

# Solidarity

Issue No. 111 / February 2018

\$3/\$5

**BREAK THEIR LAWS**

**BREAK THEIR SYSTEM**



# FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

## ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Ten years since  
the Apology

## 1968

The year everything  
seemed possible

## MARDI GRAS

Its radical roots in  
gay liberation



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# SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

## SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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## Things they say

**It feels like Jeremy Corbyn a bit, perhaps not as radical.**  
ABC journalist Barrie Cassidy's astute view on Bill Shorten

**It is a highly interventionist method. It's at odds with the way the Liberal and National parties would pursue growth in the economy.**  
Scott Morrison on why he wouldn't legislate to tie corporate tax cuts to wage rises

**It had, in effect, become a lawful sort of Ponzi scheme—using new or expected revenues to cover more pressing demands for payment.**  
Matthew Vincent, Financial Times journalist, on the Carillion collapse, a services company relying on ever more government contracts just to keep the firm afloat

**If there was a proper inquiry, in an independent inquiry into the war in Iraq in Australia... I think you would find Jim Molan would probably be up for prosecution rather than praise for his role in the atrocities in Fallujah.**  
Adam Bandt's statement for which he, wrongly, apologised to Jim Molan

**I am concerned that the level of legal migration, now that we control our borders, is in excess of the capacity for our cities to absorb, both culturally or in terms of infrastructure**  
Jim Molan in his first speech in parliament

**Can we call that treason? Why not?**  
Donald Trump's response to Democrats who didn't clap his speech

**Seven TRILLION dollars of value created since our big election win!**  
Trump on 7 January

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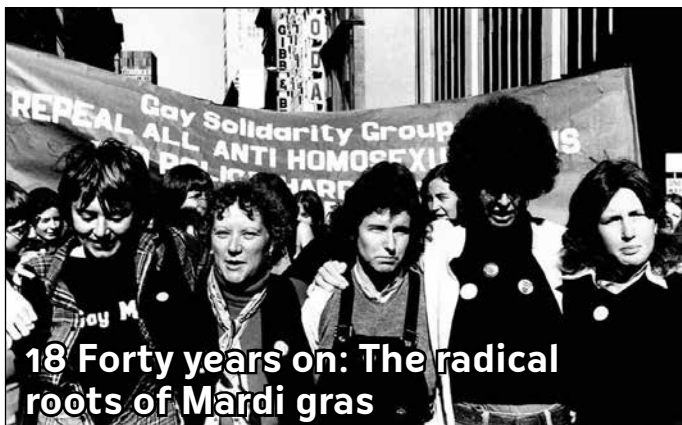


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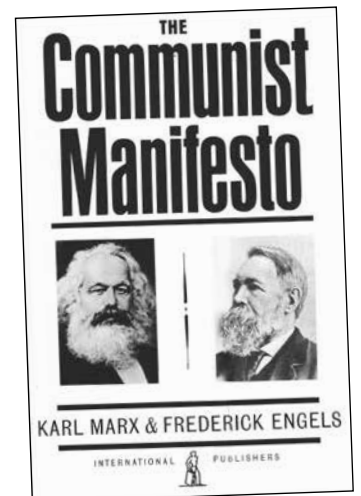
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## Ninety per cent of incarcerated youths have a brain disorder

RESEARCHERS HAVE found that 90 per cent of youth in WA's juvenile detention system have a brain disorder.

The Telethon Kids Institute conducted a study of 99 kids aged 10-17 in the Banksia Hill Detention Centre in WA.

They found 89 per cent had at least one area of severe neurodevelopmental impairment. These ranged from issues with attention and memory to motor skills and cognition. Most had not been diagnosed despite repeated contact with government agencies.

More than one-third, 36 of the 99 youth, suffered from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), which is caused by a child's exposure to alcohol in the womb. Researcher Dr Raewyn Mutch said that earlier diagnoses could have meant the young people had access to, "community care with targeted health and educational interventions and rehabilitation," instead of facing prison.

## One in five big companies not paying tax

ONE IN five of Australia's biggest companies have paid zero tax for at least the past three years, according to ABC analysis of Tax Office data. The list of freeloaders includes some of the loudest advocates of Turnbull's plan to cut corporate tax from 30 to 25 per cent. Qantas, whose CEO Alan Joyce has been a vocal supporter of the tax cuts, hasn't paid tax in ten years despite generating \$106.4 billion in income.

The law allows companies to use losses in past years, as well as the cost of investments and asset write-downs to reduce their tax bill.

Energy Australia, another champion for tax cuts, hasn't paid tax in a decade. Yet in the three years to June 2016 the company recorded \$24 billion worth of income.

Likewise, Malcolm Turnbull's former employer investment bank Goldman Sachs generated revenue of \$1.84 billion over three years and has paid zero tax.

## Sexism endemic in NSW Police force



THE ABC'S *Background Briefing* has revealed the endemic sexism that pervades the NSW police force. The NSW Police introduced a raft of new guidelines after a 2007 public inquiry into sex discrimination and harassment in the NSW Police Force. The inquiry found that one in four people who made complaints were victimised. Another state parliamentary inquiry is now investigating workplace culture there for a second time.

*Background Briefing* interviewed half a dozen current and former NSW police officers who plan to sue the NSW Police for damages in relation to sexual harassment and sex discrimination at work. One female police detective said she suffered years of abuse and recounted the appalling sexism of superiors, after the 2007 guidelines were supposedly implemented. In one case a supervisor noticed she had dyed her hair and asked a nearby group of men, "What do you reckon fellas, would you give it a go?" She described the office as like a "zoo" and said, "They talk about victims like that. A sexual assault victim would come in and that particular [superintendent] was like, 'That slut's down there, go get a statement off her'."

## Amazon patents wristband to track worker movements

ONLINE SHOPPING giant Amazon has won two patents for a tracking wristband that could monitor every move of the company's workers.

According to the patent the technology, "would emit ultrasonic sound pulses and radio transmissions to track where an employee's hands were". The wristband would be able to notify a worker's supervisor every time they slacked off, went to the bathroom, scratched themselves or fidgeted. The device would also be equipped to vibrate in order to tell workers they are doing something wrong.

Amazon is notorious for abusing staff in order to maximise productivity. In 2011 there was a scandal when Amazon forced workers in an Eastern Pennsylvania warehouse to work in 38 degree heat with ambulances waiting outside to take away labourers as they collapsed from heat exhaustion. Amazon's brutal exploitation of its workers is championed by its founder and Chief Executive Jeff Bezos who has a net worth of around \$145 billion. Bezos says, "This is a company that strives to do really big, innovative, groundbreaking things..."

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

## Mistake to make marriage equality a small target

RODNEY CROOME, a founder of Australian Marriage Equality (AME), has written a damning insider's criticism of the "small target" strategy to achieve equal marriage.

AME was the largest equal marriage campaign group up to and during the 2017 postal survey. Croome resigned in August 2016 so he could oppose the proposed plebiscite on Equal Marriage. He describes campaign managers being brought into the Equality campaign whose, "concern was that anything but the simplest, blandest message about marriage equality could disengage or push away the soft Yes supporters".

This meant staying quiet about Safe Schools and transgender oppression. Croome, in his time as a key AME spokesperson, describes how he, "was summarily told not to speak about Safe Schools, even though I had helped develop a version in Tasmania that had strong bipartisan support and was relatively immune to attack."

He recounts: "I was also told not to address transgender equality, even though my experience had shown me that one of the most compelling arguments for marriage equality were the life stories of transgender people."

Croome argues that this attempt to duck the homophobic arguments of the No campaign meant they went dangerously unanswered: "Before the postal survey was called, the ABC's Vote Compass showed about 50% support for marriage equality in electorates across Western Sydney. This dropped by as much as 30% in some of these electorates in subsequent weeks.

"The only explanation for this was that soft Yes supporters were persuaded by the No campaign's talking points."

# EDITORIAL

## It's right to fight, it's right to strike



ON 22 FEBRUARY, the Fair Work Commission will hand down its decision whether or not to terminate the Port Kembla Coal Terminal enterprise bargaining agreement. The South Coast Labor Council has called a rally in Sydney that day for the “Right to Bargain”, “Right to Strike”, and the “Right to Organise.”

It should be the start of the ACTU

campaign to Change the Rules. But there is no sign that the ACTU or Unions NSW are mobilising for the rally.

All over the country workers are being locked out, or facing drastic wage cuts and bosses’ threats to terminate agreements.

For over 200 days, workers at Oaky North in central Queensland

**Above: Workers at the Port Kembla Coal Terminal were locked out again on Friday 16 February, as the Fair Work Commission was deciding whether to terminate their agreement**

**Join the Rally for our rights  
12.30pm Wednesday  
28 February outside  
the Fair Work  
Commission,  
80 William St Sydney**

### Barnaby and Turnbull: Hypocrites on parade

THE FURORE surrounding Barnaby Joyce has plunged the Turnbull government into yet another crisis.

Turnbull has forced Joyce to take leave rather than have him serve as acting Prime Minister, as he tries to pose as the defender of conservative values to shore up the Liberals’ base.

Turnbull’s “bonking ban” is symptomatic of a puritanical government in terminal decline. But morality sermons from “Father Turnbull” and appearances on *Sixty Minutes* with his wife Lucy to offer tips on maintaining a successful marriage are not going to save the Coalition.

It is not the “morality” of Barnaby’s affair that bothers voters—it’s the stench of hypocrisy that surrounds him and the rest of the Turnbull government.

As the *Washington Post* put it bluntly, “One of Australia’s staunchest opponents of same-sex marriage just left his wife for his pregnant girlfriend.”

It’s not only that; it’s the taxpayer-funded travel arrangements, the high-paid job-swapping to keep

Joyce’s relationship under wraps, and the cosy arrangements with millionaire business mates to live rent-free, while he is paid in excess of \$400,000.

And Joyce even claims that because the rent-free offer of housing came from a friend it didn’t need to be declared.

The elite has one set of rules to maintain their wealth and privileged lifestyle and then does everything to impose a different set of rules on the rest of us.

How dare Turnbull lecture anyone about traditional family values? Tell that to the Aboriginal families that are ripped apart by poverty and child removals, or the single parents trying to survive on the Newstart allowance or income management.

It is not the sex in Parliament House that is the problem; it’s the hypocrisy and entitlement that disgusts people. The Nationals are complaining that “Barnaby has been thrown under the proverbial bus”—that’s where we should throw the lot of them.

have been locked out by Glencore. In January, Glencore applied to terminate their enterprise bargaining agreement.

The Fair Work Commission ban on the NSW train strike has shown that workers’ fundamental right to strike is threatened by a Fair Work Act that is loaded in favour of the bosses.

Wage growth is stagnant as corporate profits soar. Inequality is rising. Yet Malcolm Turnbull is pushing ahead with his plan to cut corporate tax from 30 to 25 per cent and hand \$65 billion in tax cuts to big business.

So far, Labor leader Bill Shorten opposes Turnbull’s corporate tax cuts.

Shorten also opened the year by declaring the minimum wage was too low to live on, saying he has a goal of, “raising the pay of all Australians”. But he was vague about how workers are going to get much-needed pay rises.

The NSW rail workers’ strike had the potential to break the state government’s pay cap and open the way for real pay rises across the board. But when the Fair Work Commission banned their strike, Shorten said nothing.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus now says bluntly that, “the Fair Work Act is broken”.

At the heart of this is the fact that, as she put it, “Taking industrial action is too difficult and seems to be becoming even more difficult.”

Enterprise bargaining makes any strike action outside defined “bargaining periods” when an agreement expires, illegal. And even in a bargaining period, unions have to jump through hoops that frustrate and delay industrial action.

Labor is suggesting some small changes, such as making it harder for bosses to terminate agreements and restricting the use of labour hire. But it has said nothing about establishing an unrestricted right to strike.

The ACTU has begun talking about the right to strike. But the talk has to be turned into action.

A campaign that is limited to getting Labor elected won’t deliver the change we need. It was Labor governments that both introduced enterprise bargaining in the 1990s as well as the mis-named “Fair Work Act” in 2009.

In December the MUA organised an illegal picket to defend jobs at Melbourne’s Webb Dock. Construction workers also walked off the job, breaking the law, to join them.

If we are going to beat Turnbull and the bosses and win the right to strike, that is the kind of defiance that we need. There’s no time to lose.

**The ACTU’s talk about the right to strike has to be turned into action**

# Being black is not a crime, says Melbourne rally

By Jasper Bell

“THEY ARE playing political games and it is not right”, the South Sudanese Community Association’s Richard Deng told a protest of 400 people in Melbourne in early February.

The “Stop criminalising African communities” rally was called in response to the scare campaign around “African Gangs” whipped up by Liberal Party politicians and the Murdoch press through the summer.

The conservative media expressed shock as Deng promised to mobilise to help defeat the government, saying, “Peter Dutton and Malcolm Turnbull, you need to be deported... if you do not stop what are you doing, we are going to send you back to where you come from... We have to defend ourselves.”

Deng Maleek from the Flemington-Kensington Legal Centre told the rally that the government’s racism had led to a wave of attacks on Sudanese people, and that young black men are being stopped and harassed by Victoria police, “asking them whether they are gang members, and treating them like criminals.”

The crowd marched to the Liberal Party headquarters, and then to Victorian Parliament House, chanting “racists are not welcome here,” and “Dutton’s gang is a racist gang, throw the Liberals out.”

In January, the *Herald Sun* newspaper whipped up a scare campaign alleging an “African Gang Crisis”.

Malcolm Turnbull and Immigration Minister Peter Dutton were quick to jump on the bandwagon, with the PM telling the press that Victoria has a problem with, “gang violence and lawlessness.” Peter Dutton even went as far as claiming that Melbourne residents “are scared to go out to restaurants” in case they are “followed home by these gangs.”

But it was all a lie. Official statistics released in February show that crime in Victoria is at its lowest for ten years. Youth offences are down over 40 per cent since 2008-09. Even the slight over-representation of young men of Sudanese background is likely the result of racist over-policing of working class migrant communities.

Speakers at the rally included lawyers, leaders of community associations, a representative from the



**Above: Rallying against the criminalisation of African communities in Melbourne**  
Photo: Charandev Singh

Victorian Trades Hall Council and two National Union of Workers (NUW) delegates.

## Racialising crime

The speakers not only rejected Dutton’s comments, but called for an end to the racialising of crime in Victoria, and for the government to better fund public education, housing and employment programs for young people, instead of spending \$2 billion on expanding policing in Victoria last year.

The Liberals want to use racism and hysteria about crime to score political points before the Victorian state election in November. While Peter Dutton was attacking the Victorian Labor Government for being “soft” on crime, Victorian Liberal Leader Matthew Guy was posturing over tougher mandatory sentencing and increased policing.

Labor Premier Daniel Andrews should have rejected the racist attacks on African communities, but instead took the Liberals’ bait, insisting that his government would “throw the book” at young offenders, and reinforcing his call for more anti-terrorism measures.

Many at the rally voiced concern that the failure of mainstream politicians to challenge racism is empowering the racist right. Nyadol Nyuon,

one of the rally organisers, told the crowd that, “the climate of racism, of attacks—the last time I remember this kind of climate was in 2005, near the time of the Cronulla riots.”

“To younger African-Australians”, she said, “You have a right to feel safe, you have a right to be represented, and you have a right not to be vilified.”

Speakers at the rally also attacked the use of the word “African” to lump together various populations. Gabriel Ayuen from the NUW told the rally, “It’s racist, inaccurate and it’s untrue. Africa is not a suburb—it makes no sense to talk about African gangs.”

The rally shows the kind of unified fight we will need to push back the scaremongering and expose the Liberals’ agenda of cuts to services.

Matt Kunkel from the Victorian Trades Hall Council told the crowd, “the trade union movement will always stand with Melbourne’s migrant communities against these racist attacks. The government attacking you are attacking working people everywhere: they’ve slashed penalty rates, cut education funding and reintroduced the ABCC.

“We need to stand together, black and white, to take the fight to the government.”

.....  
**‘We need to stand together, black and white, to take the fight to the government.’  
—Matt Kunkel, Victorian Trades Hall Council**



# Greens challenge Labor from the left in Batman

By Chris Breen

THE BATMAN by-election in Melbourne on 17 March is a battle between The Greens' Alex Bhathal and the ALP's Ged Kearney. A win for Bhathal would give The Greens a second seat in the House of Representatives. Batman is one of the 25 seats that Greens leader Richard Di Natale sees as the basis for The Greens' long-term hope of holding some balance of parliamentary power.

There will be national attention for that reason.

Sitting ALP MP David Feeney resigned because of the dual citizenship fiasco. But he was always unpopular even with Labor voters. He was a right-wing factional party power-broker, whose undeclared and unlive-in negatively-gated \$2.3 million property in the electorate was an embarrassment and a drag on the Labor vote.

One question that will be centre-stage is refugees. In her election video, Bhathal says, "We will close the camps, we will bring the refugees here". Bhathal also told her 300-strong campaign launch that the question of refugees was the prime reason for her running in the seat again.

As ACTU President Kearney has spoken at Refugee Action Collective forums and long advocated for refugees. She played an important role in developing the ACTU's pro-refugee policy which, "calls for the detention centres on Manus Island, Nauru, and any other offshore detention centres to be closed".

But now she is running Kearney won't publicly repeat those calls. She was quoted in the *Herald Sun* as saying that Labor's current position (in favour of boat turnbacks and offshore detention) adopted by its national conference is "a reality I accept."

That's a pity. If Kearney would publicly campaign as a Labor candidate committed to the demand to "Bring Them Here", it would be a major boost for the movement and dramatically ramp up the pressure on Shorten and the Labor Party to end their bi-partisan support of Liberal policy.

Nonetheless ALP refugee policy is a reality that can be changed. Sixty-eight per cent of Labor voters across Australia want the refugees on Manus and Nauru brought to Australia.

Labor voters can vote 1 Greens, 2



**Above: Greens candidate Alex Bhathal at a campaign launch**

Labor knowing there is no chance of a Liberal winning the seat.

The Refugee Action Collective has called a "Bring Them Here" rally in Batman for Saturday 10 March to mobilise refugee supporters in the electorate and help build an even bigger rally for the Melbourne-wide Palm Sunday refugee rally on 25 March.

## Campaigning from the left

The Liberal vote in Batman is derisory and the state party has announced that it won't field a candidate. On the face of it, this makes a Bhathal win more likely. The right-wing Victorian state president Michael Kroger said that the Liberals would not be "a vote-channelling machine for Labor"—meaning this time around they are going to favour The Greens winning over Labor.

This is a challenge for Bhathal. Electoral opportunism has sometimes seen The Greens attempt to win seats by wooing the Liberal vote. Bhathal needs to make it clear that voting Greens is a vote for a candidate who will do everything she can to get rid of the Turnbull government. This is also the best way for Bhathal to win the left Labor vote.

No doubt Kearney can expect to get a higher vote than Feeney—whose personal vote was about zero. But Batman is an electorate that is split in two—the northern half votes Labor, the southern part votes Green. The nurses union has backed Kearney (a

former nurses' leader) as has ACTU Secretary Sally McManus. Labor is already out campaigning on penalty rates and school funding.

The Greens say they will tackle inequality. But their pledges need to go beyond their existing modest promises—to protect renters, tackle housing inequality, and to ban corporate political donations. The Greens could campaign in support of the striking Australian Paper workers in Preston to show their opposition to Turnbull's anti-union laws.

Bhathal is also making a big issue of opposing the Adani coal mine—something Labor has opportunistically moved to neutralise by making anti-Adani noises, although Shorten stops short of outright opposition.

Bhathal is also yet to make it clear where she stands in regard to Di Natale's push to move The Greens to the "pragmatic" centre.

*Solidarity* is calling for a vote for Bhathal, with second preference to Labor. A win for Bhathal would put further pressure on the ALP to dump its cruel refugee policies. If Bhathal wins, it would help kill off the myth that pro-refugee policies are electoral poison.

This election won't settle the question of Manus and Nauru, and it won't get rid of Turnbull. But a win for The Greens can be the basis for building stronger grassroots refugee and union movements that can beat Turnbull and the system he represents.

**Bhathal needs to make it clear that she will do everything she can to get rid of the Turnbull government**

# Rail worker: ‘we should strike anyway, we should just walk off’

Solidarity interviewed a Sydney rail worker about the ban on strike action and why rail workers deserve a better agreement

## What does the Fair Work Commission’s (FWC) decision to rule the 29 January rail workers strike illegal mean going forward?

If you look at wage growth, it’s stagnant. At the same time industrial action has decreased by 97 per cent since the 1970s.

So for workers to lose their only bargaining chip, which is their right to strike—even in a protected action period, which has been officially validated and vetted by the Fair Work Commission—is a disgrace! And it shows the rules in place to protect workers in a period of bargaining are broken.

The whole point of a strike is to show how powerful workers’ labour is within an economy and society. We require the labour of qualified, highly-skilled, routinely re-assessed train drivers, signallers etc. in order to run our train network safely.

The NSW government needs to know how important rail workers are to keep our economy going. The current offer show how little the care about their workforce which puts in 110 per cent.

Our work should be respected and currently it is not.

There is uncertainty whether the union officials will go ahead with further industrial action, but rail workers are ready to keep the fight going after the six-week ceasefire.

We should go ahead with overtime bans and rolling strike action to show how even removing our labour for small periods of time affects the economy.

But, in all seriousness, the rank and file needs to be organised and prepared to side step and organise their own action irrespective of FWC rulings or the union officials’ decisions.

If the FWC rules industrial action illegal again, we should strike anyway, we should just walk off.

## What do you think of the new deal?

The new deal is being sold to all employees as a 4.06 per cent per annum pay increase. But in fact it’s only 3 per



Strikes and industrial action on Sydney trains have been declared illegal

cent, 0.25 per cent more than what was already on the table. They’re including a one off payment of \$1000, seven days domestic violence leave, extending five days critical incident leave to all staff. This is how they’re coming up with the 4.06 per cent figure.

Regarding the critical incident leave, train crew already had it and, more than likely, they’ll remain the only ones that will use it, so not much change there.

We now need to provide a medical certificate if we’re sick for two days, down from three.

I should point out that the new deal does not include back-pay for the time that has passed since our last Enterprise Agreement (EA) expired. Unfortunately, the union bargained away the back-pay clause in the 2014 EA. Previously if we agreed to a new EA we got back-pay.

## With all the problems around the new timetable, what is the state of rostering?

There’s a fortnightly master roster. But we have constantly changing start times. There’s no real pattern to it. One day will be a 4AM start, the next 8AM, the next 6AM. It’s really hard to plan your life around your shifts; it’s doesn’t allow for a good

quality of life.

Part of the new agreement allegedly includes better guidelines around rostering.

But generally, most people are really, really frustrated around the implementation of the new timetable. Drivers were working up to 13 days a fortnight with a huge amount of pressure to accept the shifts because there were simply not enough drivers.

When the new timetable was introduced they knew at the time they were 80 drivers short.

This led to excessive amounts of overtime and drivers doing a lot more kilometres; they’re working 6.5 to 7 hours of their 7.36 hour shift.

Apparently, the driver of the train that crashed at Richmond in January had done a ton of hours in the lead up to the crash.

## What is the feeling amongst rail workers about the new offer?

A lot of rank and file rail workers and delegates are not happy with the new deal—I think most will vote it down. People are quite exhausted and want it over with but we understand why we need to say no. The Combined Rail Unions want a good package with a minimum 4 per cent pay increase per annum.

Interview by Matt Meagher

.....  
**One day will be a 4AM start, the next 8AM, the next 6AM. It’s really hard to plan your life around your shifts**



# Defy the ABCC—Fly union flags, not Eureka

By James Supple

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of “more stringent” guidelines by the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), banning union signs and the Eureka flag from display on building sites has sparked a wave of flag-flying defiance. Many other workplaces have also held flag-flying events in solidarity with the CFMEU.

The new directive bans not just large union flags or stickers on building sites. “The presence of one of these items”—a single sticker or slogan on a hard-hat or uniform—is enough to breach it.

It spelled out a list of banned slogans, including, “100 per cent union”, “union site”, “no ticket, no start”, “no freeloaders” and “scab”, ‘rat’, ‘grub’ or similar to refer to employees who choose not to participate in industrial activities, such as joining a union or being represented by a union”.

Understandably, the directive has sparked a spontaneous wave of defiance. Last year Watpac in Brisbane tried to tear down union flags and CFMEU posters on noticeboards, saying it needed to be Code compliant. In October the ABCC wrote to Watpac and Probuild warning them to take down union flags and material on sites. But the Commission has subsequently backed off, according to *The Australian*.

But instead of making it clear this is an attack on union flags and material, the union leaders have chosen to focus almost solely on defending the Eureka flag. But it is not an unambiguous union flag.

The CFMEU says it is, “a flag that represents a struggle for democracy and fairness”, given its use at the Eureka stockade in 1854 and its more recent appearance in union struggles.

But the Eureka flag is also a key nationalist symbol. The Southern Cross has been incorporated onto the Australian flag. Republican Peter Fitzsimmons has called the Eureka flag, “the most iconic Australian symbol of the lot”. The far right use the Eureka flag and the Southern Cross to symbolise their racist nationalism.

Navy uniforms on the HMAS Ballarat also feature it. A version of it was used at the race riots at Lambing Flat against Chinese migrants in 1861.

Nationalism undermines the working class unity needed to build strong unions and fight the bosses. It under-



pins the racism directed at Aboriginal people, migrants and refugees.

The defiance of the ABCC directive shows there is a willingness to fight, but

**Above: What the ABCC wants to ban from building sites**

our strength is best demonstrated by flying the banned union flags, representing the real class unity that can break their bans and their anti-union laws.

## Locked out Oaky North miners now face termination

WORKERS AT the Oaky Creek coal mine in Queensland are the latest to face termination of their enterprise agreement. The 175 workers have been locked out for over 200 days, after striking when enterprise bargaining stalled. This makes it one of the longest lockouts in Australian history—something bosses can do totally legally through enterprise bargaining under the Fair Work Act.

Glencore rejected the workers’ initial proposal to roll over their previous agreement, which would have left workers with no pay rise over the next two years. They offered to accept a real pay cut if it meant retaining job security measures.

But management wants to undermine job security through the increased use of contract workers.

“It’s happening at every other pit in the Bowen Basin. Everyone’s trying to use contractors because it’s easy to supplement and get rid of when they don’t need them anymore,” Brian Lederhose, one of the workers involved, told the ABC. Sid Hurst, working in a nearby mine, commented that management’s use of contractors “is killing this town”.

Glencore has accepted similar job security measures at its Bulga and Ravensworth mines, where workers have won guarantees to convert a number of contract workers to permanent positions, increased

**Management wants to undermine job security through the increased use of contract workers**

training opportunities and improved redundancy packages. Additionally, they secured a job security clause guaranteeing that in the case of job losses, casual and contract workers will lose their jobs before voluntary redundancies and redeployment are considered for permanent workers.

In late January the workers voted down a third enterprise bargaining offer from Glencore—against the recommendation of their union officials.

In response, Glencore applied on 29 January to the Fair Work Commission to have the old enterprise bargaining agreement terminated. This tactic is becoming increasingly frequent. Murdoch University’s agreement was terminated last September, while management at Port Kembla Coal Terminal applied to terminate their agreement in January this year.

The workers have maintained a picket at one entrance to the mine, although operations continue with contract workers. Last October the Fair Work Commission savaged Glencore over its extreme surveillance of workers participating in the picket. Workers reported that private security had been monitoring them in town and while at their own homes.

The workers have vowed to remain “one day longer, one day stronger” than Glencore. They desperately need solidarity and support to win.

**Daniel Cheers**

# Ten years since Rudd's Apology, more black children are being stolen than ever before

By Paddy Gibson

ON 13 February there were a host of government sponsored events to commemorate ten years since Kevin Rudd gave his official apology to the Stolen Generations.

But a growing chorus of protest from Aboriginal families broken up by contemporary "child protection" agencies has pushed the issue of continuing forced removals into the national spotlight.

Aboriginal children are being taken away into foster care in numbers unprecedented in Australian history. These removals take place in raids using police. Newborn babies are often taken straight from the hospital.

On 30 June 2007, just before Rudd made his apology, there were 7917 Indigenous children in "out of home care". Ten years later and the numbers have more than doubled, with 17,664 Indigenous children in "out of home care" on 30 June 2017.

Despite being less than 5 per cent of the child population, Indigenous children make up more than one third of the numbers in foster care and are more than ten times more likely to be removed from their families.

Overwhelmingly these children are removed for "neglect", rather than physical or sexual abuse.

The *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997 explained that, "social inequality is the most direct cause of neglect". Problems such as homelessness, chronic hunger, substance abuse and family violence result from the intense poverty and oppression experienced by Aboriginal communities.

More than \$1.5 billion is spent every year removing Indigenous children from their families and keeping them in "out of home care". Meanwhile, the government refuses to fund employment programs, build housing or maintain the basic services in Aboriginal communities that are taken for granted by mainstream Australia.

Child protection departments are rife with racism against Aboriginal people. Entire families and communities are branded as "dysfunctional" just because they are black. Despite an "Aboriginal child placement principle" in child protection law, the majority of Aboriginal children removed are placed away from their own family network.

This racism has hardened over the



**Above: Sydney protest against continuing Stolen Generations on the ten year anniversary of the Apology**

Photo: Charandev Singh

past decade, with explicitly racist policies like the Northern Territory Intervention, introduced by John Howard in 2007 and continued by the Rudd Labor government and now Turnbull. The Intervention has encouraged the idea that Aboriginal families need to be broken up and controlled "for their own good".

## Protest

On the Apology anniversary, a protest of 150 people organised by Grandmothers Against Removals Sydney marched to NSW Parliament to demand an end to continuing stolen generations

Laura Lyons told the crowd:

"I worked for 19 years as a family support worker. I first became a victim of the system when they took my four grandchildren. Then this racist system walked into the school and took three of my own children away. I knew from that day on I had to stand up and fight... I got my children back. But the system needs to be dismantled."

A young Bundjalung Widjabul woman Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts gave a powerful testimony:

"Months later (after Rudd's apology) 14 police officers and an Aboriginal social worker knocked on my father's door in the middle of the night and ripped me out of his hands. They said, 'hug your father one last time, you have to go'... I went to 13 different homes. What we must change

is a system where the next Aboriginal baby who is born is automatically profiled for removal, just like I was profiled with a caseworker appearing at the hospital straight away".

In Alice Springs, a protest was led by Aboriginal grandmothers demanding an end to the removals and the abuse and torture of Aboriginal children in foster care and juvenile detention centres like Don Dale.

To mark the anniversary of the Apology, Labor announced that a national summit on First Nations children will be held within 100 days of forming government. They have also committed to legislating for an Indigenous representative body, or "voice to parliament".

But Aboriginal people don't need more "consultation" or "advisory" roles—they urgently need control of their own communities, children and land.

Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent removing Aboriginal children from their families while Labor was last in office. They must now make commitments of hundreds of millions more to return children to their families and communities and provide the resources and assistance required to rebuild shattered lives.

And Labor must unequivocally apologise for their role implementing and extending the NT Intervention and commit to repealing all Intervention laws and policies.

**Indigenous children are more than ten times more likely to be removed from their families**

# Stockmarket slump sign of capitalism's ongoing crisis

by Tomáš Tengely-Evans

A SUDDEN tumble on US stockmarkets has sent panic around the world. US stocks had their worst week for two years in February, down at one point by 10 per cent.

This sparked falls around the world, with Australian stocks down almost 5 per cent the same week.

Politicians and pundits rushed to reassure people that it was all just a blip. The CNBC news channel's report began, "The first thing to know about the stock market's eye-watering slide is that it wasn't caused by anything fundamental."

The New York Federal Reserve's William Dudley dismissed the falls as "small potatoes", saying, "the global economy is growing quite quickly". But the latest panic is linked to underlying problems in global capitalism.

The immediate trigger was a rise in US inflation and the threat of interest rate increases, which would spell bad news for capitalists at the moment. FXTM chief market strategist Hussein Sayed warned, "The era of cheap money is ending and for markets who got addicted to it, it's undoubtedly bad news."

## Slashed

After the global crisis of 2007 central banks slashed interest rates and injected billions in cheap credit through the British Quantitative Easing and other schemes.

This stoked new financial bubbles—and inflation—but didn't solve capitalism's underlying problem of low profitability. As one banker put it, "This was volatility unleashed" because "the market is overvalued relative to fundamentals".

Central banks are now looking at raising interest rates to stop the bubbles inflating too much.

But cheap credit has kept alive an army of unprofitable "zombie firms". Some of these are deemed "too big to fail" because their collapse could trigger an almighty crisis. The proportion of zombie firms in Germany, France and the other six major eurozone economies has risen from 5.5 per cent to 10 per cent since 2007. In Italy and Spain it has tripled—and the US is even worse at 12 per cent.

All of this underlines the need for democratic planning and a socialist transformation of society.

Working class people's livelihoods



**Above: A bout of panic hits world stockmarkets**

should not be at the mercy of what Donald Trump's deputy Mike Pence called, "simply the ebb and flow of our stock market". That means fight-

ing for a socialist society that's based on meeting working class people's needs, not maximising profits.

**Socialist Worker UK**

## Imperialist powers abandon Kurds in Afrin

TURKEY HAS launched a military offensive inside Syria against the Kurdish controlled area of Afrin.

Once again the Kurds have been abandoned, with imperialist powers including the US and Russia allowing the Turkish military to do as it likes.

The Kurds' long-running struggle for independence and self-determination deserves support. They have suffered at the hands of both Western imperialism and regional powers across the Middle East for decades. Divided between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, the Kurdish population of 30 to 35 million is the world's largest nation without its own state.

Turkey is at war with its own Kurdish population. The PKK has waged a guerrilla struggle for self-determination since 1984. Turkey views Kurdish control of the area along its border by the Kurdish PYD, aligned with the PKK, with horror.

The Kurds have been able to establish their own areas of control in Syria's north as a result of the war and the weakening of the Assad regime. But this has been based on deals with imperialist powers and the Assad dictatorship.

Initially the Kurdish PYD struck a deal with the Assad regime, standing apart from the uprising against it in return for Assad's troops withdrawing from Kurdish areas.

More recently Kurdish militias

have tried to win US support through offering themselves as fighters against Islamic State. They form the backbone of the Syrian Democratic Forces, fighting with the aid of US airstrikes and 2000 US troops.

The Kurdish PYD in Syria was clearly hoping to repeat the experience of the Kurds in Iraq, who gained US support in the 1990s to establish a semi-independent state.

But the Iraqi Kurds' move to declare full independence late last year ended in disaster, in the face of opposition from the governments of Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. After 92 per cent of Iraqi Kurds voted for independence, Iraqi government troops seized large areas of Kurdish territory, including the lucrative oil fields of Kirkuk. This ended their chance of a viable independent state.

Deals with imperialist powers are not going to deliver Kurdish liberation. The US is far more concerned with maintaining its relationship with Turkey, a military ally and member of NATO, than with Kurdish freedom.

Sections of the opposition to the Assad regime in Syria have refused to support Kurdish independence. But the hope for Kurdish liberation is bound up with unity between Arabs and Kurds and with the wider workers' struggles against the dictatorships all across the region.

**James Supple**

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**Cheap credit has kept alive an army of unprofitable "zombie firms"**



# Trump steps up racist attack on immigrants

By Sofia Donnelly

IN HIS year in office, Donald Trump has shown again and again that he's a racist bigot. He has defended white supremacists, tried to ban Muslims from entering the US and derided Haiti, El Salvador and nations in Africa as "shithole countries". Now he's escalating his attack on immigrants.

In his State of the Union address at the end of January, Trump beat the drums of war, spread delusions about his vicious tax bill's benefits to working families, and claimed that since he took office, "a new tide of optimism was already sweeping across our land." Perhaps someone should tell him he has the worst approval ratings of any new president since they started counting.

But the longest and most repulsive part of the speech was a racist tirade against immigrants. Trump outlined a four pillar plan: allow a pathway to citizenship for a mere fraction of the country's undocumented immigrants, build his racist border wall, put greater restrictions on work and immigration visas, and put a halt to immigrant family reunification.

He blamed immigrants for gang violence, when they are actually far less likely to be convicted of crimes than people born in the US. In fact, as the undocumented population has tripled in size over the last 30 years, violent crime has decreased by almost half. Then he blamed two recent terror attacks in New York on family reunification visas, never mind the fact that white supremacists murdered 18 people in 2017—double the previous year's figure.

Trump even managed to blame immigrant drug-trafficking for the opioid addiction crisis across the US—which in truth is a catastrophe manufactured by the pharmaceutical industry and their friends in government.

## Democrats cave in

The Democrats have effectively fallen in line behind Trump's anti-immigrant plans. His biggest attack is on the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals law (DACA), which allows undocumented immigrants who arrived as children to live and work in the US. It would protect an estimated 1.8 million people.

Since Trump announced in September he'd repeal it, immigrants have



yet again become a political bargaining chip. Trump has made clear that he will only discuss protecting DACA if the Democrats agree to his other anti-immigrant policies, including the border wall. Time is running out, as Trump will terminate DACA on 5 March.

In January several Democrats in the Senate finally took a stand. Trump needed their support for a new government spending bill. They refused to give him their votes unless he protected DACA. But in the face of a potential government shut-down, they caved after just three days.

All Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer got was a "promise" from the Republicans to discuss and vote on DACA legislation. The Democrats have given in to every one of Trump's racist policies and secured nothing to protect the undocumented.

The rage is palpable. Alida Garcia was formerly the National Latino Vote Deputy Director for the Obama re-election campaign. "I'm leaving the Democratic Party today", she declared straight after the capitulation, calling them "liars" and "complicit" for Latino and immigrant families "living in fear".

Cracks like this can help challenge the hegemonic opinion among most left-wing people that there is no alternative than to support the Democrats.

The Women's March this year drew hundreds of thousands again—but its main message was to vote the Democrats back in at mid-term elections in November.

**Above: The threat of deportation hangs over the head of millions of undocumented migrants in the US**

We need to win those kinds of numbers to building mass movements against Trump's agenda. We need protests in the streets for DACA and all 11 million undocumented to make it politically toxic for either party to attack immigrants anymore.

In February Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) tried to deport Ravi Ragbir, a well-known immigrant rights activist in New York. They turned his routine check-in into a removal and punitively detained him in far-away Florida.

Many suspect that this was a calculated attack on an outspoken immigrant rights leader. After community pressure and a temporary stay from the courts, Ragbir has been returned home to New York. Protests are planned for his next ICE check-in on 15 March. People organising around his case have started using a new slogan: "you can't deport a movement."

This is the kind of action that can isolate Trump's racism and defend the undocumented.

The Democrats couldn't even act like an opposition long enough to secure amnesty for DACA migrants—a community that more than 60 per cent of the country supports becoming full citizens. This is not to mention the more than ten million other undocumented people in the country who were not brought here as children.

We should remember their betrayal when the Democrats coming door-knocking for votes in the mid-term elections.

**Protest organisers have started using a new slogan: "you can't deport a movement"**

# FIFTY YEARS ON 1968—THE YEAR THE WORLD CAUGHT FIRE

In 1968 the world was shaken by mass revolts in country after country, giving birth to a new radical left, writes **Miro Sandev**

1968 IS STEREOTYPICALLY depicted as the year of sex, drugs and rock and roll. Images of long-haired hippies and rebellious students are shown, as if the whole turmoil was just about privileged children “acting out”.

But it was a time when regimes that had seemed like immovable monoliths began to crack and were on the verge of being completely smashed by movements from below.

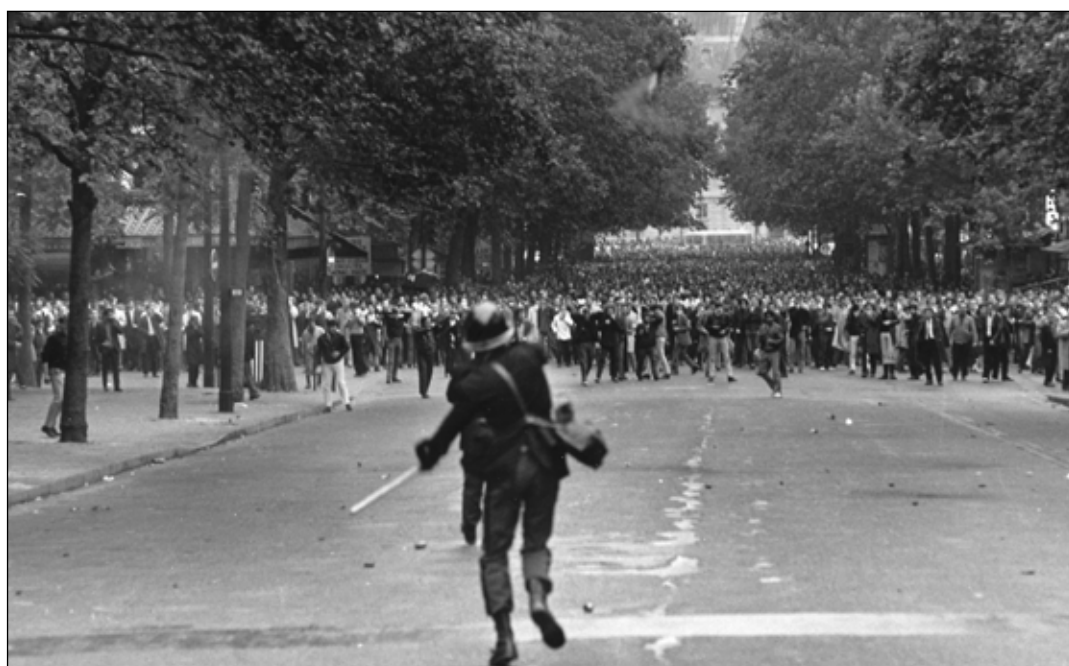
Workers and students shook the foundations of capitalism, both in the West and also in the supposedly “Communist” Eastern Bloc. By the end of the year a host of historic movements had been born, the Vietnam War had decidedly turned against the US, Stalinism was dealt a hammer blow and socialist revolution once again seemed on the cards in advanced capitalist countries like France.

In January the world’s greatest superpower was humiliated by a rag-tag peasant army in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese resistance took over cities all over South Vietnam in the Tet offensive, showing that the US could be defeated. Anti-war activists were vindicated. Workers and students the world over took heart that even the mightiest regimes could be beaten.

Then in May ten million French workers went out on general strike, responding to police brutality against student protests. Street fighting and factory occupations rocked one of the world’s richest countries. Grievances amongst workers had piled up over many years. And the student revolt was like a spark to this flammable tinder.

Student protests, begun over campus issues, soon spread into occupations over lack of proper services and a wholesale critique of capitalist society. When the police attacked them, and workers rushed to their aid, the stage was set for a mighty confrontation.



**Above: Students take over the streets in Paris in 1968**

Although the union bureaucracy was eventually able to wind down the strike by channelling people’s fury into the ballot box, May 1968 saw the birth of the radical student movement in France and many revolutionary organisations grew out of it. It also resulted in many significant gains for the French working class.

And it showed that revolution was possible even in the rich capitalist countries.

## **Build up**

The decades before 1968 were marked by a conformist calm in the rich countries of the West.

Capitalism was going through the most sustained expansion ever witnessed and the system appeared to have solved its in-built tendency towards crisis. Unemployment fell. The welfare state was built and working class living standards steadily rose. Centre-left and centre-right political parties were converging in terms of

policy and ideology.

It seemed like class conflict was over and that workers’ and bosses’ interests were actually aligned. Some said workers in the West had been “bought off”, and were too affluent and conformist to rise up against the system. The year 1968 proved them wrong.

New student movements began to develop first. In 1964 Berkeley in the US exploded with thousands of students demonstrating and occupying buildings, demanding freedom of speech on campus. Italy, Germany, Britain and Spain all followed suit, with thousands of students becoming radicals and seeking out revolutionary ideas.

The conditions for this outbreak of revolt had been prepared by the expansion of the education system. Before the 1960s, students were mostly members of the ruling class. But the needs of capitalism had seen universities opened up to more middle class and

## FEATURES

working class people.

The university presented an ideal of unlimited intellectual development, free from social, political and ideological restraint. However, students soon learnt that those who ran the universities did not practice what they preached.

Far from being liberal and democratic, the universities were firmly under the control of representatives of the ruling class, who would react to any challenge with expulsions, the police and the courts.

The university authorities would claim to be “non-political”, yet would collaborate with government war efforts and tolerate racism.

This meant that student protests which started off over liberal issues developed into all out confrontation. Later, students also connected with counter-cultural movements that were challenging the dominant socially conservative values.

Huge numbers of people were radicalised and believed revolutionary change was possible.

Yet the student movements had soon peaked. Students for a Democratic Society in the US went from 100,000 members in 1968 to completely dissolving itself by 1969. It was only where student revolt linked up with working class struggle that profound change became possible and revolutionary organisations continued to exist after the wave of revolt had receded.

### Anti-war

One issue at the centre of the radicalisation was the Vietnam War. The decade leading into 1968 had seen the spread of national liberation movements throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Vietnamese had been waging a 20-year anti-imperialist struggle against first French, and then US aggression.

The US government justified the war to its citizens using Cold War rhetoric, claiming it was protecting democratic South Vietnam from the communists in the North. But the South Vietnamese regime was a dictatorship that relied on US troops to survive.

From the very beginning, there were small numbers of US conscientious objectors who refused to go and fight despite being conscripted. Large anti-war protests began in the US from 1965. In Australia too, there was opposition emerging to conscription and the war itself.

As the war dragged on, it became

clearer that the people who the US and Australian troops had been sent to “protect”, did not in fact want them there. This sapped morale in the invading armies. Many returned soldiers denounced their involvement, joining with anti-war activists and students to protest the war.

Black workers in particular began to identify with the oppressed Vietnamese as the growing US civil rights movement challenged the racial oppression they suffered at home.

Muhammad Ali refused to be drafted and famously defended his decision: “No Viet Cong ever called me nigger”.

The Vietnamese Tet Offensive in 1968 deepened all of these currents. Up until this point, the Vietnamese forces in the National Liberation Front (NLF) had waged guerrilla warfare through hit and run tactics, mostly in their rural strongholds. For the first time they attacked US positions openly, hitting major cities including Saigon. This shattered the US government’s lies that it was winning the war.

It was a shot in the arm for anti-war activists and unionists in the West. In March US President Lyndon Johnson announced he would not re-contest the presidential election. The revolt against the war had helped destroy his presidency.

By 1970 in Australia unions were taking strike action against the war as part of the Moratorium marches under the slogan of “Stop Work to Stop the War”. In Victoria the grouping of 27 “rebel unions” called for Australian soldiers to mutiny.

This was vital for linking the imperialist ambitions of the Australian ruling class with the exploitation they meted out to workers at home and also emphasising that it was workers’ power that held the key to ending the bloodshed. It showed the possibilities for turning the student and anti-war rebellion into a rebellion against capitalism.

### Stalinism

The state capitalist regimes of the USSR and Eastern Bloc were not immune from revolt either. In reality the USSR and the Eastern Bloc regimes had nothing to do with socialism. They were societies controlled by a bureaucratic elite, using the state to exploit workers just as viciously as private capitalists exploited workers in the West.

The pro-Moscow communist parties in the West idolised these

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### The Tet offensive in 1968 shattered the US government’s lies that it was winning the Vietnam War

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countries and held them up as a model of socialism. But the reality was that they were repressive capitalist regimes, driven by military competition with the West. This forced them into squeezing their workers and this provoked uprisings to improve living conditions.

The 1968 Prague Spring was born of this pressure. A faction fight in the communist party of Czechoslovakia led to mass agitation campaigns amongst the people. Suddenly students were organising assemblies to debate questions, people were buying and reading all sorts of papers and workers began to oust officials from state-run unions.

This sort of political activity had been brutally repressed for decades. Moscow demanded the regime clamp down and restore “normality”. But the regime’s leaders were paralysed by the struggle from below.

So Russia invaded with thousands of tanks, taking over major cities and killing hundreds of civilians.

Students occupied universities with the support of sections of workers. But ultimately, the radicals leading the resistance were not ready for a confrontation that would lead to revolution and Moscow was able to reimpose bureaucratic control. Still, the protests revealed to many people that the socialism of the “socialist world” was as phoney as the freedom of the “free world”.

The leaders of the Western Communist Parties found it increasingly hard to write off these protests and applaud the Russian tanks, as they had done with the Hungarian revolution in 1956. Some of them issued statements protesting against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Other Stalinist parties split over the question. It marked the point from which many Stalinist parties around the world entered into a terminal decline.

Importantly, the layers of newly radicalised activists now took revolutionary inspiration in the possibility of socialism from below and no longer felt the need to support Moscow.

In the decades following 1968 the ruling class around the world fought back viciously.

Workers suffered a series of devastating defeats in the 1980s at the hands of neo-liberal leaders such as Thatcher and Reagan, whose effects still cast a shadow on our times. But the turbulent revolts of 1968 provide inspiration that another world is possible, one based on human needs and driven by movements from below.



# Michael Hyde: 'It felt like everything was up for grabs'

**Michael Hyde** was a student activist at Monash University during 1968. He was one of the anti-war activists charged by university authorities for collecting money to aid the Vietnamese resistance, the NLF. He spoke to *Solidarity* about the period.

MY INVOLVEMENT at Monash started in 1967. I'd been living in America for a couple of years. I came back to a university that was already slowly rumbling.

The Labor Club carried out campaigns against restrictions in parking and that kind of thing, and of course the Vietnam War.

Anti-war sentiment was reasonably clear. The real change occurred in the second half of 1967 when we decided that if you were going to oppose the war you had to support the people who were resisting the American imperialists. That's how we came to publicise and promote the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF). And that created a total shitstorm.

The Labor Club decided that we'd collect money for the NLF. That was stopped by the university administration. So a few of us collected in spite of that and were charged [under university rules].

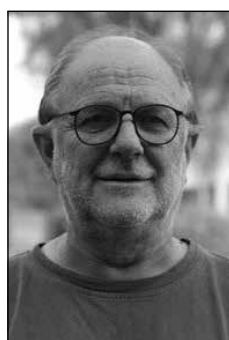
It had a massive impact. The Labor Party defended the Defence Force Protection Act which the Liberals brought in, which was going to put us in jail for two years for supporting the Vietcong. On every newspaper it made headlines and front pages.

Labor Party people in the anti-war movement went berserk and attacked us. They had people ringing us up saying we don't want you carrying NLF flags at demonstrations.

In the wider community the response was often, "I don't agree with them, but I am against the war". So taking a more left-wing position dragged people to the left.

The anti-war movement went to a much more militant phase. Whereas formerly demonstrations outside the US consulate were fairly calm and peaceful, in 1968 the 4 July demonstration erupted into a smoke bomb, rock throwing, horses charging frenzy. Over 60 people were arrested and some of us got our first taste of what it was like to be "interviewed" upstairs.

TV channels were doing documentaries on Monash University and



**Above: Michael Hyde**

**Top: Students at Monash hold a mass meeting in the late 1960s**

the Monash Labor Club. There was another really active university [in Melbourne], La Trobe. A number of us were Maoists then and the same was true at La Trobe.

## Revolutionaries

It felt like everything was up for grabs. We'd also come in on the tail end of the civil rights movement in America. And a lot of us had been deeply affected by that.

There were a lot of changes in society as a whole, but I think that the beating heart of people becoming student revolutionaries was the Vietnam War. There were arguments at home, there were people thrown out of the family, there were people who lost their jobs.

My old man was a Uniting Church minister. He and my mother were left-wing Christians. There were many like them in the Protestant and Catholic churches.

And because there was action on the streets, and people handing out leaflets and organising it made people question almost everything, including the position of women in society.

The Vietnam War demanded something of people, made them look at the very essence of their society, when they found out people had lied to them about the Vietnam War.

There were people involved in lots of different areas at lots of different levels. People who opposed the war at my father's church in Wollongong held a vigil every Saturday morning.

That basically led to my father being pushed out of that church.

A little known fact is that 12,000 young men refused to register for the draft. We were spiriting people away, onto boats [at the docks]. Even my father told me years later that he'd ferried some draft resisters down the coast of NSW, taking people into safe houses.

There were lots of ways people would become involved, and the more they became involved the more left-wing they became. Because even when they did reasonable things their telephones were tapped, they were followed.

I was a pacifist, and a kind of a Christian, and one experience after another drove me further and further to the left, because I couldn't see any calm moderate way of changing society. To this day that still rings true to me.

We felt as though we were part of a worldwide movement. There were huge demonstrations in London, in America and Paris.

We felt as though we were part and parcel of an upsurge and were delighted when we realised that when it came to the 1970s, per capita we had more people on the streets and actively involved than England or America. Michael Hyde has recently published a memoir *All along the watchtower*. He also edited *It is right to rebel*, the classic account of the 1960s and 1970s Monash student struggles. More of his work is available at [www.michaelhyde.com.au](http://www.michaelhyde.com.au)

# THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO MARX'S HANDBOOK FOR REVOLUTION

The Communist *Manifesto* remains among the best introductions to Marx's analysis of capitalism, and why workers' struggles hold the key to smashing it, writes **Vivian Honan**

*THE COMMUNIST Manifesto* is probably the most read political pamphlet in history. Although it was first published in 1848, it remains an excellent starting point in understanding socialist ideas and how to fight capitalism today.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were active in the debates among early socialists and communists in Europe. They were tasked with writing the manifesto by an organisation called the Communist League. This revolutionary communist organisation mostly consisted of German radicals living in Brussels, London and Paris.

At the time there were a number of competing strands of socialist thought. *The Communist Manifesto* was commissioned to make clear the League's programme and outlook.

## The development of capitalism

Its first chapter begins with the famous statement that, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."

Since history began, society has been made up of one group of people ruling over another. For example there have been master and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf—"in a word, oppressor and oppressed".

The development of capitalism out of feudal society did not result in the end of class conflict, but instead established new classes: the bourgeoisie (or capitalists, those that own the wealth and means of production such as the factories) and the proletariat (the working class).

The *Manifesto* provides a brilliant sketch of the Marxist theory of history.

At the time Marx and Engels were writing, remnants of the feudal system, where kings and lords ruled over serfs working the land, still lingered in

much of Europe.

The bourgeoisie had seized power through revolution in France only a few decades previously, overthrowing the French monarchy.

This was the result, the *Manifesto* argues, of changes, "in the modes of production and exchange."

Capitalism developed within feudal society as a radically new way of organising production, based on waged labour by workers who were formally free, not enslaved or bound to a feudal lord.

The new ways of organising economic life led to new ideas about the world and how it should be run, challenging established ideas and institutions.

As the *Manifesto* puts it, "The bourgeoisie... has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation."

Marx and Engels recognised that capitalism was an incredibly dynamic system, producing rapid technological change and the expansion of the new system across the world:

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere."

And yet capitalism is also based on the degradation and brutalisation of the working class. And the system periodically lurches into economic crisis, creating unemployment and

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**The bourgeoisie had seized power through revolution in France only a few decades previously**

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human misery.

Capitalism is the first form of society, Marx notes, where crisis results not from the shortage of food, shelter and other goods, but from over-production. In the pursuit of profit, companies produce more goods than can actually be sold.

To overcome the crisis, they have to either destroy productive forces (through bankruptcies that see the dismantling of machines and infrastructure), find new markets for their goods, or increase workers' exploitation further. Often this only means that the next crisis is even more destructive because the underlying difficulties in increasing profits remain.

## The working class

Alongside the emergence of the bourgeoisie was the growth of the working class.

Under capitalism, everything becomes a commodity. Our labour has a price just like bread, milk or any other product. That price is our wage. And the employers generally pay workers as little as they can get away with. The bourgeoisie profit off workers' labour by paying less than the value of what they produce.

The wage a worker is paid by their boss then usually goes straight into the pockets of another section of the bourgeoisie (the landlords and supermarket owners) when a worker pays rent and buys food and other basic goods.

But the working class have the power to challenge this situation. Even in 1848 with the system in its infancy Marx and Engels could see the potential power workers had, "with the development of industry, the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows".

The establishment of factories and other workplaces brought together workers in large numbers. But brought together in a workplace, facing the same problems, workers began to stage strikes and protests to defend their interests against the bosses.

Workers have a particular power in that they can stop production and paralyse society. They are both a product of capitalism but also have the power to destroy it.

This is what Marx and Engels are referring to in the famous statement: “What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers.”

### Socialism

Marx and Engels looked to workers’ revolution to overturn capitalism and win a socialist society based on equality and democratic control. “In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.”

But what would a socialist society look like? One of the Communists’ main aims should be the “abolition of private property”, the *Manifesto* argued. Under capitalism, a small minority own most of the world’s wealth. No matter how hard they work, at best a worker might be able to afford a house and a car and a few other possessions.

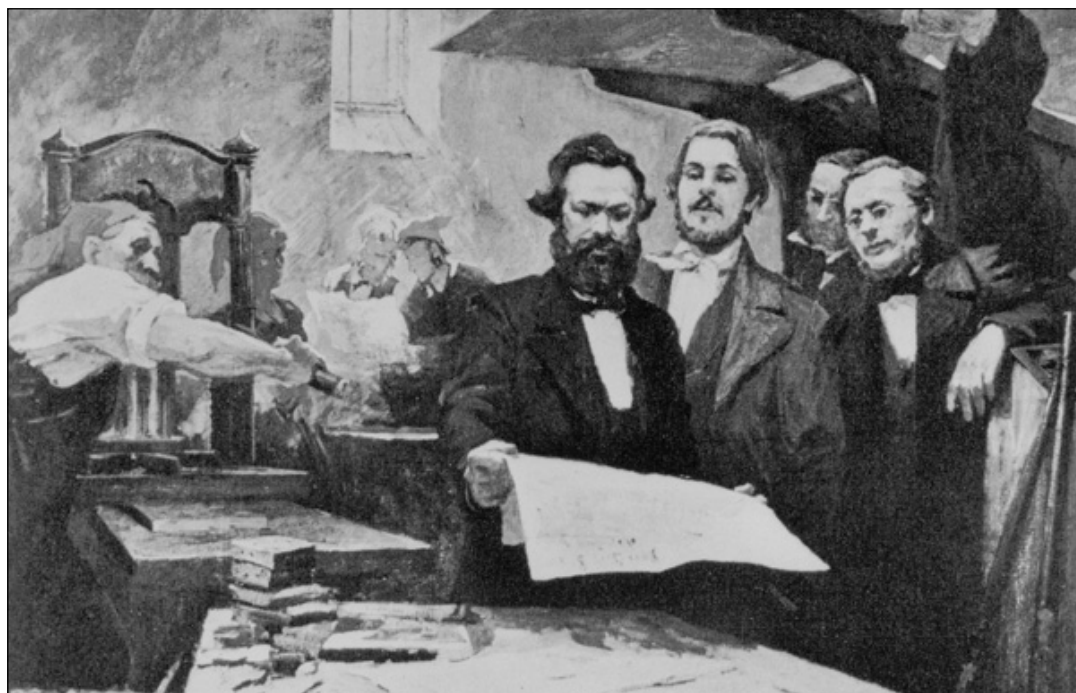
Control of the factories, workplaces and major companies allows the bourgeoisie to set the terms on which everyone else works. Abolishing private property does not mean taking away the meagre possessions of individual workers.

It means the majority of society taking democratic control of production—deciding what is to be produced in each workplace and how it will be distributed.

Despite countries such as Russia and China once calling themselves Communist, workers there had no democratic control as described in the *Manifesto*. Although there was no private property and state control of the economy, there was a ruling class running things just as corporations in the West do. This is best described as state capitalism.

The capitalists, whether they be state officials or corporate CEOs, profit off our labour and use the wealth to accumulate even more factories, companies and land.

Marx and Engels wrote in the *Manifesto*, “The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.” The



**Above: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels preparing an edition of their newspaper in Germany during the 1848 revolution**

working class have a common interest worldwide to fight the exploitation and oppression that they face.

### Revolution

The *Manifesto* ends in a call to struggle, “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!”

Its publication coincided with the eruption of revolution across Europe.

In Germany a coalition of the bourgeoisie and the emerging working class rose up demanding parliamentary elections and democratic freedoms. Marx and other members of the League returned to Germany to become active in the growing movement. Marx launched a daily newspaper, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, with the aim of deepening the revolution.

But the German bourgeoisie proved to be more frightened of the working class movement than the old autocracy, and abandoned the revolution to defeat.

The workers’ revolutions the *Manifesto* predicted have broken out again and again in the 170 years since it was published. From Germany in 1918 and Italy the year after, China in 1926 to the Spanish revolution of 1936-39, France in May 1968 and Portugal in 1974, Poland in 1981 or the Egyptian revolution of 2011, the possibility of workers’ revolution has exploded time and again.

Yet none have so far succeeded in bringing about the socialist society Marx predicted. The best example in history to date is Russia in 1917, when

workers took power in a major country for the first time. But the capitalist powers of Europe combined to help isolate and crush the new workers’ state through famine and civil war. Stalin’s dictatorship was the end result.

Workers in Russia were only able to take power because they had a mass revolutionary party, the Bolsheviks, able to organise and cohere the working class into a force that could overthrow capitalism. The lack of such a party has seen other revolutions end in defeat.

Socialists have to organise within the working class to push the struggle against the capitalists forward.

Even in 1848, Marx and Engels recognised the necessity of political organisation, arguing that, “organisation of the proletarians into a class, and, consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier.”

In Australia, the top 1 per cent own more wealth than the bottom 70 per cent combined. Worldwide, inequality is on the rise. At the same time, the working class is growing internationally and continues to hold the power to challenge capitalism that Marx and Engels describe in the *Manifesto*. It is therefore no surprise that the *Communist Manifesto* continues to be widely read.

A different world is possible, and the *Manifesto* is a good starting point for understanding what we are fighting for, and how to get there.



# 40 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST PARADE MARDI GRAS' RADICAL HISTORY

The first Mardi Gras in 1978 was part of a struggle for gay liberation inspired by the radical politics of the 1970s, writes **Geraldine Fela**

FOR FORTY years, the Mardi Gras parade has been a beacon of hope for many people struggling with homophobia and transphobia.

It is an important part of the calendar for many LGBTIQ people living around Australia. Particularly in the decades during and after the AIDS crisis, the outrageous and joyful celebration that is Mardi Gras functioned as an antidote to the horror and death that was wreaking havoc in the community.

In the forty years since the first parade in 1978, however, much of the radical politics that shaped the first Mardi Gras have been left out of the parade.

Today, it is dominated by corporate floats like ANZ and Qantas, and has been a platform politicians like Malcolm Turnbull can use to give themselves progressive cover.

In the last few years the committee that organises Mardi Gras has shown itself to be unashamedly conservative in response to a float organised by Sydney refugee activists “No Pride in Detention”, limiting the numbers able to participate and even threatening to ban the float after some participants heckled politicians.

Yet it is floats like “No Pride in Detention”—not Qantas and ANZ—that represent the spirit and politics of the first Mardi Gras.

## The politics of the first Mardi Gras

The first Mardi Gras in June of 1978 was part of a week long program of events organised by the Gay Solidarity Group to commemorate the ninth anniversary of Stonewall, the fierce riots in New York that sparked the gay liberation movement in 1969.

But its history goes further back to the early 1970s and the emergence of the first homosexual rights groups organised by out and proud gays and lesbians.

In 1970, inspired by the emergence of the radical “Gay Liberation Front” in the US, a gay man and a lesbian, John Ware and Christabel Poll, formed Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP) in Sydney. Within a few months the group had branches in most states.

It was known commonly by its acronym CAMP, a play on the word “camp”, a term synonymous with homosexuality at the time. CAMP, however, did not have the radical politics of the Gay Liberation Front in America.

In many ways it operated as a social group, a way of connecting gays and lesbians, particularly through its newspaper “camp ink”. In Melbourne, members were afraid that even the term “camp” was too recognisably gay, and adopted the name “society five” in 1971.

However, in 1972 there was a split in CAMP and “Gay Liberation” emerged in Sydney. Similar groups then spread across the country.

Gay Liberation was inspired by the student struggles occurring around the world, the campaign against the Vietnam War, the black power movement and women’s liberation. It was committed to radical, anti-capitalist politics and militant tactics.

Gay liberation had its roots in the radical left. Many of its leaders were Trotskyists and members of the Communist Party. These activists identified the roots of homophobia not in individual prejudice and discriminatory acts, but as products of broader structures of oppression, in the nuclear family and the capitalist system itself.

The gay liberation movement saw marriage and the nuclear family for what it is, a broken institution that oppresses women and limits our sexual and gender expression to roles that stunt our human potential. It exists to provide unpaid labour for capital-

.....  
**Gay Liberation was inspired by the campaign against the Vietnam War, the black power movement and women’s liberation**  
.....

ism, reproduction and nurturing the next generation of workers to fill the call-centres, universities, and office buildings.

These activists believed that for gay oppression to be eradicated, society had to be transformed completely.

In the words of the Melbourne branch of Gay Liberation, they were fighting for, “a new society, open and sex-role free”.

The goal was for a kind of liberation that won genuine freedom, freedom from oppressive gender expectations and sex roles for all people, gay or straight, and recognition that human sexuality and personal expression is extraordinarily diverse and should be celebrated as such.

The open, proud and defiant politics of gay liberation challenged homophobia by holding marches and sit-ins. They kicked off the decades long struggle to decriminalise homosexuality that didn’t end until the 1990s.

They forged links with other oppressed groups from Aboriginal people struggling for land rights to the women’s liberation movement.

This was the politics that set the stage for Sydney’s first Mardi Gras in 1978.

## What happened on the day?

The morning of Mardi Gras there was a protest march up Oxford Street. But the Mardi Gras parade was meant to be something different. It was organised as a street festival, a night time parade down Oxford Street. This wasn’t just for fun, though it was hoped that it might be! There was also a political rationale.

The gay liberation movement in Australia had struggled to bring a large section of the gay community into its fold.

There were a large number of men, many of them closeted, who lacked the confidence to join the visible and

loud movement, preferring the anonymity of the bars and beats.

It was hoped that a street parade might blur the line between demonstration and party, as the costumes and music of the Mardi Gras snaked up Oxford Street, calling these so-called “bar-flies” out of the gay bars that lined the strip, to join them on the streets.

And it worked—hundreds of people poured out of the bars to join the parade.

However, tensions soon arose. As the march approached Hyde Park, police denied them access to the park and confiscated the sound system.

Confused, the marchers dispersed and made their back up the march route, gravitating towards Kings Cross, the historic centre of gay life and culture.

In the centre of Kings Cross, at the El Alamein fountain, the police closed in. One organiser recalled that it was at this point that the police, “came out in violence... openly bashing people”. Police violence was routine for many of those marching. Gay men were routinely beaten, sometimes killed, when they used beats. Lesbians and trans people were harassed constantly in bars and on the streets.

But this time, they weren’t going to take it. Peter Murphy, a gay liberationist and member of the Communist Party recalled that, “It was a police riot, and the pofters and dykes were fighting back... Garbage and garbage bins were flying. I had never seen anything like it, and neither had the police.”

Fifty three people were arrested that night and held in the Darlinghurst police station. The police targeted the leftist organisers of the parade. Peter Murphy was taken deep into the station and severely beaten.

The Saturday following, a mass meeting was called to initiate a campaign to drop the charges. Two thousand people marched at a rally called on 15 July 1978. In an act of defiance, they re-traced the route taken on the night of the arrests.

At the time, this was the largest gay rights demonstration in Australian history. The demonstration had two demands: They wanted the charges from Mardi Gras dropped and also the right to march.

Many who had been arrested at Mardi Gras had been charged with taking part in an illegal procession. This related to a broader civil rights concern over the unpopular Summary Offences Act, which had been used by the NSW police to stop protests in



**Above: The police crack down on the first Mardi Gras parade in June 1978**

the past.

Gays and straights demonstrated together, joined by modest contingents from trade unions and the Labor Party.

The campaign to drop the charges was successful, with most of the charges from the Mardi Gras arrests dropped and the Summary Offences Act repealed in 1979.

The campaign won the right to march for everyone.

### **Fighting for our rights today**

We can expect that Mardi Gras this year will be a double celebration. It is both the 40th Anniversary and also the first Mardi Gras since the legislation of marriage equality.

Though equal marriage represents formal equality, homophobia and transphobia remain.

In most states the fight for the Safe Schools program continues. Many LGBTIQ people still feel the need to hide their sexuality and gender identity at work, in schools and in their families. Trans people in particular live with the constant threat of violence.

The marriage equality campaign missed an important opportunity to

take on the bigots in the No campaign, and to defend Safe Schools and trans rights. They ducked these “hard” questions, insisting that marriage equality was simply a matter of “fairness”.

But the rights of trans people to transition and for schools to discuss sexuality and gender identity openly should not be “hard” questions in a campaign for equal rights.

To really beat back homophobia and transphobia, we need to take inspiration from the radical politics behind the first Mardi Gras. That means struggling against oppression and discrimination wherever it rears its ugly head and fighting for a better world in which the true diversity of human sexuality and self-expression can flourish.

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# MARCH TO END THE MISERY ON MANUS & NAURU



**Above: Protesting the situation on Manus last year**

**By Ian Rintoul**

PLANS ARE well underway for this year's Palm Sunday, "Welcome Refugees" rallies.

It is more important than ever that thousands rally and march to demand the closure of Manus and Nauru, an end offshore detention and that all the asylum seekers and refugees are brought to Australia. The injustice and misery has to end.

The conditions on Nauru and Manus continue to deteriorate.

Border Force's sick determination to maintain its offshore detention regime is seeing it condemn children to the mental hell of Nauru rather than allow them to get help in Australia.

On multiple occasions it has refused to bring psychologically damaged, suicidal children off Nauru until lawyers take them to court. And there are scores more people that Border Force has prevented getting help despite medical recommendations that they need treatment that Nauru cannot provide.

Border Force has now negotiated an arrangement to send medical patients to Taiwan, to prevent having to send anyone to Australia, where legal action can prevent them being returned offshore.

The Rohingya refugee who Border Force refused to medivac after he was severely head-injured last November still suffers severe headaches and is too dizzy to walk very far. He has received no treatment.

The UN refugee agency has yet again condemned the conditions on Manus. Rico Saleedo, its regional pro-

tection officer, said, "it is evident since the closure of Australia's so-called Regional Processing Centre, that the need for greater mental health support, emergency medical care and specialised torture and trauma counselling remains critical and unmet..."

It takes refugees four days to get an appointment to see an IHMS doctor at the clinic that now only operates at the East Lorengau camp during office hours. Otherwise refugees have to use the Lorengau hospital, which struggles to provide even rudimentary health care for locals.

And refugees are still exposed to violence. They are warned to "walk in groups" and be back in the camps by 6pm.

## **Resettlement farce**

Meanwhile, the US resettlement process is glacially slow, and uncertain. Four and a half years after they were dumped offshore and 15 months after the US deal was announced, hundreds of people have not even had their first interview. Others have completed security interviews and had medical examinations in preparation for resettlement months ago but have no idea when, or if, they will ever go.

Iranian refugees are conspicuously absent from recent US resettlement approvals. After three protests on Nauru, Border Force gave them a letter, which said almost exactly nothing. "No nationalities are excluded from the US Refugee Admissions Program" it claimed but, "Nationalities [unspecified] subject to a Security Advisory Opinion may require more time to process." More time than 15 months? It didn't say.

But it did say, "Further visits from the Department of Homeland Security are planned in the coming months." Months!

A January ReachTel poll recorded 58 per cent in favour of the Australian government accepting New Zealand's offer to take 150 refugees from Manus and Nauru a year. But even that idea is too much for Minister Dutton who constantly resorts to the old scare-mongering about people smugglers, "watching developments in Australian politics closely".

Like the lies about "African gangs", refugees are part of the government's suite of racist election propaganda. The Liberals' scapegoating will increase as the election gets closer. That is an added reason to build the biggest Palm Sunday rallies that we can, with the biggest union contingents we can organise.

We need to get rid of the Liberals. But Labor remains committed to offshore detention. The movement to "Bring Them Here" has to grow over the coming months—to take the fight to Turnbull but to also make it clear that the movement won't settle for anything less from a Labor government.

It is a demand to immediately end the misery on Manus and Nauru. Along with ending asylum boat turn-backs, it is also a demand that goes to the political heart of the refugee movement—the right for asylum seekers to cross borders by boat and be protected when they arrive. The ruling class wants to maintain their borders to divide and rule and assert their control.

Fighting to "Bring Them Here" is part of the fight that can break that control.

**Refugees on Manus are warned to "walk in groups" and be back in the camps by 6pm**

**Solidarity**