Committee has repeatedly held that Australia is in breach, for instance, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, an agreement which guarantees protection against arbitrary imprisonment. This is just one of a number of international conventions, like the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which supposedly bind Australia.

Condemnation of the Australian government for breaching international law carries some moral weight. But international agreements are not legally enforceable, unless they have been specifically incorporated into Australian domestic law.

There is no international court or body capable of enforcing international law. The few international courts that exist have limited power and can only operate if a country agrees to be bound by them.

In 2014 independent MP Andrew Wilkie referred the Australian government to the International Criminal Court (ICC) over its treatment of refugees. But the ICC takes on very few cases, and cases can only be initiated by state parties or by the court itself. It has so far indicted only 39 people, all African nationals for crimes committed during wars.

International law is not some impartial, independent world authority. It exists in a world order where the most powerful states like the US, and its allies including Australia, control the outcomes and hypocritically avoid

responsibility for human rights abuses and war crimes. The 2003 invasion of Iraq was an illegal war, but neither former President George W Bush nor anyone in his administration has been prosecuted for war crimes.

The campaign for refugee rights should certainly use whatever limited avenues the courts provide to try to end the detention and punishment of refugees.

In April this year, PNG Supreme Court held the detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island was illegal. This decision puts pressure on the Australian government to bring them to Australia, but the court cannot actually force Australia to act.

Ultimately it is only mass political campaigning within Australia that can force change. The #LetThemStay campaign earlier this year was a perfect example. The loss of the High Court case keeping the 267 refugees from Nauru and Manus Island in Australia meant there was no legal barrier to sending them back to the offshore camps. But a wave of mass protests and opposition has kept them in Australia.

The same is true with regard to ending offshore processing. The camps were shut once before. The mass movement in support of refugees shifted public opinion and Labor policy and Nauru was closed in 2008 after John Howard lost power.

As the momentum for change grows once more, we need to focus on building the mass movement that is key to shutting them again.

.....  
**Changes to the law to get around court decisions have been commonplace**



# Grassroots campaign wins Mojgan's freedom

By Ian Rintoul

A TWO-YEAR long “Free Mojgan” campaign won the release of 22-year-old Iranian asylum seeker, Mojgan Shamsalipoor, from immigration detention on 21 September.

The tireless campaign, lead by teachers and students from her former school, Yeronga State High School in Brisbane, faced down the government policy that has kept many Iranian asylum seekers in indefinite detention.

Mojgan was a 20-year-old, senior student at Yeronga High School on a bridging visa when her claim for asylum was rejected in 2014. She was then re-detained and taken to the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation (BITA).

Mojgan was a victim of government policy that had seen more than 40 other Iranian asylum seekers re-detained at the end of 2014, despite the fact that the government knew Iran would not accept asylum seekers being forcibly returned.

Despite numerous attempts, the Iranian government has consistently rejected moves by the Australian government to negotiate a deal to forcibly return asylum seekers.

A campaign by teachers at the Yeronga school after she was detained meant that she was able to continue to attend school on a day-release basis from BITA. She was escorted to and from school, and subjected to searches by Serco detention guards.

But, in August 2015, just three month short of graduating from high school, Mojgan was moved from BITA to Darwin detention after she spoke with the ABC for a report about her situation. The vindictive move by the Immigration Department not only threatened her education, it also separated her from her Iranian refugee husband, Milad.

But the campaign of petitions, marches, protests and strikes has won Mojgan's release on a bridging visa with work rights. Around 15 other Iranians who had been re-detained were also released the same day.

The “Free Mojgan” campaign also provided the impetus for involving the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) in the refugee campaign. In 2015, the QTU and the Independent Education Union set up Teachers for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum (TRAPSA), to campaign more widely.



Above: Marching for Mojgan last year

Mojgan is free—although still denied a permanent visa—but other Iranians are still trapped in indefinite detention limbo on the whim of the

Immigration Minister.

The campaign has set a fine example. Now, we have to free them all—onshore and offshore.

## Manus detention in turmoil—again

THE MANUS Island detention centre has been thrown into turmoil yet again, as PNG and Australian immigration reshuffle and tighten detention arrangements inside the centre. Immigration is trying to force all so-called “double negatives” to be separated and kept in Mike Compound.

Some “double negatives” have been given removal notices even though injunctions ordered by the PNG Supreme Court prevent anybody associated with the court case challenging the legality of the detention centre from being deported.

The government is running scared that the detention arrangements will be overtaken by the Supreme Court hearing on 27 October at which lawyers for the Manus prisoners will seek their immediate release and for all those who wish to, their return to Australia.

The problems engulfing Manus were highlighted by the plea made by PNG Foreign Minister, Rimbink Pato, at the recent UN refugee summit for other countries to help PNG resettle the refugees from Manus. (Nauru's Prime Minister, Baron Waqa, also appealed to world leaders for help to resettle refugees from that island.)

It was a very public repudiation of Peter Dutton's repeated claims that

refugees can be resettled in PNG.

Pato also made a fool of himself on Australia TV, claiming that the April PNG Supreme Court order, that the detention of asylum seekers was illegal and Manus detention centre must be closed, somehow did not apply to “the East Lorengau Transit Centre.” But that is not so.

Despite the PNG Supreme Court decision, the detention arrangements on Manus are being tightened. Refugees from the detention centre are no longer allowed to even visit, let alone stay at the East Lorengau Transit Accommodation. Asylum seekers who have refused to be part of the refugee determination process in PNG have had their points cut so they can no longer access the detention canteen.

These restrictions have gone along with efforts to coerce asylum seekers into agreeing to return to their home countries. Bribes to return have increased, \$13,000 is common. Up to \$20,000 is being offered. But despite the efforts to bribe and break people, there are very few takers.

The days of offshore detention are numbered, but Dutton and the Australian government are desperately trying to save face while they trash the lives of those they should be protecting.

.....  
**The campaign of petitions, marches, protests and strikes has won Mojgan's release**

# ACTU insider blasts union focus on electoral campaigns

By Tom Orsag

WHILE THE mainstream media gloat at the decline of union membership and record low level of strikes, the union movement is grappling with how to reverse its decline.

Having left the ACTU, Tim Lyons, its former assistant secretary for six years, has served up a critique of the union leadership's inability to do the basic organising necessary to re-build unions, in an article in the September issue of *Meanjin*.

Lyons is not a leftist official, with his roots in the right-affiliated National Union of Workers (NUW), a former base of Bill Kelty and Simon Crean. And he tried to secure the support of the woeful Shop Distributive and Allied Employees' Association (SDA), the union responsible for so many concessions to the big supermarket chains, in his failed tilt at the ACTU leadership.

But he is arguing with inside knowledge of the failings within the trade union bureaucracy.

He even pines for the influence unions had during the Accord with Labor in the 1980s and 1990s, although it was the Accord that actually began the rot in union membership numbers.

The ACTU current leadership of Dave Oliver and Ged Kearney might dismiss Lyons' thoughts as "sour grapes", given he lost his leadership bid in early 2015. But his observations as a union and Labor insider make for both accurate and frustrating reading.

Lyons' basic argument is that unions must return "to a focus on work and organising" rather than electoral campaigning.

He rightly condemns the union leaders' focus on getting Labor elected or re-elected, rather than the basics of signing up union members and building workplace organisation. He claims that, "Over the last three years, the ACTU spent about as much money, or even more according to some sources, than it did on Your Rights at Work against Howard". But all this effort "builds nothing real", because, "the message is that it's voting that is important, not joining a collective that has its own power," and that, "All this work evaporates on polling day."

Lyons is quite right that unions are failing to build workplace strength. But Lyons doesn't really appreciate what is behind this failure. He makes no mention of the shackles created



**Above: Unions drew the conclusion from the Your Rights at Work campaign that it was marginal seats campaigns, not mobilisation, that worked**

by enterprise bargaining that severely restricts protected industrial action to rigidly constrained bargaining periods.

What is needed is bottom-up organising and the use of unions' industrial muscle. Yet, the major limitation to unions' organising efforts is the officials' steadfast refusal to defy the anti-strike laws.

The key success of both Labor and Liberal governments since the 1980s is to have intimidated the trade union leadership with tough legal sanctions against routine industrial action.

There is no strategy whatsoever within the union movement aimed at winning the right to strike. Even when the unions have had chances for mass defiance of the law, like the MUA lockout of 1998 or the CFMEU's long fight against the ABCC, they have failed to take them.

## Bureaucracy

Lyons identifies as believing, "in the Laborist model of a party with affiliated unions". As a career union official and Labor Party loyalist he is trapped within the cage of reformist politics. The unions have focused on "general issues of campaigning and electoral politics", he says, "because it's easier than talking about and doing real organising". The social position of the trade union bureaucracy, mediating between employers and the working class, negotiating the terms of workers' exploitation, tends to conservatism.

The Polish-German socialist Rosa

Luxemburg argued that unions are on the one hand "indispensable" for the working class and on the other, "totally incapable of transforming" capitalism.

The senior union officials have built up a stake within capitalism through their control of large union bureaucracies and union assets. Militant confrontation with the employers risks losing this in massive fines. They would rather seek a seat at the table with government and employers and accept whatever can be negotiated.

Lyons wants a more muscular reformism. He writes, "Organised workers are the only social movement that can support a strong left agenda and protect its achievements."

He is vaguely aware that Labor has little to offer unions in the neo-liberal era, noting that, "Labor... is struggling to turn what remains of social democracy into a compelling electoral program." Let alone one that actually benefits working class people.

As Lyons writes, "there is no future for trade unionism if people experience it as internet memes and random phone-calling each election".

A shift to a more militant focus on organising and strike action by a section of the union officials would be a step forward. But the real hope for growth and militant unionism lies with rebuilding an organised and confident rank-and-file, and using its industrial power. Tim Lyons, "The labour movement: my part in its downfall" *Meanjin* Spring 2016



Tim Lyons

# Kirra Voller speaks out: Dylan needed help, not prison



IMAGES OF teenager Dylan Voller hooded and strapped to a chair in Don Dale juvenile detention centre, broadcast by ABC's *Four Corners* in August, shocked people around the world and stand as a symbol of the terrible abuse inflicted on Aboriginal children and youth in Australian prisons. Nationwide, more than 50 per cent of young people behind bars are Indigenous and the figure is 98 per cent in the NT.

Dylan was the most badly tortured of the many young people who appeared on the program. He was first incarcerated at 11 years of age. Like approximately 60 per cent of youth placed in Don Dale, he had also been placed under the care of the Department of Children and Families. He is now 19 and remains in prison.

Malcolm Turnbull moved quickly to quell the outrage at the abuse in Don Dale, announcing a Royal Commission.

The Commission will investigate both the juvenile detention system and 'child protection' in the NT. Thousands of people have protested across Australia demanding an end to the jailing of children and youth and justice for the victims of Don Dale and highlighting the failure of previous inquiries to lead to any real change.

In Alice Springs, there have been actions targeting NT Senator and Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel

**Above: Rallying in response to the Four Corners expose in July**

Scullion every Tuesday.

**Kirra Voller**, Dylan's sister, has spoken out at protests. She spoke to *Solidarity* about her family's experiences and the need to continue the fight:

Dylan was an angry kid with behavioural issues, who needed help and guidance. Mum didn't have a partner so she reached out to DCF (Department of Children and Families).

But there was no support for her. It was more like, he's a bad kid he's got no hope, you've done what you can now hand him over to us. But Mum was still trying and she still had much more to give.

If all the money they have spent over the years on him went into my Mum to help her with counselling and support workers it would have been a better result.

Mum didn't have any say in anything. There were certain days only when we were allowed to visit him in his house.

### Lack of care

I remember reading reports that had ridiculous prices like \$270,000 for six months in a house. They set up these houses for kids like Dylan, with shift workers who are young [and inexperienced].

That particular home was [one he was sent to] through court as a last

resort option, with two or three workers on at a time. They'd sit around and have a beer out the back and Dylan would be inside doing his own thing. It happens everywhere. Driving around town I'll see little boys stopping me, asking me for a lift out the front of these houses where they are supposed to be cared for. There's no one there looking out for them.

The first time he got charged with something and then sentenced was for running away from a DCF house. He'd come home to visit us but he breached his curfew.

A lot of times he would flare up and do something, for instance spitting because that's his way of trying to protect himself. For a little boy that and his voice are the only weapons he had. He has said some pretty vile things but those are just words. He wasn't taught to control that. If the right help had been given back then when he was just an angry kid it would have saved all the drama probably.

If they can train up New Zealanders who come over from another country why not train indigenous people to help in those areas.

Rather than removing kids, provide education and help families, because those programs work. A lot of those programs are started by indigenous organisations to help families so that DCF don't come and take your kids off you.

### Traumatised

People keep going on about his [lack of] respect for other people. You can't expect a traumatised child to respect people, no one has ever respected them. They're not going to respect people or authority at all. That's the same for all the boys that are in there, in jail or protection.

Even to this day he's scared, he told Mum that the other day that he's scared he's going to get bashed and he's had a black eye since the show was aired.

We're really thankful for everyone's that's been supportive. Seeing it from around Australia helps us.

Troubled kids can be helped. It's not the same as an adult who is capable of knowing what they're doing. Kids like Dylan who have just been through systematic abuse, not cared for and treated badly, they don't think of themselves as any better. Kids shouldn't be in prison at all. It's wrong and there needs to be change.



**Kirra Voller**



# Ruthless bombing won't end the war in Syria

By Mark Gillespie

Hundreds have died in recent weeks as Russia and Syria have unleashed a horrific wave of bombing on rebel held areas of Aleppo.

They have repeatedly targeted hospitals, with the M2 hospital bombed twice in one day. Mohammad Abu Rajab, a doctor at the hospital, said, "These bombings are systematic and direct against hospitals that are serving besieged Aleppo".

This violence has had tragic humanitarian consequences for the 250,000 civilians living under siege.

Western powers have been quick to denounce the horrific violence as war crimes. But the West is in no position to lecture Assad and Russia.

At the same time as Russian jets are pounding Aleppo, Western powers are providing arms for a vicious blockade and assault on rebel held territory in Yemen by a Saudi Arabian led coalition.

This assault is every bit as vicious as the assault on Aleppo. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has accused the Saudis of targeting "hospitals, schools, mosques and civilian infrastructure".

The Western powers too have been involved in their own brutal assaults on Tikrit, Ramadi and Fallujah in Iraq and are currently preparing an assault on Mosul, still home to an estimated 700,000 civilians.

The most likely outcome in Aleppo will be victory for the Syrian government forces, backed by Russian bombs. Similarly in Mosul, Iraqi government forces, backed by Western bombs, will most likely overrun Islamic State.

But in both cases this will do nothing to reduce terrorism. It will only fuel the sectarian divisions which the Sunni jihadist groups feed on.

While the big powers bomb from above, in both Syria and Iraq, it is Iran that is the backbone of the ground assaults. They've mobilised thousands of Shia militants from across the region and incorporated them into government structures along similar lines to the infamous Basij in Iran.

The Shia militias are the mirror-image of the Sunni jihadists. Human Rights Watch has already documented many abuses by "out of control militias" in towns recaptured from Islamic State.

Backing Shia jihadist over Sunni jihadist, whether in Syria or Iraq,



**Above: Russian and Syrian regime bombing has killed hundreds in Aleppo**  
Photo: Aleppo Media Center

is just a recipe for more retaliatory violence. Outside intervention into the region, whether from Russia or the West, or local powers Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran, is not part of the solution but part of the problem.

Socialists in Australia have to oppose all outside intervention but particularly Australian intervention. Just like their invasion of Iraq, more Western intervention will only add more fuel to the fire.

## Anti-refugee backlash fuels German far right

THE FAR right Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) won 14.2 per cent of the vote in September's elections to enter Berlin's state parliament for the first time.

Mayor of Berlin, Michael Muller stated that if the AfD received even one tenth of the votes it would be seen around the world as a sign of the return of the extreme right-wing and the Nazis in Germany.

It has now gained representation in ten of 16 German state parliaments, becoming the second or third most popular party in three regions.

So how did the AfD—a right-wing populist and Eurosceptic party that formed three years ago, win such support? The growth in Islamophobia and a backlash against refugees has provided the AfD a platform to blame Germany's welcome to refugees for a series of crimes and terrorist attacks.

The AfD has even beaten the mainstream right-wing Christian Democratic Union (CDU). President Angela Merkel's CDU originally campaigned for the support of the intake of refugees from Syria, proudly announcing "We will man-

age!" as one million refugees arrived in Germany last year.

Now Merkel is back pedalling, giving into the chauvinistic rhetoric of the AfD as a means to win back public trust. Earlier in September while attending the G20 summit she commented, "The topic of integration will still play a big role, and the question of how to return refugees who are not entitled stay."

The far right in Germany is attempting to take advantage of discontent as a result of the economic crisis and take it in a racist direction. Last year Pegida, a neo-Nazi group, held a series of street rallies. They were beaten back by counter-protests including a 30,000 strong anti-fascist rally.

An anti-racist rally in early September this year drew together 6000 people including Blockupy (anti-austerity) supporters, trade unionists, workers, students and youth organisations. Protests and opposition to racist policies must continue. In the imminent future fighting Islamophobia is crucial to building solidarity in order to overcome the racist backlash against refugees.

**Tooba Anwar**

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**Outside intervention is not part of the solution but part of the problem**



# Stalemate with right-wing as Corbyn re-elected leader

By Miro Sandev

BRITISH LEFT-WINGER Jeremy Corbyn has won a landslide victory to be re-elected as Labour Party leader. He actually increased his share of the vote to 62 per cent despite a campaign by the right-wing that blocked 130,000 members from voting, most of whom were pro-Corbyn.

He was forced into the contest only 12 months after winning the job because right-wing Blairite MPs staged a mass resignation from his cabinet and denounced him as unelectable in a general election.

At Labour's conference Corbyn supporters were able to pass motions committing Labour to a "massive increase in the supply of council housing", as well as ending NHS privatisation. But the left also lost a number of key votes, which revealed the power the Blairites continue to wield inside the formal structures of the party.

They were able to push through changes to the National Executive of the party meaning two anti-Corbyn people will be added, tilting the balance marginally in favour of the anti-Corbyn forces.

And the right-wing GMB union drove through a motion—with little opposition—saying Labour should not abandon gas or nuclear energy. This completely contradicted the energy secretary of the party who had announced a day earlier that Labour would ban fracking. Deputy leader Tom Watson humiliated Corbyn at the conference by lavishly praising the Blair years. The vast majority of MPs are still bitterly opposed to Corbyn's agenda and no amount of wooing them with offers of cabinet posts will secure their loyalty.

Focussing on the internal fights within the party machine will mean left-wing activists face tiring, bureaucratic disputes that are likely to demoralise them. The key question is whether Corbyn's support group Momentum continues to focus the fight on winning control of Labour party structures or whether they build the struggles outside.

It is crucial that all Corbyn supporters make the demonstrations against racism and workplace struggles such as the junior doctors' strike, the absolute focus of their efforts. Ultimately, this empowers Corbyn much more than winning votes at



**Above: Corbyn drew huge, enthusiastic crowds during the leadership contest**

conferences and in committees.

## No compromise

There are clear battlelines between not just Corbyn supporters and the Blairites, but also amongst Corbyn supporters themselves. Two of the important ones are the question of immigration controls and the removal of Britain's nuclear weapon arsenal, Trident.

Some Corbyn supporters and sympathetic media commentators have advised compromise with the right-wing on these issues, so the debates can be avoided and the party can get back to opposing austerity.

The problem with this approach is that war, racism and austerity are all tightly linked, and you can't simply hive off one from the other. Capitalism produces devastating wars because of the competition between nation states, supporting their own capitalists. Those wars, like the destruction of Syria, produce millions of refugees who flee to countries where there are more jobs and opportunities for their families.

That's why Corbyn is absolutely right to support a foreign policy focussed on peace, scrapping funding for Trident and redirecting the money into socially useful things like housing, healthcare and education.

But Corbyn has not won this argument within the party and Labour remains committed to renewing Trident. Blairites and even soft-left MPs believe they need to be hard-nosed on questions of national security in order to win elections. There's also

huge pressure to maintain the status quo from the union bosses who have members in the military industries.

There is also a lot of pressure on Corbyn from right-wing MPs and some union leaders to support a policy of immigration controls. They claim this reflects the views of workers as expressed in the Brexit vote.

Corbyn's main ally John McDonnell also said the party should be open to immigration controls. So far Corbyn has resisted this and said in his speech that it is not migrants that bring down wages, but greedy bosses. But his introduction of a Migrant Impact Fund in communities "affected by immigration" is a dangerous compromise that links the deterioration of public services to the arrival of migrants.

As Corbyn said in his speech, it is not migrants that put a strain on the health service—it is successive governments refusing to invest in hospitals and introducing privatisation. And it's not migrants who strain housing but the parasitic developers who build luxury apartments and push poorer people out of neighbourhoods, or governments that refuse to build social housing.

These pressures will continue to weigh on Corbyn because Labour is a party committed to winning elections and being seen to be "respectable". The right wing will exploit this. Real transformation cannot come via the parliament, it has to be built through workers' struggles in the streets and in the workplaces.

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**Deputy leader Tom Watson humiliated Corbyn at the conference by lavishly praising the Blair years**

# BERNIE SANDERS: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REVOLUTION?

Bernie Sanders' loss in the Democratic primaries exposes the true nature of the party—and why efforts to change it from within are a dead end, argues **Clare Fester**

BERNIE SANDERS spent the last year profoundly shaking the US political system. Promising a political revolution against the 1 per cent, he railed against the control of politics by the billionaire class, recalling the slogans of the Occupy movement against Wall Street, the bank bailouts and austerity. The self-described socialist generated a wave of enthusiasm Hillary Clinton could not match.

Sanders drew enormous crowds of 19,000 in Portland, 20,000 in Boston and 27,000 in Los Angeles to hear him speak. In the end, he won 23 of the 57 Democratic primaries and over 13 million votes. His campaign raised over \$200 million, mostly from small individual donations—unlike Hillary Clinton's current corporate-funded \$500 million war chest.

The policies Sanders put forward offered an alternative to the usual lacklustre presidential race between Democrats and Republicans, the two enthusiastic parties of American capitalism, with a twin commitment to neo-liberalism.

Sanders exposed Clinton's corporate backing, declaring during the Michigan primaries: "One of us has a super PAC. One of us has raised \$15 million from Wall Street for that super PAC. One of us has given speeches on Wall Street for hundreds of thousands of dollars."

But Sanders was clear from the start that he would back whoever became the Democratic candidate, which meant eventually falling in line behind Clinton.

## **Collapse into Clinton**

Tragically, Sanders has now thrown away the desire for an alternative to corporate dominated politics as usual to channel support back into the dead end of the Democratic Party.

The election contest now looks quite bleak, between unhinged racist Donald Trump and Wall Street favourite Hillary Clinton.

Sanders finally declared his formal support for Hillary Clinton at the Democratic National Convention in July. "We need leadership in this country which will improve the lives of working families, the children, the elderly, the sick and the poor," Sanders told delegates. "Based on her ideas and her leadership – Hillary Clinton must become the next president of the United States. The choice is not even close."

Since his close defeat in the primaries Sanders has worked to pull the left vote and his former supporters into line behind Clinton. In early October he echoed Democratic fear-mongering that a vote for a third party candidate was essentially a vote for Trump.

Clinton remains the preferred ruling class candidate. She has endorsements from war criminals and corporate heads. She's celebrated for reaching across the aisle for Republican votes—George Bush Senior has added his name to the Republican endorsee list!

Sanders' endorsement is a bitter pill to swallow for many supporters after months campaigning for a "political revolution" and exposing the entrenched wealth that wields true power inside the Democratic Party—the very things that Clinton represents. Protests and walkouts by disaffected Sanders supporters rocked the Democratic convention.

Although the Democrats' 2016 policy platform has been widely touted the most progressive in the party's history, the Sanders revolution hasn't pulled the Democratic party to the left on any issue.

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**Sanders' endorsement of Clinton is a bitter pill for many supporters after campaigning for a "political revolution"**  
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Single payer healthcare remains off the agenda, as does free higher education. There is rhetorical support for a \$15 minimum wage, but no national policy to enforce it.

The meaningless phrase "comprehensive immigration reform" appears, but the platform is deafeningly silent on deportations—more of which have been carried out by Obama than any other president in history. Fracking and the settlements in Palestine will continue under another Democratic presidency. Far from changing the Democrats from within, Sanders is now left using his anti-system popularity to hand the left vote to a candidate representing everything he campaigned against.

## **The Democrats**

It was a mistake to think that Sanders could ever win the Democratic nomination on a radical platform.

The Democratic Party machine heavily backed establishment candidate Hillary Clinton. As the Democratic Convention opened, leaked emails showed the bias against Sanders of supposedly neutral top party officials, along with evidence that they tried to discredit his campaign. The odds were stacked against him despite his huge grassroots popularity.

The Democratic Party is a capitalist party funded by big business and controlled by the elite. Unlike the Labor Party in Australia it has never had a formal membership or the same connection to the trade unions. The Labor Party leadership here sells out its working class base again and again, but unions still hold half the votes at party conferences and it at least has a branch and conference structure where members can influence policy. The Democrats have no such connections to ordinary people.

In New Hampshire Sanders won the primary by a landslide. Clinton lost by more than 20 per cent, but she won as many delegates as Sanders.

The party has a system of “super-delegates”—party bureaucrats who hold around a sixth of delegate votes in the Democratic National Convention—who can support whichever candidate they like, regardless of registered members’ opinions or votes. It’s a safeguard against anyone too unpredictable winning through.

If they can’t use corporate funding or party rules to get around ordinary delegates and members, the Democrats can always use other means to oust progressive candidates.

It has a long history of undermining left-wing challenges. In the 1930s, socialist Upton Sinclair actually won the Democratic nomination for state governor. His election plans included worker-run co-operative farms, a progressive tax on the rich at 30 per cent and guaranteed pensions.

Roosevelt and the Democratic Party machine funneled money to the Republicans and even ran a third party candidate to take votes away from Sinclair. This handed the election to Republican Frank Merriam, showing how far the Democrats were willing to go to stop radical candidates.

Even during the height of the anti-Vietnam war movement, despite the demand for an anti-war candidate at the 1968 convention party bureaucrats installed Lyndon Johnson’s pro-war Vice President Hubert Humphrey as the presidential nominee.

### Our “Revolution”

There is a desperate need for a third party that could genuinely represent working class people in the US. But instead, since losing the nomination, Sanders has continued trying to change the Democratic Party from within, reinforcing the logic of a two party system and drawing people into the Democratic electoral machine.

At the end of August he launched “Our Revolution,” an organisation dedicated to running progressive candidates inside the Democratic Party. This uninspiring non-profit has had trouble capturing the fast-dissipating Sanders momentum. More than half its staff resigned the night before its launch. More than 3000 supporters and 122 Sanders delegates signed a petition criticising the structure and politics of the organisation.

Our Revolution has no democratic selection process or set of standards that determine who or what makes a



**Above: Bernie Sanders is now selling the candidate he previously rejected as in the pocket of corporations**

“progressive” candidate.

It targets local candidates who have the least power to set national debates and agenda on the policies that enlivened the Sanders campaign in the first place. This dead-end strategy of fighting inside the Democratic Party was what ensured the Sanders revolution’s defeat.

### Third party

Sanders’ collapse into the Clinton campaign should come as no surprise. From the outset Sanders committed to fighting within the Democratic Party and built no independent left organisation or coalitions.

Around two thirds of former Sanders supporters will grit their teeth vote for Clinton in November. But the opportunities to break open the two-party system exist.

Jill Stein, presidential nominee for the Green Party reached out to Sanders in July calling on him to run a joint ticket, but to no avail.

Clinton is a tremendously unpopular “lesser evil”, her support base glued together mainly by the horror people feel toward Trump. A break with the Democrats by Sanders to align with the Green Party and other left forces could have changed the conversation.

There has been trickle of support toward Stein. A CNN poll following the Democratic National Convention found that 13 per cent of Sanders supporters and sympathetic independents now plan to vote for her, nearly double the number prior to the convention.

Anu Pulskamp was a state delegate for Sanders during the primaries who now supports Stein. Interviewed in *The Guardian* last month Pulskamp

said, “voting for Jill at this point is continuing his revolution. I think by me voting for the third-party candidate, along with millions of other Bernie supporters, it will maybe show that the third party is possible in the future... I don’t want a two-party system any more. I don’t think it’s fair.”

The task for the US left now is translating the Sanders revolution into a real political alternative to the Republicans and the Democrats.

None of the anti-capitalist sentiment that fuelled Sanders’ popularity has gone away. The “recovery” following the economic crisis is weak and restored profits haven’t trickled down to wages or social services. The abject hatred for business as usual that brought us Sanders on the one hand and Trump on the other remain an unresolved political crisis in the US and across the world.

This means voting for Jill Stein and the Green Party in November, but it also crucially means building the political strength for change in social movements outside the White House.

The millions who were inspired by Sanders are the possible base for powerful movements for change. They can reinvigorate the fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, led by fast food workers, which has already forced two states, California and New York, to raise the minimum wage.

They can help deepen the Black Lives Matter movement, which has already turned police killings into a national issue.

The Sanders phenomenon has shown the potential for building a grassroots movement for socialism in the US. But it is up to the left outside the Democrats to make that a reality.

# WOMEN, WORK AND MILITANCY IN WORLD WAR II

The role of women in war production challenged entrenched gender divisions and gave women workers newfound confidence to demand equal wages, argues **Lucy Honan**

THE SECOND World War saw a dramatic change in women's role in the Australian workforce.

It was a dramatic challenge to the ideology and structures that excluded women from work and enforced gender segregation.

Equally dramatic but less well known was women's response to their conscription into factory jobs previously performed by men for war production. They put to use their new social weight as workers, setting off an impressive wave of strikes to win equal pay and to improve working conditions, despite all the pressure to stay at work for the boys, and to help win the war.

Victorian-era moralism and ideology about sex roles and family roles was imported from England, but Australia had its home grown legal and industrial structures too.

The 1907 Harvester agreement established the concept of a "living wage", designed for a male worker as well as his wife and family to live on. This enshrined the idea that men were responsible for wives and children, and therefore women were not entitled to the living wage.

This kept many women locked in dependence, and women and children who had been "deserted" or who didn't have husbands in poverty.

In reality families could not survive on the so-called "living wage". So in the first half of the twentieth century there was a slow but steady increase in women working. As early as 1927, about half of all factory workers in Australia were female.

This trend was a concern for the ruling class. A 1911 Royal Commission voiced concern that the crowding together of the sexes in factories had a "pernicious influence" and stimulated the sexual system. It wanted to discourage women from working in factories, disbelieving when a factory girl explained that domestic work was actually far harder. And it declared that, "No married woman should be allowed into a factory at all".

When the Victorian Lady Teach-

ers' Association argued for equal pay, the Royal Commissioner replied, "Equality either from a physical or an intellectual viewpoint, cannot be accepted... [a woman] is, by reason of her natural frailty of body, unfitted to bear the physical strain inseparable from the vocation of a teacher..."

Where women competed with men for the same job they were paid a male rate. Where they were working in different roles, their wages were fixed separately by the court based on "the class of work in question." So an elaborate and absurd division of men's and women's work developed. Clothing, textiles, shoes and food preserving was women's manufacturing work. But in the 1920s and 1930s the men's world of metal work and engineering was open to women only in the roles of "light repetitive work" such as core-making, drilling and assembling.

## The Second World War

There was an acute shortage of labour as the armed forces and defence production expanded. Cabinet endorsed "the extensive employment of women". The *Women's Weekly* announced, "Australia is calling on her women as never before".

In a reversal of the assertion that factory work was the road to sexual depravity, *Women's Weekly* said, "You'll find it no harder than your house job. Easier perhaps. In fact, many war production factories, with their spic-and-span canteens, bright music and carefully-planned rest breaks are more fun to work in than any house."

Between July 1939 and June 1945 the female "working population" increased from 677,500 to 811,200. The best estimate of the number who went from being housewives to paid employment is 99,300.

The kinds of work women were doing changed; from isolated self-employment as domestic servants to mass production in factories alongside thousands of others. This category increased from 64.5 per cent to

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**The confidence women gained from being essential to production led to a wave of militant strike action**

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80.1 per cent of the female workforce between 1939 and 1943, while domestic servants declined from 18.3 per cent in 1939 to 5.9 per cent in 1945.

Married females' participation rate more than doubled between 1933 and 1945.

The decrease in the male proportion of the workforce was most marked in government munitions factories and in banking and insurance.

In the metal industry, where a massive increase in demand for war equipment and munitions combined with large numbers of men leaving to go into the armed forces, the number of women rose from 1375 in 1933 to 52,847 in 1943.

Employers and the government insisted that this was temporary.

A Women's Employment Board (WEB) determined scales for women entering "male" jobs during the war and for six months afterwards. But this gave it jurisdiction over only 7 per cent of employed women.

Mostly they set the rate at 90 per cent, sometimes 80 per cent, and in a few cases, such as tram conductresses, clerical workers, and some retail work, 100 per cent of the male wage. The WEB commissioners were forced to admit, despite themselves, that women:

"produced results in every way equal to males... To all of us it was an amazing revelation to see women who were yesterday working in beauty salons and who had not previously worked outside their own homes... who now stood behind mighty machines operating them with a skill and mastery that was little short of marvellous..."

## Militancy

But the confidence women gained from being essential to production, and the arbitrary nature of wage rates, led to a wave of militant strike action to fight for equal pay, pay rises and better conditions.

The Small Arms Ammunition Factory in Footscray was a pre-war employer of women, so the pay was lower than in other munitions factories where the WEB had set the rate. Several thou-



sand male and female workers held a stopwork meeting in early 1943, demanding the 90 per cent rate for females. More than 2000 women from other government factories joined them on strike.

These strikes were without success. But they did succeed at Simmonds Aeroaccessories in South Melbourne. Here Simmonds refused to pay the rate awarded by the WEB. So 132 women sheetmetal workers struck for over four months during wartime. The case went as far as the High Court before the company capitulated and paid the 90 per cent rate.

When Amalgamated Wireless Australia in Ashfield refused to pay a pay rise granted by the WEB, 150 women in the aircraft assembly section joined the Amalgamated Engineers Union. When the Board arbitrarily decided that only 75 per cent of them were entitled to the WEB rate, a three week strike followed. Eventually they were “prevailed upon” to return to work while legal action unfolded.

Labour historian Daphne Gollan has written that, “in New South Wales, during the 20 months ending August 31 1944, there were 1,432 industrial disputes involving 588,951 workers and resulting in a loss of 1,461,671 man-days—or as was more frequently the case, woman days.”

Employers were particularly obsessed about keeping down women’s wages. This was despite the government agreeing to foot the bill for all manufacturing costs during the war, including any wage rises. They were very forceful in reminding women that the break in sex role segregation was a temporary evil for the war.

Strikes were often more successful than the protracted court and commission process. When a Sydney company, Richard Hughes, refused to pay the WEB rate, the case dragged through the courts for over six months, with the company repeatedly appealing to different bodies.

By June 1944 it had become obvious to the workers that they were getting nowhere. A strike and lockout led quickly to a settlement involving \$6000 in back pay.

There is a lesson here for today’s campaign for equal pay for childcare workers. Unions have run court cases and community campaigns, but not organised the industrial action with the power to force rapid gains.

The level of industrial militancy was particularly impressive when you consider the forces aligned against women. The entire establishment as well as union leaders and the Labor



**Above: Women at work in a factory in South Australia during the Second World War**

Party were solidly behind the war effort. Once Russia joined the war the Communist Party threw their weight behind it too, using their considerable influence among radicals in an effort to keep industrial peace.

The pressure to think of the war effort, and accept sacrifices, was immense. But it could not erode the new found confidence that women felt.

For example, following the failure of the employers to pay the awarded 90 per cent at a Footscray munitions factory, the (male) secretary of the union assured women they would get their money and urged them to return to work for the sake of “the boys in the trenches”. Women responded angrily with shouts of, “We know all about the boys in the trenches ... they’re our husbands and sons”. Three days on strike resulted in Prime Minister Evatt agreeing to pay them the wage rise until the employers agreed.

The Clothing Trades Union had a policy of no strikes during wartime. A statement from the leadership claimed that, “in so far as the men were concerned, this objective was largely achieved”.

But it bemoaned the fact that: “Circumstances in regard to female employment are totally at variance to those surrounding employment of males and the result has been some-

what disastrous.”

### Self-activity

Part of the reason for their greater militancy was that women were not constrained by a tradition of deference to the union bureaucracy or official union structures.

In some instances there was solidarity forged between men and women workers, for instance in the Engineers Union and the Sheet Metal Workers Industrial Union. But where unions would not lead action, women were prepared to act themselves. Young women workers at the Berlei factory used the technique of the classroom, passing notes from machine to machine to elect representatives and agree to a stopwork.

This organising in opposition to a union and political left leadership that almost entirely got in their way is a reminder about workers’ capacity for self-activity and struggle.

But the lack of union and political traditions also had a serious drawback. It meant that the lessons of the magnificent strike wave were not generalised in a way that could go beyond the immediate battles to a broader and more conscious effort to destroy sex role segregation and pay inequality at the time.

But this history should be an inspiration in the continuing fight for equal pay and against sexism today.

## Don't dismiss science behind drugs and treatment of mental illness

Heather Baldwin responds to our article on mental illness from last issue

THE ARTICLE “Mental illness and the sickness of capitalism”, published in the September issue, is problematic at best, and irresponsible at worst. I'm disappointed to see that Chris doesn't appear to have taken onboard any of the criticisms provided by the audience during the presentation of it at the Keep Left conference in August. As was pointed out by several people then, the argument that capitalism is the cause of mental illness, and resistance is the best way to tackle it, is reductive, and frankly dangerous. The line of reasoning is superficial, displays misconceptions about the genetics of disease susceptibility, and presents cherry-picked evidence to support a predetermined conclusion. The logic of the piece is informed purely by ideology.

I'm not saying that society is not sick; it is. And I'm not saying societal factors can't trigger, exacerbate or increase lifetime risk of developing a mental illness or disorder. But societal factors can also increase risk of developing heart disease and cancer—that doesn't mean that they don't exist or shouldn't be treated.

The term “mental illness” encompasses a wide range of illnesses and disorders, from psychotic disorders like schizophrenia to mood disorders like anxiety, depression and bi-polar disorder. Treating them as if they are all the same makes as much sense as claiming that brain tumours and Alzheimer's disease are both “physical illnesses” of the brain, and using this to inform sweeping statements about causes and treatments. Mental



illness may have an additional layer of complexity compared with physical illness (though I'm not sure a fundamental distinction between the two is justified), but this complexity is all the more reason why it is folly to lump them all together and treat them as if they are homogenous.

It's wrong to imply that questions about effectiveness of SSRIs (the class of drugs that includes Prozac) in treating depression can be used to dismiss all pharmacological treatments for all mental illnesses. Not treating serious conditions like schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder can be fatal. Drugs can save lives.

Social support and non-pharmacological treatments are likely important for many conditions, perhaps more so than pharmacological treatments. There is evidence that cognitive behavioural therapy is at least as effective as SSRIs for treating anxiety.<sup>1</sup> But such findings cannot be generalized. The evidence must be evaluated independently for each condition and potential treatment.

The idea that the only contribution of genetics is that “some people to dealing better or worse

with particular situations” hints, to my mind, at attributing blame. Are mentally ill people just of weaker constitution, those less able to cope with the constructs of capitalism than those who are well? There is a great deal of evidence for a genetic role in predisposing people to conditions from bi-polar to schizophrenia.<sup>2-5</sup> Of course there are other risk factors—environment (which encompasses societal, socio-economic and other external factors) likely plays a very strong role, and no geneticist worth their weight would claim that genes are the only factor, or even the most important factor for many conditions, and there is still a lot that is unknown about the genetic role in many diseases. But the fact that because there are many people with a gene variant associated with a disease (genotype) who don't have the condition (phenotype), does not disprove genetic predisposition. The disease phenotype likely arises from complex interactions with multiple susceptibility genes as well as environmental factors, including those mentioned in the article. It is relatively rare that known genetic risk factors constitute single

genes whereby a person with that genotype always develops the disease, be it a mental or physical illness.<sup>6-7</sup>

Certainly there are important points raised in Chris' article. Capitalism is the root of a great many problems in our society, and those problems—deep inequality, social isolation, the nuclear family, the 40 hour work week, urban living and separation from nature—contribute to poorer physical and mental health.<sup>8</sup> It's clear that rising rates of mental illness are not caused by an increase in prevalence of genetic susceptibility traits, and genetic susceptibility is obviously not the reason for the disturbingly high rates of mental illness among the refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus Island. It's also fair to question over-medicalisation of natural variability in personality or behavioural traits.

Addressing modifiable causes and contributors, such as social determinants, would undoubtedly contribute to a better, more equal and healthy society. However, over-simplification and sweeping statements are irresponsible. Mental illness is very real, as are its consequences for the individual, families

and broader society. Socio-political analysis is important, but evaluation of causes and treatments need to be based on evidence from rigorous, peer-reviewed science, not on ideology.

### Notes

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# Response: Answers on mental health not in our genes

Chris Breen responds to comments of his article in our last issue

IT MAY be unwise to rule out genes playing any role in mental health, but if they do it is likely to be a complex one that is only a small part of the picture.

The social and environmental contribution to mental illness is even more important than for other illnesses. The human mind and disorders of it are deeply shaped by our social environment.

Blaming the genes of those imprisoned on Nauru or Manus, where over half are currently suffering serious mental health conditions, would be both cruel and implausible.

The reference in my original article to “interactions between genes and the environment that predispose some people to dealing better or worse with particular situations” meant no blame attribution.

I was referring to the many environmental factors that can affect the onset of mental illness, for example class, family support, age, physical health, and the experience of oppression like sexism or homophobia. Those driven to mental illness are in no sense “weaker”.

The claim that genetic tendencies to mental health problems have been well established does not stand up on available evidence. Even if it turns out there are genetic “tendencies” for some disorders, this can’t explain why some people who develop mental health issues are fine at some times, but not at others. And it can’t explain the sheer numbers.

Forty five per cent of the Australian population will experience a mental health issue in their



lifetime. That can’t all be down to genetics. If it was then you might as well say the problem is having human genes.

Genetics also cannot explain why mental health issues have been rising. One study reports rates today five times that of the 1930s.

There have been claims that genes are responsible for everything from IQ scores, to poverty or gender differences. But these studies ultimately assume that the unequal world we live in is the natural order of things, not something that contributes to these problems.

As one recent paper looking at widespread concerns about the growing lack of reproducibility and indeed false results in some scientific fields put it, “For many current scientific fields, claimed research findings may often be simply accurate measures of the prevailing bias”.<sup>1</sup>

All the studies Heather provides are meta-analyses. Meta-analysis is highly dependent on selection criteria. It can play a role in science, but is dependent on the quality of the studies it includes.

Further the meta-analyses provided all include a number of twin studies. These have a long history of misuse and systematic bias.

One problem is that twins often share the same environment. It is also difficult to find enough identical twins for statistically useful results.<sup>2</sup> In regard to suicide, there are only very small numbers of identical twins who commit suicide each year. A twin study looking for a genetic link to suicide is therefore unlikely to produce meaningful results.

As an example one study provided *Genetic Epidemiology of Major Depression: Review and Meta-Analysis* includes several twin studies. One of those, by Slater and Shields, used just 67 pairs of identical twins. 16 of the twins identified as schizophrenic were labeled “questionable” as to whether they were monozygotic (identical, from the same egg), or dizygotic (non-identical).

A bewildering array of gene regions have been claimed to be associated with mental illness.

Many studies that do report possible genetic

associations report only small effects, many have either not been reproduced or are later contradicted, and there is good reason to believe that many are flawed<sup>3</sup>.

## Treatment

Not all mental illness is the same, and different disorders can have different causes. But there is a difference between mental illness and diseases such as heart disease or cancer. Because there is no objective definition for either schizophrenia or depression, these illnesses are based on classifying particular symptoms. Unlike diagnosing cancer or heart problems, evaluating behavior is very subjective.

The drugs for depression (SSRIs) and anti-psychotics for schizophrenia were both discovered experimentally (through observing the effects they had on people). In both cases they are treating symptoms, not underlying causes. There is debate within medicine and psychiatry about whether SSRIs are effective.

Anti-psychotic drugs can reduce particular acute symptoms of schizo-

phrenia at first onset, but they are a blunt instrument. They have serious side-effects, including shrinkage of the brain over time, heart conditions and permanent involuntary muscle movements. Some people have described anti-psychotics as a chemical straight jacket. There is some evidence that schizophrenic patients who come off drugs fare better compared to those who continue with them long term.<sup>4</sup>

Mental illness needs to be treated, but there is evidence that “chemical imbalance” theories are wrong. Treatments based on these theories are problematic. Attempts at genetic explanations are not leading to better treatments. More resources need to be put into increased social support and addressing social problems.

## Notes

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2. As an example, the California Twins Autism Study over turned decades of previous autism twin study claims by studying 192 twin pairs, four times as many as any previous study [www.ageofautism.com/2011/07/new-autism-twin-study-demolishes-decades-long-belief-in-genetic-causation.html](http://www.ageofautism.com/2011/07/new-autism-twin-study-demolishes-decades-long-belief-in-genetic-causation.html)

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# STUDENTS STRIKE TO SAVE SCA

By Erima Dall and James Supple

STUDENTS AT Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) have staged a two-day student strike against plans to close their campus at Callan Park. About 150 students and supporters rallied on the main campus. The group marched around in red bandanas and glittered masks, lecture-bashing classes to invite people to join them.

As part of the “day of disruption”, a gigantic banner was dropped from the Quadrangle building and piles of clay turned into a sculpture at the entrance. A tent city, complete with a DJ, was set up on the front lawns.

“This is the second strike, the first was a walkout from classes, to show that the student body is in protest at this current situation with SCA. We’re here to say you’re disrupting our education,” student Tim Heiderich told *Solidarity*.

“As long as we keep pressure up and keep our profile up, more of the movement’s demands are being met.”

A 120-strong student general assembly on 22 September, one-sixth of the SCA student body, voted to strike. Only two people voted against.

Activists organised to create picket lines directing students to a single entrance, and tried to convince them not to go to class. This was an important step forward from the first strike, when there were no real picket lines.

This strike was more polarising than the last—partly because students were under more pressure to finish assignments. A small minority of students (and one staff member) claimed that picketing and encouraging students to join the strike was “intimidating”. Others said that while they were happy for others to strike, they wanted the right to “choose” to go to class.

But this only weakens the campaign and undermines the democratic General Assembly vote. A campaign can only build if it holds everyone to account to the decisions made. It says everything that new Dean, Margaret Harris sent out an email saying she would ensure students had access to classes—when she is the one shutting down classes at SCA permanently!

The “day of disruption” clearly impacted the university. They had security guards trailing students around main campus all day, pulled down



**Above: Let SCA stay rally hits the main Sydney Uni campus during the two-day strike**

the giant banner and got police onto campus to evict the tent city.

But the occupation of administration offices at SCA continues, approaching a phenomenal 50 days.

## Victories

The campaign has scored another two significant victories. In July students demanded Dean Colin Rhodes, who was spearheading the closure of SCA, step down. He has now resigned.

The new acting Dean, Margaret Harris, has gone on a charm offensive. But Harris has made it clear she accepts the plan to close Callan Park, claiming the cuts are, “what has got to happen”. SCA student Cecilia Castro told *Solidarity*, “She even said to us that she’s getting paid by Sydney Uni and she’s here to do a job.”

The closure of the Callan Park campus has also been delayed, after the university announced that its efforts to sack staff will take longer than planned, following a court challenge to the process by staff union, the NTEU. Classes will not move from Rozelle until the middle of next year at the earliest.

“They’re not ignoring us like they’re saying”, Cecilia said, “we’re putting pressure on them.”

But the university is still determined to move SCA to the main Sydney university campus, slash staff by 60 per cent and close jewellery, ceramics and glassmaking facilities.

It has refused to reinstate enrolments for next year in the Bachelor of Visual Arts (BVA), Master of Fine Arts or PhD programs. This would drastically shrink student numbers and aid their efforts to gut the arts school.

It was a boost for the campaign that a number of staff members spoke at the General Assembly meeting.

Painting lecturer Mikala Dwyer gave her strong support to the student occupation, saying it had been a “powerful symbol” and that “without it we would not have reached so many ears”.

Matthys Gerber, a senior lecturer in painting, told students “Artists need their fortresses and palaces... We are first and foremost an art school—and this is what we are protecting.”

Staff action is still a key issue. If staff took strike action to shut down classes, it would seriously escalate pressure on the university. The campaign is a long way from that. But even a concerted campaign by SCA staff, involving rallies and a collective decision not to take voluntary redundancies, would have a big impact.

Enterprise bargaining with the university begins early next year, which means the staff unions, the NTEU and CPSU, will be able to take lawful industrial action. This could help propel the fight to save SCA into the new year. The student campaign has an immense amount to be proud of. As Matthys told the students, “This campaign is art.”

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**“They’re not ignoring us like they’re saying”, Cecilia said, “we’re putting pressure on them.”**