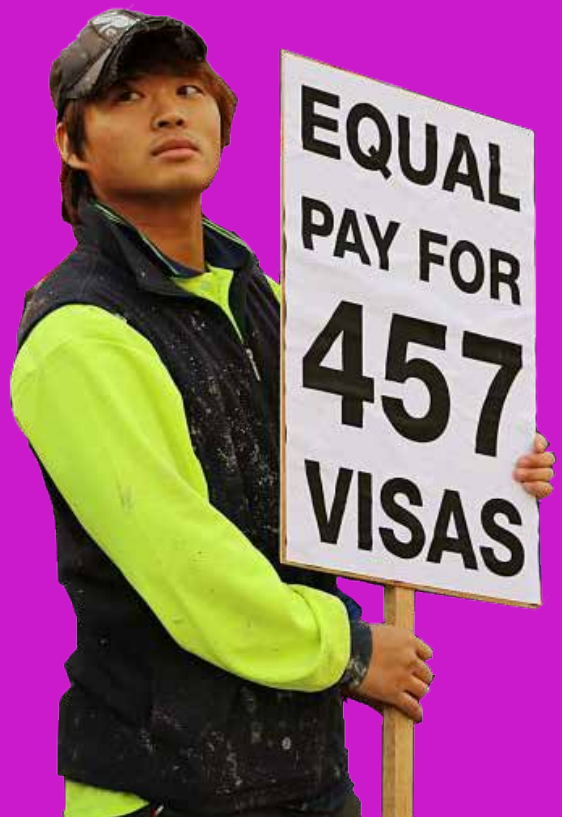


MIGRANTS ARE

WELCOME HERE

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RACISM

Turnbull launches anti-immigrant campaign

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SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown
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sydney@solidarity.net.au

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Things they say

She's a modern-day communist, old Sally McManus. She believes it's OK to operate outside the law.
Immigration Minister Peter Dutton

Out here in the western suburbs of Sydney I've got a good name and reputation to protect. I can't be associated with an (outfit) where public trust has totally collapsed, I've got to be careful with some of these outfits.
Mark Latham's explanation on why he keeps losing jobs with the mainstream media

The only thing that business has, considering its low appraisal in the community, is money.
Hugh Morgan, former chief executive of Western Mining Corporation.

We haven't had this since Joh was around
One Nation Senator Malcolm Roberts on the party's reception in Queensland

If you're talking about propaganda the ABC also uses Nazi style mind control.
Malcolm Roberts again

First of all we need perspective... In the US, there are very high levels of people on food stamps and welfare but at least they can spend it on something
Lord Michael Hastings, Global Head of Citizenship at KPMG, when asked how he responds to concerns about the negative effects of globalisation in developed countries

I had to use cocaine. I thought it was a way to get in with the boys, so I used coke.
Ben Sharp, former West Coast Eagles player, who became an armed robber after his playing career ended.

The culture could be described as the view held by players and the club, that if they were successful on the field, what they did outside the club was of little consequence.
Retired Supreme Court judge William Gillard's leaked report to the AFL on the West Coast Eagles' drug culture

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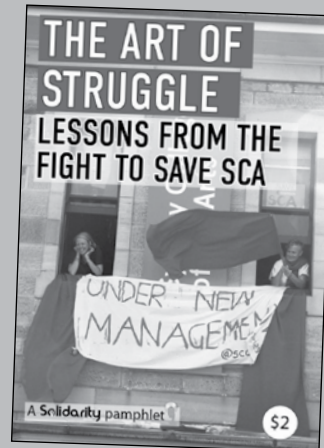


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New Solidarity pamphlet: The art of struggle—Lessons from the fight to save SCA

The SCA campaign was one of the most significant student campaigns against neo-liberalism over the past year. In this pamphlet we share our experiences of the strategy and tactics that made possible one of the longest student occupations in Australian university history.
On sale for \$2 from Solidarity



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INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

Same-sex marriage reduces youth suicide

A LARGE-SCALE study in the US has found a dramatic drop in teenage suicide in states that have legalised same-sex marriage. The study, published this year, examined the period from 1999 to 2015 in 47 states.

LGBTI students attempt and commit suicide at far higher rates than the rest of the population. US Federal data shows 15 per cent of heterosexual high school students have seriously considered suicide in the last year. For lesbian, gay and bisexual students the rate was triple at 43 per cent. During the years of the study 8.6 per cent of all teens reported attempting suicide when same-sex marriage had not been implemented. For LGBTI teens the rate was 28.5 per cent. However, in the 32 states that introduced same-sex marriage, suicide attempts dropped by 7 per cent. The study was published by Julia Raifman and her colleagues at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore.

48 people on over \$1 million paid no tax

TAX OFFICE data has revealed that 48 Australian millionaires paid no income tax in the 2014-15 financial year. Nineteen gamed the system by claiming around \$1.1 million each for the cost of “managing their tax affairs”. Nine reduced tax by spending a combined total of \$27.5 million on “gifts or donations”. This allowed them to slip under the tax free threshold and avoid paying the Medicare levy.

Xinjiang bans beards

THE CHINESE government has ramped up its victimisation of Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim minority in the country’s far west. A series of bizarre anti-Muslim laws have recently been introduced in their province of Xinjiang. They include a ban on “abnormally long beards” and wearing veils and even on refusing to watch state television. Workers in stations and airports are also required to “dissuade” anyone wearing a veil from entering and to report them to police.

Punchbowl Boys’ replacement principal ran prison school



IN EARLY March the Principal of Punchbowl Boys’ High School, Chris Griffiths, along with Deputy Principal Joumana Dennaoui, was sacked. His replacement, Robert Patruno, has a background in the prison system, as former head of the Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre’s education unit. The sacking and pointed replacement has been accompanied by a hysterical media campaign painting Punchbowl High as a hotbed of Islamic extremism. The school has a large proportion of Muslim students and Griffiths was allegedly resistant to the implementation of a NSW government “deradicalisation program”.

The program, “Schools Working Together”, now operates in 19 NSW schools. It involves surveillance of students’ religious activity, “vetting” of religious instructors and encourages staff to monitor and report students suspected of “radicalisation”. The program clearly targets Muslims, with all the participating schools in areas with large Muslim populations in Sydney’s west and southwest. Supposed signs of “radicalisation” listed in the program guidelines include common teenage behaviours like “decreased attendance at school”, “distancing from usual friends or a change in friendship groups” and “decreased interest in usual sport or social networks”. Teachers are also told to look out for “increased interest in or devoutness regarding religious beliefs”—a recipe for Islamophobic profiling.

A Change.org petition against Griffiths’ sacking has gained over 1800 signatures. It says: “There needs to be an inquiry into the NSW Department of Education’s decision-making process... The media has unfairly defamed both of their characters and labelled the students of Punchbowl Boys High School as radicalists and criminals... placing an ex-principal of a juvenile justice centre only exasperates (sic) the situation.”

Target charge \$72 for water after Cyclone Debbie

IN THE wake of Cyclone Debbie, Target was caught jacking up prices to take advantage of water shortages. A Target outlet in cyclone ravaged Bowen in Queensland displayed a pack of 24 bottles of water for \$72. Similar products can be found for as little as \$9.

An outraged local took to Facebook saying, “Talk about price gouging us while we are in need. Disgusting mongrels... I had only just left the disaster recovery people with lifeline there who gave me 12 bottles of water to bring home so we have clean drinking water and Target are pulling this stunt.” Target’s parent company Wesfarmers made \$407 million profit after tax in 2015-16.

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

UK cuts cause 30,000 deaths in a year

RESEARCH PUBLISHED by the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* has revealed a massive spike in deaths in England and Wales caused by government funding cuts. Analysis of National Health Service performance data found there were 30,000 “excess deaths” in 2015, the biggest spike in the entire post-war period. Analysis ruled out data errors, cold weather and flu as potential causes and revealed health care cuts were the major factor in the deaths.

Savage cuts to health spending and \$28 billion in welfare cuts have ravaged Britain’s aging population; the elderly bore the brunt of the mortality.

The research points out that targets were missed for emergency waiting times and ambulance call-out times, staff absences are increasing and many hospital posts remain unfilled. Professor Martin McKee commented, “Given the relentless nature of the cuts, and potential link to rising mortality, we ask why is the search for a cause not being pursued with more urgency?”

Twiggy Forrest launches tax crusade while paying no tax

TWIGGY FORREST, boss of Fortescue Metals Group, has joined a delegation of WA bigwigs in Canberra to demand a more equitable distribution of Federal GST tax revenue for WA. The delegation also included bosses from Wesfarmers and Woodside Petroleum. There is significant irony in Forrest styling himself as a champion of tax equity. Forrest’s private company Tatterang Pty Ltd paid no company tax in 2014 despite reporting \$284.6 million in taxable income. Twiggy avoided taxation through consolidations and asset transfers with other companies run by Forrest.

EDITORIAL

Unite against Turnbull's racism and his attack on penalty rates

TURNBULL HAS taken another lurch to the right, whipping up racism in a desperate effort to claw back support, as the Liberals keep trailing in the opinion polls.

First he announced he was scrapping 457 visas in order to put "Australians first, Australian jobs first, Australian values first". They were words that could have come out of the mouth of Donald Trump. Pauline Hanson immediately claimed his decision as a win for One Nation. Then he announced new measures to force migrants to prove they accept "Australian values" to gain citizenship, including a new citizenship test, proof of their ability to integrate and higher English requirements.

This is a blatant attempt to scapegoat migrant workers for unemployment by accusing them of threatening "Aussie jobs", and to inflame Islamophobia with loaded citizenship questions that suggest migrants (read Muslims) have backward ideas about women and domestic violence.

Instead of standing up to racism, Labor and the unions have tried to outdo the Liberals with their nationalist campaign against 457 visa workers.

ACTU President Ged Kearney and the CFMEU's Dave Sutton even demanded further efforts to restrict immigration, saying the package, "ignores abuses of other temporary visa classes, including working holiday and student categories".

The unions' anti-457, "Aussie jobs" campaign is a mistake. Immigrants and refugees are not a threat to jobs. The real threat comes from bosses and the Liberals as they attack conditions for construction workers and cut penalty rates.

We need a fight both against Turnbull's anti-worker laws and his racist scapegoating. The government wants to use racism to distract attention from its anti-union, pro-business agenda.

Almost every week jobs are being cut and another company is exposed ripping off their workers through removing penalty rates or stealing wages.

Stationary chain Kikki.k became the first company to apply the cuts to penalty rates for retail workers to their employees. But it then emerged that they had never paid penalty rates previously, with workers on a dodgy agreement set up under WorkChoices.

A serious union campaign to defend penalty rates could stop this



Above: Turnbull's racist attacks are designed to distract attention from his unpopular agenda

attack and finish Turnbull off. But so far the unions are simply planning a low-level "community campaign" and waiting for the next election, two years away. The Aussie jobs campaign is a diversion from the real fight that is needed.

The Your Rights at Work campaign against John Howard was started with combined unions delegates' meetings and mass rallies. Unions NSW has agreed to hold a delegates meeting, but this needs to happen soon and in every state.

Everyone who wants to see a fight against penalty rates should move a motion in their local union branch calling for action.

The CFMEU construction union's nationwide stopwork rallies against the Australian Building and Construction Commission and the new Building Code were a positive start. But this needs to be followed up with a campaign of industrial action to defy the ABCC. And the unions need to stand against Turnbull's racism.

It's time to start the fightback.

Australia backs Trump's warmongering

DONALD TRUMP'S bombing of Syria and threats against North Korea mean the world is suddenly a more dangerous place.

His cruise missile attack in Syria has ratcheted up tensions with Russia, which continues to back the Assad regime. While the US said it was not planning a wider war against Assad, White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer made it clear Trump would still, "hold open the possibility of future action".

Although Trump described the strikes as a response to Assad's chemical attack, they were also designed to show his willingness to launch future military strikes.

A week later he dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb ever used in combat, known as the "mother of all bombs", in Afghanistan.

This message is targeted at China and North Korea in particular. Trump's strikes against Syria were launched during his summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Florida.

The US is pressuring China to bring North Korea into line. But Trump has also threatened North Korea directly.

Trump's aggressive imperialist stance using bombing and the threat of war to extend US influence is a dangerous game.

Australia plays a key role supporting the US military. Both Malcolm Turnbull and Labor leader Bill Shorten rushed to declare their support for the US strikes in Syria, and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has joined Trump's scaremongering about North Korea.

Australia is already supporting the US bombing in Syria and Iraq, and US bases here play a crucial role in US military actions globally. Over 1200 US marines arrived in Darwin in April, with extra aircraft, declaring they were ready "to fight to win the night". We need to end Australia's intervention in the Middle East, end the US-Australia alliance, and kick out the US bases.

.....
Immigrants and refugees are not a threat to jobs

Wharfies stop work as Patrick tries union busting again

ON SUNDAY 9 April, wharfies and activists held a three-hour blockade of the Patrick terminal at Port Botany in Sydney, to protest the latest attempt at union busting on the waterfront.

Qube, led by ruling class warrior Chris Corrigan, is opening a container yard on the wharf on land subleased from the Patrick terminal, which will not be covered by an MUA enterprise agreement. They are trying to outsource wharfies' work and create a second tier of sub-standard jobs on the waterfront.

The blockade of over 100 activists and wharfies chanted passionately "MUA—here to stay" and "Whose port? Our port? Whose jobs? Our jobs". Supporters came from neighbouring terminals, as well as Newcastle and Port Kembla. Spokespeople from other unions including the CFMEU and International Transport Federation, plus NTEU and ASU members spoke to the crowd to lend support. Several trucks and security guards were turned away by the picket.

After three hours Patrick workers held a meeting and determined they could not go in to work the afternoon shift, and voted to go home. The company lost an 8-hour shift. The crowd pledged to return in bigger numbers to blockade again if Qube and Patrick refuse to budge.

Sit-in

Then, in a significant escalation, on Thursday 20 April, workers refused to load a train and began an almost 24 hour sit-in. Container-yard workers were driving boxes directly to the rail, expecting MUA members to then load them onto the train, despite Qube insisting the yard would have no impact on or interface with Patrick's work, and would only be for empty containers. They were caught lying red handed.

Three workers were singled out and taken off pay. This was the trigger for the terminal-wide stop-work. One Patrick wharfie said the workforce was "filthy", and pointed out that the company ignored a clause in the EBA that allows 72 hours to resolve such disputes.

The workers sat down in the lunch room and operations ceased. The following night and day shifts came through the gate, sat down and refused to work. At least two ships were left unworked in the port—one still had its hatch lids off, so it could not leave.



Above: MUA rally at Port Botany in 2015

Work did not resume until 2pm the next day.

Patrick is playing dumb, saying the site is not part of their business. But they are fooling nobody. Qube has recently bought out Patrick in a 50:50 joint venture with Canada's Brookfield logistics company. This means Patrick is "leasing" the yard to its new owners.

The MUA is having none of it. Sydney branch Secretary Paul McAleer said, "Patrick's attempts to compartmentalise the Port Botany Terminal by putting up flimsy fences to restrict job opportunities for our members is a sneaky, opportunistic plot to de-unionise the terminal, or at the very least to insource cheap labour."

Chris Corrigan, outgoing Chairman of Qube, is the former managing director of Patrick who led the infamous war on wharfies in the 1998 waterfront dispute, when he sacked the entire workforce and replaced them with ex-army scabs trained in Dubai. Now, according to *The Australian*, "he prefers the challenge of a cycle ride in the Swiss Alps he now calls home." But the evidence suggests his favourite challenge is still union busting.

Corrigan lost control of Patrick after the dispute, but has never taken his eye off it. He has reassembled many of the old Patrick executives under the Qube flag. Corrigan is staying on the Qube executive specifically to handle the Patrick takeover.

Qube is trying to rearrange and

redefine cargo-handling jobs to give the MUA the least coverage possible, while themselves profiting from both port and landside operations. The ACCC warned of the enormous market power that would come from integrating Patrick and Qube's port operations with the two largest land-based logistics businesses in Australia. Qube is currently developing the largest intermodal freight precinct in Australia—Moorebank logistics park—aiming to get containers out of Botany on freight trains, with NSW government support. Unsurprisingly, the disputed container yard is directly adjacent to the rail tracks.

Support

In an early victory for the union, the Fair Work Commission (FWC) threw out Patrick's attempt to charge the union with illegal industrial action over the initial picket. As *Solidarity* goes to press, another FWC hearing is taking place. The container yard has ceased loading trucks, during the talks. The union is fighting to have the container yard work recognised under a stevedoring award that could be covered by the MUA.

The union has received dozens of letters and photos of support, from wharfies and transport workers as far afield as Algeria, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Indonesia, Malta, the US, India, Cyprus and Poland—amongst others! Unionist and activists in NSW should be ready to support further blockades at Patrick.

Send photos and resolutions of support to: Sydney.Executive@mua.org.au And post on social media with the hashtag #defendpatrickdockers

Don't fall for Turnbull's racist campaign against migrant workers

By James Supple

IN A further slide to the right, Malcolm Turnbull has announced the end of 457 visas and new tougher citizenship requirements for migrants. Racist Pauline Hanson celebrated the moves as the work of One Nation.

The government is scapegoating temporary migrant workers for unemployment in an effort to win back One Nation voters and present itself as “protecting the borders”.

Turnbull even explicitly linked the move on 457 visas to the Liberals' efforts to keep out refugee boats. He is imitating US President Donald Trump, who issued a similar order restricting temporary work visas in the US the very same day.

The citizenship changes are designed to spread racism and suspicion about immigrants.

The citizenship test will now include questions such as whether religious freedom in Australia allows violence against women, forced marriage or genital mutilation.

This fans the racist idea that migrants are more likely to have backward or sexist ideas, and draws on the effort to demonise Islam as being anti-women. New migrants will also be forced to prove their ability to integrate, through showing they are working and sending their children to school.

Tragically Labor leader Bill Shorten has responded by ramping up his own xenophobic campaign, calling the 457 visa changes a “con-job” and declaring that, “we’ll still be bringing in cooks, builders, bakers and hairdressers from overseas to do jobs that Australians should be doing.”

The Labor Party and union campaign against temporary visas has presented overseas workers as a threat to “Aussie jobs”. But immigration does not cause unemployment. Migrant workers consume goods and services like everyone else, helping to create jobs.

The real threat to jobs comes from corporate profiteering. Transport giant Toll announced 200 job cuts in February, and thousands of jobs have gone in mining. This was not caused by migrants but companies trying to boost profits. Turnbull wants to cut even more jobs in the public service.

It is the bosses and the Liberals cutting penalty rates and attacking



Above: Turnbull's racist campaign shows how mistaken the union campaign against temporary overseas workers has been

construction workers through new anti-worker laws, not 457 workers.

Visa changes

The 457 temporary work visa will be replaced by two new kinds of Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visas by March next year. Workers on existing 457 visas will not be affected.

The most important changes are to reduce the range of occupations temporary visa holders can work in and to make it harder to access permanent residency.

English language requirements

will also be increased for the “medium term” visas and a mandatory criminal check imposed. These changes simply fan racist prejudices against migrants.

The changes will make workers on temporary visas more vulnerable to exploitation. Workers on a new “short term stream” will have no right to gain permanent residency at all. They can have their visa renewed once after two years. After that, if they want to stay they will have to move to another temporary visa class.

Those on the new “medium term stream” visas have to wait three years instead of two years before they can become permanent residents. This makes TSS visa holders dependent on their employer for their right to stay in the country for longer.

The best way to stop any exploitation is to welcome foreign workers into the unions, and to insist that temporary visa workers have the right to stay permanently and the same rights as permanent migrants.

There have been very positive examples of unions fighting against the exploitation of workers on temporary visas. Unions like the CFMEU and AMWU have done good work organising 457 workers.

That is the kind of united fight we need. Claiming foreign workers take jobs from locals only serves to divide the workforce, and gets in the way of a real fight for jobs against the bosses.

Instead of trying to out-do Turnbull's attack on foreign workers, Labor and the unions should stand against the racism, stand up for the rights of migrant workers and start a real fight against the Turnbull government.

What are temporary work visas?

What are 457 visas and Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visas for?

A 457 visa, to be replaced by TSS visas, are temporary visas designed to allow employers to deal with skill shortages in specified occupations.

16 per cent of 457 visas.

How do 457 workers have less rights than other migrants?

Workers on 457 visas are particularly vulnerable because they rely on their employer to keep their visa. If they lose their job they have only 60 days to find another one—otherwise they can be deported.

Legally 457 workers must receive the same wages and conditions as other workers at their workplace with the same skill level. But in many cases, employers have ignored this provision.

The changes will make workers on temporary visas more vulnerable to exploitation

What industries are 457 workers in?

There were 95,758 457 visa holders in Australia at 30 September, less than 1 per cent of the workforce. In total 65.6 per cent were managers and professionals. The construction, mining and manufacturing industries combined accounted for only

By Lucy Honan

THE THOUSANDS willing to march in the pouring rain at Melbourne’s Palm Sunday rally was a sign of the solid commitment and growing reach of the refugee campaign. But for a month in the run up, two organisations, RISE and Democracy in Colour, tried to sabotage the rally.

Their social media offensive against the Palm Sunday committee, pushing for RISE-approved speakers, portrayed themselves as the only authentic voices of refugees and tried to pit “refugee voices” against the activism of non-refugee activists.

Such mistaken and divisive identity politics can only weaken the refugee campaign and has the potential to confuse, demoralise and demobilise the campaign.

RISE charged the rally organisers with excluding refugee voices, demanding a platform for six speakers determined by RISE. The committee had already decided on and invited speakers, including refugee speakers, at meetings that, although invited, RISE had not attended.

Insisting that three out of nine refugee speakers was not enough, RISE members and supporters pressured non-refugee speakers to withdraw.

Ultimately, RISE was offered a speaking slot. But tragically the RISE speaker used the platform to accuse the refugee campaign of being a racist force holding back refugee empowerment and to call for an apology from the committee for silencing refugees.

The politics of RISE

RISE is a refugee run organisation in Victoria, which does admirable work supporting asylum seekers’ claims and providing support and welfare services. But it has an ideology of extraordinary hostility to other refugee campaign groups.

RISE’s identity politics lead them to believe white people will inevitably fail to show solidarity and contribute to racism against refugees.

One statement on their website claims: “it is not only the governments; the refugee sector has polarised us and damaged us. It is about their interest rather than our lives—what have we achieved last 20 years in Australia? NOTHING—because the refugee sector is headed by non-refugees”.

This position sets RISE at odds with all the pro-refugee actions and activities of the refugee campaign.

RISE does not endorse or promote

Responding to RISE: Class power not identity politics needed to fight racism



Above: Solidarity between refugees, supporters, unions and other community groups has been a feature of the campaign

Palm Sunday rallies, or other major refugee mobilisations. It discourages its members from speaking at events not organised by RISE, and boycotts Refugee Week.

Racism in the refugee ‘sector’?

Their anger directed at the “refugee sector” prompted many to ask does the campaign silence refugee voices? The truth is, there is a refugee leadership on Manus and Nauru, and also amongst communities such as the Tamils, Iranians, Hazara, Iraqis, Sudanese, Somalis, Kurds, West Papuans and others. The stronger the general refugee movement is, the greater is the political space for them to organise and have their voices amplified.

Palm Sunday rallies, and forums and meetings organised by many sections of the refugee movement throughout the year, build platforms for refugee activists that go far beyond the one rally itself.

Working class resistance

RISE’s mistaken view denies the possibility of genuine solidarity between refugees and supporters, and frustrates the efforts of RAC and other groups

orientating to the potential power of working class opposition. Where the movement is fighting the government’s brutal policies and trying to cultivate the seeds of anti-racist actions among unions and workers, RISE sees only inadequate gestures that must be “called out”.

Following the turning point at Lady Cilento hospital last year, where hospital workers refused to release baby Asha to be returned to Nauru, RISE issued a statement condemning hospital workers as hypocrites and cowards. Instead of encouraging nurses and doctors to replicate and redouble the Lady Cilento action, RISE dismissed them as “talking loudly” against detention, but failing to genuinely support refugees.

More recently, the Australian Nurses and Midwifery Federation issued a statement condemning the deportation of a refugee to Iraq, and called on members to attend the protest vigil. Instead of building on the nurses’ stand and offering support, RISE accused nurses’ union members of hypocrisy and “aiding deportations”.

Some refugee activists gave into RISE over the Palm Sunday rally. But offering RISE a speaker in the face of their social media attack was a mistake. This can only encourage RISE and DiC to continue with their self-defeating and destructive politics.

RISE sees “white supremacy” in one of the very ingredients the movement desperately needs: initiatives from people of every background at a grassroots level to fight anti-refugee racism.

It is impossible to build a successful refugee campaign that does not promote the voices and leadership of refugees—the horrors asylum seekers experience underpins the campaign against racism, mandatory detention and offshore processing.

With its roots in the refugee community, RISE could play a significant role in the movement. But the approach that labels the refugee campaign as racist and refuses to see the potential of working class solidarity means it undermines the potential to fight the anti-refugee policies of both main political parties and to win real change. RISE’s attacks on the refugee campaign should be opposed. Such an approach can only help the real racists in the government that oversees the torture of asylum seekers and refugees.

RISE’s identity politics lead them to believe white people will inevitably contribute to racism against refugees

Navy shooting rampage fuels calls to close Manus Island

By Ian Rintoul

THE GOOD Friday attack on the Manus detention centre has brought renewed calls for its closure.

Both the Refugee Council and the Australian Churches Refugee Task Force issued statements; with the Task Force calling on the government, “To lift the veil of re-traumatisation and fear for refugees and asylum seekers, and to evacuate the camps on Manus and Nauru.”

The government has tried to play down the events of Good Friday. Its fake news bulletin said that shots from a single gun were fired into the air, but the photos of bullet holes throughout the detention centre including accommodation areas tell the real story. And the full scale of the attack has yet to be revealed.

It is now clear that the PNG police were not armed on Good Friday and were not responsible for any of the gunshots. The 100 rounds shot into the detention centre were all fired by navy personnel.

Detention staff fled the compounds or took cover inside as the centre was besieged by navy personnel and the bullets flew.

One Sudanese refugee sustained a head injury when he was hit by rocks in the initial stage of the attack outside the detention centre. But the attack quickly escalated.

In a shameful attempt to deflect attention from the Australian government’s responsibility, Peter Dutton used Sky News to make the disgraceful and unsubstantiated allegation that the attack came after asylum seekers tried to lead a five-year-old boy into the detention centre.

It is a typical Dutton slur—a tried and true Liberal tactic—similar to the way the Coalition government used unsubstantiated (and now refuted) allegations of paedophile rings to justify the Intervention in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

Reports in the PNG media have outlined what really happened, pointing the finger at “undisciplined soldiers”. *The National* reports, “The riot also resulted in injuries sustained by a senior PNG Immigration officer and police officers and thousands of kina worth of damage to government properties at the regional processing centre at the Lombrum Naval Base.”

The Manus police commissioner



Above: Around 3000 marched in Sydney on Palm Sunday, one of the rallies held nationwide on the day

Photo: Liam Kesteven

stated that, “...locals in communities who are employed at the detention centre say the actions by soldiers are disgraceful.”

At least three cars, two belonging to PNG Immigration, were badly damaged. And at least one Wilson’s guard was beaten when the mob tried to break through the locked gates of Oscar compound to gain access to the detention centre.

The mob also went on to trash a Wilson’s Security office some distance away; an indication of both fury of the attack and the long-standing tensions between the navy, Wilson security and PNG Immigration and police, created by the detention centre on the navy base.

Investigation

The Good Friday attack brought back all the fears that have hung over the Manus detention centre since the February 2014 attack that left Reza Barati dead and around 70 others with serious injuries.

The PNG defence force has announced an investigation into the incident. But don’t expect a result any time soon. Only senior navy officers would either have had guns on the day or access to guns to use in the attack.

While two locals were scapegoated and convicted of killing Reza Barati, none of the PNG police who used guns in the 2014 attack on the detention centre has ever been held to account.

As elections loom in PNG, Manus Island is a running sore for the PNG government. Prime Minister Turnbull made a special visit to Port Moresby to stand alongside out-going PNG Prime Minister Peter O’Neill to announce that Manus Island would be closed by “the end of the year.” But they said the same thing a year ago, when the PNG Supreme Court ordered the PNG and Australian governments to close the illegal prison.

Meanwhile fears are intensifying that the US resettlement deal will mean next to nothing on Manus (or Nauru). Despite saying that all refugees who indicated an interest in going to the US would be fingerprinted, the US team left Manus Island after fingerprinting only the 300 who had an initial interview.

Peter Dutton keeps saying that no Manus asylum seekers or refugees will ever come to Australia. He keeps saying it because, as the thousands who marched on Palm Sunday showed, there is a movement that is determined to prove him wrong.

The pressure is building on the government as the end of Ferrovial’s Manus contract approaches in October. The PNG government is incapable and unwilling to resettle refugees.

As the failure of the US deal becomes even more obvious in the weeks ahead the refugee campaign will need to hammer home the message: close Manus and Nauru and bring them all here.

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Detention staff fled the compounds or took cover inside as the centre was besieged by navy personnel and bullets flew

Fresh abuses show: it's time to shut down youth prisons

By Paddy Gibson

MORE HORRIFIC abuses have been exposed through the Royal Commission examining juvenile detention and “child protection” in the Northern Territory.

But there are clear signs that the \$150 million inquiry, called in the wake of revelations of torture of Aboriginal children in Darwin’s Don Dale detention centre, will do little to stop the abuse at the heart of the system.

In March, a former child detainee spoke about attempting suicide six times in five days during an extended period in solitary confinement, saying “dying was better than staying in isolation”.

Male guards cut her clothes off with a knife and left her naked. She was made to wear handcuffs on the way to hospital despite having bleeding hands. She was put straight back into solitary for 34 hours after the final suicide attempt.

In April, the Commission heard that Conan Zamolo, a body builder and trained fighter, had uploaded videos on the internet of child detainees being forced to eat bird faeces. In another filmed incident he asked a group of boys to “suck my dick”. He also filmed a boy urinating while saying, “what are you doing you little gay dog?” Zamolo claimed this was evidence of his “good rapport” with the boys.

Another guard, Derek Tasker, denied ever grabbing children by the neck, despite allegations from multiple children. His lie came unstuck when CCTV footage was shown of him grabbing former detainee Dylan Voller in a particularly brutal incident.

Photographs of Voller hooded and shackled to a chair helped trigger the Royal Commission. Since being released from prison in January, he has courageously led protests for justice outside Commission hearings in Alice Springs alongside the campaign group Shut Youth Prisons Mparntwe.

Dylan’s sister Kirra Voller also condemned the fact that Derek Tasker has actually been promoted, and is now in charge of training other guards at the Alice Springs youth detention centre:

“Why is there a Royal Commission if Tasker and Clee (another guard who abused Dylan) are still working in these positions? Sacking



them should be the first step.”

Racism as usual

An interim report from the Commissioners released in April avoided making any recommendations. But it demonstrated they are only interested in pushing for cosmetic changes, such as better training of guards or better “structural design” of detention facilities. The report concluded, “every child in out-of-home care or in detention must be given a real opportunity to reach their full potential.”

But children should not be in prison at all, locking them up is itself an act of abuse. And the mass removal of Aboriginal kids from their parents by “child protection” into non Indigenous foster care needs to end immediately. As Aboriginal leaders have made clear, local people are more than capable of looking after children from troubled families if they are given the power and resources.

The Commissioners’ report was silent on the systemic racism that underlies the brutal treatment of Aboriginal children. In particular, they ignored the continuing impact of the NT Intervention, now rebranded Stronger Futures, which began in 2007, supposedly to “save the children”. This legislation treats Aboriginal people as second class citizens, with extreme police powers and racist controls over land and income. It has led to an explosion in rates of incarceration, child removal, suicide and other social problems.

NT Labor were elected to government in August last year, promising

The grandmother of a vulnerable witness with supporters outside the Royal Commission hearings in Alice Springs Photo: Shut Youth Prisons Mparntwe

fundamental change in the wake of the Don Dale scandal. But they have proved just as willing to use racist rhetoric around Aboriginal youth crime as the Liberals. In February Chief Minister Michael Gunner defended police who tasered a 12-year-old Aboriginal boy in the back as he ran away, rejecting calls by National Children’s Commissioner Megan Mitchell to prohibit the use of tasers on children. And Labor have done nothing to release children from either prison or foster care or sack staff responsible for torture.

In their report, the Commissioners welcomed much needed funding delivered by Labor for “diversion” programs for youth offenders. However, Labor has also beefed up funding for police “to deal with youth crime” and passed laws allowing electronic ankle bracelets to be used on children.

NT government lawyers fought Dylan Voller’s bail application and pursued other victims of torture for court costs, following a civil case seeking compensation. In late April, during a Commission hearing, the NT Solicitor-General disgracefully grilled Dylan Voller hours on his history, including on suicide attempts and incidents in primary school. She consistently accused him of lying.

There will be no justice from this process. The NT protests outside the Commission need to grow. On “Sorry Day”, May 26, Voller’s family will also travel to Sydney to lead a rally calling for the closure of youth prisons and Aboriginal control of Aboriginal child welfare.

Locking children up is itself an act of abuse

Trump's threats against North Korea a dangerous game



By Miro Sandev

US PRESIDENT Trump has issued a series of military threats as he pursues gunboat diplomacy against North Korea.

"North Korea is looking for trouble," Trump wrote on Twitter. His Vice President Mike Pence warned during a visit to South Korea that the "era of strategic patience" with North Korea over its nuclear program was over.

The US has ordered an aircraft carrier and its strike group, which includes a cruiser and two destroyers, to patrol the Korean coast. It is even considering shooting down future missile tests.

The North responded by threatening to launch a test missile every week and saying "thermonuclear war may break out at any moment."

China has been the main sponsor of the North Korean regime ever since the Soviet Union fell apart. Trump wants to put pressure on China to impose fresh economic sanctions on North Korea to force it to give up its nuclear weapons program.

But if China let the North Korean regime fall it could face the prospect of a new pro-US regime right on its doorstep and hundreds of thousands of refugees crossing into China. Trump's real problem here is with China

Above: Trump has threatened to "deal with" North Korea if China won't

itself, which is the main military and economic competitor to the US in the world today.

The US sees the ongoing demonisation of North Korea as a way to justify its presence in Asia as part of its "pivot" to the region aimed at encircling China.

The US is in the process of installing a missile "defence" shield in South Korea, which China claims is actually aimed at its territory and built for the purpose of containing China's rise.

But it appears that China is getting tired of having to deal with the diplomatic crises. To try to rein it in, it recently began an embargo on North Korean coal, which will have a huge impact on the North Korean economy.

Trump has been saying more positive things about his Chinese counterpart in recent days, so the US and China might be moving closer to some sort of deal on the question of North Korea.

US hypocrisy

It has long been the hypocritical policy of the US that they get to retain their nuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) while no other country can develop them.

Lacking other energy reserves, North Korea has used nuclear power plants since 1974. Since economic

aid from Russia ended in the early 1990s with the collapse of the Russian empire it has faced severe economic crisis.

In the 1990s the regime hit on the idea of developing a nuclear weapons program as a bargaining chip to try to extract aid and other concessions from the West.

In exchange for North Korea disbanding its weapons program, the US agreed in 1994 to help build two new proliferation-resistant nuclear reactors and provide food and oil aid.

There was also agreement to move towards full normalisation of political relations and end the sanctions on North Korea that had continued since the end of the Korean War in the 1950s.

But the US never kept its side of the bargain. The reactors were never completed and the US refused to drop its sanctions on the country.

It was only then that the regime resumed its missile testing. After George W Bush ramped up the belligerence against it, it also resumed developing nuclear weapons.

In 2002 US President Bush declared North Korea, along with Iran and Iraq, to be part of an 'axis of evil' which was developing WMDs and harbouring terrorists.

US and South Korean troops regularly engage in military preparations that simulate a pre-emptive attack and invasion of the North. With this sort of belligerence, it is understandable why the North would pursue nuclear weapons and use them as a bargaining chip.

In the last year it has tested two nuclear bombs and a number of missiles.

Socialists oppose all nuclear weapons, including the North Korean regime's potential development and use of them. But the idea that the US is seeking peace through its sabre-rattling, which threatens war between nuclear-armed countries, is obviously ridiculous.

During the Korean War the US military unleashed a ferocious campaign of napalm and carpet-bombing on Korean cities, murdering over 3 million people. It is not a force for peace in the region, but rather a belligerent imperialist bully.

We should oppose their recent escalations and call for Australia's military alliance with the US to be axed.

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The US is even considering shooting down future missile tests

Civilian deaths soar as US coalition unleashes bombs on Mosul

By Tom Orsag and James Supple

THERE HAS been a surge in civilian casualties in Iraq, as US bombing intensifies in the city of Mosul.

The Airwars website, which is tracking US operations in Iraq and Syria, estimates that at least 1300 people were killed in Mosul in March alone.

Despite direct Australian participation in the bombing, these civilian casualties are all but ignored by the Australian media.

On 17 March, a probable coalition airstrike killed up to 300 people in a residential neighbourhood in West Mosul.

Wa'ad Ahmad al-Tai told Amnesty International, "We were all huddled in one room at the back of the house, 18 of us, three families. But when the house next door was bombed, it collapsed on us... My son Yusef, nine, and my daughter Shahad, three, were killed, together with my brother Mahmoud, his wife Manaya and their nine-year-old son Aws, and my niece Hanan."

Iraqi military officials blamed the deaths on Islamic State booby traps.

But the US admitted it had bombed the location and Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, the top US general co-ordinating the operation against Islamic State, said there was "at least a fair chance" it was responsible.

At the end of December, at least seven people were killed when a warplane bombed the city's Ibn-Al-Athir hospital compound. It was the second time a Mosul hospital had been hit.

Iraq's emergency response division, a special police unit, is firing inaccurate rockets into densely populated areas. These weapons are commonly known as improvised rocket-assisted munitions (IRAM). Human Rights Watch have criticised them as "inherently indiscriminate", quoting eye-witnesses saying these weapons are being used repeatedly by Iraqi police.

The civilian casualties will only create more bitterness amongst Mosul's Sunni population against the Shia-dominated government.

Since the operation to re-capture Mosul from Islamic State began in October last year, coalition forces have simply advised the city's residents to remain in their homes.

But in the face of the increasing casualties and desperation, thousands



Above: Buildings destroyed in west Mosul

are fleeing. In early March 4000 left the city every day, according to the UN. In all, over 200,000 people are displaced, according to an International Organisation for Migration report.

Many are moved into over-crowded refugee camps. "There are four families in this tent, about 30 people sleep in it," said 25-year-old Marwan Nayef, at the Hammam al-Alil camp south of Mosul.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres admitted, "We don't have the resources that are necessary to support these people", after visiting Iraq in March.

Sectarianism

Since February, Shia militias known as the "Popular Mobilisation Units" have again been detaining and screening residents as they flee, in an effort to determine if they are members of Islamic State. In the operation against Fallujah last year, they were accused of kidnap and torture in similar operations against residents leaving the town.

Previously the militias have carried out a reign out of terror in Sunni areas re-captured from Islamic State, looting property and demolishing homes and businesses.

This is despite promises when the operation against Mosul began from Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi that the militias would not enter the city.

The involvement of Iraq's Shia militias will alienate the Sunni people of Mosul and entrench the sectarianism that led to Islamic State's rise in the first place.

The US and its coalition allies are directly responsible for the rise of sectarianism in Iraq. They sought to engineer sectarian tensions to divide and weaken opposition to the US occupation forces from 2004 onwards.

Faced with a rebellion that united Shia and Sunni Muslims, the US opted for a strategy that carved up state institutions and handed them over to sectarian religious parties. The Iraqi government remains controlled by one of these Shia parties.

There was rightly widespread denunciation of the Syrian and Russian destruction of Aleppo, a key rebel-held city in Syria. But the civilian deaths in Mosul at the hands of the West should also be condemned. The US, with Australian support, has been the architect of Iraq's destruction and its descent into an abyss of ongoing warfare.

The same coalition of Western forces that now claim to be liberating Mosul are the ones that invaded Iraq in 2003, killing hundreds of thousands of people.

The only solution lies in working class people in the Middle East rising up across the sectarian divide against imperialism, their own despots and Islamic State.

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On 17 March, a probable coalition airstrike killed up to 300 people in West Mosul

By James Supple

US bombing no solution in Syria

DONALD TRUMP'S strike on the Shayrat airbase in Syria demonstrated his willingness to flaunt the US's military power.

It will do nothing to end the brutal war in Syria. More US bombing can only feed the conflict and increase civilian deaths.

Trump claimed to be moved by the deaths of more than 80 civilians, including 30 children, in a chemical attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun.

It's almost certain the Syrian government was responsible. The West has no need to invent atrocities by a regime that has carried out so many already, from its horrific barrel bombs, bombardment of civilian areas and previous attacks with chemical weapons.

Assad even followed up by bombing the hospital treating victims of the latest attack.

But Trump's concern is sheer hypocrisy. If he cared at all about the Syrian people, he would lift his ban on accepting Syrian refugees into the US.

Malcolm Turnbull backed the bombing, saying the Australian government "strongly supports" the strike. He was quickly joined by Labor leader Bill Shorten.

The US bombing has increased tensions with Russia and raised concerns of a further escalation of the Syrian war.

But Trump's administration made it clear the attack was a warning shot, not the opening act in a new war.

The US was careful to notify Russia before the bombing, meaning the Syrian government knew it was coming too.

Only a third of the missiles hit their targets, and the airfield quickly resumed operating. The US did however manage to kill several civilians.

But this is far from the first time the US has bombed Syria. The US has already been bombing Islamic State targets since 2014, with Australian support from 2015. It has staged 7633 air strikes and killed at least 1300 civilians, according to calculations by the Airwars website.

We should oppose all US and Australian bombing. Syria is being torn apart as rival imperialist powers, from Russia and the US to Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia all try to build up local proxy forces and exert influence. They are no friends of those in Syria who continue to support the initial aims of the 2011 revolution. None of



Above: Trump launched cruise missiles on a Syrian airbase from US destroyers

them want a future for Syria based on democracy or the interests of ordinary people.

Trump's motives

Trump's decision to bomb Assad was a dramatic turnaround from his previous comments that the US "should stay the hell out of Syria".

Just a week before the strike his UN ambassador Nikki Haley announced, "Our priority is no longer to... focus on getting Assad out".

Given the failure of both his Muslim ban and the ObamaCare repeal, Trump was clearly looking for a way to boost his standing at home.

The strike has effectively silenced the liberal criticism of Trump as too close to Putin and some kind of Russian agent. This has been the key charge against him from sections of the US political and media establishment.

His mainstream political opponents in the Democrats and the media were gushing about the decision to bomb. *The New York Times*, one of Trump's favourite media targets, ran the headline "A strike in Syria restores our credibility in the world".

In a sickening segment on MSNBC anchor Brian Williams called the bombs raining down on Syria "beautiful".

Trump's action also satisfied the US national security establishment, which is reluctant to surrender all

influence over events in Syria.

But US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis has made it clear there are no wider plans for US military action against Assad, admitting, "There is a limit... to what we can do".

This follows the approach of the Obama administration, which refused to authorise the kind of military operation necessary to force regime change.

They understand that a US operation against Assad or even an attempt to impose a "no-fly zone" would mean a major confrontation with Russia.

The Russian government has made it clear it is not prepared to see Assad fall, systematically bombing rebel targets and setting out to control Syrian airspace. This has swung the balance in the war sharply against the rebel groups.

The US's focus in Syria continues to be on bombing Islamic State.

In the long run it hopes Russia will agree to a negotiated transition where Assad leaves and opposition figures are drawn into the regime. The US hoped to cynically use Assad's chemical attack to pressure Russia into accepting this. But Russia is not about to agree.

The only real solution to the ongoing war in Syria is a revival of the revolutionary process that swept the Arab world in 2011. And the best way to help that process now is to oppose imperialist intervention and the bombing.

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If Trump cared at all about the Syrian people, he would lift his ban on accepting Syrian refugees into the US

Homophobic horror in Chechnya: a product of Putin's power

By Amy Thomas

RUSSIAN NEWSPAPER *Novaya Gazeta* was the first to report that Chechen authorities are capturing, imprisoning, and killing and torturing gay people.

Over 100 people have been tortured in secret detention centres many are calling concentration camps. Three gay men have been murdered; some news reports are putting the true figure killed at 20. Some have been killed by their families, who have been urged to kill them to “wash clean their honour”.

Starvation, electrocutions, beatings, and ransoms are just some of the techniques authorities have reportedly used to force gay men to reveal the identity of others.

One escaped detainee, “Adam”, explained to *The Guardian* what the camps are like: “They woke us up at 5am and let us sleep at 1am. Different people would come in and take turns to beat us... They called us animals, non-humans, said we were going to die there.”

Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechen leader and ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, sparked outrage by saying the reports could not be true—because homosexuals “do not exist” in Chechnya and if such people existed “their relatives would send them somewhere from which there is no returning”.

Kremlin spokespeople have declared the accusations “phantom complaints”. But they are investigating the journalists responsible for breaking the story. Six journalists from the paper have been murdered since 2006.

A Russian NGO, the LGBT Network, has started an underground railroad to help people flee to Moscow. They have had 60 requests for evacuation in three weeks.

Putin's homophobic offensive

The homophobic horror in Chechnya follows an anti-gay offensive pushed by Putin for the last several years. His government passed a law in 2013 prohibiting the promotion of “non-traditional relationships” to minors. The law makes it effectively illegal to speak out in favour of LGBTI rights, or positively speak of gay relationships.

Hate crimes have escalated (there were at least two homophobic murders in 2013 alone); and support for LGBTI rights has shifted backwards. Moscow city has denied permission to hold a Pride march since 2012, with the



Mayor calling such parades “satanic”.

Western rulers have chosen, when it suits them, to posture over Russia's human rights record. Australia's Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, has expressed concern about the situation, as has the US ambassador to the UN.

No doubt those detained on Nauru and Manus Island would be surprised to hear senior Coalition spokespeople are concerned about accusations of unjust imprisonment.

If Bishop is concerned for the safety of LGBTI people, she should start at home. Bishop's own party in NSW has just defunded the Safe Schools program, an LGBTI-positive sex and relationships program. Since the defeat of the equal marriage plebiscite, the Coalition has continually stalled on passing legislation that the vast majority of Australians support.

Rather than demand our governments punish Russia—in a period of rising imperialist tensions over Syria and the South China Sea—we should demand they welcome LGBTI refugees, legislate for equal marriage, and properly fund Safe Schools. Tellingly, UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson, after tweeting his outrage about Chechnya, referred queries about asylum to another office.

Iron rule in Chechnya

Some reports have referred to Islam in Chechnya as an explanation for such horrendous homophobia. But as

Above: LGBTI groups have held solidarity protests around the world, demanding Russian escapees be given refuge

Novaya Gazeta reporter Irina Gordiyenko told SBS, “what lies at the heart of the problem [is] the impunity of the Chechen authorities”.

The present Chechen leadership are Russian lackeys—and they take after Putin in their persecution of LGBTI people. Kadyrov has faced numerous accusations of kidnappings and beatings of his opponents.

Chechnya is a small territory in the Caucasus mountain range that has been occupied by colonial powers for over 200 years.

Tsarist Russia first conquered Chechnya, marking the beginning of the longest active war in the world. A brief period of independence won through the 1917 Russian Revolution was ended by Stalin—who deported the entire Chechen population to Kazakhstan in 1944. A third died on the journey, and the remaining Chechens were only allowed to return in 1957. Alongside this, Stalin launched a campaign against Chechen culture.

The end of Stalinist rule in 1991 again brought the promise of freedom, and Chechen separatists declared independence. But Russia's rulers—many of whom emerged from the savage Stalinist bureaucracy—reinvaded the country in 1994. A successful guerrilla struggle forced Russian withdrawal, but Putin launched a new invasion in 1999. It was his willingness to prosecute war against Chechnya that secured Putin's rise to power in Russia.

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Rather than demand our governments punish Russia, we should demand they welcome LGBTI refugees, legislate equal marriage, and properly fund Safe Schools

Fossil fuelled capitalism pushing Earth system into unknown

Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System
By Ian Angus
Monthly Review Press, \$30

THE SPECTRE of climate change haunts global politics. In Australia, Turnbull has deceptively used the power outages in South Australia to try and undermine renewable energy, while offering a billion dollar government loan to the proposed Adani coal mine.

Ian Angus' new book *Facing the Anthropocene* will aid anyone who wants to fight governments that put profit before planet. It will serve as an introduction for many activists to the scientific concept of the Anthropocene—a new geological era that has no analogue in the Earth's history.

Climatologist Will Steffen and colleagues write, "The term Anthropocene... suggests that the Earth has now left its natural geological epoch, the present interglacial state called the Holocene. Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary terra incognita".

Angus argues that the scale of unplanned production for profit is causing a crisis of the Earth system itself. The threat of dangerous climate change is just one aspect of this crisis facing nine important "planetary boundaries". The others are stratospheric ozone depletion, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss, biogeochemical flows (nitrogen and phosphorus), freshwater use, land-system change, atmospheric



aerosol loading and the introduction of novel entities (like chemical pollution).

Angus argues that four are in the danger zone with three more on the way and that, "although the planetary boundaries are defined separately, in reality they are tightly linked".

When did the Anthropocene begin?

Angus writes, "For geologists, formally approving the Anthropocene is not like applying a faddish label to a current trend... It would mean declaring, on clear scientific criteria, that the present is as different from the Holocene as the Holocene was from the Pleistocene before it." Such a change is a major event: the Pleistocene lasted for over two and a half million years.

There is a growing consensus that the Anthropocene began following the Second World War. This has become known as "The Great Acceleration" based on graphs published by the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program. These displayed physical changes in the

Earth system showing gradual growth from 1750 and a sharp upturn in about 1950.

Since 1945 industrialisation based on fossil fuels has taken root on a global basis.

All in it together?

Angus writes, "The search for the social and economic origins of the Anthropocene is very different from the search for its geological beginning." Importantly he explicitly pins the blame on capitalism and its rulers for the crisis. He explains in detail how the problem is capitalism's drive for profit combined with the way fossil fuels are built into the heart of the modern economy.

He writes, "Globally, there is more capital invested in oil and gas than in any other industry. If state-owned oil companies are included, oil and gas capitalization totals about \$6,729 trillion, more than all the world's banks combined."

And also, "if a corporate executive has an inconvenient attack of conscience, he or she will not last long in that position...

when protecting humanity and planet might reduce profits, corporations will always put profits first."

Political leaders won't act because they and their nation's corporations are locked into competition with other states. Economic competition also means military competition, another vast user of fossil fuels.

Angus quotes researchers who wrote in 2010 that, "Today the U.S. military is the world's largest user of petroleum, and the largest polluter, producing more hazardous waste than the five largest U.S. chemical companies combined, and the largest producer of greenhouse gases."

Naming this new period the "Anthropocene" is not intended to cast the blame on the whole of humanity, he says. A close look at the scientists' work shows the opposite. Angus quotes several passages from a key book on the science of the Anthropocene, *Global Change and the Earth System*, which argues that in, "a world in which the disparity between the wealthy and

the poor, both within and between countries, is growing, equity issues are important in any consideration of global environmental management."

The movement we need

Angus is for building a movement for change in the here and now, and ultimately for a new kind of society that he labels "eco-socialism". His distinguishes "eco-socialism" from "productivist socialism" in part because of the mistaken identification of Stalinist state capitalist regimes like Cuba and the Soviet Union as socialist.

Unfortunately he doesn't go much further than to sketch out some very general principles for "the movement we need". Some flavour of the concrete struggles and debates socialists face within the climate movement would have been useful—for instance in the fight against the Keystone pipeline or tar sands in Canada, where he lives.

He rightly proclaims opposition to market solutions and carbon trading, but doesn't flesh this out. Support for a market solution in the form of a carbon tax crippled the climate movement here in Australia.

His long outline of what governments should do doesn't suggest any strategic focus for the movement—for instance fighting for governments to directly build renewable energy, or working within unions to campaign for climate jobs.

But the book does face up honestly to the crisis for the Earth system. It's a well-written popularisation of important new science that belongs on the shelves of climate and environmental activists.

Chris Breen

THE APRIL THESES

LENIN REARMS THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY

Lenin's April Theses argued that a second, socialist revolution was possible in Russia and re-oriented the Bolshevik Party to the fight for workers' power explains **Michael Douglas**

ONE HUNDRED years ago Russia was rocked by two revolutions in a single year. In February 1917 the bitterness felt by millions at the slaughter, poverty and profiteering brought by the First World War exploded in a mass revolutionary wave.

Starving workers rioted. Soldiers refused orders to shoot them. The Tsar, Nicolas Romanov, was forced from his throne and his Ministers arrested.

This complete political and economic disintegration forced millions of ordinary people to take the running of society into their own hands.

Democratic workers' and soldiers councils—called Soviets—sprang up across the country. One eyewitness describes how, "It was clear to everyone that all effective workers' organisations were at the disposal of the Soviet... It was for it to set in motion the immobilised railways, factories, the newspapers, and even to restore and safeguard the inhabitants from violence".

In the midst of the general euphoria, Lenin returned to Russia from exile. He had behind him a quarter of a century of revolutionary activity—prison, exile, clandestine work and emigration, organising, educating and leading the Bolshevik Party. The president of the Petrograd (St Petersburg) Soviet, Chkhaidza, greeted him at the Finland railway station in the name of the victorious Russian revolution, to the cheers of thousands of workers and soldiers.

Lenin shocked everyone, even his own party comrades, by immediately calling for a second revolution, "a thousand times more powerful than that of February".

He presented a short written summary of his views the next day to a stunned Bolshevik Party conference. Published as the April Theses, this became one of the decisive documents

of the revolution.

The April marked a break with previous Bolshevik policy. Before February 1917, practically all Marxists believed socialist revolution was only possible in developed industrialised countries like Germany, France and Britain. Because economically backward Russia did not have the resources to provide for everyone's needs, they said, fighting for socialism was premature.

The working class was still a small minority of society in a country dominated by peasants.

Both wings of the Russian socialist movement—Bolsheviks and the more conservative Mensheviks—considered Tsarist Russia a pre-capitalist society approaching a bourgeois capitalist revolution.

They expected this to free the country from Tsarism and transform it into a modern capitalist democracy, mirroring the experience of the French revolution of 1789.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks differed with the Mensheviks, however, in their insistence the revolution against Tsarism would be led by the working class rather than the capitalists, and on the need to build a revolutionary socialist party that fought for the political independence of the working class.

They agreed with the Mensheviks that only after a long process of capitalist development and transition through parliamentary democracy could the working class pose the question of socialism. History proved more complex.

Dual power

The February revolution combined elements of both a bourgeois and socialist revolution. The masses spontaneously arose, smashed Tsarism and gained effective control of

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Practically all Marxists believed socialist revolution was only possible in developed industrialised countries

the country through the Soviets. Yet the spontaneity of the revolution was also its weakness. The revolution was young, immature—it hated Tsarism and craved for unity against it. It trusted all the forces which claimed to stand for liberty and peace. So in its early days the Soviets were dominated by Mensheviks who believed power should pass to the capitalists rather than to the working class.

Within a few days of the February revolution, the Mensheviks called on the capitalists to take over the running of the country and form a Provisional Government.

The Provisional Government was dominated by the capitalists' party, the Cadets. It refused to distribute the land to the peasants, offered little to the workers and vowed Russia would continue fighting the First World War "to the last drop of blood". The Provisional Government lacked the means to enforce its will and relied on the Soviets, whose leaders took it upon themselves to subordinate the revolution to the capitalist class. Lenin explained that this was a situation of "dual power".

"This dual power is evident in the existence of two governments: one is the... actual government of the bourgeoisie... which holds in its hands all the organs of state power; the other is... the Petrograd Soviet, which holds no organs of state power, but directly rests on the support of an obvious and indisputable majority of the people, on the armed workers and soldiers."

Permanent revolution

Only the Russian socialist Leon Trotsky had foreseen such a possibility as early as 1905, drawing on the experience of the failed revolution that year. The solution he posed became known as the "theory of permanent

revolution”.

Russian society was an example of what Trotsky called combined and uneven development. Late and sporadic industrialisation sponsored by the Tsars had produced a relatively weak capitalist class subordinate to the monarchy. But also a working class concentrated in heavy industry in several cities.

It was in these factories and districts that workers were to organise and wield the weapon of the mass strike, pioneered by the Chartist movement in England, putting it at the centre of a revolution for the first time.

The experience of 1905 showed that the capitalists hated and feared the workers movement from below more than the Tsarist state above.

In the face of revolution the capitalists sided with the autocracy, and through it with the landowners. They closed ranks and crushed the uprising.

Trotsky therefore believed the workers and peasants had to drive forward in opposition to the capitalists. A revolution led by the working class would not be limited to overthrowing the Tsar, but would grow over into a socialist revolution—and so become “permanent”.

“It would be the greatest utopianism to think that the [working class], having been raised to political domination by the internal mechanism of a bourgeois revolution can, even if it so desires, limit its mission to the creation of republican-democratic conditions for the social domination of the bourgeoisie,” he wrote. Workers would fight for their own interests such as better wages, working conditions and ultimately control of the factories.

Russia’s backwardness would be a problem, but this could be overcome provided the revolution linked itself to the international workers’ movement and the fight for socialism in the rest of Europe.

Now, in 1917, with the Provisional Government determined to continue the war, with the workers and soldiers struggling against it for their own interests, and with revolutionary attitudes developing throughout Europe, Lenin independently adopted a view identical to Trotsky’s.

Old Bolshevism

Lenin’s new position was that the Provisional Government had to be opposed, and that the Bolsheviks should aim to win workers and peas-



Above: Lenin arrives at the Finland station on his return to Russia following the February 1917 revolution

ants to the slogan “All power to the Soviets”. “Only a proletarian republic,” said Lenin, “backed by the rural workers and the poorest sections of the peasants and town dwellers, can secure peace, provide bread, order and freedom.”

Lenin received no support from other Bolshevik leaders. Some charged him with treachery, lunacy, anarchy and more.

They still believed after February that the revolution should limit itself to the minimum program of a democratic republic, confiscation of landed estates, and an eight hour working day—the so-called “three pillars of Bolshevism”. Lenin had to repeat again and again, “We must abandon Old Bolshevism”, the previous party orthodoxy.

Lenin’s political opponents decided he was finished—so mad did his ideas sound, and so isolated was he within his own party. Yet it took him less than a month to win around a majority of the Bolsheviks. By the end of April he had won the debate at both a major Petrograd City Conference and at the Seventh All-Russian Congress of the party. Why?

Lenin’s reputation among party members and his skill in argument were important.

But even more powerful factors were at work. The Vyborg district of Petrograd, for example, had supported the transfer of power to the Soviets since the earliest days of the February revolution. Vyborg was the most advanced and militant working class district of Petrograd, where the biggest workplaces were located.

As time went on and disillusionment with the Provisional Government and the hardships produced by the war deepened, the radicalism of Vyborg spread. An early convert to Lenin’s position, Ludmilla Stal, remarked, “In accepting the slogans of Lenin, we are now doing what life itself suggests to us.”

Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution allowed him to successfully chart the course of the 1917 revolution. But Trotsky was a brilliant general without an army to speak of, while Lenin was the recognised leader of a great party.

As an individual, Trotsky could make his words heard but only a massive and well-disciplined party like the Bolsheviks could transform words into action.

After joining the Bolsheviks, Trotsky wrote that his earlier failure to see the need for such a party had been, “the greatest mistake of my life.”

Once the Bolsheviks embraced Lenin’s April Theses they set out to win the majority of the working class, the poor and the soldiers to their side. Lenin was successful in April because he knew how to express the program of the revolution in a few clear and simple slogans which fitted the dynamic of the struggle, and meshed with the experience and needs of the masses.

He identified with the aspirations of the oppressed and had absolute confidence in the potential of the working class to shape society in its own interests. Six months later during the October revolution the working class proved him right.

NORDIC SOCIALISM THE ALTERNATIVE WE NEED?

Bernie Sanders and others hold up Nordic welfare states as a model for winning change through reforming capitalism. But they too are under attack writes **James Supple**

OVER THE last three decades governments all over the world have been cutting spending on public services and dismantling the welfare state.

Neo-liberal policies have led to growing inequality. In Australia the top 1 per cent of income earners, making on average \$450,000 each, have doubled their share of income since 1980.

In the US the picture is even starker. In the wealthiest society in human history one in seven people, 45 million Americans, survive only on food handouts.

Bernie Sanders's campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination last year inspired millions of Americans with a call to turn this around. Describing himself as a democratic socialist, Sanders said, "I think we should look to countries like Denmark, like Sweden and Norway". These Nordic countries, with the addition of Finland, maintain the most generous welfare states in the world.

Denmark, the best example, provides free universal health care and university education, unemployment benefits paid at 90 per cent of your former wage for two years, as well as 75 per cent of the cost of child care.

Sweden is famous for providing 13 months of government-funded parental leave paid at 80 per cent of your wage, plus another three months for the partner who goes back to work first. This compares to four and a half months paid at the minimum wage in Australia.

Although this system is sometimes referred to as "Nordic socialism" it is better described as social democratic.

It developed through a series of reforms based on a compromise with capitalism that allowed businesses to maintain healthy profits.

The Nordic countries have been a test case for efforts to use the state to reform capitalism in the interests of workers, developing the welfare state to its fullest extent anywhere in the world.

Sweden, the largest of Nordic countries, is a clear example.

The Swedish working class managed to force reforms after a period of intense class struggle. In 1902 workers staged a three-day general strike to demand the vote.

Another month-long general strike followed in 1909. During the 1930s Depression a bitter strike in the Adalen valley saw police shoot down five workers.

This produced a period of Social Democratic Party government, the equivalent of the Labor Party in Australia, from 1932 until 1976. They were able to strike a deal with Swedish capitalists in return for winding down strikes and the level of class struggle.

A partnership deal between unions and employers was agreed in 1938, where the unions policed national wage agreements through holding back further strike action.

After the Second World War this was expanded into a centralised wage fixing system enforced across industry regardless of an employer's ability to pay.

While "inefficient" companies were driven out of business, those that could invest and improve their competitiveness benefited through wage restraint.

Far from undermining capitalism, there was relatively little nationalisation of industry, less than in countries like Britain and France at the time.

In return workers received a very high "social wage" through government spending on welfare and public services.

But this arrangement was only possible because of a long period of economic boom where businesses continued to comfortably make profits. Sweden's neutrality in the Second World War saw the country boom in the late 1930s through supplying the needs of German rearmament. It emerged unscathed from the destruction caused by the war in other parts of Europe.

This arrangement was only possible because of a long period of economic boom

This situation continued through the period of the post-war boom, the so called "golden age" of capitalism that continued until the mid-1970s.

It was in this period, when welfare states were expanding in many other countries, that most of the increase in welfare spending in Sweden took place. Government spending grew from 25 per cent of the economy in 1950 to 60 per cent by the early 1980s.

Economic crisis

But once economic crisis and recession hit, the willingness of Swedish capitalists to accept these levels of government spending and the old wage agreements was called into question.

When the post-war boom ended and recession swept the world in 1974 Swedish economic growth shrank. Another severe recession in early 1990s saw unemployment rise from 1.7 per cent to 8 per cent.

Unemployment shot up again after the 2007 economic crisis and is still at 7.4 per cent today. This is a far cry from the period of the post-war boom when unemployment averaged 2 per cent.

The result was the adoption of the same kind of cuts and neo-liberal policies that we have seen in Australia and across the world.

Sweden cut taxes on high income earners, cut public pensions, sacked 90,000 workers in the public sector and began opening health care to private companies.

As a result, the pro-market *The Economist* gloated: "The majority of new health clinics and kindergartens are being built by private companies, frequently using private money... The Swedes have done more than anyone else in the world to embrace Milton Friedman's idea of educational vouchers... More than 10% of students under 16 and more than 20% of those over 16 attend 'free' schools, two-thirds of which are run by private companies."

In 1995 Sweden also joined the EU, accepting fiscal rules that led to cuts to spending on sick leave, unemployment benefits and parental leave.

As *The Economist* commented in 2013, “Sweden has reduced public spending as a proportion of GDP from 67% in 1993 to 49% today. It could soon have a smaller state than Britain. It has also cut the top marginal tax rate by 27 percentage points since 1983, to 57%, and scrapped a mare’s nest of taxes on property, gifts, wealth and inheritance. This year it is cutting the corporate-tax rate from 26.3% to 22%.”

The same story has been repeated across Scandinavia. In Finland, ten years after the recession in 2007, unemployment is still at 9.2 per cent.

This has triggered an effort by the current conservative government to strike a “Competitiveness Pact” where unions have agreed to longer working hours, lower holiday bonuses, a wage freeze and an increase in workers’ pension contributions.

All this is designed to “increase productivity” by 5 per cent, in an effort to boost business profitability through wage cuts.

To top it all off, the Finnish government is also outsourcing employment services and cutting \$14 billion in spending by 2030.

Despite the cuts in recent decades, welfare services in Scandinavia remain by and large better than those in Australia or the rest of developed world.

You can still read reports on the success of Finland’s school system or its “baby boxes” that deliver nappies and clothes for a baby’s first year to every expectant mother.

But the trajectory is clear—these are not societies moving towards socialism but towards the same growing inequality, government cutbacks and ruthless, unrestrained capitalism as anywhere else.

Crisis of social democracy

Politically, the social democratic parties that introduced the Nordic model are facing the same kind of crisis as they are all across the developed world.

And, as elsewhere, there has been the rise of racist far right parties on the back of disillusionment with the political mainstream.

Much like Labor in Australia, Sweden’s Social Democrats have polled only around 30 per cent in the last two elections, down from an average of 45 per cent in elections



until 1980.

The Swedish Democrats, a racist party that campaigns against immigration and refugees are sitting at 20 per cent in the polls and have 49 seats in the national parliament. The racist Danish People’s Party came first in the last European elections with 26.6 per cent.

The Nordic model was able to deliver an extensive welfare state in a period where capitalism was healthy enough to pay for it.

But in the period of lower growth and economic crisis since the post-war boom ended these measures have been under attack.

This has been the experience all around the world. In the 1970s Australia introduced free universities and a universal Medicare scheme. We once had state-run banks as well as power and phone companies.

Today the Labor Party may promise to end the freeze on Medicare spending or to protect penalty rates while in opposition. But when it takes government it delivers cutbacks in an effort to balance the budget.

This has led to the growth of new left-wing electoral parties like The Greens, who aim to use parliament and control of state to deliver reforms, just as the old social democratic parties did in previous decades.

But in a period of economic crisis such a parliamentary strategy faces

Above: Sweden, which has the most fully intact of the Nordic welfare states

major problems.

In 2014 the radical left party Syriza formed government in Greece promising to end austerity, only to capitulate to the demands of the European Central Bank and the IMF and end up implementing austerity itself.

Socialism

Real socialism requires overthrowing capitalism, not compromising with it.

It would mean a society where we take control of the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich 1 per cent and use it in the interests of the working class majority. This would allow spending on services and welfare to meet social needs, as well as tackle the threat of climate change and environmental crisis.

This kind of social transformation can only come through class struggle on a mass scale.

The best example of this came 100 years ago, when Russian workers and peasants succeeded in overthrowing capitalism in the 1917 revolution.

Workers’ struggle, through strikes and industrial action, has the potential not just to halt the operations of capitalism but to construct a new, thoroughly democratic way of running society.

It is only this tradition, not the social democratic model of the Nordic countries, which can bring about socialism.

BUILDING UNIONS PREPARE TO DEFY CODE

By James Supple

THE CFMEU construction union has pledged to fight new laws aimed at stripping workers' conditions and pushing the union off building sites.

A new federal Building Code, introduced alongside the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), will ban companies from federal government tenders if they refuse to comply with its rules.

The new Code prohibits a range of clauses from inclusion in Enterprise Bargaining Agreements, in an effort to frustrate union efforts to effectively organise workers.

The CFMEU is refusing to renegotiate existing Enterprise Bargaining deals that contain banned clauses. A number of the existing, lawful agreements have over two years left before they expire. The union's National Secretary Dave Noonan told building companies, "we're not going to give those conditions away and give you a code-compliant agreement just because you ask."

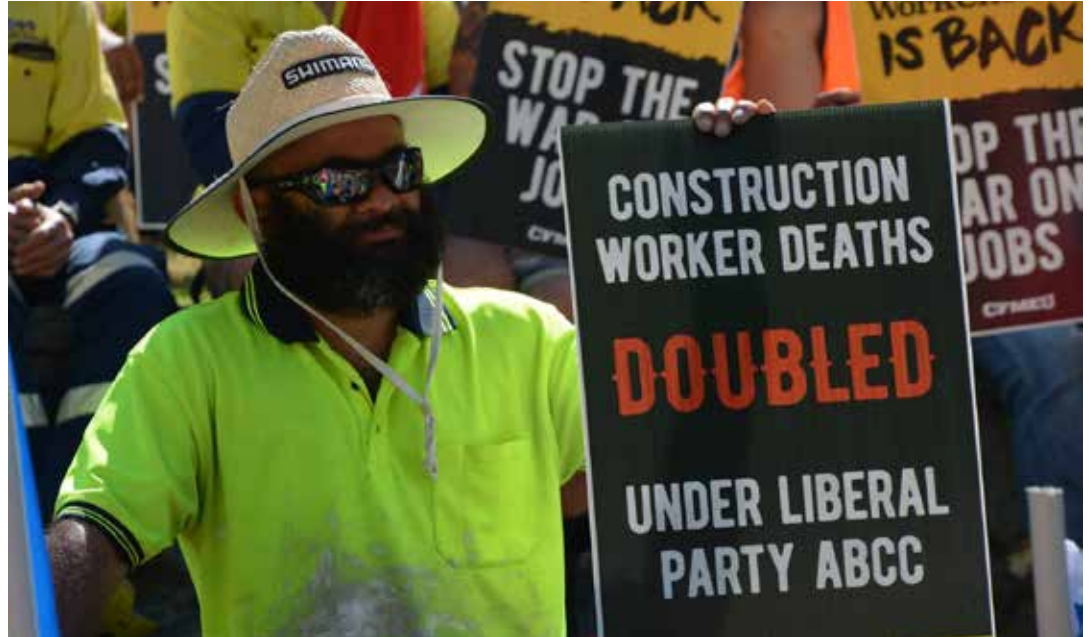
He said the union was willing to resist the new Code, "by all means available".

This is exactly the kind of defiant stand needed to stop Turnbull's anti-worker attacks over penalty rates, the Building Code and the ABCC. The national stop-work rallies held in March saw thousands of construction workers defy the law to take strike action protesting the new laws.

Many of the large building companies have non-compliant agreements. This could see around 1500 building companies excluded from the lucrative multi-million government projects.

They are desperate to finalise new agreements by the September deadline.

This sets the scene for a serious industrial fight against the Turnbull government and major building companies. If builders with existing non-compliant union agreements are excluded from government tenders, other companies may try to adopt



Above:
Construction workers on the national stopwork on 9 March
Photo: CFMEU
Construction Qld/NT

non-union agreements in order to get the work.

But a number of enterprise bargaining agreements also commit the union to re-negotiating to comply with the Building Code. Lendlease's agreement covering NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, finalised in November last year, allows the company to terminate the agreement in order to negotiate a new Code compliant deal.

It will take the threat of serious and sustained industrial action against companies to force them to live with the non-compliant agreements.

Conditions threatened

The Code is a serious threat to construction workers' conditions and union rights. It would ban unions having any additional rights to enter workplaces for induction sessions, safety checks or to hold union meetings.

It would also eliminate conditions including guaranteed days off for Christmas Day and other public holidays, the requirement for an equal site rate covering all contractors, and limits on ordinary working hours that prevent excessive overtime. Requirements to

employ a certain number of apprentices on a site would also disappear.

The broad wording of the Code, which attempts to ban any clause that would, "impose limits on the... company to manage its business or to improve productivity", could potentially strike down many other conditions as well.

Construction unions have also campaigned against the Code by saying it would mean "more temporary visa workers", through banning clauses that restrict the use of 457 visa workers on sites. But measures that are designed to drive 457 visa workers from their jobs, or set unions up to police workers' immigration status, can only divide the workforce. The unions should be trying to draw 457 visa workers into the fight for jobs and better conditions, not trying to exclude them.

The re-introduction of the ABCC means the law is even more stacked against unions in construction, with large fines for exercising the basic right to strike. Beating the Code and staring down the ABCC means these bad laws will need to be broken.

Noonan said the union was willing to resist the new Code, "by all means available".

Solidarity