

Solidarity

Issue No. 97 / December 2016

\$3/\$5



Fight racism Fight the right

**NO TO TRUMP
NO TO TURNBULL**

TRUMP

Eyewitness from the protests in the US

UNIONS

Return of ABCC means time for a fight

GONSKI

Time for a real fight for public education



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Solidarity No. 93
August 2016
ISSN 1835-6834
Responsibility for election comment is taken by James Supple, 410 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills NSW 2010.
Printed by El Faro, Newtown NSW.

SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Things they say

I want to note too, that Peter Dutton and indeed his predecessor Scott Morrison have suffered from constant, often-vicious attacks, claims that they lack compassion. That they lack a heart.

Refugee rights protests are obviously getting under Malcolm Turnbull, Morrison and Dutton's skins

Could have been a little smoother

Tony Abbott on what he could have done better in dealing with his Coalition colleagues

A pleasing aspect of the overall election result was the regaining of the Senate majority by the Republicans, which should remove some of the gridlock that has plagued the US system in recent years.

Glen Barnes, chairman of Ansell—another corporate director who has no problem with the Trump victory

The Trump team advised [me] that the president-elect wants to cut federal government tax by 50 per cent in his first few months of office, and that he wants to cut company tax to 15 per cent. What a kickstart to the American economy that will provide!"

Billionaire Gina Rinehart also likes what she hears about Donald Trump

He is a lot smarter than we think.

Andrew Mohl, Commonwealth Bank director and former AMP chief executive on Trump

In theory I could run my business perfectly and then run the country perfectly. There's never been a case like this

US President-elect Trump

I like it a lot. I don't think it's tough enough.

Donald Trump on what he thinks about water-boarding

The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make US manufacturing non-competitive.

Donald Trump in 2012

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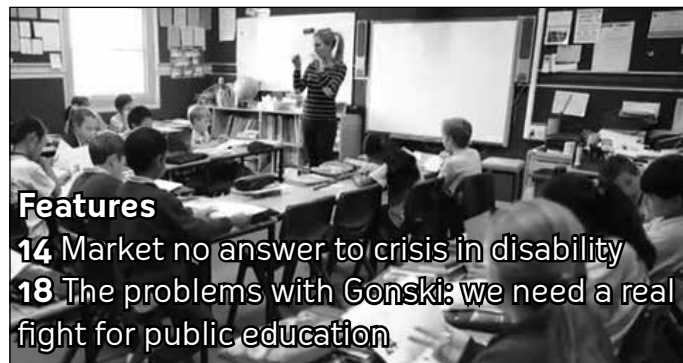
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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

Twiggy Forrest named WA Australian of the year

BILLIONAIRE MINING magnate Andrew “Twiggy” Forrest has been named WA’s Australian of the year. The Chairman and major shareholder of Fortescue Metals Group was lauded for his philanthropy during the ceremony—in particular for tackling Indigenous disadvantage. The ceremony programme read: “Never daunted by the scale of challenge, Andrew devotes his relentless energy to society’s most vulnerable, tirelessly working to highlight Australia’s Indigenous disparity”.

In 2008 Forrest promised to create 50,000 Indigenous jobs in the private sector. By 2015 he had failed to create even 20,000 short term placements. He also chaired Abbott’s review into Indigenous employment where he made recommendations that Centrelink recipients go on a draconian “healthy welfare card” which restricts what you can buy and prohibits cash withdrawals. In 2015 the Federal Court heard testimony revealing that his mining company had tried to rig a meeting with Native Title holders in WA as part of a push to shore up mining access on Yindjibarndi land. Fortescue Metals Group paid out a \$155 million dividend to Forrest in 2016, yet the company paid no net income tax last year.

MPs ‘too busy’ to scrap travel perk

IT MUST be tough being an MP. It turns out the parliament has been so busy, it hasn’t found time to end the notorious gold travel pass for former MPs.

More than two years ago Tony Abbott announced plans to axe the scheme, yet the government still hasn’t got around to it.

The failure to put the bill through the final parliamentary sitting of the year means it will survive until at least February.

Around 200 former MPs are currently entitled to ten return business class flights a year under the scheme. It costs the taxpayer around \$1.5 million a year.

Big banks go on job killing spree



ACCOUNTS FILED by the major banks show that cost cutting drives have destroyed more than 4000 jobs this year. Since March NAB, ANZ and Macquarie Group have binned 3415 workers. In the second half of this year Commonwealth Bank added to the pile, cutting a further 92 jobs. Ernst and Young banking experts euphemistically described the trend as a symptom of “cost discipline” in the face of “slowing revenues and higher ongoing costs driven by regulatory and technology expenditure.”

But CBA and ANZ reported record profits for the nine months up to 30 June 2016; \$9 billion and \$5 billion respectively. The “tough economic conditions” blamed for the job cuts didn’t seem to hit the bosses either. Macquarie Group’s Chief Executive Nicholas Moore became one of Australia’s highest paid CEOs in 2016, taking home \$18 million. CBA CEO Ian Narev followed close behind on \$12.3 million.

Major parties hide donations

A NEW report published by GetUp has found 85 per cent of privately raised income received by the major political parties is hidden from the public. Glaring loopholes in reporting requirements mean many donations are untraceable.

The report reveals that only 25 per cent of the Liberal Party’s private income was officially declared in 2013-2014; \$19.3 million of a total of \$78.6 million. In 2007-2008 the Liberals declared 30 per cent of their private income, an indicator that the pool of untraceable “dark money” is increasing.

Changes to laws have made it far easier for parties to avoid scrutiny. In 2006-2007 the Coalition changed the declaration threshold from \$1500 to \$10,300. As a result it is easy to conceal enormous private payments by “splitting donations”. A donor could make \$20 million in undisclosed donations in a single year by making a separate payment of \$10,000 every weekday to different branches of the party.

Even when donations are disclosed the identity of donors is easily hidden. Political parties and affiliated organisations regularly hold dinners, or sell tickets for thousands of dollars and record the money received as payment for a “service”. In many cases the names of those that attend are not reported at all. Finally, payments from big companies can be listed in a way that hides whether it is income from property sales or investments, or actually donations. For example, in 2014-2015 Meriton Property Services made two payments of \$25,000 to the Liberals that were recorded as “donations” and one of \$20,000 that was recorded as an “other receipt”.

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

Unemployment hits 9.2 per cent

ANALYSIS RELEASED by Roy Morgan research in November put the actual unemployment rate in Australia at 9.2 per cent. This is considerably higher than the September Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figure of 5.6 per cent. According to their survey 1.118 million people are unemployed; a 78,000 increase compared to October 2015.

The Roy Morgan poll counts anyone looking for work as unemployed, while ABS polls are seasonally adjusted and restrict the definition of “unemployed” to someone who has been looking for work for four weeks.

Turnbull threatens to sue Medicare granddad

MALCOLM TURNBULL has threatened a bizarre and vindictive legal assault on Mark Rogers, a 66-year-old grandfather who runs a “Save Medicare” website in his spare time. In November the retiree received a letter from the Australian Government Solicitor giving him less than 48 hours to take the website down.

The letter demanded he formally agree to “cease and forever desist from using the Medicare name and branding”. It was sent on behalf of the Department of Human Services and claimed the domain name of the website and its use of the Medicare logo was “deceptive”, “misleading” and breached copyright.

Mark was told that if he didn’t shut down the website “by the above deadline, our client reserves the right, without further notice, to institute proceedings against you, seeking injunctive relief, damages and costs.” Rogers defied the deadline, telling Fairfax the legal attack was “Monty Pythonesque” and that “Medicare belongs to the people anyway”.

EDITORIAL

Turnbull and Shorten mimic Trump's racist campaign

DONALD TRUMP'S election shows the political danger when disgust with the system is pulled to the right. It is already having its effect on Australian politics.

It has given confidence to racists like Pauline Hanson in particular, who boasted that Trump and One Nation stood for similar things. But both the Liberal and Labor Parties have stepped to the right in the wake of Trump's victory.

Trump has promised to ramp up military spending and expand the size of the US navy in order to confront China. No one seems sure what his foreign policy will look like, as he threatens to destabilise existing alliances and promises to "get tough" on Islamic State.

Turnbull very quickly pledged support for Trump: "It's in our mutual interest to stand together and we'll continue to do so through the Trump presidency and the presidencies that follow it."

Trump's take over as president means there is more reason than ever to end the US alliance.

The kind of populist xenophobia peddled by Trump has a long and shameful record here. Trump wants to build a wall to keep out immigrants, while Malcolm Turnbull runs a "border protection" regime where the military turns back refugee boats.

The disillusionment with mainstream politics is just as real in Australia as in the US. Just 14 per cent say they trust political parties and only 34 per cent believe "people in government can be trusted". The underlying disgust with mainstream politics has seen the public approval of all recent prime ministers, from Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard to Tony Abbott and now Malcolm Turnbull, go into rapid decline.

Both Labor and the Coalition have responded to Trump's election by pandering further to racism. Opposition leader Bill Shorten has ratcheted-up Labor's campaign against 457 temporary work visas which scapegoats migrant workers for taking jobs and lets the bosses off the hook.

This only increases racism, and makes right-wing figures like Pauline Hanson seem more legitimate.

But Border Force Minister, Peter Dutton set a new low, declaring "There was a mistake made" in bringing Lebanese Muslim migrants into the country in the 1970s, because



Above: The protests that have greeted Trump's election are the hope for resisting his racism and bigotry

22 "second and third generation migrants" have been charged with terrorist offences.

Even for Dutton, this was a crude attempt to blame the whole Lebanese Muslim community for supposed terrorism, smear migrants groups as criminals and stoke racism and fear.

He is guilty of perpetuating the same racism and marginalisation they have experienced in Australia for the last 40 years, on top of Australian government support for every imperialist intervention in the Middle East and every Israeli attack on the Palestinians.

Fighting back racism

With the Turnbull government in serious political trouble and sagging in the polls, it is making a habit of reaching for the race card. Only a week before Trump was elected Turnbull announced the plan for a lifetime ban on refugees from Manus Island and Nauru getting any kind of visa to come to Australia. But outrage at Turnbull's Bill has killed it off (see p7).

Increasingly, the government's efforts to whip up fear about refugees are not working. Peter Dutton's scaremongering during the election campaign about refugees taking "Aus-sie jobs" and Turnbull's efforts to talk up his plans for "strong borders" had little impact. The Coalition's vote crashed, and Turnbull went within an inch of losing the election.

The on-going movement for refugee rights—the demonstrations,

public meetings and continual revelations of the abuse on Manus Island and Nauru—have blunted the government's attacks on refugees.

There is now majority public opinion in favour of resettling refugees from Manus Island and Nauru in Australia, a marked change since Labor re-opened the camps in 2012.

The campaign has begun scoring victories—like the success in keeping the 267 people from Manus Island and Nauru in Australia through the "Let them stay" campaign, and now the defeat of the lifetime ban.

The lesson from the US is that we can't rely on the mainstream parties to turn back racism or stand up for the rights of working class people. Hillary Clinton and the Democrats have been deeply discredited by years of declining living standards and job losses, while bankers and the top 1 per cent are wealthier than ever.

The protests that have hit the streets in the weeks after Trump's election are the key to resisting Trump and fighting for real change. The same is true here.

But we also need a left-wing alternative to the mainstream parties and their rule for the rich. Trump and the right try to direct workers' anger onto immigrants, refugees, women and other minority groups.

We need a socialist organisation that builds the fight against the system and against those that are really responsible for racism, unemployment and job cuts—corporations, the rich and the political elite.

.....
Increasingly, the government's efforts to whip up fear about refugees are not working

Dutton channels Trump in racist attack on Lebanese

By Amy Thomas

AUSTRALIAN POLITICIANS have been trying Donald Trump's racist rhetoric on for size since his election victory. For Immigration Minister Peter Dutton, famous for joking about Pacific Islands drowning in rising seas and calling refugee pregnancy on Nauru "a racket", it hasn't been too much of a stretch.

His comments that former Liberal PM Malcolm Fraser made a mistake in resettling Lebanese Muslims in Australia in the 1970s were also made at the same time he suggested Australia could ban specific groups, like Sudanese people, from Australia.

Dutton said that descendants of Lebanese Muslim migrants were predominantly responsible for terror offences. Turnbull only praised him as an "outstanding" Immigration Minister.

The Lebanese Muslim Association condemned Dutton in no uncertain terms, releasing a statement that read in part:

"Dutton is just another in a long line of politicians questioning our community. [This is part of a] toxic, assimilationist, nationalist agenda ... what he said was racist. What he implied was racist ... This should not be about proving ourselves to wider Australia ... We refuse to continue doing so at Dutton's request... Manipulating bigotry for political gain is an insult."

They also used the opportunity to condemn Manus and Nauru and the "shocking cruelty" of Immigration policy.

In doing so, they put Labor to shame—who, while calling on him to apologise, said such comments were most worrying because they undermined the efforts of security services to work with Lebanese people. Dutton, again channelling Trump, responded by saying Labor was part of the "tricky elite" and he was just being honest.

Dutton's comments smeared the whole Lebanese Muslim community as responsible for terrorism.

John Howard actually made similar comments in 2007, suggesting that some Lebanese migrants were "hostile to our society" with their "raving about jihad".

Such racism serves the purpose of casting suspicion over Muslims and promoting fear over a nearly non-existent terror threat. Even Labor's approach of calling on the Muslim com-



Above: Dutton's attack on the Lebanese Muslim community was a vicious piece of Islamophobia

munity to co-operate with government "anti-terror" efforts only reinforces the racist idea that this community is to blame.

Even Dutton admitted it was not the migrants that arrived in the country themselves, but tiny numbers of the "second and third generation" who have been accused of terrorism. This points to the experience of racism and marginalisation here that is responsible, if there is any significant problem of terrorism.

As the Coalition's popularity plummets, they are becoming increasingly reliant on these kinds of political tactics to hold onto power. All the more reason to make sure they cannot get away with it.

Tamil asylum seekers targeted under 'fast track' laws

IN EARLY November activists rallied in Brisbane to highlight the plight of Tamil asylum seekers and the threat to return them to danger in Sri Lanka.

The Tamils are a persecuted minority and following the Sinhalese army's march into the predominately Tamil areas in Sri Lanka's north and east in 2009, many thousands fled to Australia seeking safety.

But successive Australian governments have been hostile. Tamil boats have been intercepted by the Australian navy and turned back, using the "enhanced screening" process to dismiss asylum claims.

In December 2014, the government established a "fast track" processing system to deal with the claims of 30,000 asylum seekers who arrived by boat in recent years.

This sets up the Tamils to fail. Rebecca Lim, an Immigration Agent working closely with the Tamil community says the government is "proactively pursuing the Tamils" and she is anticipating an 80 per cent failure rate.

Fast tracking removes appeal rights and has seen legal aid stripped away, leaving many asylum seekers dealing with the system unrepresented. Assessors are dismissing credible reports about the conditions in Sri Lanka to rely on a document produced by the government's own Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Rebecca said, "we've got multiple reports from people like [UN adviser on Sri Lankan war crimes] Yasmin Sooka... who has written that anyone with any links to the LTTE, the Tamil Tigers, whether it's minor, whether it's a high level link, all should not go back".

Assessors are telling people that if one area of the country is not safe, they can live in another. But Pan Jordan, a Tamil Catholic Priest, says this is "impossible".

"After the war peace has not returned to Sri Lanka...because the Tamil areas are militarized...for every five Tamil persons there is one soldier in the north. Anything can happen, harassment by the army, intelligence services, all these things are going on even today...Sri Lanka is a small country and if you are a Tamil and move into a different place people will recognise you as a stranger and naturally they will report you to the police".

In 2010 the Australian government returned a young man to Sri Lanka who again fled back to Australia in 2012. On his second attempt he was finally recognised as a refugee, after suffering torture. Another young man deported about 18 months ago is now a recognised refugee in Sweden. The flawed "fast track" process is set up to return people like this to danger.

Mark Gillespie

By Ian Rintoul

ON 12 November, four days after it became clear that Donald Trump would win the US presidential election, the Turnbull government hastily announced a deal with the US to resettle “some” refugees from Nauru and Manus Island.

However, there was precious little detail. The announcement was more a passing parade of military officials of Operation Sovereign Borders and uniformed bosses of Australia’s Border Force. Turnbull boasted he had ordered the “biggest ever peacetime maritime operation in Australia’s northern waters” forming “a ring of steel” to repel any asylum boats attempting to come to Australia.

A month later, while hundreds of refugees on Nauru have left their names as “being interested” in the US deal, there are still few details. Although the deal supposedly applies to refugees on Manus as well, nothing about the deal has been officially mentioned there.

The deal will potentially leave hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees on Manus and Nauru. Given the anti-Muslim and anti-immigration rhetoric of US President-elect Trump, it is possible that he will simply renege on it.

Sky News declared that the US would accept between 300 and 400 from family groups; no single men. Dutton says that is not true, but only ever says “some” refugees will be resettled. US officials only say that the final number has not been determined.

What is very clear is that the US deal will not provide a resettlement solution for everyone on Nauru.

Asylum seekers whose claims have not been fairly processed; rejected refugees who cannot be returned to their home countries; single men; those who are rejected by America will remain on Nauru.

The US deal may provide an outcome for some families—but the campaign to “Bring Them Here” is going to revive as the flaws in the deal become even more obvious.

Refugees on Nauru aren’t being told who will, or will not, be in the running but they are being officially told that the process, even for those who are accepted, will take months.

Border Force has also approached asylum seekers and refugees from Manus and Nauru who are in detention in Australia and told them that they will have to go back to Nauru or Manus to be considered for the US deal. But there are no guarantees that they will

Despite the US deal, we still need to Bring Them Here



Above: Detention on Nauru

be resettled. Going back to Nauru would be a leap into the unknown.

Similarly, the US deal will separate those who are on Nauru and Manus from uniting with families already in Australia who were never sent to the offshore camps.

Refugees resettled in the US would have to wait for permanent US residency to make applications for family members to migrate there.

There are too many problems with the US deal for it to be accepted as any sort of “solution”. The deal would still leave offshore detention in place. Dutton has said that Nauru will remain an Australian detention option, indefinitely.

Shamefully, despite opposing

Turnbull’s lifetime ban, the Labor Party leaders still only talk about “third countries” for resettlement. The campaign will need to break the Labor Party from their bi-partisan support for offshore detention.

Meanwhile, despite the delays, court action is still pending in PNG to finally force the PNG and Australian governments to close Manus Island, pay compensation and return those on Manus to Australia.

The US deal has opened up cracks in the offshore detention regime as never before. But the refugee movement needs to seize the opportunity to step up the campaign to “Bring Them Here” and end the barbaric offshore policy altogether.

Outrage kills Turnbull’s refugee lifetime ban

FOR TWO days at the end of November, pro-refugee protests disrupted the final parliamentary sitting.

The government wanted parliament to pass its lifetime ban on any asylum seeker who was sent to an offshore detention centre after 19 July 2013, ever being able to enter Australia. But a wave of outrage has forced the government to withdraw the Bill.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton and Prime Minister Turnbull have relentlessly claimed it was necessary to send a strong message to people smugglers, and maintain the integrity of “our” borders. But their political game is too obvious.

Conservative New Zealand Prime Minister John Key struck a telling blow against the government, declaring that they would not accept a refugee subject to a lifetime ban as this would create second-class New Zealand citizens.

For most people, the lifetime ban looked like a desperate move by a desperate government keen to stem their falling popularity by (again!) bashing refugees. There were protests around the country. Crossbench Senators were inundated with emails and phone calls after Labor joined the Greens to oppose the Bill.

The government backed down. Dutton told Sky News, “We don’t want the Bill voted down.”

.....
The deal will potentially leave hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees on Manus and Nauru

Anti-union ABCC is back, but where was the fight?

By Tom Orsag and James Supple

THE ANTI-UNION Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) is set to return. A series of deals with the crossbench senators of the Nick Xenophon team and Derryn Hinch, along with the support of One Nation, were enough for the Coalition to pass the legislation.

The bill was one of the triggers for Malcolm Turnbull's double dissolution federal election, after the Coalition failed to get it through the Senate in 2014.

The ABCC is aimed at breaking the power of the construction (and associated) unions.

Building workers at Lend Lease, one of Australia's biggest building companies, recently won a 20 per cent pay rise over four years in most states, after only limited industrial action in Queensland. Hutchinson, Watpac, Multiplex and Probuild had already signed the agreement. The deal buys into some of the bosses' "productivity" concerns, with a single national EBA at Lend Lease replaced by state deals, with WA workers getting only 3.125 per year reflecting that the industry is "struggling" in that state.

But it is a big win when the wages of Australian workers are growing at their slowest rate on record—1.9 per cent a year.

Turnbull used the pay deal as evidence that the ABCC was needed to curb the CFMEU.

The ABCC has extreme powers, including the threat of six months in jail for workers who refuse to answer questions, on topics such as who attends union meetings or argues for strike action.

Turnbull and the construction bosses complain about "illegal behaviour" on building sites. What they mean is the construction unions' militancy and willingness to take industrial action in defence of members' safety and working conditions.

Australia has some of the harshest restrictions on the right to strike in the world. The law makes organising effective industrial action almost impossible, confining it to short approved bargaining periods for enterprise agreements once every three or four years.

Approval requires drawn out ballots and notification to the employer



Above: The ABCC will make building sites more unsafe by weakening the unions

The ABCC aims at preventing strikes and weakening union organisation

of any action.

This means that the continual action needed on building sites to force bosses to fix safety hazards runs up against the law.

The ABCC polices industrial law, with the intention of preventing strikes and weakening union organisation. ABCC inspectors will begin crawling over building sites, attempting to dig out evidence to threaten individuals and prosecute the CFMEU, construction unions over infringements.

It will be able to impose fines of up to \$34,000 on individual workers who take part in "unlawful" industrial action.

Concessions

The government was forced to make some concessions to win the crossbenchers' support. Workers interrogated by the ABCC will no longer be banned from telling anyone else they have been called in for questioning.

There are also some new minor "accountability" mechanisms, including judicial review of ABCC decisions and a requirement to gain permission from the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to use Commission's coercive powers.

The most significant change is that the government has backed down on plans to make its new Building Code apply immediately to all agreements signed since 2014.

Now existing EBAs can remain unchanged for two years, until November 2018, but all new agreements must comply.

Any building companies tendering for government contracts must comply with the government's Building Code.

The code bans a whole series of items from EBAs, and weakens union organisation by stopping the hiring of full-time site delegates, restricting union right of entry, and even banning union stickers or flags at work, including on hardhats.

Last time

The ABCC was first set up under the Howard government in 2004 and lasted until its replacement with a slimmed down version with Labor's Fair Work Building and Construction body in 2012.

Its establishment led to increased deaths on construction sites, from 19 in the year it was introduced to 37 in the year Howard left office.

Weakening the unions means weakening safety. Without union membership in the industry, exploitation is also rife. The Melbourne Age recently reported the story of one Afghani tiler who had not been paid some \$20,000 over six years.

The unions' reliance on lobbying crossbench Senators, instead of an industrial campaign of protests and strikes, failed to stop the ABCC legislation. This was a mistake that can't be repeated.

The government will be very wary about taking the risk of locking up construction workers for simply insisting on basic rights. Like last time, the ABCC can be beaten through a campaign of defiance—backed by industrial action to defend workers who refuse to co-operate with ABCC inspectors.

Protests and strike action can force the ABCC off building sites and defend our unions.

Labor's attack on 457 workers is racist scapegoating

By James Supple

BILL SHORTEN has stepped up his attack on 457 visas in the wake of Trump's election in the US.

Drawing the conclusion that xenophobia is the key to winning support amongst workers, he declared, "We're not going to lose our blue-collar voters like the Democrats did."

Shorten has blamed migrant workers for unemployment, claiming temporary workers from overseas are, "taking the jobs of nurses, motor mechanics, carpenters, auto-electricians".

In words that could have come from the mouth of Trump, Shorten declared, "We will buy Australian, build Australian, make in Australia and employ Australians".

Both Labor and The Greens moved amendments to Turnbull's ABCC legislation designed to make it harder to employ 457 visa workers in the construction industry. The Greens openly declared this was an attempt to see if racist Pauline Hanson was "serious" about putting curbs on foreign workers.

This is a dagger to the heart of union organising in a country with such a large migrant population.

If local workers think migrants are to blame for stealing jobs and driving down wages this will set us against each other and divide the working class.

There is no clear distinction between temporary and permanent migrants. There are only 94,890 primary 457 visa workers in Australia according to the latest statistics. But 190,000 permanent migrants are accepted every year. Many temporary visa workers will go on to stay here permanently—it is estimated they will make up 70 per cent of the permanent migrants accepted over the next few years.

Bosses do try to exploit migrant workers and employ them on poor wages and conditions. The solution to this is to organise them into the unions and fight to demand better conditions, not to campaign against them coming here.

The Coalition responded with a disgraceful move to reduce the period 457 workers are allowed to remain in the country if they lose their job. They will now have just 60 days, instead of 90, to find another job or face deportation. This will only make 457 workers even more vulnerable to exploitation, because their boss controls their right



Above: We need to fight for the rights of 457 visa workers and organise them into the unions, as was done with these Korean construction workers in 2013

to be in the country.

It's not migrant workers responsible for unemployment and job cuts. Rio Tinto has just announced 500 job cuts

in WA. This is driven by the desire to maintain profits. Greedy bosses and government cuts are what is really responsible for unemployment.

Trump's protectionism no way to save jobs

ONE OF Trump's key pledges was to tear up trade deals, condemning them for sending American jobs offshore. He says he wants to renegotiate NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement covering Canada, the US and Mexico) and will refuse to go ahead with the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

He even suggested increasing tariffs, such as a 35 per cent tax on sales of cars produced in Mexico, as a way to keep jobs in the US.

It's not surprising that this struck a chord, given the US has lost five million manufacturing jobs since 2000. Free trade deals are a disaster, but not because countries like America or Australia get a bad deal. They are deals designed to benefit corporations and the ruling classes of all countries—at the expense of workers and the environment everywhere.

The TPP for instance, contained a mechanism for corporations to sue foreign governments that passed any law or regulation that would "damage" their investments. Under similar mechanisms, French company Veolia is currently suing the Egyptian government for introducing a minimum wage. US company Lone Pine is suing the Canadian government under NAFTA for its ban on fracking.

But Trump's bluster on trade paints overseas workers as the enemy. When Trump says, "Whether it's China or Japan or Mexico, they're all taking our jobs" he is stirring up nationalism and xenophobia.

Protectionism is not about saving jobs, but saving bosses' profits.

Bluescope Steel demanded a \$60 million subsidy from government in tax concessions last year in exchange for keeping its Port Kembla plant open. But at the same time it asked workers to accept 500 job cuts and a three year wage freeze. A year later the company's profit was up 119 per cent to \$293 million. But the 500 jobs are gone for good.

The car manufacturers in Australia took billions of dollars in subsidies and tariff protections over decades. But there were continual job cuts as the companies brought in labour-saving technology to boost profits instead of putting jobs first.

Instead of fighting the bosses to defend jobs, calls for government protection mean collaborating with the bosses to help them maintain profits. Nationalisation under workers' control can guarantee jobs—but it means forgetting about the bosses' profits and fighting them every step of the way.

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457 workers will now have just 60 days, instead of 90, to find another job or face deportation

Trump's win shows the danger of racist right

By James Supple

TRUMP'S VICTORY has sent shock and disbelief across the world.

His election has emboldened Pauline Hanson and far right parties everywhere. It has given confidence to bigots in the US, where racists celebrating Trump's victory have physically attacked black people, torn off Muslim women's headscarves and scrawled racist graffiti on the homes of migrants.

Mass protests erupted as soon as Trump claimed the Presidency. This has to be the start of a fightback to stop Trump's bigotry and right-wing agenda from becoming the new normal.

The stakes are high. If anger at inequality is turned in a racist direction the results will be extremely dangerous.

There is enormous resentment across the US as a result of declining living standards over the last several decades. The neo-liberal era has seen working class people asked to take continual pain while the top 1 per cent have seen their wealth explode.

The wealth of a typical American household has fallen a staggering 14 per cent since 1984. But the top 1 per cent have seen their share of national income soar from 10 per cent in 1981 to 22 per cent last year.

The economic crisis after 2008 made life even worse. A Reuters poll on the eve of the election found that 75 per cent agreed that, "America needs a strong leader to take the country back from the rich and powerful" and 68 per cent agreed that "traditional parties and politicians don't care about people like me."

Democrats' failure

The Trump victory is a measure of the failure of the Democrats and the deep disillusionment after eight years of Obama. Under the first black president routine police shootings still force people to take to the streets to assert that "Black lives matter".

Hillary Clinton was the worst possible candidate for this situation. The Democratic Party insisted on running someone who personified the political elite and their contempt for ordinary people. It is possible that Bernie Sanders, who called for a "political revolution" against the corporate domination of the political system, could have



Above: Trump's win shows how racist populists can gain a hearing

beaten Trump. But the Democratic Party elite did everything in their power to ensure he would not be their candidate, and once Hillary Clinton became the Democratic candidate Sanders backed her.

The Democrats' loss of votes was the main reason behind the result. Clinton was simply unable to convince many of those who supported Obama to turn out to vote. Her defeat was sealed in mid-western states like Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio which Obama won in 2012. Her share of the vote here was down by between 6 and 7 per cent. Clinton's vote share was down 15 per cent in small towns like Trumbull, Ohio.

This is the area known as the rust belt, once dominated by manufacturing jobs that have now disappeared.

Trump also won an increased number of white working class voters in small towns and rural areas. As the *New York Times* put it, "Industrial towns once full of union voters who for decades offered their votes to Democratic presidential candidates shifted to Trump."

Exit polls showed Trump won 58 per cent of white voters overall. Clinton maintained an overwhelming lead among blacks, Latinos and Asians. But Clinton lost millions of black votes. Her share of the black vote was 5 per cent lower than Obama's in 2008.

Racist populism

Trump cynically appealed to the anger at the political system by promising to bring back jobs and attacking a

"rigged economy" run by "powerful corporations, media elites and political dynasties". Trump channelled the massive political and economic discontent into a vicious, racially charged nationalism. He blamed China and foreign workers for taking jobs. And he promised to deport millions of immigrants so that "jobs are offered to American workers first". Alongside this was his call for a halt to all further Muslim immigration.

Racism works to divide the working class by scapegoating immigrants and minorities for the destruction of jobs and living standards. Both here and in the US, the left has a serious task on its hands to build anti-racist movements capable of countering the racism of our rulers.

Since the election Trump has given little indication of backing down on the racism of his campaign. He has pledged to deport two to three million immigrants he claims have criminal records as soon as he takes office.

His staff appointments include Steve Bannon as chief strategist, who runs the "white nationalist" Breitbart News website that promotes a cocktail of Islamophobia and other racism.

His national security adviser, retired general Mike Flynn, has described the Islamic religion as "like cancer" and tweeted "Fear of Muslims is RATIONAL". Jeff Sessions, his nominee for Attorney-General, opposes immigration and was rejected by the US Senate for a post as a federal judge over racism against blacks.

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Since the election Trump has given little indication of backing down on the racism of his campaign

Report from the US: Wave of protests show hope for resisting Trump



Above: Protests have erupted across the US

By Clare Fester

TRUMP'S ELECTION is being met with a wave of resistance all over the US. Angry marches blocked downtown LA every evening the week after the election. The mobilisations are some of the largest I've ever been a part of, with over 15,000 in the streets of LA on 12 November. The crowds are so large that spontaneous marches erupt continuously every time people gather around the city. The crowds are young and diverse, and chants about protecting Muslims, undocumented migrants, black lives matter, and sexism are hugely popular.

There have also been large protests across the country from New York to Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle and Salt Lake City.

As Trump's proposed cabinet fills with racists, minorities are living in very real fear. There are reports from schools of children asking their teachers what Trump is going to do to them. Black school students in Missouri and New York were told to go sit at the back of buses and Latinos face taunts about Trump's proposed Mexico border wall. The Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that documents hate crimes, says it's received more reports than the period immediately following 11 September.

As racists grow more confident, the Democrats have shamefully said they're willing to work with Trump in

office, asking the public to give him a chance. But ordinary people already know what a Trump presidency will entail: threats to the undocumented, attacks on women's rights and uncertainty about the Affordable Care Act.

The fight against Trump's plan to deport two million migrants in his first 100 days is key where I live. In LA County the undocumented population is an estimated one in ten. East LA high schools walked out of class on 14 November.

The LA school district has declared classrooms safe, refusing to share information about students' immigration status with the incoming government or allow Immigration and Customs Enforcement onto its campuses. College campuses across the country are staging walk-outs with similar "sanctuary campus" demands.

There are important debates too. Some on the protests are calling for Trump's impeachment, electoral college reform, and think Clinton should have won. But the illusions in the Democrats are shaky. There are huge openings to discuss how the Democrats sold us out. Reminding people that Obama deported 2.5 million undocumented migrants goes down particularly well. People are hungry for alternatives to the two party system.

The next step is to turn this outrage on the streets into grassroots campaigns to fight and disrupt Trump on every front, on campuses, in neighborhoods, and in unions.

He plans to appoint Supreme Court justices to overturn abortion rights won in the Roe v Wade decision. And he wants to bulk up arms spending and the size of the US military. This includes expanding the navy in order to ratchet up tensions with China.

Trump posed as an anti-establishment candidate. But the billionaire's policies will favour the super-rich. Global stockmarkets recovered from the initial shock after his election as they remembered that he wants to cut the corporate tax rate from 35 to 15 per cent.

There is no way he can meet his promises to bring back jobs and double economic growth.

Workers who voted for him in the hope that he would stand up to the rich and powerful will get nothing but more misery.

The mainstream Republicans and corporate elites who disowned him during the campaign are now talking unity and collaborating with him. Even Hillary Clinton said Americans owed him "an open mind and the chance to lead". Tragically, Sanders has now also said that he would cooperate with Trump on anti-corporate campaign promises.

The control of the Democratic Party by a section of American capitalism and the political elite makes it incapable of offering an alternative to Trump's right-wing populism.

The discontent that Trump and other far right parties around the world are capitalising on can also be pulled to the left.

There are millions of disillusioned Sanders supporters who did not vote for Clinton or Trump who can be won to a fighting alternative to Trump and the Democrats.

In Britain, the discontent has seen the rise of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party.

The demonstrations that exploded in the days after Trump's victory show the desire to fight his dangerous racism, sexism and xenophobia. The last few years have seen new movements from below in the US like Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock and the Fight for \$15 minimum wage.

The task of the left is to shape them into a fightback capable of countering Trump's racism and scapegoating, and directing workers' anger against the bankers, corporations and the top 1 per cent.

This is where the hope lies for building a genuine left alternative in the US.

The mobilisations are some of the largest I've ever been a part of, with over 15,000 in the streets of LA

Duterte pivots from US to China in bid to play off both powers

By Vivian Honan

AFTER MONTHS of growing tension between the Philippines and the US, Filipino president Rodrigo Duterte announced in late October he was cutting ties with the US, one of the Philippines's closest allies, and leading a pivot towards China. Addressing a meeting of Filipino and Chinese businessmen in Beijing, Duterte stated, "I announce my separation from the United States, both in military and economics also."

Duterte, who was elected in May, had already announced that there would be no more joint US military exercises with the Philippines.

In May, Filipino Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana was quick to reassure the US that the US security alliance would not be scrapped. Similarly, after Duterte's declaration in Beijing, Secretary of Trade and Industry Ramon Lopez, stated, "We definitely won't stop the trade and investment activities with the West, specifically the US."

Duterte's zig-zagging has caused consternation in the Philippines and in the White House. Under Obama, the US has sought to counter China's influence in the Asia Pacific region. Losing the Philippines would be a blow to America's strength there.

Duterte is trying to play off the two superpowers to his advantage; there is nothing consistent in his opposition to US imperialism. Concerned to maintain his "tough guy" image, Duterte called Obama "a son of a whore" after the US criticised Duterte for the serious human rights breaches committed since he was elected.

By cosying up to China, Duterte hopes to gain greater Chinese investment—deals worth US\$24 billion were signed—and some concessions from China on territory disputes in the South China Sea.

Before Duterte was elected, the Philippines won a legal ruling at the Hague against China's claims over territory in the South China Sea—but Duterte has not pushed the issue with China.

In return, China has allowed Filipino fishermen to return to their traditional fishing grounds at Scarborough Shoal for the first time since 2012.

But Duterte has also back-pedalled on his anti-US stance. In November he approved the continuation of military exercises and the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA)



Above: One of the recent protests against Duterte's decision to bury former dictator Marcos in the "Cemetery of Heroes"

between the two countries.

Trump

Trump's election as US president has also seen Duterte move closer to maintenance of the US-Philippine alliance.

Duterte and Trump have been likened for their lewd comments on women, crass language and anti-establishment image. Both have been the beneficiaries of anger at elite politics but are not offering a progressive alternative.

Duterte welcomed Trump's victory, saying, unlike Obama, Trump had not commented about his government's human rights abuses. Trump, however, has labelled several nations, including the Philippines, as "terrorist nations" from which the US should bar immigrants. Any curb on foreign workers would hit the Philippines hard. Remittances from Filipino workers in the US are a significant part of the Filipino economy.

But Trump has also said that he will expand the US military, adding some 80 warships to the US Navy to counter China's military presence in the South China Sea and elsewhere. Although Trump has said that allies such as Japan and South Korea should pay more to maintain US military protection, there is no sign that he is likely to downgrade the US role in the region.

Duterte was elected in May on the back of widespread frustration among Filipinos at the established political parties. He spoke to people's fears

and experiences of widening income inequality, the struggle for jobs and rising crime. But despite his popularity, Duterte is no anti-imperialist and no friend of the people.

Duterte's "war on drugs" has resulted in thousands of deaths at the hands of police hit-squads, while others have been victims of vigilante-style killings. Duterte has revoltingly compared himself to Hitler, saying he wants to kill millions of drug addicts as Hitler killed Jews.

Much of the left have turned a blind eye to Duterte's drug-war killings in the hope he represented a break with the corruption and human rights abuses of the Filipino oligarchs and trapos (traditional politicians). But there are signs that the initial tolerance for Duterte is running out.

Angry protests have erupted since the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the government policy to allow the burial of the Filipino dictator Marcos in Manila's "Cemetery of Heroes". Duterte is understood to be repaying the Marcos family for their electoral support for him.

The burial is an insult to the Filipinos still demanding justice for the abuses of the Marcos regime, which was toppled in a people power revolution in 1986. Over 20,000 people demonstrated at the Peoples' Power monument on 30 November, calling for the dictator's body to be "dug up". According to one protester, Duterte has shown himself to be "just a rotten trapo."

The US has sought to counter China's influence in the Asia Pacific region. Losing the Philippines would be a blow

By Dave Sewell

Fidel Castro: 1926-2016

WHEN THE young Fidel Castro stood trial for an armed attack on the Moncada military barracks in 1953, he dared the court, “Condemn me. It doesn’t matter. History will absolve me.”

Six years later he was Cuba’s prime minister, and led its government for 49 years before formally standing down in 2008.

History must judge him both as the freedom fighter whose defiance humiliated US imperialism and as the ruler of a repressive, unequal society.

Castro grew up in a Cuba that was essentially a colony. It was part of a chain of US domination across Latin America. That was backed up by the violence of US forces and the dictators they propped up.

Castro was a nationalist who resented this imperialism and fought it bravely. He focused on armed actions by necessarily small and conspiratorial groups.

His trial for the Moncada attack helped catapult him to the head of Cuba’s opposition. But it had involved just 140 people—and failed, leaving Castro in jail until an amnesty two years later.

The failures of other opposition forces helped make Castro’s methods seem the only game in town.

President Fulgencio Batista shut down the electoral process in a 1951 coup. Massive strikes and protests in 1933 had proved the power of Cuba’s working class. But the Communist Party had joined Batista’s first government, and discredited themselves.

Along with a boatload of Cuban exiles—and the Argentinian Ernesto “Che” Guevara—Castro launched an invasion from Mexico in November 1956, hoping that a mass uprising would greet them.

It didn’t, and most were killed. But the survivors began a long guerrilla war in Cuba’s mountains. The regime also began to rot from within, and its US backers wavered.

Castro used the guerrillas’ prestige to secure his leadership of the opposition—and ensure that his army was the only organisation fit to take power when the regime fell.

This was a heroic fight. But it was nothing like a communist revolution as envisaged by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. They made it a central principle that “the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves”.

In Cuba’s revolution, Castro and



Above: Fidel Castro at the UN

his allies did all they could to limit workers’ role to supporting the guerrillas.

Defiance

The new government enacted the land reforms it had promised peasants, while seeking a compromise with the US and the Cuban rich. Their intransigence forced it to radicalise.

US allies stopped selling Cuba arms and other vital supplies, leading it to buy from Russia. US-owned refineries refused to process Russian oil, so Castro nationalised them.

The trade embargo the US imposed created hardship for ordinary Cubans for decades. US agents carried out terror attacks that killed Cuban civilians.

The CIA under US President John F Kennedy even launched the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 by right wing rebels. Cuba proved that the US could be beaten, just 50 miles off the US coast.

This was the context for Castro declaring socialism in December 1961—three years after taking power. There were two sides to his defiance.

On one hand Castro was taking a more strident anti-imperialist tone. He appealed to the poor across the Americas, and encouraged Guevara to “spread the revolution”.

But in a world polarised by the

Cold War, what Castro meant by socialism was more about aligning with one superpower to resist the other. An initially reluctant alliance with Soviet Russia became central to his rule.

This beat the CIA at the cost of becoming a pawn in the nuclear arms race. Cuba survived the US embargo by becoming a captive market for shoddy Eastern Bloc goods—and continuing its dependence on sugar exports.

The new Communist Party that Castro created in 1965 was a tool of state control from above. A new ruling class was forming based on state property—not workers’ power. This left the fundamentals of capitalist society untouched. Exploitation continued, as did the oppression that grew out of it.

Despite major gains in literacy, many Cubans still have bad housing conditions and low wages. This is especially true of the black Cubans who still face institutional racism.

The state’s success in developing health care is rightly celebrated. But it is used more for foreign policy—sending doctors to Venezuela in exchange for oil, for example—than provision for the poor.

Abortion wasn’t fully decriminalised until 1979. Even today, lack of opportunities drives many women to the sex work that is a major part of Cuba’s tourism industry.

Castro persecuted LGBTI people horrifically, with mass arrests and forced labour camps for “deviants”. It culminated in the expulsion of up to 10,000 gays and lesbians from 1980.

Thaw

Castro’s retirement—and a thaw in relations with the US—was an opportunity for his successors to further his retreat from Cold War state capitalism towards a market-based model.

They hope to follow China in opening up to big profits while continuing to repress opposition.

Castro gave encouragement to rebels and anti-imperialists across the world. It was right to support his resistance to the US’ attempts at revenge.

But he cannot be absolved of abusing the idea of communism to rule over a capitalist society.

The socialism he claimed to represent is as important as ever—but making it a reality means workers’ self-activity, not state control from above.

Socialist Worker UK

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In a world polarised by the Cold War, Castro’s socialism was more about aligning with one superpower to resist the other

AS NDIS ROLLS OUT MARKET POLICIES NO ANSWER TO CRISIS IN DISABILITY

The introduction of the NDIS is being used to privatise services and drive down workers' wages and conditions

IN AUSTRALIA, almost one in five people has a disability. People with disabilities (PWD) are more likely to be homeless, unemployed, imprisoned and victims of physical and sexual abuse. 45 per cent live at or below the poverty line. There is a clear need to remedy this injustice.

This July marked the beginning of the full rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Over the next three years 460,000 people who “have a permanent and significant disability” will enter the scheme, roughly 10 per cent of PWD. The scheme has been in operation in seven trial sites since 2013.

The NDIS has been hailed as “the most significant economic and *social reform since* the introduction of the original *Medicare* scheme.” PWD should receive significantly increased funding.

Under the NDIS, instead of state governments giving block funding to disability providers, the federal government will directly fund individuals with a disability. Disability providers will be forced to compete with each other for clients' money.

This new individualised funding model is promoted as bringing “choice,” “control” and “empowerment”. These are long fought for principles of the disability rights movement and many PWD have welcomed the scheme. However the introduction of a competitive market into disability services is a huge problem.

Competitive market

The vast majority of disability providers are not-for-profit (NFP—employing 73 per cent of workers), alongside a smaller government sector (21 per cent) and a small for-profit sector (6 per cent). The NFPs receive most of their funding from government.

The introduction of a competitive market under the NDIS involves the entry of more for-profits and NFPs as state governments across Australia sell

off public disability services.

In NSW 6000 disability workers who support 10,000 PWD are in the process of being transferred to the private and NFP sector.

Disability union HACSU is campaigning against Victorian Labor Premier Daniel Andrews' decision to privatise public disability services, despite promising not to before the 2014 state election. This would put the futures of over 5000 support workers, 70 per cent of whom are women, and over 2600 PWD, in doubt.

Handing public services over to the free market is a disaster—as the privatisation of public transport, power, Telstra and TAFE education has shown.

Some for-profits will attempt to cherry-pick clients whose needs are cheapest and easiest to meet, leaving clients with more complex needs with little choice. These providers will have a perverse incentive to prevent clients from developing their own capacities, due to the loss of income any increased independence might bring.

And the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), a statutory authority charged with administering the NDIS plans to “deregulate prices as the market matures.”

This is a recipe for price gouging, as is currently the practice in child-care, where increasing subsidies to consumers simply results in providers raising prices. This has been reported in some trial sites.

This could lead to PWD struggling to afford what they need, and increases in government funding simply lining the pockets of disability providers as they hike prices.

Workforce implications

Perhaps the greatest concern about the NDIS is the downward pressure on pay and conditions that will result from the marketisation of the sector, along with the expected doubling of

Funding allocations for the NDIS are not nearly enough to provide good quality care by well trained workers

the disability workforce.

The current funding allocations for the NDIS are not nearly enough to provide good quality care by well trained workers. The basic unit price for services, what the NDIA calls the “efficient price,” isn't enough for employers to comply with the award, let alone EBAs.

The current hourly rate of \$42 does not factor in time required for training, meetings and paperwork. Without a significant increase in the unit price many providers will be forced to shut down or hire unqualified workers who will accept substandard pay and conditions.

Disability providers are already applying to the Fair Work Commission to amend the award to cut penalties and reduce minimum shifts.

And the pressures of a competitive market will threaten wages and conditions, in a sector which is already poorly paid and highly casualised.

This is what has been happening in some trial sites. The peak body for NFPs described the experience in the Victorian trial site as bringing: “increased demands of staff, less ability to offer training and professional development, weaker supervision [and] increasing workplace health and safety risks.”

Researchers from RMIT have written that the regional manager of one large service provider told them, “we are losing staff to other industries ... Some have gone to aged care facilities, the pay is lower but they're going for the security”.

Inadequate funding combined with the pressure to provide only the services PWD want has created major difficulties.

“Another executive manager of an organisation providing home-based services told us: ‘(t)here have already been lots of one hour shifts, lots of travel time. We've got staff working 15 hours to get 8 hours' pay, and they're running their own vehicles...

We try and have shifts backing on to each other but it's not always doable.”

There is currently no qualifications requirement for direct support workers in the disability sector, despite 80 per cent of the workforce having a Certificate III or IV. With a doubling of the disability workforce the quality of training and care will deteriorate.

Government-run disability services are the ones that can afford to provide the best training, pay and conditions for staff. In Victoria, through strong union organisation, DHHS workers have won pay 30 per cent higher than in the non-government sector. The public sector is also where the number of casuals is lowest and workers with the most experience are concentrated. But they now face privatisation.

Other service providers say they won't be able to afford to provide on the job training under the NDIS. Disability providers are also replacing permanent staff with casuals to give them greater flexibility in the more insecure funding environment.

NDIS participants are being encouraged to self-manage their budgets and directly employ carers as independent contractors. This denies workers their traditional workplace rights and further undercuts EBAs and the award.

A number of Uber-style internet-based businesses are starting up that link consumers with support workers. They are bound to undercut other providers on pay and staff qualifications.

The disability sector already loses experienced and highly qualified staff because of poor pay and conditions. This is likely to get worse under the NDIS.

According to HACSU, over half of DHHS staff indicated in a Reachtel survey that they would leave the sector if their pay was cut.

So despite the fanfare about the NDIS enhancing consumer choice, there may actually be less choice for PWD about who works with them, as experienced, qualified people look elsewhere for better paid, secure work.

Union response

Union coverage in the disability sector is low. If workers are to defend their pay and conditions, and improve quality of care, we have to unionise current workers who are anxious about the NDIS as well as the tens of thousands of new workers who will be



Above: Disability support workers in NSW protest the privatisation of services

required.

Unions are campaigning for mandatory minimum qualifications under the NDIS. But given the expected increase in the workforce, it is difficult to see how this can be won without a serious industrial campaign.

Unions should be campaigning for paid training for all current and new workers in the sector. Currently staff undertaking training must work 120 hours unpaid to get qualified, a serious obstacle to upskilling for workers who can't afford to do unpaid work.

Unions are also lobbying against privatisations, for tighter regulation and more NDIS funding. But the whole neo-liberal premise of the NDIS needs to be challenged.

Market failures

Contrary to the hype around the NDIS, the market won't deliver better services or enhanced choice and control to PWD.

It would be far simpler for the government to use the assessments the NDIA is making of people's needs to provide the goods and services itself.

There are widespread hopes the NDIS can increase workforce participation for PWD and their carers. Australia is ranked 21st out of 29 OECD countries for employment of PWD and is at the bottom for incomes for PWD.

Discrimination is legal if the employer can prove that making adjustments to hire the employee would cause "unjustifiable hardship."

The NDIS may increase the supply of workers with disabilities on the la-

bour market, but due to the systematic discrimination they face from employers and the extra costs associated with employing them, there is no reason why employment rates will automatically increase. That would require serious intervention in the market.

Another clear area where the market can't deliver is the acute shortage of affordable housing.

By enabling PWD to live independently in the community for the first time it is estimated the NDIS will create additional demand for affordable housing for between 83,000 and 122,000 participants.

The NDIS will fund home modifications as well as supported accommodation, but will do nothing to fund the affordable housing many people need. This means PWD will remain on long waiting lists for public housing. The answer is obvious—governments need to properly fund public housing.

What we need is a fully public and well-resourced disability support system.

PWD have additional needs. But they would also benefit enormously from comprehensive services that benefit everyone in education; expanded, free public transport; universal health-care; liveable welfare payments; and investment in public housing.

Employers and the government will have to be forced to meet the needs of PWD and the wider community. To win justice for PWD we need to fight for a world that works for human need not profits.

75 YEARS SINCE THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOUR HOW THE US PUSHED JAPAN TOWARDS WAR

The war in the Pacific began 75 years ago with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. But it was fundamentally a war between two powers for dominance of Asia, writes **Tom Orsag**

THE 75TH anniversary of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour will see the recycling of myths about the "infamy" of this supposedly sudden and unexpected attack. But any close examination of the attack on 7 December, 1941, shows that US manoeuvred Japan into "firing the first shot" and going to war.

The US administration had decided on war and aimed to force Japan, via crippling economic sanctions, into making that fateful decision.

Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, wrote in his diary on 25 November 1941, "The question is how we should manoeuvre them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves."

The reason President Franklin Roosevelt chose this path was that the American population was hostile to US involvement in the European war against Nazi Germany. This mood was described as "isolationism".

To secure his re-election in November 1940, Roosevelt had to pledge himself to stay out of any foreign war.

Again Stimson was quite candid, in 1946, at a Congressional Committee investigating how the Japanese "caught the US unaware" at Pearl Harbour. He said, "In spite of the risk involved, however, in letting the Japanese fire the first shot, we realized that in order to have the full support of the American people it was desirable to make sure that the Japanese be the ones to do this."

The US government minimised the risk by moving part of its Pacific Fleet in Hawaii to the Atlantic in May 1941. US aircraft carriers were also away on active service when Pearl Harbour was attacked.

The US may not have known exactly where the Japanese attack would take place. But it knew, at least, that some form of attack was likely.

The US was going to use the war in the Pacific as a means of involving itself in the European world war and the subsequent carve up of the world after Germany and Japan were defeated.

As a junior partner to British imperialism with its own interests in the South Pacific, Australia was also drawn into the conflict with Japan.

Imperial rivalry

By the early 20th century the European powers had divided the world into rival colonial empires. This led to the horror of the First World War as the great powers fought over the re-division of the world.

At the end of the war Britain and France emerged with their empires intact, enlarging them through devouring the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. The US had a place at the table carving out oil interests in the region.

Japan had been Britain's ally against Germany in that war, much to the consternation of anti-Japanese racists inside the Australian ruling class and the Labor Party.

Japan began industrialising rapidly in the late 1800s. Its lack of oil, coal and sufficient mineral resources of its own meant it was dependent on foreign imports.

But the rest of Asia was already under the control of the older imperial powers, denying Japan access to the resources its economy needed.

The Russian Marxists Lenin and Bukharin argued in their theory of imperialism that the great powers would be forced towards the constant division and re-division of the world as the balance of power between them changed. This was tragically confirmed in outbreak of the First and Second World Wars.

By the late 1930s, American and Japanese imperialism finally collided

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Asia was already under the control of the older imperial powers, denying Japan access to resources
—————

over control of the Asia-Pacific.

What elevated their rivalry into war was the Great Depression. Economic collapse led individual nation states to attempt to cut themselves off from the world economy, trying to bolster their domestic industries through protectionism.

This meant Japan was shut out from export markets and raw materials. Trade restrictions by Britain, France and even China hit Japan hard economically.

Japan's solution was to acquire its own colonies—first Manchuria in 1931 and then in China in 1937. It had already ruled Korea since 1910. British and American interests in China led to collision with those two powers. As Paul A. Schroeder put it, "There is no longer any real doubt that the [Pacific] war came about over China."

The war in Europe that began in 1939 gave Japan the opportunity to seize more territory in Asia. French defeat and British exhaustion gave it the chance to gain control of rubber from French Indo-China (modern Vietnam) and British Malaya (modern Malaysia) and oil from the Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia).

Japan's rulers knew the US would be keen to fill the vacuum left by the old powers, so they studiously avoided war until it was pressed upon them.

Roosevelt refused to renew the US commercial treaty with Japan in July 1939. In July 1940, the US introduced licences for exports of oil and scrap-iron, then an embargo on all scrap in September. That month the US passed the Two-Ocean Naval Expansion Act, signalling to Japan its intention in the Pacific. In October, the US conducted its first ever peacetime military draft lottery.

Roosevelt sought to mask the slow strangulation of Japan's economy by making it harder for Japan to even

obtain the oil it held valid contracts for. Oil tankers began to be “regretably unavailable” to carry supplies to Japan.

After Roosevelt’s re-election in November 1940, on a supposed policy of avoiding war, he extended the embargo to include iron and steel.

In response to Japan’s occupation of southern Indo-China in July 1941, the US froze all Japanese assets in the US, bringing trade almost to a standstill. Britain and the Netherlands joined the US embargo.

On 26 November Secretary of State Hull handed the Japanese an ultimatum, which insisted, “The Government of Japan will withdraw all military, naval, air and police forces from China and from Indo-China... [and support no] government or regime in China other than the National Government [of Chiang Kai-Shek].”

The Japanese government felt that it had been only left two options: retreat and subordinate Japan to America or take the risk that war involved.

When Stimson asked Hull ten days before Pearl Harbour about negotiations with Japan, his response was, “I have washed my hands of it and it is now in the hands of you and Knox [Secretary of the Navy]—the Army and Navy.” War was imminent.

The 12 December weekly intelligence of the British Admiralty wrote, “Had she not gone to war now, Japan would have seen such a deterioration of her economic situation as to render her ultimately unable to wage war, and to reduce her to the status of a second-rate power.”

Being a far weaker power than the US, Japan chose to strike first in the hope that throwing the US off balance might see it lose enthusiasm for war.

Joseph Rochefort, Naval Commander of Station HYPO (combat intelligence centre for the Pacific Fleet), was blunt, “We cut off their money, fuel and trade. We were just tightening the screws on the Japanese. They could see no way of getting out except going to war.”

US control

The US justified its actions in terms of its opposition to Japanese colonial control of other countries. But the US had exactly the same desire for control of the region.

Its imperial conquest and subjugation of the Philippines is a clear example. Together with Hawaii, which the US had seized in 1898, the Philippines became the stepping-stone



Above: Torpedo bombers on the USS Enterprise prepare for the Battle of Midway in the Pacific

for US power projection in the Pacific.

The US took control of the Philippines following its war with Spain in 1898. It then had to put down an uprising when locals demanded independence.

US President McKinley said the Philippines, were “unfit for self-government,” and “there was nothing left for us to do but take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and Christianise them.” General William Shafter made clear the same year just what “uplifting” Filipinos would mean, “It may be necessary to kill half of the Filipinos in order that the remaining half of the population may be advanced to a higher plane of life than their present semi-barbarous state affords.”

In their three-year war to destroy the independence movement, US forces conducted a scorched-earth policy that devastated the country and its people, the majority of whom supported the independence fighters.

The populations of entire islands were herded into concentration camps, and hundreds of thousands were killed. One general reported that as many as 600,000 people were killed or died of disease on the island of Luzon alone—and an estimated one million Filipinos were killed, according to one historian.

The end of the war

The US was also prepared to use the barbarism of nuclear weapons to ce-

ment its claims. Its dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945 was about demonstrating to US allies and rivals, in particular Russia, the US’s claim as the pre-eminent power in the post-war world.

With the atomic bomb, the US no longer needed Russia’s assistance to defeat Japan. In one stroke, the US was able to keep Russia out of that region and demonstrate to the world the power of a weapon only it possessed.

In mid-May 1945, Stimson had a long conversation with Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy about how to “deal with Russia.”

Stimson said it was a time to, “Let our actions speak for words. The Russians will understand them better than anything else. It is a case where we have got to regain the lead and perhaps do it in a pretty rough and realistic way... They can’t get along without our help and industries and we have coming into action *a weapon which will be unique*”.

Historian Herbert Feis concluded, “It is quite possible that it was thought the proof of the power of the weapon, as demonstrated in actual warfare, might be an effective source of added authority to the American Government in the settlement of matters at issue with the Soviet Union.”

The innocent civilians of Hiroshima and Nagasaki paid with their lives in their tens of thousands to demonstrate US power.

WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT GONSKI LET'S HAVE A REAL FIGHT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Gonski funding model would allow the divide in education to continue, and does not challenge the flawed testing regime, argues **Lucy Honan**

IN NOVEMBER, newspaper headlines screamed about Australian schools sliding down international rankings—but that is not the measure of the real crisis in Australian education.

The Australian school system is now one of the most unequal in the world. Our schools are now more socially stratified than those in Canada, New Zealand or even the UK, and about as unequal as those in the US. And it's getting worse; government funding to elite private schools has increased at twice the rate of funding to public schools.

Meanwhile nearly 600,000 children live in poverty and public schools are struggling to cater for the majority of them, with vastly inadequate resources.

Public schools in Victoria must scrounge together almost as much money in parent contributions and philanthropic donations as they receive in funding from the Education Department just to run a basic program. Some public school principals have even hired out teachers to private schools to raise funds.

The MySchool league table that encourages parents to shop around instead of enrolling their children at the local public school is exacerbating the inequality, creating deprived, second-class public schools that cater for those students who have no alternative. Former Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard claims as one of her major achievements.

The Australian billionaire David Gonski's review into school funding in 2011 was supposed to reverse the inequality.

He proposed a "needs-based" funding formula that was put forward as a way to end dodgy government funding of elite private schools, and the beginning of a transparent flow of increased funds to schools with higher

concentrations of Indigenous, low socio-economic status, disabled or geographically isolated students.

But five years later, public school teachers and students are watching some private schools raking in almost triple what they should get according to Gonski's own formula, whilst public schools still miss out on the basics. In 2014, Loreto Kirribilli (NSW) received 283 per cent of the Schools Resource Standard (SRS), the basic taxpayer funding set for each public school.

The Labor Party and the Australian Education Union are campaigning to push the federal Liberal government to fully fund the final two years of the Gonski agreement. Public education desperately needs more funding, but it is time to admit that the Gonski recommendations were never about reversing school inequality.

Gonski enshrines a rigged funding model that sees private schools keeping their sticky paws in government funding; and entrenches competition between schools for test scores by tying funding to school NAPLAN improvements. It should have been rejected by the teachers' unions and public education defenders from the outset.

We need a campaign to defend and restore public education led by teachers. Demands for smaller classes, more preparation time, and an end to the destructive competition for test scores need be at the centre of such a campaign.

The extent of inequality

The authors of the Gonski report were disarmingly clear, and obviously a little panicked, about the extent to which the Australian education system is not just replicating social divisions, but compounding them.

On the international education

The Australian education system is not just replicating social divisions, but compounding them

league tables (Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA), Australia was classified as a "low equity country" in 2000, and rose to the level of "average equity" in 2009 but only because students from wealthier backgrounds dropped their performance.

Gonski identified that "compared with other high-performing OECD countries, Australia's schooling system is characterised by a strong concentration of disadvantaged students in certain schools, and conversely, a strong concentration of advantaged students in other schools. Australia also has a relatively low proportion of students who attend schools with average or mixed socio-economic backgrounds."

This clumping of kids into "rich" and "poor" schools is a problem because learning is a very social process. The overall socio-economic status of a school has a stronger impact on students' learning outcomes than the effect of an individual students' own socio-economic status (SES).

As anyone who has taught at a school serving mainly low SES students can attest, classrooms can become echo chambers of anger, disaffection and disengagement when there is a critical mass of students who come to school already battling the injustice and humiliation of poverty.

Short tempers trip-wire the classroom, and teachers, as emblems of a hostile system, have a hard task convincing students they can offer anything of relevance to their lives. There are not enough inspirational posters and "high expectations" mantras in the world to disguise the demoralising reality that our education system has thrown these students on the scrapheap of public education.

In schools with a greater mix of wealth, teachers and students are more

likely to have better, more relaxed relationships; classes can hold focus for longer, concepts can be explored further. The overall patience of students and teachers is higher, and in such a learning environment the students who most need a calm refuge can sometimes find it, rather than ricocheting exasperation.

Having said that, it is also worth noting that in predominantly rich schools, as opposed to “mixed” and poor schools, poor students are more likely to be excluded and bullied. The mix is important.

These facts are spelled out in the Gonski report. At one level, the declining educational performance measured by PISA is a concern for the ruling class; low education can be drag on productivity. In crude corporate terms, boosting student performance can boost profits and decrease the cost of unemployment.

Gonski (himself a chairman of Coca-Cola Amatil, Transfield, Singapore Airlines, Morgans Stanley and more) quotes economists at KPMG, who calculated that increasing the number of kids with Year 12 attainment would boost GDP by \$11.8 billion annually.

Yet as much as Gonski could identify the problem of a ranked education system, his recommendations, even if implemented to the letter, would do nothing to dismantle the policies driving inequality, and could even make it worse.

Funding private schools

There is a spectacular contradiction at the heart of the Gonski recommendations.

On the one hand it was meant to promote a more transparent and “needs-based” funding model that would direct more funding to poorer schools and those with high needs.

On the other hand, Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard insisted that Gonski also had to honour existing deals with private school “old boys”, headmasters and state governments. So, under Gonski, the government actually grossly over-funds private schools that are already flush with ovals, swimming pools and state-of-the-art theatres.

The explicit bias in favour of elite schools could not be more obvious. Gonski does nothing to dismantle the two-tiered structure of government and private schools.

But Gonski’s so-called “needs-based funding” approach is also a problem because it ignores whether a school is private or public. By



Above: The teachers' unions have put all their efforts into electoral campaigns entirely uncritical of Gonski

providing government subsidies to fee-paying schools, Gonski ensures that they play a permanent polarising role. This drives social segregation in the education system even within poorer working class areas.

For example, Catholic schools in working class suburbs can be almost entirely reliant on government funding, yet still demand a small, but important, fee from families that will separate those children from even poorer children in the area.

And above them all, the rich private schools (still government subsidised), as always, take the kids from the richest families.

Competing public schools

Not only has Gonski boosted private schools, his recommendations entrench a market in public education and hasten the disintegration of state public school systems into competing schools.

The increasing use of publicly comparable “performance data” (such as the national literacy and numeracy NAPLAN tests and Year 12 ATAR scores) is driving a deeper hierarchy among public schools.

One very cheap option for reducing inequality in schools would be to ban the MySchool website, which exacerbates social segregation in schools by encouraging parents to compare student scores at different schools and shop for the “best” school they can access (i.e. schools with higher concentrations of wealthier students).

This segregation means some public school principals chase high

scores at almost any cost. They will avoid enrolling students with poor academic prospects, and discourage low performers from sitting tests. Or students are pushed out of school into alternative “pathways”.

Some public schools set “compulsory” voluntary school fees that are high enough to send a clear signal to poorer families that they are not welcome.

In short, public schools mimic private school elitism, with attempts to attract students from better-off backgrounds while other local schools absorb the students at the bottom of the pile.

Gonski ordered an expansion of education measurements, so that kids would face more tests on more things. There are more intense “accountability” measures, so that the scrutiny of school and student achievement can become more obsessive.

He gave approval to the kind of school autonomy seen in Victoria, where principals are independent of the education department and allowed to run public schools like their own business, competing for positions on the league tables.

He spent a chapter of his report discussing how public school principals should be taught to raise money from philanthropic charity as a way to give their school a funding edge.

Chasing the data

On top of all this, Gonski shoved the NAPLAN tests and measured performance “outcomes” focus into the centre of the funding formula.

FEATURES

Schools should be funded so they can reach internationally recognised best practice. The government should provide enough funding to drop all class sizes to between 15 and 20 students.

Despite what some bogus educational gurus like Melbourne University's John Hattie say, there has been solid evidence for decades that a significant decrease in class sizes improves student learning. Yet, Australia's class sizes are still higher than the OECD average.

There should also be enough funding to increase teacher preparation time to make it comparable to the envied school systems in Finland or Shanghai where teachers have double the preparation time of Victoria.

But under Gonski, funding is based on an "outputs" approach, like the failed American "No Child Left Behind" model.

Under this model, the "School Resource Standard" is set by the bare minimum amount that a reference group of high achieving schools require to get 80 per cent of their students over the NAPLAN line. And this funding does not include money for school buildings and land, extra-curricular or enrichment activities, or health and welfare support!

When private schools can't raise the money, their budget is topped-up by the government. But public schools are starved of funds.

Extra funds are supposed to go to schools with disadvantaged students, but both the 'resource standard' and the extra loadings come with increased 'accountability measures' (read, strings) to ensure that any extra the money is used to produce greater "outputs"—i.e. to meet minimum standards according to the test data.

Teachers who have seen the early stages of Gonski money trickle into their schools have complained bitterly because the way the meagre extra dollars are spent is often counter-productive.

Reports abound of wasted professional development sessions with snake-oil consultants who claim their improvement strategies will see a jump in school "outcomes". Number-crunching consultants are hired to calculate the value that teachers have, or have not, added to student test scores; money is wasted on prescriptive "packages", often bought from the USA that promise to turn around student performance if teachers submit to the program.

A 2016 principals' survey found that in schools with Gonski funding,



over half of principals were spending their funding on "professional development to improve quality of teaching" compared to only 21 per cent who said they had spent money on employing more teachers to reduce class sizes.

Meanwhile a survey of Victorian teachers this year found that 90 per cent of teachers say that their excessive workload negatively affects the quality of their teaching. Over two-thirds of teachers don't have enough time to plan their classes to the level that they believe is needed.

Despite the supposed concern about Australian school inequality, the Gonski recommendations actually guarantees inequality and its funding formula adds more demands and more pressure onto teachers, while doing nothing to reduce teaching stress and workloads.

Where are the teachers in Gonski?

The Australian Education Union (AEU, which represents public school teachers and support staff) and its state branches have spent two federal election cycles and countless state

elections running entirely uncritical "Give a Gonski" marginal seats campaigns.

Union members were encouraged not to speak of public schools during door-knocks, but of needs-based funding for "all schools". When members started to bring up the problems with the way early tranches of Gonski money were being spent at their school, and even when federal Liberal Minister Simon Birmingham revealed that Gonski funding would go elite private schools, the union leaders have maintained full, unequivocal Gonski support.

But the relentless, blind support for "the full Gonski" and years of marginal seats' campaigns have not secured the full funding increase. Ironically, according to AEU polling, public support for Gonski is dropping, because people object to Gonski providing unfair private school funding!

Gonski, a representative of the corporate 1 per cent should not be setting the parameters for public school funding.

An effective public education campaign needs to start with what would actually work to boost real funding and reverse school inequality. Teachers' demands for decreased workloads, smaller class sizes and ending the race to the bottom set by NAPLAN scores, are essential for ensuring public schools get the money they need.

We have to openly call for an end to government funding for private schools if we are going to stop the social segregation of state schools and students.

There is a deep anger among teachers at the state of our schools and our working conditions. If such demands were at the centre of a public education funding campaign, we would be offering real solutions to the problems of inequality plaguing Australian schools.

The marginal seats campaigns rely on our ability to convince voters to elect Labor politicians. Yet Labor is committed to Gonski, and as we have seen Gonski will not save public education.

The fight for public education needs to start with teachers, and the industrial power that teachers have to fight and win. There would be widespread support for a real campaign to restore public education.

Work bans, strikes, NAPLAN boycotts could create havoc for the already besieged Turnbull government, and make the crisis in our schools a political crisis for the Liberals.

Above: NSW teachers on strike. Action like this will be needed to fight for public school funding

Ford exposes a sexist society, but how do we fight it?

Fight like a girl
By Clementine Ford
Allen & Unwin \$29.99

FEMINIST AND media personality Clementine Ford's first book *Fight Like a Girl* has gained enormous attention since its publication in October.

Ford's frank discussion of sexism clearly speaks to the experiences of the thousands of women who have bought her book or follow her work, particularly at a time when blatant misogyny is rampant in the media, sports and politics.

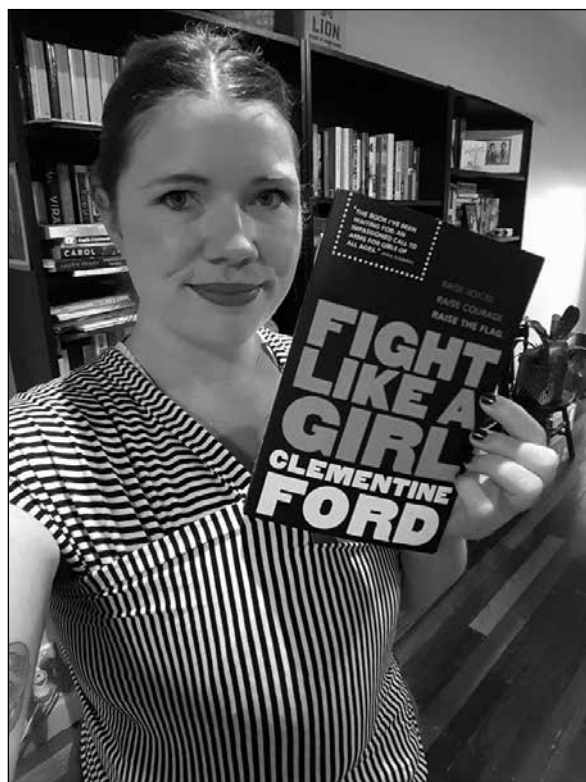
This is likely to worsen with the election of a proud chauvinist to the White House.

Anecdotes about Ford's own life—the first time she was called “fat”, developing an eating disorder as a teenager, and the barrage of abuse she has received online as an outspoken feminist—provide valuable insight into the sexism that pervades the most intimate aspects of the lives of girls and women everywhere.

Her reflections on the often-crippling effects of internalised misogyny and constant self-criticism, particularly amongst younger women, are also very relatable.

Despite the catchy title, however, it was disappointing to find that Ford provides no strategy for *actually fighting* sexism.

Each chapter tackles different aspects of sexism that the author has experienced first hand, and rightly encourages us to feel angry about these daily injustices. But rather than suggest ways of collectively fighting to end that oppression, each chapter ends with an entreaty to, essentially, ignore the sexism and love yourself.



Forming a “girl gang” and masturbating regularly, as Ford suggests, may be good ways to feel healthier and more supported, but they don't cut it as a strategies for social change.

Indeed, throughout the book, Ford treats women almost exclusively as victims, but rarely as potential agents of resistance. Though she expresses admiration for women putting up with sexism and encourages individual acts of defiance, she has little to say about the very real achievements made around women's rights in the past.

Rights like access to abortion and divorce, and legislated equal pay, were won through collective struggles fought by women and men in workplaces, on campuses and on the streets.

These rights are being slowly taken away from us again, but this book provides nothing in the way of strategies to fight

to defend them.

Sexism and system

Ford also provides no explanation as to where sexism comes from. Her claim that women have been subjugated “since the dawn of time” is simply

Rather than suggest ways of collectively fighting, each chapter ends with an entreaty to, essentially, ignore the sexism and love yourself

untrue, as well as being deeply disempowering.

It was only with the advent of class societies that oppression became systemic. The system of capitalism requires that reproductive labour, like child rearing and care for workers' material needs, be done privately in the home, at no cost to the ruling class or the state. It is this unequal burden that keeps women bound to the home and gives rise to the stereotype of women as “natural” caregivers.

But instead of examining the material roots of sexism, Ford falls back on a nebulous concept of “patriarchy”, whereby all men are naturally inclined to dominate women—itself a form of biological determinism.

Ford's approach is grounded in identity-based politics. She suggests that all men, whether working class or ruling class, have an interest in maintaining sexism, and therefore cannot play more than a supportive role in fighting against it.

This precludes the possibility of building united, collective struggles against oppression, in which sexist ideas amongst working class men and women alike can be seriously challenged and broken down.

This also leads us to the conclusion that all women, regardless of class, are ultimately on the same side. But it was Liberal MP Pru Goward that oversaw the closure of domestic violence services in NSW. Her party is also responsible for the torture of refugee women. And female CEOs like Gail Kelly do not think twice about cutting pay or benefits for their female employees.

Any gains in women's rights and economic independence will have to be

made by fighting *against* ruling class women like Goward and Kelly, not seeing them as part of the “sisterhood”.

Institutions of sexism

Instead of looking to the institutions that uphold and encourage sexist ideas, like the media, advertising companies and the halls of parliament, Ford focuses instead on nasty comments made by individuals—as though these are the cause, rather than a symptom of a sexist society. And in focusing on interpersonal relationships, Ford leaves the structures that underpin sexism, such as the nuclear family and the gender pay gap, now around 18 per cent, virtually untouched in her criticism.

For example, Ford does not mention the need for free, accessible child care—which is fundamental to alleviating the burden of unpaid reproductive labour.

The limited socialised childcare that existed in Australia has slowly been made unaffordable over the past three decades. Combined with constant attacks on welfare and maternity leave entitlements, many women have no choice but to simply leave work to care for young children, and are often dependent on their partner's wage to survive, even if that partner is abusive. No amount of “self-love” will solve this problem, which faces thousands of working class women in Australia.

We should all be furious about sexism in all its guises. But anger cannot be the starting and end point—we need to organise ourselves to fight against the sexism that is built into capitalism.

Caitlin Doyle

Instrument of power: How Mitchell's Australian shaped a ruling class agenda

Making Headlines
By Chris Mitchell
Melbourne University
Press, \$32.99

IT'S OFTEN said that journalism is the first rough draft of history. But when a book is by a very senior Murdoch journalist, you have to wonder whose history is being written.

Chris Mitchell is not just any Murdoch journalist. He was editor-in-chief of *The Australian* from 2002 to 2015, having spent the previous seven years as editor-in-chief of Queensland Newspapers, which includes the *Courier-Mail*.

And *The Australian* is not just any newspaper. As academic Robert Manne outlined in *Quarterly Essay* in 2011, *The Australian* plays a critical role as the only national paper that sets out to shape the political agenda.

Over the five years since, its weekday circulation has declined from 130,000 to 97,000. But, as a review of Manne's essay in *Solidarity* put it, the paper continues to find a significant audience among politicians, journalists, senior public servants and business people—"the political class" and the main agenda-setters.

That, Manne argued, made *The Australian* the country's most important newspaper.

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

In *Making Headlines*, Chris Mitchell makes it clear that he is proud to

have set *The Australian's* political agenda—one that reflects his own.

The refugee issue was red-hot when he arrived in Sydney in 2002. He set out to fight for John Howard's position on border control.

"The ABC, Fairfax newspapers and even most people at *The Australian* were deeply at odds with Howard on asylum-seekers," he writes.

"I thought the Oz was on the wrong side of the debate and that too many of its reporters were in the pockets of refugee activists. I set about changing the paper's position ...

"In practical terms, reversing the paper's previous position in favour of a relaxed approach to border control was the beginning of my realignment of *The Australian* towards the centre-right."

In a matter of months he shifted or hardened the paper's position on a range of questions.

"There was one last reason to reposition the paper in editing terms," Mitchell writes. "Not only did I think *The Australian* was getting the politics of Howard wrong but also I could not understand why it was presenting as a soft Left national alternative to the soft Left Sydney and Melbourne Fairfax titles."

In 2000, pre-Mitchell, *The Australian* had run reasonably accurate reporting of the S11 anti-capitalist protests in Melbourne and given the S11 Alliance equal space to put the case against the World Economic Forum.

With him in charge, the paper dropped any pretence of balance, becoming a one-eyed advocate of "economic reform",

His book throws a fascinating light on the relationship between two members of the ruling class—the elected prime minister and the unelected editor

by which Mitchell meant privatisation, lower taxes for corporations and the wealthy, and free trade.

As Manne put it: "*The Australian* is ruthless in pursuit of those who oppose its worldview—market fundamentalism, minimal action on climate change, the federal Intervention in indigenous affairs, uncritical support for the American alliance and for Israel."

Ruling ideas

The paper's sharp shift to the right certainly didn't mean, however, that Mitchell and the succession of prime ministers that he dealt with saw eye to eye on every issue.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels identified 170 years ago the inherent bias that informs the production of ideas under capitalism.

In *The German Ideology* they wrote: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force."

So the mass media (not just newspapers and broadcasters, but companies like Google and Facebook), the justice system, advertising, politics and the education system all reflect the "common sense" of the ruling class.

A system based on the extraction of profit creates an ideological superstructure that justifies the exploitation and oppression that such a system entails.

Profits are necessary, industrial action is "mindless", violence is wrong unless it's perpetrated by the state, the family is the

most important unit of society, the environment is there to be plundered.

But Marx also reminded us that the capitalists are far from united. His "hostile band of warring brothers" are often at odds about how to run the system and how to share the spoils.

So while Mitchell was a great fan of John Howard and defended him over racism, the Culture Wars over Aboriginal history, the Gulf War and turning back the boats, he used *The Australian* to attack Howard for being too soft economically.

Howard, he argued, was using the revenue from booming mineral prices to buy off sections of the electorate with family tax benefits, the baby bonus and superannuation concessions.

"*The Australian's* critique was that a prime minister and a government in tune with mainstream Australia lacked the reform vigour of the Hawke and Keating years and was prepared to mortgage Australia's long-term prosperity for short-term political gain."

Mitchell is a long-time friend of Kevin Rudd. The book recounts a number of encounters between the two men between 1995 and the recent past.

They throw a fascinating light on the relationship between two members of the ruling class—the elected prime minister and the unelected editor, the politician seeking public media endorsement and the journalist looking to boost circulation, the leader balancing ideology and popularity and the editor prepared to use his paper to prosecute



Above: Chris Mitchell with Rupert Murdoch during his time editing *The Australian*

a pure neo-liberal agenda.

In September 2006, Rudd booked out an entire 70-seat Sydney restaurant so he and Mitchell and NSW ALP secretary Mark Arbib could eat in private while Rudd pitched for support against Labor leader Kim Beazley.

Two months later, Rudd rang Mitchell from the Great Wall of China while in the company of Labor heavyweights, Kim Carr and Simon Crean.

Rudd asked Mitchell to commission a Newspan on whether Rudd and Julia Gillard would do better against Howard and Peter Costello than Beazley and Jenny Macklin.

Mitchell obliged, and the poll findings gave Rudd the trigger to call a spill and take the leadership from Beazley.

In the run-up to the 2007 election, Rudd crawled to Mitchell, desperate to make sure that Labor's agenda was approved by Murdoch's neo-liberal flagship.

The union movement was putting up a mighty fight to kill off Howard's WorkChoices legislation—but behind workers' backs Rudd asked Mitch-

ell to suggest changes to Labor's industrial relations policy that *The Australian* would support.

"It was a bizarre request, and one none of us had ever received from previous political leaders."

Backing Rudd

Mitchell lobbied Murdoch to allow him to throw *The Australian's* weight behind Labor. Rudd, he thought, "understood business and markets. We shared many views about economic reform [and] the rise of China".

After Labor's win, relations between Rudd and Mitchell were warm. Mitchell tells of a lunch hosted at a Sydney mansion by Alasdair MacLeod, who was married to one of Rupert Murdoch's daughters.

Rudd, who had just returned from the Bali climate conference, where he had endorsed the Kyoto Protocol, launched an attack on the environmental concerns among Labor members.

"He said it was a joke that he and his responsible minister, Penny Wong, had received a standing ovation for signing a piece of paper that

required no substantive commitment from the new government ...

"Rudd could not have been more explicit that he had no intention as a new prime minister of sacrificing even a single job on the altar of green symbolism."

The relationship between Rudd and Mitchell cooled in 2008 when *The Australian* ran its "Captain Chaos" coverage, revealing how Rudd's management style was creating dysfunction within the government.

But the two men continued to meet, each seeking to gain advantage—Rudd looking for media endorsement, Mitchell looking for a strong headline. United by a neo-liberal agenda, divided by their methods of prosecuting it.

Some of their meetings would not have sounded credible in a cheap spy novel.

In 2008, Rudd deliberately let Mitchell overhear him giving US President George W. Bush a hard time on the phone.

Two years later, no longer leader, Rudd invited Mitchell to dine with him—in secret, in

Rudd crawled to Mitchell, desperate to make sure that Labor's agenda was approved by Murdoch's neo-liberal flagship

the (switched off) sauna room on the top floor of a five-star Sydney hotel. It turned out that Rudd's agenda was to dish the dirt on his Labor colleague, Wayne Swan.

Mitchell's relationship with Gillard was nowhere near as close. But Gillard was just as keen as Rudd to curry favour with Australia's most right-wing newspaper.

Gillard came to Mitchell's office to underline to him that she was "no socialist ideologue".

He quotes her as saying: "Look, Chris, despite what you might have read about my background in the Left of the Labor movement, I have no doubt you and I have a very great deal in common. My values are mainstream values, and I can work with your paper."

Mitchell had a similar relationship with his former employee, Tony Abbott. Drinks and dinners, before and after Abbott became prime minister. Friendly advice from Mitchell on how to prosecute a successful neo-liberal agenda and criticism when a dysfunctional Abbott government failed to do so.

From 2002 to 2015, as the leadership merry-go-round whirled, Mitchell used his clout as head of the nation's primary neo-liberal media outlet to celebrate, cajole, criticise and berate the prime minister of the day.

Unelected and unaccountable—except to Rupert Murdoch—Mitchell showed how the ruling class can use its control of ideas to rein in elected politicians.

A genuinely progressive government would face such pressure many times over. It will take the building of a mass movement of workers prepared to challenge the system to overcome it.

David Glanz

ABORIGINAL CHILD REMOVALS FEEDING PROFITS AND PRISONS

By Miro Sandev

A ROYAL Commission into the “juvenile justice” and “child protection” systems in the Northern Territory, sparked by revelations on *Four Corners* of torture in the Don Dale detention centre in Darwin, continues to reveal stories of horrendous abuse against Aboriginal children.

Meanwhile, a further *Four Corners* investigation has shone the spotlight on violence kids are suffering in residential care. Recent protests in juvenile detention centres across the country further demonstrate the national scale of the problem.

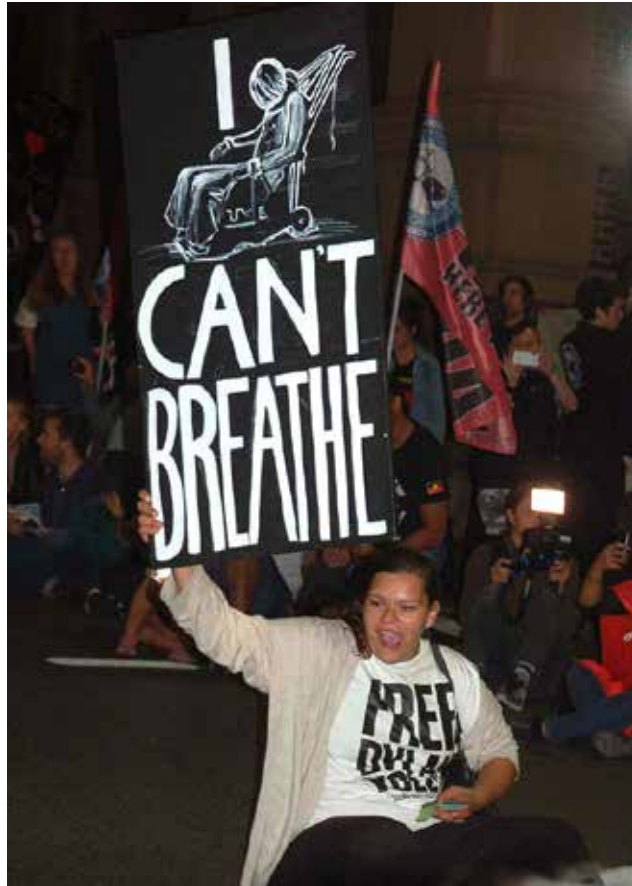
Hearings about juvenile detention centres during the Royal Commission have revealed instances of children being tied up spread-eagled, forced to drink urine, stripped and left naked, and one who was left alone in his cell for four days. A report by Amnesty found that in Queensland children were being forced to squat for extended periods and had dogs used on them, which is a clear breach of international standards.

Through the Royal Commission, Aboriginal communities are pointing out the connections between forced child removal, youth detention and suicide. At Yirrkala in Arnhem Land, women said, “we are losing our children to foster parents. What about our role, our culture?” one woman asked. “Sending children back to the homelands is the best medicine.”

On 14 November, *Four Corners* aired another investigation, this time into the scale of the abuse in residential care homes. “Child Protection” departments claim children are not safe with their parents, but they often end up in a much worse situation after removal.

Since the privatisation of the “out of home care” sector, many of these homes are now run for profit by slimy capitalists. *Four Corners* showed houses that were dilapidated, filthy, crowded and without enough social workers to provide supervision for all of the children. Sexual assault offenders are housed with victims of sexual assault, some as young as 12.

The parasites who run the houses



Above: Kirra, sister of Dylan Voller, whose appalling treatment in Don Dale was exposed by *Four Corners*. Dylan was recently refused parole despite being eligible since October and remains in an adult prison. His mother fears that he will be unable to speak freely to the Royal Commission for fear of retribution while he remains in prison.

receive hundreds of thousands of dollars per year for each child, sometimes up to a million dollars if the case is “urgent”. Meanwhile they ration out a measly \$100 per child per week to cover food, clothing and all other necessities.

Aboriginal child removals

Four Corners failed to mention that nationally, more than one third of children in “out of home care” are Aboriginal and the proportion is well over half in many regions, including in Sydney.

The report also suggested that no one wants the children that are placed into the homes, when in many cases the exact opposite is true. Groups like Grandmothers Against Removals have supported Aboriginal people fighting for return of their children and have shown that with sustained protests, families can be reunited.

Unless these children escape “child protection”, they are likely to end up in

juvenile or adult prisons.

A report by the Institute for Health and Welfare found that children in child protection were 14 times more likely than the general population to be in juvenile detention or under some form of criminal supervision. Amnesty research shows Aboriginal children make up two thirds of those locked up in detention centres in Queensland, even though they are only 8 per cent of the general population.

Despite the Royal Commission’s focus on the NT, kids in detention across the country are standing up and defending themselves from abuse. There have been uprisings in several juvenile prisons in the past two months, with youth taking control of the facilities in Melbourne, Sydney, Townsville and Banksia.

In November about 40 kids in the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre at Parkville rioted, taking over the facilities and climbing onto the roofs of the buildings. The mainstream media portrayed the kids as wild youth intent on destruction. But *Four Corners* showed that during similar riots in Don Dale, authorities lied about events and the youth were proved to be entirely justified in fighting back.

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has demonised the detainees and tried to send all those involved to a maximum-security adult prison at Barwon. Detainees were held there in, “solitary confinement... they haven’t seen the sky for a week” according to Ruth Barson from the Human Rights Law Centre.

After lodging a challenge in the Supreme Court, the Aboriginal Legal Service forced the Andrews government to agree to shift the Aboriginal youth from Barwon, though their future remains unclear.

Every remote community visited by the Royal Commission has made demands for self-determination and funding for community controlled programs to deal with struggling youth and families. We need a powerful wave of protest nationally to shut down all child prisons, bring the kids home to their communities and smash racist laws like the NT Intervention.

Solidarity