

Solidarity

Issue No. 102 / May 2017

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**STOP THE UNI CUTS, STOP THE ABCC
DEFEND PENALTY RATES**

TIME TO TAKE

ON TURNBULL



BUDGET

Turnbull targets students, unemployed, workers

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

1967 referendum left hopes dashed

1917

Women, sexual liberation and the Russian revolution



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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.

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Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown
For more information contact: Jean on 0449 646 593
sydney@solidarity.net.au

Melbourne

Melbourne Solidarity meets every Wednesday at 6pm, Room G09, Old Quad Building, Melbourne Uni
For more information contact: Feiyi on 0416 121 616
melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Perth

For more information contact: Phil on 0423 696 312

Brisbane

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

Canberra

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

Magazine office

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

Things they say

It seems to me that some corporations unfortunately today are wimps in regard to standing up to these activists. A few people angrily appear at a dinner that Westpac held and they apparently change the world.

Resources Minister Matt Canavan didn't like Westpac's decision to refuse a loan to the Adani coal mine

Because we are not you—and you will never be us.

Shorten channels Julia Gillard's "we are us" comment as he struggles to distance himself from Turnbull's budget

It is about time politicians led by example and both on the Senate side and the House of Reps, there should be random drug testing as you come through the doors.

Jacqui Lambie referring to the Liberals proposal to drug test some welfare beneficiaries

I think any move by the Commonwealth to relatively disadvantage independent and Catholic schools and relatively advantage public schools I think is just wrong in principle

Tony Abbott thinks the government shouldn't advantage its own schools—the ones that don't get the advantage of private fees

I don't stand by anything

President Donald Trump when asked if he stood by his claim that ex President Obama was "sick and bad."

Media reports that my wife worked only two or three hours a day are disgusting. She was in the office at least three or four hours a day.

Bankrupt mining magnate Joe Gutnick explaining to the Federal Court why his wife was paid \$285,000 a year. He also said she was a "precious gem" worth millions. But whose millions we wonder?

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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

Catholics direct funds to rich schools

PRIVATE CATHOLIC schools are channelling government money towards rich schools in elite suburbs at the expense of their needier schools. Catholic schools are allowed to re-distribute government money within the Catholic system—supposedly according to need. This is far from the reality.

Data from the government's new school funding estimator shows schools in rich areas of Sydney receive more money than those in Western Sydney and rural areas. St Brigid's Primary School in Coo-gee got \$7411 per student in 2015 and McAuley Primary School in the exclusive harbour-side suburb of Rose Bay got \$8180. Meanwhile Mr Pritchard in Bonnyrigg in the far west of Sydney got \$6490 per student in the same period and St Brigid's Primary in Raymond Terrace on the outskirts of Newcastle got \$6779.

Aboriginal man tasered to death

COPS TASERED a black man to death outside an Officeworks store in Perth in May. Police were called to the store over a completely separate incident and came across the 40-year-old, Chad Riley, incidentally. According to shoppers the father of six was distressed and banging his head against a wall before police arrived.

Police approached him and became involved in an altercation that ended with Riley being tasered repeatedly by multiple officers. Already with a heart condition, he died after being rushed to Perth hospital.

Media reports have claimed he was suffering mental distress yet he had been discharged from medical care that morning.

The man's family is demanding justice. His sister Cassandra told Nine News she believes the tasing caused his death, saying, "The adrenaline, the heart pumping, stress... and then the tasers would've just triggered it off". Currently only an internal police investigation is taking place.

Santos admits business plan based on 4°C warming



AUSTRALIA-BASED OIL and gas giant Santos has admitted that its business plan is based on a 4°C rise in global temperatures. Global warming this high by the year 2100 is considered to be catastrophic—even by the World Bank. Such a trajectory of warming would lay waste to global food production, result in a ten metre rise in sea level and trigger apocalyptic droughts and storms.

Santos Chairman Peter Coates made the admission when questioned at the company's AGM in Adelaide in early May. Coates was asked whether the company's plans were based on the 2°C target set in the Paris climate agreement. This is the target endorsed by most governments as the maximum safe limit of warming, although many scientists say even this is a dangerous level.

He replied that the company had adopted a 4°C "pathway" as part of its strategy then went on to describe this as "sensible" and "consistent with good value" for shareholders.

US company in Iraq hides smuggling, theft, sex trafficking

A US company with a \$700 million government contract to secure an Iraqi airbase has been exposed as covering up organised criminal activity. An AAP investigation found that the company, Sallyport Global, turned a blind eye to theft, smuggling and possibly even sex trafficking.

The company's job at the Iraqi government base was to run operations, train the Iraqis and maintain security. The base housed the first squadron of F-16 fighter jets delivered from the US to the Iraqi army. But when Sallyport took over it appears to have struck a deal with powerful Shiite militias there.

The company fired internal investigators who uncovered the wrongdoing. Two of them, Robert Cole and Kristie King, say they uncovered evidence the company's employees were involved in prostitution and human trafficking. They reportedly smuggled so much alcohol onto the base that in some cases planes visibly see-sawed under the weight. A militia stole two generators with a crane which they drove straight past Sallyport security. While investigating alcohol smuggling Cole and King uncovered a prostitution ring in Baghdad with Sallyport employees as customers. Ethiopians had been infiltrated into the base as housekeepers but were working as prostitutes. Unmoved, Sallyport Chief Operating Officer Matt Stuckart said, "It is absurd to suggest that the company would shut down an inquiry into a matter of such gravity".

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

Fairfax pays CEO \$7.2 million as it cuts jobs

AS FAIRFAX announced it was cutting 125 editorial jobs at its newspapers, it emerged that CEO Greg Hywood was paid as much as \$7.2 million last year. The company claims it has to cut jobs to save \$30 million. But it's clear they could save plenty by cutting executive salaries.

The true size of his pay packet was masked by undervaluing share options. Stock analysts believe he has already been paid out in cash for the options, for a tidy sum of \$5.6 million. His "incentive package" was delivered based on making 15 per cent cost cuts at the company.

Keating says the rich are over-taxed

FORMER LABOR PM Paul Keating has come out hard against the ALP's proposed 49.5 per cent tax rate for top earners on over \$180,000. He described the tax as "too punitive" and suggested it be 39 per cent "at the most".

His impassioned intervention on behalf of the rich came in response to Bill Shorten's post-budget proposal to make the existing 2 per cent temporary deficit levy permanent. Keating pointed out that as part of the Hawke and Keating Labor governments he had personally reduced the top marginal income tax rate from 67 to 47 per cent. Wayne Swan recently took to *The Guardian* to defend this record as "a guiding light".

Macquarie not taxed by massive CEO pay

WHILE THE banks complain about paying more tax, it has emerged that Macquarie group CEO Nicholas Moore was Australia's highest paid boss last year. In the 12 months to May he was paid an astounding \$18.71 million. This is 239 times the average annual wage. His annual pay rise alone was \$700,000.

EDITORIAL

Budget, penalty rates, ABCC—united action can stop Turnbull

TURNBULL'S BUDGET is a desperate attempt to boost his shattered popularity. But it has done nothing to improve his support.

Post-budget polls show that Labor would win an election in a landslide with 53 per cent to the Liberals' 47 per cent.

Turnbull wants to pretend his budget is "fair", backing away from some of the hated cuts in Abbott's horror budget in 2014. But this is still a budget for the rich.

Turnbull and Morrison have made a big song and dance about the tax on the big banks, but it is less than 5 per cent of their profits of over \$30 billion. And the government has admitted they won't stop the banks passing the tax on.

Turnbull is dropping the "deficit levy" on high-income earners that raises \$1 billion a year. The Liberals' plan to cut company tax will be a hand-out to big business and reduce government income by \$65.4 billion over the next ten years.

On the other hand, the budget targets workers, students and the unemployed for more punishment. The Liberals want to increase the Medicare levy on workers earning as little as \$21,655. Turnbull also plans to drug test 5000 new Centrelink clients.

The budget also increases university student fees and cuts tertiary education funding by \$2.8 billion. This will threaten hundreds of jobs as university managements push the cuts through. Students will face more course cuts and attacks on the quality of education.

Labor and The Greens have already called Turnbull's bluff, saying they won't pass any increase to the Medicare levy for low-income workers in the Senate. And they won't vote for cuts to universities.

Student demos have already mobilised against the cuts. There is the possibility of linking up with university staff action, as many campuses are just beginning new enterprise bargaining with "no forced redundancies" being a major demand.

But we can't rely on the Senate to block the budget cuts. It was protest and industrial action that defeated Abbott's cuts in 2014. That is what will be needed to beat back Turnbull.

United action

The Turnbull government has already declared war on workers through supporting the cut to penalty rates. They



Above: The wave of protest and opposition in 2014 suck Abbott's budget cuts, the same treatment can push back Turnbull

are also out to strip conditions and push the union off construction sites using the ABCC and the new Building Code (see p9).

There needs to be a union-wide response to the budget, penalty rates and the ABCC. If the bosses are able to get away with cutting penalty rates in retail, hospitality, pharmacy and fast food they will come after other workers too.

The anti-union laws targeting construction workers affect all unions. In May the Fair Work Commission told the MUA to drop work bans at Patrick's at Port Botany in Sydney or face \$500,000 in fines a day. They were fighting the company's effort to establish a new non-union yard on lower wages and conditions.

Fairfax workers took illegal industrial action, with a seven-day strike against a massive 125 job cuts—a quarter of staff positions.

The campaign that fought John Howard's WorkChoices began with mass combined union delegates' meetings and weekday rallies.

Unions NSW have already called a combined delegates' meeting to discuss Turnbull's attacks, on 28 July. We need delegates' meetings in every state. Everyone who wants to see a fight should move a motion in their workplace or local union branch, supporting, or calling for, the delegates' meetings.

The delegates' meetings can make

the call for a mass stopwork day of action against Turnbull's war on workers.

Don't let Turnbull divide us

Meanwhile Turnbull is trailing behind Donald Trump and pandering to Pauline Hanson, with his call to "put Australians and Australian jobs first" when he scrapped 457 visas.

Turnbull is trying to scapegoat migrant workers for unemployment and low wages.

Tragically, rather than standing up to this racism, Labor is trying to outdo it. Their shocking "Australians first" ad with Bill Shorten wrapping himself in the Australian flag alongside a cast of white workers caused a backlash. But the real problem is not just the white Australian crowd that supposedly represents Australian workers, but the racist message that migrants are stealing jobs.

Unions and the Labor Party need to drop their dangerous "Aussie jobs" campaign. We need a fight for jobs that targets the government and the bosses, not immigrants and overseas workers. That's why Solidarity has launched a sign-on statement opposing racism and supporting temporary workers—see page 10.

Turnbull is weak and his government is unpopular—a united fightback can push back Turnbull's attacks. Any concession to racism can only hold back that fight.

.....
Unions NSW have called a combined delegates' meeting to discuss Turnbull's attacks on 28 July

Fight back Turnbull's \$2.8 billion uni cuts and fee hikes

By Matt Bull, Tom Fiebig and James Supple

THE BUDGET is a massive attack on students and university education.

It rips \$2.8 billion over four years out of universities across Australia.

Student fees are set to increase by 7.5 per cent over four years. When fully implemented, students will pay between \$2000 and \$3600 more for a four-year course. Students already face fees of \$6152 to \$10,266 a year. An increasing share of the cost of degrees is being shifted onto students, with fees to cover 46 per cent of the cost of degrees, up from 42 per cent now. Student fees have increased by almost half since 1997.

Worse, the Liberal Party is reducing the HECS repayment threshold from \$55,875 to \$42,000.

This means students will have to start repaying HECS on an income not far above the minimum wage. On top of job insecurity, cuts to penalty rates and the housing crisis this is another kick in the guts to students and young people.

In a continuation of the government's anti-immigrant offensive, New Zealand citizens living in Australia and permanent residents have also been targeted. They will now have to pay full fees instead of HECS, at a cost of \$90,000-\$100,000 for a three year degree. Combined with the three-year increase in the wait to gain citizenship, this will stop people from studying.

Funding cuts

Universities have already suffered funding cuts of \$3.9 billion over the past six years, according to Universities Australia.

Yet Education Minister Simon Birmingham claims that funding has, "grown above and beyond the costs of their operations" since most universities aren't actually running at a loss. That is because they have been slashing jobs and casualising staff for years.

Managements increasingly run universities like corporations as they move to cut costs and enrol more and more students in an effort to rake in funding.

Even in the last few months, Victoria University has announced 115 academic job cuts, Curtin University said around 150 jobs would go, and UNSW planning documents revealed up to 400 administration staff would lose their jobs.



Above: Students rally against the cuts in Sydney on the National day of action on 17 May

Over half of teaching at Australian universities is now performed by casual staff. Many are only paid for teaching periods, around half the year, and have to scramble to renew contracts from one semester to the next. Administrative and teaching staff have been forced to take on more responsibilities and are often overworked.

Universities are trying to find even more ways to reduce contact hours, with some courses at Melbourne University such as creative writing replacing lectures with online recordings of last year's course.

New cuts

The new round of cuts will come in the form of an "efficiency dividend" of 2.5 per cent in 2018 and another 2.5 per cent in 2019. Large universities like University of Western Sydney, Sydney University and Melbourne University will lose around \$45 million. Melbourne University estimates it will suffer a cut of \$150 million over four years, including other measures.

There will be further pain if universities do not meet new performance targets, including in course completion and research. These would trigger funding cuts of anything up to an enormous 7.5 per cent.

Universities that cater to students from lower income and working class backgrounds such as Victoria University or Charles Sturt, which have

higher dropout rates, face greatest risk.

University Vice-Chancellors have already indicated they will be unable to absorb the cuts, meaning staff will be cut and the quality of education will further decline.

The Government attempts to justify these measures by saying they need to balance the budget. But the priorities and interests of the Liberals are clear. Corporate tax cuts will cost the budget \$5.2 billion over the next four years. This is a budget for the Liberal corporate elites and wealthy while students and the poor pay.

Australia is already one of the lowest in the OECD club of rich nations for public funding of tertiary education as a proportion of the economy.

We need to fight this attack on students and staff. Abbott proposed complete deregulation of university fees which would have allowed universities to charge whatever they liked. The scale of the protests and opposition forced the Senate to block this, and the Liberals to abandon the plans. This shows that protests work.

We need to demand the Senate does the same thing again.

Students are not consumers, and universities shouldn't be corporations. We need to fight for universities to be institutions for social need and public good. This starts with stopping Turnbull's cuts through mass pressure and demanding universities get the public funding they need.

Students will pay between \$2000 and \$3600 more for a four-year course

Liberal schools plan a con, but Gonski's model flawed from the start

By Lucy Honan

THE LIBERALS have managed to coax back corporate executive David Gonski in an effort to legitimize their "Gonski 2.0" school funding deal.

But there is no rationale for accepting \$22 billion less for schools than what the ALP has committed. Public support for the full \$37.6 billion associated with years five and six of "Gonski" is high. Australian Education Union (AEU) polling, unsurprisingly, shows that voters would prefer money for schools than the \$65.4 billion company tax cuts Turnbull has proposed. Even the Liberals do not deny the need for more funding.

The Greens are wrong to toy with supporting the Liberals' plan. They have been wooed by the impression that the Liberals are taking an axe to private school funding. But nothing could be further from the truth. The Liberals do plan to suspend the web of deals done with the private and Catholic schools, and support a School Resource Standard (SRS) formula. But they intend to fund 80 per cent of private schools' SRS and only 20 per cent of public schools' SRS.

The Greens and the ALP must stand firm in their demand that the Liberals commit the full amount of "Gonski" dollars. But to end the incredible inequality in the Australian education system and the workload crisis that teachers face, the AEU, The Greens and the ALP must drop their support for the Gonski model of funds distribution. Gonski cements government funding for private schools, and entrenches the narrow focus on NAPLAN scores. Gonski's new review promises to devise more ways to tie school funding to the imposition of more "accountability" tasks that undermine teachers' autonomy.

Gonski's proposal that public funds for education should be "sector blind" was wrong from the start. The concentration of students into "rich" and "poor" schools is accelerating social inequality. Private schools are a core element of this stratification process. There is no justification for funding this inequality.

Gonski's SRS formula is supposed to be the minimum a school needs to get 80 per cent of its students, accounting for demographic background, to achieve a NAPLAN standard. The formula does not include



Above: There needs to be a fight for the full amount of Gonski money, but not for spending it on private schools

Gonski cements government funding for private schools, and entrenches the narrow focus on NAPLAN scores

Opposition to new Year 9 NAPLAN hurdle

PARENTS AND teachers are campaigning to reverse a NSW government decision to make NAPLAN scores a requirement for passing the HSC.

Year nine students will have to achieve a band eight score on the tests, a level more than half failed to meet last year.

A forum held on 9 May, the week of this year's NAPLAN (National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy) tests, discussed campaigning to combat the changes.

Martine Beaumont, the parent of a year ten student, explained how the change was, "telling kids as young as year eight that HSC was not an option for them".

Labor MP and Shadow minister for Education Jihad Dib highlighted the absurdity of the policy, with students who don't achieve the band eight in year nine able to sit another test where they are only required to achieve a band six. So why not just make that the requirement in the first place?

Joanna Kolevris, a year ten student, spoke of how much energy and time is wasted on NAPLAN, "We spend up to five periods on just

money for school buildings and land, extra-curricular or enrichment activities, or health and welfare support.

The formula distorts school priorities through a narrow obsession with test scores and teacher "accountability" measures. Australian Education Union surveys show that principals are more likely to spend the meagre extra Gonski dollars on "professional development" rather than increase teachers' preparation time, or lower class sizes. Yet two thirds of Victorian teachers say excessive workload is preventing quality teaching.

All public schools must have the resources to run according to international best practice. Preparation time in Australia should be comparable that of the exceptional school systems in Finland or Shanghai where teachers only spend 15 and 14 hours a week in front of students respectively. Australian teachers spend 20 hours.

Instead of keeping the tap of public funds on for private schools, and imposing a narrow NAPLAN agenda, we need a campaign that demands public funds for fully funded public schools.

practice tests."

Robin Ewing, Professor of Teacher Education at Sydney University, explained that the tests are, "actually working against what we know is good teaching" by pushing schools to "teach to the test" and "increase the inequity in our system". Most teachers know their students' needs already, she said and the tests, "are not telling them much that they don't already know".

There is growing concern amongst parents and teachers about the impact NAPLAN tests are having on students.

NAPLAN is not simply a measure of students' learning but is increasingly used to evaluate teacher performance. Publishing school rankings on the MySchool website increases school inequality as wealthier parents move their children to better resourced, better performing schools.

An online petition against the changes to year nine tests in NSW already has almost 14,000 signatures. Parents and teachers want 10,000 signatures on a paper petition to force a debate in parliament.

Ruben Fela

Turnbull budget targets students, workers, unemployed—but no real pain for the rich

By James Supple

MALCOLM TURNBULL and Scott Morrison have delivered a budget aimed at avoiding unpopular cuts, in a desperate effort to reverse their slide in the polls.

The pundits say it's a budget Labor could have delivered. But its tax increases deliver no real pain for the rich. Instead ordinary workers and the unemployed are being targeted.

This is not a big spending budget that will do anything serious to improve services.

Morrison has made it clear that the purpose of increasing tax is to reduce the deficit and "keep the balanced budget on track". Over the next four years the government aims to reduce government spending to 25 per cent of the economy.

Where the budget does mimic Labor is in delivering cuts that rob Peter to pay Paul. As in the Gillard Labor government's 2013 budget, the Liberals are cutting funding to universities to move money into schools.

But the funding increase is less than what Labor has offered, and will further gut universities by \$2.8 billion, as well as forcing students to pay higher fees.

The government's increase to the Medicare levy by 0.5 per cent hits workers with incomes as low as \$22,000 to ensure it can fund the NDIS. But the "deficit repair levy", which hit only high income earners on over \$180,000, will be scrapped.

This means a tax break for high income earners for the next two years before the Medicare levy increase kicks in.

The banks face a new levy forecast to raise \$1.5 billion a year. But with profits at the five big banks affected at \$30 billion every year, this is a hardly a big hit. And the banks immediately threatened they would just pass the cost onto customers. Again, it's workers not the rich who will pay.

And after the government covers what it is already handing back to business through its existing tax cuts, costing \$5.2 billion over the next four years, there is not much of the new bank tax left. Over ten years the government plans to hand business back a gigantic \$65.4 billion in tax cuts.

Living on welfare is already



Above: Turnbull says his budget is "fair" but the rich are largely let off the hook

impossible. Now the unemployed face further punishment, with a trial of random drug testing. And those with recognised drug and alcohol problems can no longer gain exemptions from mutual obligation requirements. In addition there will be a new "three strikes" demerit system designed to cut more people off welfare payments. The government plans to save \$632 million over five years.

Tax breaks untouched

Again the government has refused to tackle the massive tax breaks for the rich on either negative gearing or capital gains tax. These are the measures that have seen rich investors flock into the housing market, driving up the cost for home buyers to obscene levels.

The two measures combined cost government an enormous \$11.7 billion a year, according to the Grattan Institute. The best Morrison can do is pare back some travel allowances and depreciation write-offs for investors, saving a piddling \$250 million a year.

The housing affordability measures announced in the budget are a complete joke. The new "first home owner saver scheme" will do nothing to help home buyers. Like previous first home owner grant schemes it will simply push up the price of housing further.

A new National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, talked up prior to the budget, gets a measly \$63.1 million over four years to help finance low-cost community housing.

As business writer Michael Janda summed up Morrison's housing package, "If it does make a difference, it may take a microscope to see it."

Defence is one area where there is no belt-tightening in sight. Total spending will grow to \$36.4 billion next year, an increase in real terms of 6.1 per cent.

This includes the first stage of a colossal \$50 billion program to build 12 new submarines.

Australia's part in the wars in the Middle East will cost another \$903 million for the year. And the Australian Federal Police will get another \$321 million to hire 300 more officers.

This budget is designed to undo the political damage from Abbott's horror budget in 2014. But there is nothing fair about making ordinary workers to pay more tax given the billions in subsidies for the rich.

The government's backdown on the freeze on the Medicare rebate and PBS co-payment increases show that the government is vulnerable to public pressure. An active campaign by university students and staff can force them to abandon their cuts and fees increases at universities as well.

The government has refused to tackle the massive tax breaks for the rich on negative gearing and capital gains tax

UNIONISTS ACROSS Victoria joined a week of action in support of refugees in early May. Inspired by the success of the Teachers for Refugees t-shirt actions in December, nurses, librarians, health workers and university staff all staged their own actions.

Around 200 people attended a vigil on the Tuesday night, including nurses from at least four hospitals and workplaces.

Teacher Anam Javed told *Solidarity*, “there’s roughly ten of us here tonight from Eltham who have taken a 50-minute train ride after working a full day”. “We’re educating the Eltham community, the kids and the parents about this” through staging the actions, she said. “A lot of kids have asked great questions and expressed a real desire to work on this issue, and have asked teachers why are you wearing this t-shirt and what does it mean?”

Teachers at 20 new schools which had not taken part in previous workplace actions donned the pro-refugee t-shirts demanding “Close the camps, Bring them Here”.

As in December, teachers were condemned by Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham and faced pressure from the Victorian Education Department not to wear the t-shirts in schools. In at least four schools teachers wore them into class in defiance of directives from their principals. Elsewhere, t-shirts were worn in classrooms with the permission of principals.

There was an increased level of defiance this time, as not a single teacher has received a formal reprimand for wearing a t-shirt, despite the right-wing media campaign in December. Teachers were again supported by their union, the AEU.

The nurses’ union, the Allied Health Association, Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) and the NTEU all produced their own refugee t-shirts for members. Librarians for Refugees also held their own photo actions at RMIT and Melbourne University libraries.

Workplace actions are a key way to spread the pro-refugee message deeper into local communities, combat the government’s fear campaign and build the momentum for change. The action at the Lady Cilento hospital in Brisbane last year, where health workers refused to release baby Asha and her family for return to Nauru, show how workers’ action can also directly disrupt the detention policies.

Teachers in NSW are holding their own week of action at schools during refugee week in late June.

New unions join Victorian teachers in workplace refugee actions



Above: Teachers from Eltham High School at the 200-strong vigil held during the week of workplace actions

CFMEU workers’ defiance keeps union flags flying at Watpac

FOR THREE days, Watpac bosses in Brisbane tore down CFMEU flags and posters on building sites, but stop work action has kept the union flag flying on the job.

Union flags had been a feature of the Watpac sites but in early May, every night for three days, the bosses tore down the posters and each day the delegates would put up twice as many.

The company claimed that its sites had to be “code compliant” to meet the new requirements of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), the anti-union watchdog re-established by the Turnbull government.

Under Turnbull’s new laws, if a company wants to tender for government work, all enterprise agreements involving the tendering company will have to comply with a new code, on every job, even non-government ones. Under the code, set down by the ABCC, workplaces are banned from displaying union flags and posters. Even union stickers on helmets are outlawed, along with clauses restricting cowboy labour hire companies undercutting site agreements, among other requirements. It is a way of trying to drive down conditions and restrict the union throughout the industry.

Things came to head on 9 May.

Workers at Watpac Newstead Series site arrived to find the union flags gone again. At a meeting outside the gate, they took a vote, “No flags, no work.”

At the Watpac Mary Street site, similar action was unfolding. “It was all over in five minutes,” one worker told *Solidarity*. “We told them, ‘no flags, no work’ and the flags went straight back up.”

At Newstead, however, one crane driver sided with Watpac. For a couple of hours workers stayed on the grass. Then the whole worksite waited and watched as the flag went up on the hold-out crane.

In New South Wales, Watpac sites have always been flying the union flag. But in Queensland the company has been more actively anti-union. It turned out that the company was lying when it told the workers that the company had to be code compliant. It is only after 31 August companies have to be “code compliant” to be eligible for government contracts. But it is a taste of things to come.

Defiance of the law at Watpac kept the unions flags flying. That’s the kind of fight that will be needed to defeat the ABCC and the code right across the industry.

Ian Rintoul

Sign-on statement: Migrant workers don't take jobs—Oppose Turnbull's racism

MALCOLM TURNBULL'S recently announced changes restricting temporary work visas and further tightening the citizenship application process are an effort to mimic US President Donald Trump and use racism to boost the government's declining electoral support.

We the undersigned oppose the Turnbull government's decision to scrap 457 visas and restrict the rights of migrant workers.

The restrictions will discriminate against migrant workers and leave them even more vulnerable to exploitation. Increased English language requirements and a mandatory criminal check for temporary workers only fan racist prejudices, as do new citizenship test questions that suggest migrants oppose women's equality or support child abuse.

Turnbull's new Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visas to replace 457s make migrant workers even more vulnerable. The TSS visas will increase the barriers to permanent residency. Workers on the new four-year TSS will have to wait three years instead of two years to apply for residency. The new two-year TSS will operate as a "guest worker" scheme, with no rights to residency at all.

All temporary visas can lead to hyper-exploitation because employers have the power to determine whether workers can remain in the country. If they are sacked, 457 workers have only 60 days to find a new job or they face deportation. But union organisation of temporary visa workers can protect their rights, including the right to residency, and defend industry conditions for all.

Migrant workers don't take jobs
Turnbull's "Australian jobs, Australian values" slogan is a disgraceful attempt by an unpopular government to blame migrant workers for unemployment.

There is no relationship whatsoever between levels of migration and levels of unemployment. Migrants consume goods and services like everyone else, helping to create jobs. 457 visa holders are far less than 1 per cent of the workforce. Tragically, by calling for further restrictions on the rights of workers to come to Australia, the ACTU, some affiliate unions and the Labor Party have reinforced the idea that foreign workers are to blame.



The union demand "Aussie jobs for Aussie workers" alienates and scapegoats migrant workers. Twenty-eight per cent of the Australian population was born overseas. We can't build united, strong unions with a campaign that divides the workforce.

The campaign for "Aussie jobs" has done nothing to actually stop job losses. But it has given more oxygen to Turnbull and One Nation to attack foreign workers.

It is Turnbull and big business that are causing job losses, not migrants. Since 2013 the Coalition government has cut 15,000 public service jobs and another 4000 are threatened with the May budget. Thousands of jobs were lost when the major car companies closed the car plants. It is the employers, Australian bosses included, that cut wages and conditions like penalty rates and outsource and casualise the workforce to exploit Australian and migrant workers alike.

To build unity against the government and the employers we need to welcome workers on any kind of visa into our unions and make the right to permanent residency for all migrant workers a central demand.

There are many examples in our history of migrant workers leading strikes. Workers on different kinds of visas are already part of our unions, actively involved in the collective

Above: Temporary visa workers fighting for equal pay at a construction site in Canberra

struggles to defend conditions and union rights. There are recent examples of unions organising and defending 457 visa holders from exploitation. This is the kind of action the union movement should build on.

We call on the ACTU and affiliated unions to:

i) Oppose the Turnbull government's changes to temporary work visas and the new rules for the citizenship applications. Demand rights to permanent residency for all migrant workers.

ii) Drop the "Aussie jobs for Aussie workers" slogan and begin a real fight for "Union Jobs For All"—a campaign against closures and casualisation, for secure, union jobs that unites all workers, regardless of their national or cultural background.

iii) Oppose discrimination against workers from non-English speaking backgrounds. Demand that translators and paid English language classes are available on the job.

Signatories include:

Michael Thomson, Secretary, NTEU NSW

Mark Johnston, NTEU University of Sydney Branch Vice President and National Councillor

Damien Cahill, NTEU University of Sydney Branch Vice President (Academic), Elected Member, NTEU National Executive

Bill Dunn, NTEU member and Associate Professor, Political Economy, University of Sydney

Claudia Gonzales, NTEU—Adult Community Education Branch President (Vic)

David Glanz, member, RMIT University NTEU branch committee

Heather Goodall, NTEU member and Professor, Social and Political Change Group, UTS

John Gauci, Secretary, Inner City Teachers Association (NSW Teachers Federation)

John Morris, Secretary, Canterbury-Bankstown Teachers Federation

Lucy Honan, AEU (Victoria) Branch Councillor

Judy McVey, Section Councillor CPSU, ABS PSOI

Nick Riemer, NTEU member University of Sydney

Paddy Gibson, NTEU member and Senior Researcher, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning UTS

To add your name to this statement email solidarity@solidarity.net.au

New Zealand channels Turnbull and Trump in attack on migrant workers

By Paddy Gibson

NATIONAL PARTY Prime Minister Bill English launched an attack on rights and opportunities available to migrant workers in New Zealand in April.

His promise of a “Kiwis first approach to immigration” came just days after Malcolm Turnbull announced similar changes to “put Australians first” and Donald Trump campaigned to “Buy American, Hire American”, issuing an executive order to review migrant worker visas in the US.

All three politicians are scapegoating migrants for problems caused by many years of neo-liberal attacks on working class living standards.

In New Zealand, migrants have been blamed in particular for an acute housing affordability crisis, driven by property investors and a large scale sell off of state housing.

The changes will restrict access to the “skilled migrant” visa to workers who earn more than \$49,000. Migrant workers already living in New Zealand will have three years to find a job that meets the new requirements, or face deportation. Migrants seeking permanent residency will also no longer be able to claim “points” that count towards their application working jobs that pay less than \$49,000.

Lower paid workers could be eligible for a new visa that restricts their stay to just three years, offers no pathway to residency and denies family the right to travel with them.

Immigration lawyer Alastair McClymont argues that the changes will hit Indian migrants particularly hard. He says “90 per cent” of Indian students studying in New Zealand have come looking for a pathway to residency that has now been closed.

Another lawyer Richard Small told the ABC’s *Pacific Beat* that Pacific Islanders will also be heavily affected with the changes part of, “a quiet closing of the door to the Pacific... as many as 90 per cent of skilled migrant applications from the Pacific would be unlikely to succeed”.

Disgracefully, just like in Australia, the New Zealand Labour Party has called for even harsher restrictions on migrant workers, pledging to cut migration numbers by “tens of thousands” if elected. Greens co-leader James Shaw has also campaigned for tougher immigration controls.

Resistance to the attacks has come



Above: Indian students in Auckland campaigning against deportation

from Unite, a left-wing union representing hospitality and retail workers. Unite has held a number of meetings to call for amnesty for workers already in New Zealand, including at the Sky-City casino where hundreds of migrant workers are organised in the union.

At the meetings, some speakers raised the discrimination that New Zealand workers face in Australia, where they are denied access to government services, calling for unity and a fight for migrant workers’ rights on both sides of the Tasman.

Impact of Turnbull’s 457 visa changes clearer

EVIDENCE IS mounting that Turnbull’s changes to temporary worker visas will create a new class of “guest worker” migrants with fewer rights.

Many have noted that the occupations removed from the list that temporary migrant workers can do would still allow over 90 per cent of those granted 457 visas in the second half of 2016 to gain a new Temporary Skills Shortage visa.

But analysis by SBS News found that more than half of temporary migrant workers in future would only be entitled to the two year temporary visa. This means they have no pathway to permanent residency and can only stay in the country on their current visa for four years.

The changes only apply to new temporary visa applicants from March next year. But based on the occupations of 457 visa workers in Australia at the end of 2016, 45,000 of the 81,000 would be affected. Overall just 35 per cent of current 457 visa holders would have a right to permanent residency under the changes. This would prevent 15,000 people gaining permanent residency each year.

In addition, the higher level of

English required to gain citizenship poses a serious barrier for refugees and family members of skilled migrants who arrive with low English skills.

Henry Sherrell, a researcher at the ANU, examined the Australian government’s official Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), provided to newly-arrived refugees and other migrants. He writes that, “Of the AMEP attendees who completed 500 hours of training between 2004 and 2012, 0 per cent of new migrants reached the level required for the new citizenship test.”

Around 80 per cent of refugees attend the classes. Based on the number of new migrants who attend these classes, “somewhere north of 30,000 people each year would be ineligible for Australian citizenship under the new rules”.

A lack of citizenship denies people the right to vote, to work in some public service jobs and means they can have their visa cancelled and face deportation. And under new changes non-citizens also have to pay up-front fees to study at university. These attacks on migrant workers are simply racist discrimination.

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The changes will hit Indian migrants and Pacific Islanders particularly hard

Macron's victory in France won't stop the fascist Le Pen



By Amy Thomas

FRANCE'S HISTORIC presidential battle between fascist Marine Le Pen and neo-liberal Emmanuele Macron may be over, but the crisis in French politics that produced this remarkable contest is far from resolved.

It was the first time ever that neither the Conservatives nor the Socialist (Labor-type) Party made it to the second round.

Macron took 24 per cent to top the poll in the first round. He was able to build support simply on the basis that he wasn't from the hated mainstream parties. He kept relatively quiet about his plans to attack trade unions and public sector jobs, instead promoting himself as "an outsider".

In truth, he's as insider as they come—an ex-banker, and a former Minister of Economy in outgoing President Francois Hollande's government.

Macron won comfortably with 66 per cent of valid votes in the second round run-off. But almost two-thirds of his voters said they did it only to keep out Le Pen. Turnout at polling booths, usually high in France, was the lowest since 1969. And 12 per cent of people who did vote recorded a blank or spoiled ballot.

Now, in the context of such limited support, Macron faces the elections for parliamentary candidates without a party. As soon as he tries to cobble

together a government of neo-liberals like himself, his claim to "outsider" status will be easily exposed. Like those that came before him, Macron will have a hard time trying to impose his ambitious neo-liberal reforms.

He takes the helm from the humiliated French Socialist Party, led by Francois Hollande. Much like their Greek counterparts PASOK, they have been reduced to a pale shadow of their former selves after years of implementing austerity measures. Hollande achieved little in his time but a fantastic drop in support from 60 per cent when first elected in 2012 to an approval rating of just 4 per cent as he left office. The Socialists' candidate, Benoît Hamon, recorded a derisory 6 per cent in the first round.

Austerity and racism

Hollande faced mass strikes in 2016 against his Labour Law, and he only got it through by suspending voting in parliament. The French economy is still in crisis, with unemployment at 10 per cent (and 23 per cent amongst young people).

Hollande's government was also characterised by repeated Islamophobic offensives since the attack on Charlie Hebdo in 2015. He used nationalism and appeals to "Republican values" to obscure the focus on his austerity measures.

This climate of racism, authoritarianism and austerity has created fertile ground for the repugnant fas-

Protester during the election campaign demands "Neither the banker (Macron) nor the racist (Le Pen)"

cist National Front.

Of course, many breathed a sigh of relief that Macron defeated their leader, Le Pen. But it would be a mistake to equate this with a defeat for the National Front. The party's Nazi roots were exposed in the election, with the party's temporary leader revealed to have denied the Holocaust and supported the Vichy regime.

Not only did these fascists win nearly 11 million votes—a historic high—but they continue to organise and win support almost entirely unimpeded by an active protest movement against them. Some left parties and activists have even supported Islamophobic measures like the ban on the burqa, helping to legitimate and give cover to racism.

Le Pen's strategy is to hide the true fascist roots and commitment of the National Front in order to "normalise" the party and chase mainstream electoral support. Macron's presidency promises more of the policies the National Front fed off, which will help fuel their growth. That's why it was right for sections of the French left to refuse to be drawn into backing Macron.

Building an activist movement to beat back the National Front's advance is crucial. But a left alternative is also needed.

The vacuum in politics, and the hatred of austerity, means there is a real space for this. Left candidate Jean Luc Mélenchon won an impressive 19.6 per cent of the vote in the first round, nearly as many votes as Le Pen. He supported the rights of refugees crossing the Mediterranean to come to France, called for withdrawal from NATO, the abolition of the Labour Law, and taxing high income earners at 90 per cent.

Combining anti-racism and anti-austerity on the streets holds the possibility of transforming French politics. Mélenchon himself seems unlikely to build such a street movement. He deliberately ditched his old party and formed a new "movement" with nationalistic tones, France Unbowed, simply to stand in the election.

Macron is going to be a weak leader. It remains to be seen how many seats he will actually win in the French parliamentary elections in June. But unless a real extra-parliamentary opposition is built to fight racism and fight Macron, Le Pen and the National Front will keep growing.

Macron's presidency promises more of the policies the National Front fed off

Hanson's influence aided and abetted by major parties

The White Queen: One Nation and the Politics of Race
By David Marr
Quarterly Essay 65

IN 2016, Pauline Hanson made her way back into parliament for the first time since 1998, obtaining 9 per cent of the Senate vote in Queensland. Despite her many electoral defeats over this time, the racism at the core of Hanson's politics has never gone away. Instead it has become part of mainstream politics.

In the latest *Quarterly Essay*, David Marr details the progression of Hanson and how the major parties have come to not only accommodate her racism, but also adopt her policies.

Marr makes clear that Hanson's ideas should be called for what they are—racist. When she first entered the political stage in the late 1990s, Hanson attempted to whip up hysteria about Asians and Aboriginal people. More recently, she has turned her attention to Muslims. She has called for surveillance cameras in mosques and wants to ban halal certification and all Islamic head coverings.

Yet Islamophobia has become so normalised that Hanson's policies no longer cause the same level of outrage. Marr writes, "These days she seems hardly even a surprise. She was such big news in Asia the first time around that the Foreign Press Association declared her the most famous Australian in the world. These days she makes no headlines offshore."

He rightly pins the blame for this squarely on the mainstream parties, pointing out, "neither Coalition nor Labor leader will bluntly call Hanson on race".



While globally there has been a growth in far-right, racist parties, Marr notes that Hanson's following is not yet on the same scale as that of her overseas counterparts, such as Marine Le Pen, Nigel Farage, or Trump. Australia was not hit as hard by the financial crisis as Europe and America. Marr points to the 2016 Scanlon survey results to show that 70 per cent of Australians are happy with current immigration levels or think they should be increased.

Yet disillusionment with mainstream politics here is still clear—just 26 per cent believe governments can be trusted.

Who Votes One Nation?

Marr uses data from the 2016 Australian Election Study, compiled by academics at the ANU, to examine where One Nation's support comes from. Its voters are almost as likely to be found on the fringes of cities as they are in rural areas.

Many people are disillusioned with politicians, but One Nation voters are furious, seeing them as only looking after themselves. They also mostly think that the economy

and their own financial situation is getting worse, despite the fact they overwhelmingly have jobs and are "middling prosperous".

In 1998, Hanson won 53 per cent of her votes from people who previously voted for the Coalition. In 2016, she took an even share of 39 per cent each from Labor and Liberal.

But what is most distinctive, he argues, is

that over 80 per cent of them want immigration numbers cut.

Embracing Hanson's Racism

Rather than take a principled stand against Hanson's racism, the major parties have adopted her policies in efforts to win back the votes, and have themselves used migrants as a scapegoat for economic problems.

In the lead-up to the 1998 Federal election, Howard tried to out-do Hanson. Marr writes, "He slashed funding to Indigenous people, cut immigration numbers, tightly restricted family reunion visas, cut welfare for migrants, tried his best to neuter native title and closed Australia to boat people. Hanson had called for each of these policies."

Hanson lost her seat and One Nation won only a single Senator following the Liberal Party's decision to put One Nation last, but Howard continued to adopt her policies. In 1999, Howard teamed up with Labor's Kim Beazley to introduce the punitive temporary visa for refugees—a policy Hanson had first floated in 1998.

Hanson went on to

campaign in the 2001 state elections for a blockade of refugees coming by boat. It became a reality when the Howard government that same year ordered refugees rescued by the Tampa to be sent to Nauru.

With the help of the Labor Party, John Howard made her ideas mainstream.

The same strategy has been used by the major parties ever since. From Gillard's re-introduction of offshore processing of refugees, to Abbott's explicit Islamophobia, reflected in his statement, "I've often heard Western leaders describe Islam as a religion of peace. I wish more Muslim leaders would say that more often, and mean it."

Most recently Turnbull has attacked migrants through changes to the 457 visa and citizenship process.

Hanson's supporters remain a small core, but the scapegoating of migrants and refugees by the major parties has had an effect. The Scanlon survey showed that 61 per cent of Australians disapprove of asylum seekers attempting to reach Australia by boat. It also found that discrimination and abuse experienced by migrants has increased.

While Marr's essay is a must-read for understanding racism in Australia today, one thing lacking is a discussion of how to confront the racism.

The persistent work of activist groups like the Refugee Action Collectives show that grassroots activism can work to swing public opinion. This same thing is true when it comes to confronting the racism being whipped up by Hanson and the major parties.

Vivian Honan

ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AND THE UN-FAIR WORK ACT

The system of Enterprise Bargaining restricting lawful strike action to bargaining periods is at the core of laws that have removed the right to strike explains **David Glanz**

THE STATEMENT from new ACTU secretary Sally McManus that workers are justified in breaking unfair laws delighted union activists around the country.

Interviewed by the ABC in March, shortly after her election, she was asked about legal action faced by the construction union, the CFMEU.

If interviewer Leigh Sales was expecting a routine statement distancing the ACTU from “militancy” she was in for a shock.

McManus’s reply was simple and a breath of fresh air—“there’s no way we’ll be doing that”.

“The CFMEU, when they’ve been fined, they’ve been fined for taking industrial action,” she said. “It might be illegal industrial action according to our current laws, and our current laws are wrong.

“I believe in the rule of law when the law is fair and the law is right. But when it’s unjust I don’t think there’s a problem with breaking it.

“It shouldn’t be so hard for workers in our country to be able to take industrial action when they need to.”

McManus’s position, which she defended over the next days despite ruling class outrage and Labor leader Bill Shorten’s rejection, is significant.

This is the first time in decades that the national leadership of the union movement has not just criticised anti-union laws but advocated they be broken.

Her statement came as workers everywhere were outraged by the Fair Work Commission’s cut to weekend penalty rates for workers in retail, hospitality and pharmacies.

And she stuck to her word when Fairfax journalists in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Newcastle walked out in early May on a so-called illegal strike over job cuts, tweeting: “I visited *The Age’s* MEAA members to show my solidarity & let them know

we have their back.”

The challenge now is to spread that sense of defiance through the union movement (and among workers not yet organised), to start to undo the damage caused by more than three decades of retreat.

The scale of the challenge was revealed in early May when the Australian Bureau of Statistics released the latest figures on union membership.

Private-sector union membership is down to 9.3 per cent from 11.1 per cent two years ago. Public-sector membership is down slightly to 38 per cent.

The current laws restricting workers’ right to strike are enshrined in the Fair Work Act, introduced by Kevin Rudd’s Labor government in 2009.

But the origins of this sorry situation can be traced back much further, to the election of Labor under Bob Hawke in 1983—Australia’s first neo-liberal government.

Hawke struck an agreement with the union leaderships—the Accord. Workers were told that if they moderated their pay claims and cut back on industrial action, the economy would improve and Labor would raise the “social wage” (welfare, education, health, etc).

The reality was a decline in real wages while an initial increase in the social wage fell away. Profits soared 25 per cent each year between 1983 and 1988.

Alongside the fall in living standards came damage to union culture. Fewer strikes meant workers slowly began to lose ingrained habits of defiance and solidarity.

Union delegates who had been used to running their own disputes and working across networks of rank-and-file activists began to be reined in by their officials. They were increasingly being turned from worker leaders into messengers for the union

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The laws restricting workers’ right to strike are enshrined in the Fair Work Act, introduced by Kevin Rudd’s Labor government

bureaucracy.

Compared to today, strike figures were still high. In the June 1988 quarter, the rate of strike action was 101 days per 1000 employees. There was a late spike to 104.6 days in the last quarter of 1992, fuelled by mass strikes against Jeff Kennett in Victoria. Last September, the Australian Bureau of Statistics recorded 3.3 days per 1000.

Enterprise agreements

The main game for Hawke and later Paul Keating was to shift workers from nationwide, industry deals (awards) to enterprise-based agreements, with wages linked to the employer’s profitability.

Labor employed salami tactics—one slice at a time. In 1987 they introduced a two-tier system with central deals topped up with local agreements.

Then, in April 1991 and in the midst of a recession, workers were given a stark choice. Wait for rare “safety net” pay rises or get an enterprise agreement.

Enterprise bargaining both split up workers and led to shoddy deals.

The Commonwealth public service, previously a single employer with pay rates that applied across all departments, was divided into multiple agencies, each with its own pay scales.

In the metal industry, deals saw skilled workers agree to take on semi-skilled work or, at the Ford plants in Victoria, any job on the shopfloor.

At Alcoa, weekly hours rose from 38 to 42. Workers at the Commonwealth Bank agreed to weekend and evening work at ordinary rates.

In 1993, Keating brought in a game-changer.

As Greg Jericho, writing in *The Guardian*, put it: “Comparing the industrial landscape now with pre-1994 is almost pointless. In December 1993 the laws regarding strikes funda-

mentally changed when the Keating government introduced protected industrial action.

“This gave workers a legal right to strike but also narrowly defined the areas on which they could do so. For example, you could no longer strike in support of workers in another industry, enterprise or union.

“The Industrial Relations Reform Act 1993 defined that a strike could take place if it was ‘about matters pertaining to the relationship between employers and employees’. Crucially, the strikes had to occur within the ‘bargaining period’ of the enterprise agreement ... The laws reduced strikes almost overnight.”

This marked a huge shift in the way that workers, and most importantly their officials, viewed industrial action.

Right to strike

Strikes and work bans had never been legal in Australia, outlawed at federal level by the Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1904.

But for a century, workers had taken action with a large degree of impunity. Rather than waiting for legal rights to be granted, they created real rights through struggle.

At times the bosses pushed back. The Liberal government led by Bob Menzies brought in harsh penal powers in 1953 that saw striking unions heavily fined.

In 1985, Melbourne confectionary company Dollar Sweets won a case against its workers’ union in the Supreme Court, the first time in Australia that a union was forced to pay damages for the losses caused by picketing.

But until 1994, workers saw themselves as free to take action at any time. Workers and their officials would argue claims, tactics and the chances of winning, but the law was not part of the debate.

Keating turned this world upside down. There would now be bargaining periods where unions could take action without the fear of damages. But the flip side was that as soon as an enterprise deal was struck, the right to take protected industrial action ceased.

If the boss cut jobs or victimised activists the day after the deal was signed, workers’ hands were tied.

The decline in union membership accelerated. In 1986, 46 per cent of Australian employees were union members; by 2007 that was down to 19 per cent.

Part of that was related to redun-



dancies in blue-collar industries that had been heavily unionised.

But the decline was across the board. Why join a union if it couldn’t actively defend members’ interests outside of small windows of protected action?

Union officials

Keating based his strategy on an understanding of what motivated union officials.

First, enterprise bargaining had significantly increased their workload—instead of negotiating awards that covered whole industries, they had to do a multitude of smaller deals. Keating’s law meant they would spend less time on the picket line.

Second, the penalties in the law were aimed primarily at union assets, rather than at members. By threatening assets, Keating was putting pressure on the officials to keep the rank and file in line.

When John Howard was elected in 1996, he continued with the carrot and stick of protected action and threats to union assets.

He also tightened the screw. The Workplace Relations Act stripped back awards to 20 allowable matters and introduced individual contracts—Australian Workplace Agreements, which could over-ride collective agreements.

Employers were, for the first time, given the option of putting agreements to staff ballots, over the heads of the union officials or activists.

It was not until Howard over-

Above: Community picket at Port Botany in Sydney during the recent Patrick dispute, when workers staged unlawful industrial action

reached with the passing of the WorkChoices legislation in 2005 that the union leadership finally drew a line in the sand.

WorkChoices severely ratcheted up the restrictions on union activity and attacks on workers.

Secret ballots were now required for strike action; unfair dismissal became harder to get—and impossible if you worked for an employer with fewer than 100 employees; and the “no disadvantage” test was ditched, which meant that collective and individual agreements could leave workers worse off than under the award.

The law helped bring down Howard in 2007. But the ACTU campaign against it put few demands on Labor.

Rudd dumped AWAs and the unfair dismissal clauses, but kept the poisoned chalice that had been passed down from Keating to Howard to Rudd—the barring of industrial action outside protected periods.

This is the situation that McManus rightly criticises. Bad laws that encourage workers to be passive for years at a time.

Throughout this period of retreat there have been groups of workers who have been prepared to fight despite the law.

Construction workers, nurses, teachers and Fairfax journalists have all been at times prepared to call the law’s bluff.

With McManus’s words in their ears, other workers need to take the same path and once again assert their rights through struggle.

VOTE FOR ABORIGINAL RIGHTS 50 YEARS ON 1967 REFERENDUM LEFT HOPES UNFULFILLED

The referendum victory in 1967 failed to deliver the improvements for Aboriginal people in health, employment and land rights that many expected, writes **Lachlan Marshall**

ON 27 May 1967, more than 90 per cent of Australians responded to the call to “vote Yes for Aborigines”, supporting a referendum making amendments to Australia’s Constitution.

The key amendment allowed the Commonwealth government to make “special laws” for Aboriginal people, who were then living under discriminatory state-based Welfare Boards controlling Aboriginal lives. The referendum changes also meant that Aboriginal people were included in official government counts “reckoning the numbers of people in the Commonwealth, or of a state”.

The victory was the culmination of many years of campaigning by grassroots activists, co-ordinated through the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). They had hoped that the Commonwealth would use its new powers to end discriminatory state legislation, initiate major programs to end poverty and disadvantage and grant Aboriginal Land Rights. They would be sorely disappointed.

Fifty years on, Aboriginal people are still subject to vicious racism and many suffer third world living conditions. The Commonwealth has consistently refused to stand up to the states and legislate national Land Rights. But they have used these powers to make “special laws” to strip back Native Title rights granted by the courts and implement openly racist policies such as the Northern Territory Intervention.

However, despite the failure to deliver meaningful change, the referendum was an important symbolic moment, giving confidence to a generation of activists that achieved significant gains through the 1970s.

Legal campaign

Aboriginal people and their supporters had been making demands for citizenship rights and Commonwealth responsibility of Aboriginal affairs since the early 20th Century. Com-

monwealth responsibility was a key demand of the “Day of Mourning” on 26 January 1938, marking 150 years since British invasion.

The post-war years saw an explosion in anti-colonial and anti-racist movements. In Australia Aboriginal people were resisting their status as second-class citizens. Struggles such as the 1946 Aboriginal pastoral workers’ strike in the Pilbara against slave like conditions built important links with the trade union movement.

The campaign for a referendum was launched on 29 April 1957, at a meeting in Sydney’s Town Hall organised by the Australian Aboriginal Fellowship. Their strategy was a mass petition campaign to pressure the Federal government to delete discriminatory clauses from the constitution and to wrest control over Aboriginal affairs from the states. The petition campaign became a national movement with the establishment of the FCAATSI in Adelaide in 1958.

There was debate within it over the legal emphasis of the campaign, with Communist Party member Shirley Andrews commenting in June 1962, “It seems to me to be putting the cart before the horse to be concentrating exclusively on the legal aspects of discrimination and ignoring the economic ones.”

She commented at another time, “If all Aborigines become full citizens overnight, and they were not entitled to any special financial aid, they would be expected to start from a position behind the lowest paid of other workers.”

Other members of FCAATSI—especially Indigenous members—were wary of any demands for “special laws”, given the way they had been targeted by governments in the past. Kath Walker (who later changed her name to Oodgeroo Noonuccal) for instance believed FCAATSI should simply demand equality and the complete removal of section 51 which allowed

The campaign was launched in Sydney in October 1962 with the aim of gathering 300,000 signatures

laws to be made “for any race” except Aboriginal people.

The campaign was re-launched in Sydney in October 1962 with the aim of gathering 250,000-300,000 signatures. They sought endorsements from political parties, unions, churches and other organisations. Kath Walker toured the country to raise the profile of the campaign, which received donations from the ACTU and Australian Council of Churches.

Each federal electorate saw the formation of campaign committees, and signatures poured in to MPs, who tabled the petitions on a daily basis. The campaign ended up with 103,000 signatures on 94 different petitions.

Even Liberal Prime Minister Robert Menzies was forced to present a petition from his constituents. In September 1963 Menzies agreed to meet a delegation from the campaign. After the meeting he offered his guests drinks. Kath Walker replied, “You know, Prime Minister, where I come from, you would be put in jail for this [offering alcohol to an Aborigine].”

Menzies resisted the pressure to hold a referendum. But times were changing. Resistance to racism was being broadcast to a global audience. In 1960 people witnessed the Sharpville massacre in South Africa, which sparked protests in Australia.

Images of police beatings of civil rights protesters in the American South inspired a “Freedom Ride” of Sydney University students, led by Charles Perkins, in 1965. Named after a US civil rights campaign aimed at desegregation, they toured regional NSW and shone a spotlight on the apartheid conditions in places like Moree, Dubbo and Walgett. Momentum for change continued to build with the Wave Hill walk-off by Gurindji pastoral workers in 1966, a strike both for equal pay and Land Rights.

On 1 March 1967, new Prime Minister Harold Holt finally agreed to hold the referendum.

Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, in their history, describe how the referendum campaign responded to the announcement: “In a whirlwind of activity, it lobbied politicians, held public meetings, organised rallies, distributed leaflets, stuck handbills and posters, and sold badges and buttons.” Campaign songs urged voters to “Vote ‘Yes’ to give rights and freedoms.”

Many voters believed the vote would force the government to take measures to improve Aboriginal people’s lives. As *The Age* wrote, “A Yes vote will pave the way for improving their health, education and housing”.

Chika Dixon, acting president of the Sydney-based Foundation of Aboriginal Affairs, claimed, “For most Aborigines [the referendum] is basically and most importantly a matter of seeing white Australians finally, after 179 years, affirming at last that they believe we are human beings.”

With bi-partisan support, and the absence of a “No” campaign, Australians voted by a whopping 90.77 per cent to support the changes, with majorities in all states. Only eight of the 44 attempts to amend the constitution had ever succeeded, and none with votes as high as in 1967.

The day after the vote Gordon Bryant of FCAATSI claimed that, “The vote is an overwhelming endorsement of the view that it is time for material action. The government cannot hide behind constitutional inhibitions, nor can it hide behind a faith in public apathy. This vote represents a great national demand for action.”

A disappointing victory

The massive Yes vote gave a psychological boost to Aboriginal people. A writer in Brisbane recorded that on the day after the referendum, “There were black people on the streets in a way that we had never seen them... People got themselves up in their very best gear and walked out in the streets of Brisbane, down Queen Street where they never went.”

Some Aboriginal people described how the Yes vote helped them overcome an “inferiority complex.”

But the federal government was committed to the status quo and showed only contempt for the demands for action on issues like housing, employment and Land Rights.

Harold Holt said the government “should not magnify the Aborigine problem out of its true reality” and departed on a four week tour of the US and Europe the day after the referendum. The Gorton and McMahon Liberal governments that followed



Above: Campaigning for a “Yes” vote in the referendum

Holt made no real positive change.

Changes that did take place came not from the Commonwealth using its new powers, but the momentum and pressure generated by the black rights movement. Equal wages came into effect in 1969. Some state governments, such as in NSW, began to wind up the Welfare Boards that had controlled Aboriginal lives for almost a century.

But Aboriginal people continued to experience police harassment and segregation and were forced to live in terrible conditions. Equal wages was used as an excuse by pastoralists to kick thousands of black workers off stations to which they often had tribal connections, onto the outskirts of rural towns. In Queensland the government passed a new discriminatory “Aborigines Act” in 1971 that remained in place until the 1980s.

The failure of the more conservative legal strategy of the referendum to bring substantial change radicalised black activists. As Aboriginal activist Gary Foley wrote about the emergence of the Black Power movement in Redfern, “when the high expectations created by the 1967 referendum were dashed by government inaction, the younger activists felt a strong sense of betrayal and cynicism at the more non-confrontationist methods and tactics of the older generation. All the effort that respected political leaders like Faith Bandler, Ken Brindle,

Perkins and others seemed to amount to nothing.”

The black movement emerged in the context of a society wide radicalisation. Working class people were going on strike in record numbers—and not only for economic reasons. In July 1972 activists, inspired by the political strikes of the anti-Apartheid and Vietnam Moratorium movement, organised a national “Moratorium for Black Rights” in which thousands of workers and students went on strike to join demonstrations.

In January that year the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was set up in protest against the McMahon government’s announcement that it would not recognise Aboriginal Land Rights. This activism and growing militancy paved the way for real strides forward. Aboriginal community controlled organisations were established and progressively funded through the 1970s and early 1980s. The NT Land Rights Act in 1976 was followed by other reforms at the state level, such as a Land Rights Act in NSW in 1981.

Recognise

The current campaign to “recognise” Aboriginal people in the constitution is appealing to the legacy of the 1967 referendum to build support, holding an expensive dinner with business and political leaders to mark the 50th anniversary. However, unlike the 1967 referendum, which was demanded by grassroots activists, “Recognise” was initiated by the Rudd government in 2008 as a deliberate distraction from the ongoing destruction of Aboriginal communities. It offers no meaningful change and has been supported by Abbott, Turnbull and major corporations.

Since the election of the Howard government, both Labor and Liberal have wound back the gains of the black movement of the 1970s, returning to policies of paternalism and assimilation. Many communities are at breaking point, with historic rates of Aboriginal incarceration, child removal and youth suicide.

The 1967 referendum was an inspiring example of how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal activists can come together to build a mass campaign to shift racist attitudes and change government policy. But the real changes that improved Aboriginal lives did not come from new words in the constitution—they came from building power on the streets and linking up with collective working class organisation. This is a power that must be urgently rebuilt today.

HOW REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA LIBERATED WOMEN

The 1917 revolution put great effort into freeing women from domestic drudgery and giving them a leading role in the unfolding political struggle, writes **Caitlin Doyle**

IN 1917, the lives of women in Russia were utterly transformed. Following the revolution in October, women enjoyed the highest levels of political freedom and equality anywhere in the world.

Some of the rights that they won, such as abortion on demand and equal pay, are yet to be achieved in Australia.

Women also played a decisive role in the revolutionary struggle, with strikes and protests led by women kicking off the February revolution and helping carry through the revolution in October, when workers took power.

The Bolsheviks argued that the full liberation of women could only come about through radical change. They planned for society as a whole to assume the traditional burden of women as mothers and carers that kept them isolated in the home. But this was to prove no easy task in a country ravaged by civil war and famine.

Women in Tsarist Russia

Tsarist Russia was extremely socially and economically backward. The vast majority of the population were poor peasants working the land. Peasant men who did not regularly beat their wives were considered “unmanly”.

Serfdom had only been abolished in 1861, more than half a century after Western Europe. While this brought some greater political and personal freedoms, it pushed people off the land and into the cities in their thousands.

Many women came to work in the multiplying factories. It was only in some, highly skilled industries that male workers earned enough to support a family.

On average, women were paid around half the wage of men, but in some cases, as little as a fifth. They often worked days of 12 or 13 hours. After this, while male workers might go to the taverns or to political meetings, women would go home to cook, clean and take care of children.

Women also lacked any political rights. They could not vote or own

property and were essentially the property of their husbands.

Marxism and Women’s Liberation

Marxists saw the institution of the nuclear family as the basis of women’s oppression under capitalism, first identified by Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx’s collaborator, in the 1870s. They recognised that the private, unpaid labour that women did within the home, raising the next generation of workers at no cost to bosses or the state, was essential to running capitalism.

But as they entered the workforce, women also became part of the working class movement. Clara Zetkin, a prominent German socialist, proclaimed in 1896 that, “only in conjunction with proletarian women will socialism be victorious”.

Although the “woman question” had been discussed in radical and intellectual circles for decades, it was not until the 1905 revolution that the women’s movement in Russia was born. Although the revolution failed to overthrow the Tsar, it shook Russian society to its core.

Women workers played a significant role in the strikes and protests. They demonstrated that, despite the immense material difficulties that held them back, they too could be effective agents in the class struggle. Child care, maternity leave, and equal pay were also raised as crucial demands for women workers.

1905 also prompted socialists in the Bolshevik party to assess their work amongst women. Not all Bolsheviks recognised the importance of bringing working class women into the struggle.

Alexandra Kollontai was a leading Russian socialist. Initially a member of the Menshevik faction, she joined the Bolsheviks in 1915. With the support of other leading Bolsheviks, including Lenin, she argued within the movement for special work to engage and politically educate women, and for fighting the sexist ideas of male workers.

On International Women’s Day in

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Women workers struck, alongside men, over wages, safety and the length of the work day

1915 the Bolsheviks launched a special newspaper for women, *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker). It was edited by Inessa Armand and Nadezhda Krupskaya (Lenin’s wife).

Feminism had begun to emerge as a significant political movement across Europe and the US. Middle and upper class women were now fighting to be able to enter professional jobs, own property and win the vote.

However, Marxists argued that the interests of bourgeois women ran counter to the interests of working class women, rejecting the notion of the “sisterhood”.

Ruling class women were able to push the burden of domestic labour onto maids and servants. They also drew their wealth from workers’ exploitation, and therefore could not be relied upon to support working women’s demands.

Kollontai argued that upper class women would, “be able to win a comfortable place for themselves in the old world of oppression, enslavement and bondage, of tears and hardship... For the majority of women of the proletariat, equal rights with men would mean only an equal share in inequality.”

Socialists supported middle class women’s demands for equal rights, but also called on them to support working women in their struggles. Feminists and socialists were also divided around the question of suffrage. Many feminists demanded only partial suffrage for women—with voting rights restricted to property owners. Socialists instead championed universal suffrage in the context of the class struggle.

World War One

The onset of the First World War brought class divisions into sharp relief.

The Bolsheviks rejected the war from the outset, arguing that it served the interests of the rich and powerful and would only bring suffering to the working masses. Most feminists supported the war effort. They sought to establish themselves as men’s equals by demonstrating their essential contribu-

tion to the defence of the nation.

As the war dragged on, food shortages made life harder and harder. Women began to resist the war and the demands that it placed on them and their families.

However as men went off to war in droves, women had to enter the factories and farms in greater numbers than ever. By 1917, women made up 40 per cent of the workforce in Petrograd.

This gave them new power and increased political confidence. Women workers struck, alongside men, over wages, workplace safety and the length of the work day.

At the beginning of 1917, the secret police warned that women, the mothers of half-starving families, were the biggest threat to the tsarist regime because they constituted, “a mass of inflammable material which needs only a spark for it to burst into flames”.

Revolution

On International Women’s Day, in February 1917, female workers ignored the cautions of the established left parties and went out on strike against bread rationing in their thousands. A male engineering worker recalled that, “masses of women workers in a militant frame of mind filled the lane...shouting, ‘Come out! Stop work!’ Snowballs flew through the windows.”

The strike spread. Workers formed soviets, or workers’ councils, to coordinate their political activity in their workplaces.

During these tumultuous days, bourgeois women complained that their maids were inattentive—the tore off their aprons, tied red ribbons in their hair and took to the streets in celebration.

Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate and a provisional government was formed. In October 1917, workers, behind the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, overthrew the provisional government to deliver all power to the soviets.

Some of the first decrees by the new workers’ state were to give women full, equal rights with men. For the first time in their lives they had the right to divorce, to abortion on demand, paid maternity leave, and equal voting rights.

But the Bolsheviks realised that having the same rights on paper was not enough. Women had to be liberated from the household drudgery that enslaved them. The back-breaking work in the home, rearing children, cooking and cleaning, began to be socialised. Public kitchens and dining halls, laundries, and nurseries were established.



In Petrograd during 1919-20 almost 90 per cent of the population was fed communally. In Moscow more than 60 per cent were registered with the dining-halls.

The revolution also gave way to freer forms of relationships and sexuality in what had previously been a sexually repressive society.

Lenin once referred to the Russian Revolution as a “festival of the oppressed”. As the Russian working class was transforming society, they were also challenging the reactionary values that had underpinned the old system. Homosexuality was decriminalised and church control over sexual activity was abolished. For the first time, lesbian and gay people could meet without fear of state persecution. There were several instances of same sex marriage.

It was no simple task, however, to throw off old backwards ideas. Women still faced sexism and economic hardship that limited their ability to be involved in politics. Most women were still illiterate.

The Zhenotdel

In recognition of this, the Bolsheviks redoubled their efforts to bring women into the party and the ongoing revolutionary struggle. Although the revolution was under siege, with no less than 22 armies invading in the first year, the Bolsheviks understood that the revolution would be lost without the equal involvement of women.

In 1918, the first all-Russian Congress of Working Women was held. Over 1000 delegates elected from all

Above: Russian socialist Alexandra Kollontai helped lead the efforts of the revolution to organise amongst working women

over the country attended.

Out of this conference the Zhenotdel was set up, a special body of the Communist Party dedicated to women and women’s issues.

Zhenotdel volunteers travelled thousands of miles across the country to factories and villages to campaign for the revolution. They used “agit-trains” to reach remote areas, bringing with them poster art and song and dance groups. They held political meetings and showed films and plays in towns all over Russia.

They travelled to the Muslim populations in the East, often wearing the veil to be able to talk and work amongst veiled women. The Zhenotdel set up over 125,000 literacy schools and produced publications on everything from socialised childcare to designs for new homes taking into account plans for communal facilities.

Delegate bodies rotated every two or three months. Local women were elected to regional committees, organising communal institutions, party work, people’s courts and war work, and then reported back to their local area. For many rural women this was the first time they had left their remote communities.

Counter-revolution

But with the failure of the revolution to spread to the rest of Europe, the Russian revolution became increasingly isolated.

As civil war raged, poverty and starvation gripped Russia throughout the 1920s. The new workers’ state was unable to fund and support the public kitchens, nurseries and laundries. As a result, women were forced back into the home. Prostitution soared back to war time levels.

By 1928 a counter-revolution, with Stalin at its head, was complete. Its progress could be measured in the lives of women. The role of mothers was again glorified and abortion was re-criminalised. In the Russian borderlands, Stalin’s bureaucrats carried out forced unveilings of Muslim women. The Zhenotdel was dissolved in 1930.

But for a moment in history, Russian workers created a society where dignity and respect lay at the centre of human relations. The Russian Revolution showed the possibility of sweeping aside sexism and oppression. Women glimpsed true freedom and had a hand in starting to build the world anew.

In the era of Donald Trump and entrenched sexist divisions across the world, the need for revolution is greater than ever.

MANUS CHAOS: NO SAFETY, NO FUTURE

By Ian Rintoul

CONFUSION AND increased tension surrounds the abrupt announcement of the closure of sections of the Manus detention centre.

It is not the first time that the government has announced that Manus would close. The PNG Supreme Court ordered its closure in April 2016, but both the PNG and the Australian governments ignored that.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton says that the prison will only “start to be decommissioned” in the run up to the end of October. But October is also when detention operator Ferrovial’s Manus contract will end.

So the pressure is mounting on the Australian government about what to do with the people that have been dumped on Manus for four years. Pressure has been stepped up to force asylum seekers to return to their home countries. The threats of forced deportations to Nepal and Lebanon have coerced asylum seekers to accept payments of up to \$25,000 to return home.

Now PNG Immigration has made the surprise announcement that N block in Foxtrot compound will close on 28 May, and that they intend to close Foxtrot compound entirely at the end of June. N block holds around 30 people, mostly Sri Lankan refugees. They can probably be absorbed into other compounds.

But the announcement also came with the threat of forced removal to the East Lorengau Transit Accommodation area near the main town on Manus. It was such a threat that provoked the mass hunger strike and takeover of the detention compounds in January 2015.

One indication of the bureaucratic confusion is the suggestion that East Lorengau could be used as temporary accommodation for refugees selected for resettlement in the US. But the US has only interviewed 300 people, and at their last visit only 70 of those had their second interview.

No one has been told if they have been accepted or not. The US team will not be back on Manus until Au-



Above: N Block in the Foxtrot compound on Manus Island, set to close by 28 May

gust. So no one on Manus is going to the US any time soon.

In any case, East Lorengau can only hold around 300 people. There simply is not enough room. Nor could the Manus community tolerate 300 single men being placed in close proximity of the Lorengau settlement. The hospital is rudimentary and people do not get enough money to live on. Food has to be brought to East Lorengau to sustain the people living there.

And they are constantly preyed upon. Bashings and robberies of refugees are routine. There is no future for refugees on Manus. Nor is PNG able to resettle refugees anywhere else.

Pressured to leave

Only a day after the abrupt announcement came the revelation from documents leaked to *The Guardian* that Australian Border Force and PNG Immigration specifically planned to increase pressure on the Manus asylum seekers and refugees to coerce them leave the detention centre. Interestingly, the document was drafted in January 2016 just prior to the PNG Supreme Court hearing and was mindful that the court could (and did) order the closure of Manus. It is chilling to read the clini-

cal ruthlessness of the prison controllers planning possible violence against refugees who have been found to be owed protection because of violence used against them in their homelands.

The forced separation of asylum seekers and refugees (refugees in Oscar and Delta Compounds, mostly asylum seekers in Foxtrot and Mike) was flagged in the January security review but only put into effect three months later in April. Despite their plan, the intimidation and use of police, that was about all they managed to achieve.

One part of the document says, “Conditions for refugees at East Lorengau refugee transit centre should be more attractive than for refugees at Lombrum RPC [the detention centre].” That is over a year ago, but despite all the efforts very few people have been willing to shift there.

The documents also admit, “Manusians, already affronted by the imposition of 1000 men with whom they have been forced to share their small, resource-poor island, are wary of, if not outright hostile towards, the new arrivals.” There is still only one way to guarantee the safety and secure future of those people dumped on Manus, as well as Nauru—bring them here.

Bashings and robberies of refugees are routine. There is no future for refugees on Manus

Solidarity