

Solidarity

Issue No. 122 / January 2019

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**STILL FIGHTING
FOR JUSTICE**

**STOP THE RACISM
STOP STEALING KIDS**

LABOR

Conference fails on right to strike and refugees

YELLOW VESTS

Protests against inequality humble Macron

FRONTIER WARS

Socialists and the last massacre



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SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Things they say

Sure [James Cook] made some mistakes, who doesn't?

Scott Morrison, who wants to spend \$48.7 million to build a James Cook memorial complex in Botany Bay

There are quite a lot of us who actually think Australia is a pretty great place and we don't really have too much time to be angry.

Scott Morrison reflects on what he learnt in his happy place on his holidays

Now is the time to separate the goats from the sheep.

President of the Wagga Wagga Liberals, Colin Taggart, announcing he has quit the sheepish Liberal Party to run with goats of the Australian Conservatives in the March NSW state election... or vice-versa

Both sides in business can smell profit... Everyone understands that the war is approaching its end and a gigantic construction will begin on which money can be made.

Vladimir Padalko, vice-president Russian chamber of commerce, anticipating business deals with the Syrian government.

This nation desperately needs a thriving right-of-centre party full of right-of-centre ideas.

War criminal Jim Molan, hankering for the good ole days of Tony Abbott.

Unlike the Coalition, Labor has provided a well-articulated policy to try and meet ...lower process, lower emissions and reliability.

Macquarie Bank's assessment of Labor's energy policy; the billionaire's club is deserting the sinking Coalition ship.

I was hoping that maybe somebody would come back and negotiate. But they didn't do that.

Donald Trump on why he stayed at the White House by himself over Christmas after shutting down the government

This opportunity driver could have a positive impact on our brands

Google on the opportunity climate change offer to get more people using Google Earth to watch the planet collapse

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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

Extreme heat and overcrowding cause prison riot

PRISONERS IN Alice Springs began rioting in late December after demanding ice and cordial to help deal with extreme heat. Temperatures in central Australia have approached 50 degrees this summer, yet the men's section of the Alice Springs Correctional Centre has no air-conditioning and broken fans meant there was no air circulation.

The prison has become drastically overcrowded, according to the United Voice union. One prison guard told the *NT News*, "That place was built for 350 [people] and there's 650 in there. It's a toxic environment. This is what happens when you've got 16 prisoners sharing a dorm with no aircon and the temperature hitting 50C outside for days."

The riot began after prisoners refused to return to their rooms due to the heat.

A spokesman for the NT Department of the Attorney-General and Justice said ice and additional fans were eventually provided. But United Voice branch secretary Erina Early said there could easily be a repeat: "To me the only way that this is going to be fixed if there is appropriate cooling mechanisms for the prisoners, because it's not humane in a room crammed together, where you've only got minimal toilets and also no air-conditioning."

On average during 2016-17, the most recent year for which figures are available, 84 per cent of prisoners in the NT were Aboriginal.

Aboriginal boy thrown in cage at supermarket

SUPERMARKET STAFF in Perth dragged a young Aboriginal boy into a storeroom and locked him in a cage, his mother has told NITV, after he allegedly stole a bottle of Coca-Cola.

The nine-year-old boy received cuts to his arm and the back of his head and was bleeding, after he broke a window to escape the cage.

The CEO of Ngalla Maya Aboriginal Corporation, Mervyn Eades, who has been assisting his family since the ordeal, told the media, "No one has the right to handle anyone's children, no matter what colour they are. Don't use that vigilante approach and take the law into your own hands."

Property developers' profits behind Opal Tower chaos



HUGE CRACKS that opened up in the Opal Tower residential apartment building in Sydney have exposed rampant profiteering by developers and governments' failure to do anything about it.

Over 300 people were evacuated from the building after the cracks appeared on Christmas Eve, just six months after residents began moving in. It could be months before they can return.

Building defects are rife in residential apartment buildings in Sydney. A 2012 report by UNSW's City Futures Research Centre found 72 per cent of residents in buildings constructed since 2000 knew of at least one significant defect in their building.

Many have criticised a conflict of interest where certification checks are carried out by private companies who are chosen and paid by the builders. And after two years developers have zero liability for most faults that emerge, except for major structural defects that make buildings unsafe to live in.

According to UNSW's Geoff Hanmer, "controlling the cost of construction is one of the key factors in making a profit". This means property speculators cut corners to boost their bottom lines.

State governments have been happy to promote developments because they deliver them extra revenue. Everyone else gets ripped off.

Politicians say no to pill testing

THE MAJOR parties remain set against allowing pill testing, despite six deaths at music festivals across the country since September. Both NSW Liberal Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Labor's Daniel Andrews in Victoria are against the idea, despite the doctors' peak body the AMA urging them to allow a trial.

Berejiklian opposed pill testing in December pill by saying it would, "give people a green light to taking substances", parroting the failed tough-on-crime approach.

In Europe pill testing has reduced deaths and hospitalisations from drug use at music events.

Evidence shows that less people actually take drugs as a result of pill testing, with so many pills shown to contain harmful substances.

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

Australia approves arms sales to butchers of Yemen

THE AUSTRALIAN government has approved dozens of shipments of arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, currently fighting a murderous and destructive war in Yemen.

Defence Department documents obtained from parliamentary hearings and Freedom of Information requests show that approval has been granted to at least 37 military-related shipments to the UAE and 20 to Saudi Arabia since 2016. Government approval is needed before companies can ship military items overseas.

The four year war has seen a horrific bombing campaign against civilian areas, with a study in October last year estimating at least 60,000 have been killed. As a result of Saudi-imposed restrictions on food and medical imports, the UN says 14 million people are also on the brink of famine.

The news came a year on from then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's announcement of an effort to boost Australian arms sales with the hope of becoming the world's 10th biggest exporter. The Middle East as highlighted as a "priority market" under the strategy.

Millions join massive strike in India

ONE HUNDRED and fifty million workers joined a two-day strike in India on 8 and 9 January, showing the immense potential power of the working class.

Ten major union federations backed it, in protest at the policies of the neo-liberal Modi government.

Trains and buses in many cities shut down, and workers in health, education, coal, steel, and banking all joined the strike. Modi's viciously right-wing government has promoted contract labour, increased privatisation and imposed austerity, combined with efforts to stir up racism against Muslims and religious minorities. The strike was timed in advance of elections due by May.

EDITORIAL

Liberal rats abandon ship—step up the fight for change

SCOTT MORRISON has started the year with another appeal to the hard right, provocatively insisting that Invasion Day, 26 January, is Australia's national day. Declaring himself "a prime minister who is for standards" he announced that councils would be required to run citizenship ceremonies on Australia Day and impose a dress code, banning shorts and thongs.

"Respect citizenship, respect the day," he said, and went on to trumpet the government's waste of \$6.7 million on a "re-enactment" for the 250 year anniversary of Captain Cook's "discovery" of Australia, next year.

But Morrison was forced to move his media conference when he was confronted by placard-carrying protesters.

As the reality of near certain election defeat sinks in, the Liberal rats are already deserting the sinking ship. Cabinet Minister Kelly O'Dwyer won't re-contest her safe seat of Higgins, amid fears the Liberals might be in danger of losing it. Marginal seat holders Craig Laundy and David Coleman are also reportedly contemplating quitting.

And the internal turmoil continued as disgust at the Liberals' hopelessly low number of women MPs, just 25 per cent of the caucus, and the ongoing accusations of internal bullying and sexism, triggered another round of infighting in January.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne and MP Sussan Ley broke ranks to support the idea of quotas for female candidates, while other Liberal MPs also urged action.

True to form, Morrison promised nothing, saying it was a problem he'd "inherited" from his predecessors and he'd work on it in the future.

Morrison tripped off to Fiji and Vanuatu to counter China's efforts to win influence in the Pacific, but was shamed on global warming when Fiji's Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama put it clearly, "Here in Fiji, climate change is no laughing matter." He called on Australia to shift its focus away from coal mining.

At home, extreme heat has dramatically re-focussed attention on climate change. This December was the hottest on record, and a series of towns in country NSW and northern Victoria recording their hottest ever temperatures in January.

The heat triggered a massive



Above: Extreme heat has put new attention on climate change—and the Liberals' inaction

fish kill in the Darling River. Up to a million fish died after a blue-green algae bloom depleted oxygen levels in the river—little more than puddles because of corruption, corporate greed and mismanagement.

Morrison's answer? A week later, the government was backing a new coal-fired power station on the site of the closed Hazelwood station in the La Trobe Valley!

The government faces a possible showdown when parliament resumes on 12 February. Since Kerryn Phelps' win in the Wentworth by-election and Julia Banks' move to the crossbench, the Coalition is in minority government and faces the prospect of being defeated on the floor of parliament.

Last December, Morrison shut down parliament early rather than lose the vote on a new process for medical evacuations from Manus and Nauru. The bill will return to parliament in February.

Drive the Liberals out

But it's not enough just to watch the Liberals stumble to defeat.

Protests, strikes and stopwork rallies can galvanise the mood against the Liberals and begin to build movements that can fight for real change.

Labor's national conference in December showed the limits of what Bill Shorten is prepared to deliver (see page 6). There were no further commitments to any kind of industry-wide bargaining or right to strike. And Labor continues to support offshore detention as well as asylum boat

turnbacks.

Another national day of union stopwork rallies to Change the Rules on industrial relations would help to finish off Morrison and take the fight to the bosses.

Every strike between now and the election, at places like Port Kembla Coal Terminal over job security and at Hutchison ports, can be used to build a real fight to Change the Rules, maintain conditions and win real wage rises.

Workers at Wongawilli Colliery, near Wollongong, showed how to fight. After four days of their planned two-week strike action, the bosses caved in. The workers won a 12 per cent pay rise and forced the company to convert them from casual to permanent jobs.

In December, thousands of high school students walked out of class to call for action on climate change and denounce Morrison's climate vandalism. Another climate strike, planned for Friday 15 March, will see both high school and university students walk out together.

The refugee rallies on Palm Sunday in April can bring together everyone who wants to end offshore detention on Manus and Nauru, and make it clear that the movement will keep fighting a Labor government that refuses to Bring Them Here.

Join us to help build these struggles and to build the fight for a socialist society that protects the environment and produces for human need, not for profit.

.....
Protests and stopwork rallies can galvanise the mood against the Liberals and build movements that can fight for real change

Labor's show of unity leaves refugees, union rights in the lurch

LABOR LEADER Bill Shorten told the party's national conference in Adelaide in December that people were looking to them for "unity" and "stability".

With the federal election due by May, Labor can taste victory. And party and trade union leaders were desperate to ensure nothing might damage their chances.

As a result there were virtually no open debates or disagreements at the conference, with key issues left unresolved in order to project an image of unity.

Shorten's opening address focused on inequality and low wages growth, as he appealed to those in, "insecure work... earning less than they deserve... and yet paying more tax than a multinational company."

Labor announced plans to fund 250,000 new affordable homes, rented at 80 per cent of market rates—although this is not public housing, since they are leaving it to the private sector to build them.

There was also a discernible tilt towards reassuring business that Labor would look after their interests in government, as Shorten promised to give them, "the confidence and incentive to invest and grow", and to deliver "consensus" between workers and employers.

In a welcome call, Labor says it will end the racist CDP program. This forces 30,000 mainly Aboriginal people in remote communities to work for the dole for long hours and with harsh penalties for non-compliance, leading to widespread hunger. It will be replaced with a new program that Labor says will reassert community control and development in remote areas and offer fair pay, although the number of real jobs on offer is still unclear.

But it failed to commit to increasing Newstart, agreeing only to an "urgent review" within the first 18 months of winning office. After over 20 years without an increase the payment has fallen so low that it is now impossible to live on.

In an effort to deliver equal pay for women, the Fair Work Commission would be allowed to consider pay equity in award decisions covering female-dominated industries like early childhood education and disability services. There was also agreement to nation-wide industrial manslaughter laws to hold bosses accountable for killing someone at work.



Above: Labor leader Bill Shorten at the conference

The conference also reasserted existing commitments on industrial relations, including the scrapping of the Australian Building and Construction Commission and the Registered Organisations Commission as well as some form of industry-wide bargaining.

Labor's Michael O'Connor has made it clear that the party is looking only at expanding existing industry bargaining provisions in low-paid industries like childcare and cleaning.

On climate change, Labor reaffirmed its policy of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030, but will not promise to halt the Adani mine or other fossil fuel projects.

From industry-wide bargaining to the right to strike, increasing Newstart, the Adani mine and refugees, Labor's policies are far short of the radical change to neo-liberalism that is needed.

There will need to be a fight against an incoming Labor government to press for further change. The same power that got the kids off Nauru can get everyone off Manus and Nauru and to Australia.

And a re-invigorated union movement that is willing to take the fight to Labor will be needed to break the rules set by the Fair Work Commission—in order to reverse the years of the Liberals ruling for the rich.

Refugee movement will have to fight Labor

THERE WERE no great expectations Labor's conference was going to move to close Manus and Nauru and end offshore processing.

The conference made some important promises. Labor will scrap temporary visas and provide permanent visas for refugees. And for the many thousands of asylum seekers in Australia who have been cut off any income support, a Labor government will provide welfare, work rights and funding for legal support for protection applications.

Labor will increase the humanitarian intake to 32,000 by 2025.

But the conference also made it clear that over the crucial questions of offshore detention and the turnback of asylum boats the refugee movement will have to fight a Shorten Labor government.

Tragically the Labor left went along with the political argument that controversial questions should

be avoided to present a picture of party unity. But the idea that the refugee issue is damaging electorally is the central reason that Labor have maintained a bi-partisan position with the Liberals on offshore detention.

The Labor left's concession meant there wasn't even a resolution to force a discussion of ending offshore detention and "bringing them here" onto the floor of the conference.

At the 2015 conference, the Labor left moved to end Labor's support for turnbacks and won almost half of the conference.

The right-wing of the party took advantage of the left's concession, and in a piece of pure vindictiveness—just to show who was boss—ensured that a motion to re-assess the 6000 asylum seekers who have been rejected under the fast-track system was voted down.

Ian Rintoul

.....
Labor's policies are far short of the radical change to neo-liberalism that is needed

Toothless “Voice” will change nothing for Aboriginal people

By James Supple

BILL SHORTEN has reaffirmed Labor’s support for a new Aboriginal “Voice to parliament”, promising a referendum to enshrine it in the constitution if Labor wins the election. This is another piece of symbolism that will do nothing to address ongoing oppression, poverty and racist government policies.

The “Voice” proposal was originally developed by conservative Indigenous lawyer Noel Pearson in 2015, to try and rescue a failing, government backed campaign for constitutional recognition.

The “Voice” was presented as a major “structural reform” by the Referendum Council set up by Malcolm Turnbull, a remedy to the “torment of powerlessness” faced by Indigenous people. But to placate conservative politicians and the corporate sector, the proposed constitutional details of the “Voice” stipulate it will be a toothless advisory body that could be dismantled at a stroke by the government of the day.

Malcolm Turnbull originally supported the proposal. But following the “Uluru statement from the Heart” in May 2017, which the Referendum Council claimed as a mandate for their advisory Voice model, Turnbull rejected it as a “third chamber of parliament”. He was under pressure from a push against the Voice by Abbott, trying to cohere the hard right of the party for a leadership challenge.

A series of “dialogues” leading up to the constitutional convention near Uluru consistently rejected tokenistic constitutional change, demanding real power for Aboriginal communities to control their own affairs and a process for negotiating treaties.

Some delegates walked out of the Uluru convention, saying it had been set up to ratify Pearson’s proposal. Many other delegates who stayed believed the “Statement from the Heart” was a call for far more profound power than that on offer from the Referendum Council’s Voice model.

But a recent parliamentary committee, which delivered a report in November supported by Labor and Liberal representatives, accepted without question that the Voice would simply “serve to advise the Parliament” and would not have “any form of veto power”. The government would determine how the Voice to



Above: Supporters of the Voice to parliament plan Megan Davis, Pat Anderson and Noel Pearson

parliament worked, and could also dissolve, defund or replace it, simply by passing legislation.

One submission, from Aboriginal members of the Referendum Council, even argued there should be no legally enforceable obligation on government to consult the body. The Voice would simply, “rely upon political respect from... the Parliament and the Executive”. But when has the government ever shown respect for the aspirations of Aboriginal people?

Dissolved

A series of advisory bodies have been set up since the 1970s, then ignored and discarded. The Whitlam government established the elected National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC), only to see it shut down and replaced by the Fraser government a few years later. Then came the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC). It was pushed aside by the Hawke Labor government as soon as it objected to weak proposals for land rights legislation. Finally the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was dissolved in 2005 by the Howard government with the support of Labor.

As the Uluru Statement from the Heart Working Group told the parliamentary committee, “all of these advisory bodies have been defunded / removed from legislation, when [they] engaged in conversations about Treaty, Sovereignty and a true sense of self-determination for First Nations’ peoples.”

Despite being elected at the convention near Uluru, this Working Group has been sidelined in discus-

sions because they say bluntly that, “neither Uluru Statement from the Heart nor the delegates at the regional dialogues expressed the wishes for a Voice which was [simply] an advisory body to Parliament.”

A body with real funding and the powers needed to allow Indigenous communities to control their own lives is badly needed—but not on offer through this process.

Aboriginal communities face desperate and worsening poverty and oppression. Racist child removal policies have seen the number of Aboriginal children in out of home care explode, doubling since the Apology to the Stolen Generations just over ten years ago. Aboriginal children are ten times as likely as others to be removed and new forced adoption powers in NSW would make it impossible for children to be returned.

The massive loss of jobs and control through the NT Intervention and associated policies since 2007 has driven communities into the ground. The river crisis in NSW has left many without clean drinking water. Many other communities nationally are forced to drink bore water with heavy metals, or poisoned by industry.

Nationwide, Aboriginal people are locked up at obscene and rapidly rising rates, accounting for 28 per cent of adult prisoners despite being just 2 per cent of the population. This has been driven by a return by governments to a more openly punitive and assimilationist approach.

It will take a return to the fighting mass Aboriginal rights movements of the past to push back the racism.

A series of advisory bodies have been set up since the 1970s, then ignored and discarded

Buckingham finally gone, but The Greens' crisis remains

By Caitlin Doyle

RIGHT-WING NSW Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham resigned from the party in December. But none of the political issues at stake have been resolved.

Buckingham resigned after the NSW State Delegates Council (SDC) finally passed a motion calling on him to step down as a candidate for the March state election. Two previous attempts had failed to gain the required 75 per cent vote.

There had been growing pressure for this since sexual assault allegations against Buckingham were made public in August. On ABC's 7:30, former Greens staff member Ella Buckland accused Buckingham of assaulting her in 2011, alongside three other women who accused individual Greens members and officials of assault and rape.

Buckingham's sexist behaviour was already notorious within the NSW Greens. But an external company hired to investigate said there was insufficient evidence to hold him legally responsible for sexual assault. Ella Buckland says she was "disgusted" after being excluded from the investigation and forced to fight to even have her witnesses interviewed.

Buckingham acted appallingly, telling the media that he had been "cleared" and that Ella had made "false allegations" that had been used for "political gain".

But it was not until then NSW Labor leader Luke Foley was forced to resign, following a harassment complaint from an ABC journalist, that Greens MPs decided to act. Although she and other MPs had remained silent during the Greens' failed internal complaint process, at this point Jenny Leong used parliamentary privilege to call on Buckingham to step down.

Federal leader Richard Di Natale, a long-time political ally of Buckingham, also said he should step down, realising that he had become an electoral liability.

It's welcome that Buckingham is gone. But the failure to wage a political fight against him and the more general conservative politics he represented within the party means there are major issues left unresolved.

Buckingham was part of a right-wing grouping in the NSW Greens which wants to embrace Di Natale's more conservative approach based on



Above: Jeremy Buckingham has refused to apologise for his actions and instead lashed out at The Greens

single-minded electoralism and parliamentary wheeling and dealing.

Buckingham wanted to appeal to disillusioned National and Liberal voters and pull the Greens further to the right. His defeat by left-wing MP David Shoebridge in the pre-selection battle in NSW last year was a welcome relief, after previous successes for the right-wing grouping.

But the left failed to clearly fight over the fundamental division over political strategy, between electoralism and an active left party prioritising social movements outside parliament.

The fact that the right's Cate Faermann won just as many votes as Shoebridge in the pre-selection shows that many Greens members remain unclear about the political divisions.

Buckingham will now contest the NSW election as an independent.

No change in direction

The SDC's decision to request that he remove himself from the election ticket was met with outrage by his right-wing allies. NSW Greens MPs Justin Field and Cate Faehrmann threatened to quit the party, unless it held a recount of the pre-selection ballot to allocate Buckingham's preferences and push the right's Dawn Walker into an electable position. But they backed down when Di Natale intervened to broker a deal to keep them in the party.

While some see Buckingham's resignation, and Di Natale's support for his removal, as a major setback for the right in the NSW Greens, there has

been no change in the overall rightward direction of the national party.

Di Natale remains committed to an electoral view of The Greens gradually winning seats to gain the balance of power. It was this strategy that saw him almost do a deal to support Malcolm Turnbull's "Gonski 2.0" in 2017, angering teachers and education activists around the country. This was a narrowly missed "Democrats moment" for the party.

The Greens are in danger of losing ground to a Labor Party that is tacking to the left. They are likely to lose seats at both the NSW and federal elections, after a disappointing result in Victoria last November.

The party is yet to seriously take up the working class demands that could appeal to Labor's base.

They have not been able to recognise the strategic importance of the ACTU's "Change the Rules" campaign, or the opening for the party to champion the union demands, like the right to strike, that Labor will not support. The campaign will be one of the decisive issues in the federal election and has massive support amongst union activists.

The immediate crisis for the NSW Greens may have been averted for now, but it will inevitably re-erupt.

There is a pressing need for a party clearly to the left of Labor that mobilises its membership to build mass social movements and connect with working class aspirations for change. Unless the left fights, The Greens will be unable to meet this challenge.

Buckingham was part of a right-wing grouping in the NSW Greens which wants to embrace Di Natale's more conservative approach

Medical Transfer Bill another blow against offshore detention

By Ian Rintoul

THE PROSPECT of the Coalition government being defeated when the Medical Transfer Bill is returned to the House of Representatives on 12 February has been thrown into doubt by the dithering of independent MP Cathy McGowan.

The success of the Bill would mean that sick asylum seekers or refugees from Manus and Nauru could be transferred on the recommendation of two treating doctors, removing the veto of the Home Affairs Minister and Border Force.

A defeat over refugee policy in the first 2019 sitting of Parliament would be a major blow to the Morrison government so close to the Federal election.

The #KidsOff campaign has forced the government to transfer almost all the children and their families off Nauru. Separated fathers and a number of single women and men have also been transferred. Only seven children remain on Nauru; four of them in two families that have been accepted to go to the US. The two other families (with three children between them) have declined to come to Australia so far.

The #KidsOff success has been a tremendous boost to the refugee movement. But hundreds are still languishing after more than five years. The mental health crisis on Manus and Nauru gets worse by the day; attempted suicide and self-harm is now a daily occurrence. It is going to take even more determined campaigning to get everyone off and end offshore detention.

Labor is committed to the medical transfers, and says it will get everyone off Manus and Nauru.

But it clings to the myth that there are “third countries” that will resettle refugees from Manus and Nauru. One resolution at Labor’s national conference in December said in part, “Labor will prioritise the resettlement of all eligible refugees currently on Manus and Nauru to the United States, New Zealand and other third-countries.”

The US deal is almost exhausted after accepting only 467 refugees. The vast majority of recent US resettlement results handed out on Manus and Nauru have been rejections, and there are almost 1000 people still stranded on Manus and Nauru. New Zealand is only offering to take 150 a year.



Above: Morrison has been forced to get all but seven kids off Nauru Photo: Sharon Ung

But Labor is just as vulnerable to protest action as Morrison. Unions and a majority of Labor members are against offshore detention.

The teacher walk-offs in November showed the potential of the union

movement to throw its industrial weight in support of refugees. That potential is going to have to be used against a future Shorten government. Going quiet for Labor won’t free the refugees.

Hunger strikes across domestic detention

AS *SOLIDARITY* goes to press, immigration detainees in detention centres across Australia are staging a hunger strike protest over detention conditions and extraordinary Ministerial powers that allow the Minister effectively to keep people in detention indefinitely.

Most, but not all, the detainees in the hunger strike protest are so-called 501s—people who have been convicted of some crime (usually not serious) and whose visas are cancelled under section 501 of the Migration Act. The powers extend far beyond the power of the criminal justice system. Even those who are charged and found not guilty or whose charges are not proceeded with, can have their visa cancelled on character or national interest grounds.

The legal powers introduced in late 2014 are part of the Coalition’s toxic nationalism to systematically demonise migrants, refugees and non-citizens in general.

People are being held in detention sometimes longer than any sentence imposed on them by a court, effectively on the whim of the Minister.

The conditions in the new maximum security compounds in MITA, BITA and Yongah Hill are appalling. Videos of Serco Emergency Response Teams brutalising detainees have emerged from MITA but have been ignored by the government. Guards have powers to arrest and impose punishments that are completely unaccountable. Handcuffs are universally used whenever detainees are moved—even to doctors’ or dental appointments. They are handcuffed even to hospital beds.

In MITA, detainees are locked in their rooms from midnight to 7am. There are no TVs and the only seats are stainless steel stools bolted to the floor alongside stainless steel tables also bolted to the floor.

The protests have lifted the lid on the abuses that are part and parcel of the mainland detention regime. The militarisation of the detention centres has also gone along with tightening up the conditions for visits, so a visitor can only visit one person per day and must give five working days’ notice of a visit that has to be booked online.

It is detention—onshore and offshore—that is the crime.

.....
The US deal is almost exhausted after accepting only 467 refugees

US Syria withdrawal would redraw imperialist carve up

By Daniel Cotton

IN LATE December Donald Trump abruptly announced plans for the withdrawal of US troops from Syria.

His Defence Secretary Jim Mattis and anti-ISIS envoy Brett McGurk resigned in protest. The US establishment was horrified at losing their foothold against Iran and Islamic State. It has now succeeded in slowing the withdrawal. Senior State Department officials report the withdrawal is going ahead with no time-frame attached.

But the US is not the only imperial power jostling over Syria. A full US withdrawal risks encouraging a Turkish invasion across northeastern Syria.

Turkey is home to the largest Kurdish population in the world, and is fiercely opposed to any indication of Kurdish independence. They are eager to squash Kurdish YPG (People's Protection Units) militias which dominate 30 per cent of Syria. The presence of 2000 US troops fighting alongside the YPG has protected them from Turkey. The US has used them to fight Islamic State, but was never going to be a reliable supporter of Kurdish freedom.

With Russia's blessing, Turkey bombed and invaded Afrin last year to fight the YPG, leaving 130,000 displaced.

The YPG are now looking to Assad to dissuade a Turkish invasion. For Assad, whose forces are responsible for most of the 500,000 killed in Syria since 2011, this is only another symbol of his strengthening hold over Syria. The UAE and Bahrain have reopened embassies in Damascus, symbolising a growing consensus that Assad is the sole force able to maintain control. Each move is another nail in the coffin of the 2011 revolution.

The imperialist carve up of the country has been catastrophic for Syrians. Russian bombs have flattened hospitals and civilian areas. US aerial bombardments have killed thousands. The US has fired tens of thousands of artillery rounds into Raqqa leaving 90 per cent of the city destroyed. They've used white phosphorus in civilian areas, and targeted people fleeing the destruction.

Rasha Badran, who lost 38 family members to US coalition air strikes, said, "We thought [US and allies] would target Daesh [ISIS] and leave the civilians alone. We were naïve."

Australia has 800 troops in the region, and another 300 in Afghani-



Above: Trump's withdrawal decision shocked the US military establishment

stan. Socialists in Australia should demand Australia withdraw from the Middle East and drop support for US imperialism. And we need to fight to welcome the refugees fleeing the Syrian regime, imperialist bombing, and IS attacks.

Liberation for Syrians will not

come from Assad's brutality or the bombs of any of the imperial powers. The only hope is for a revival of the revolutionary spirit of 2011. Recent protests in Tunisia and last year's strikes in Iran are an inspiring reminder of the possibility for revolutionary upsurges capable of toppling dictators.

Trump shuts government to demand wall

DONALD TRUMP has imposed the longest government shutdown in US history in an attempt to demand Congress agree to \$7 billion in funding for his border wall.

The standoff with the Democratic Party saw nine different departments of the US government shut down on 22 December, leading to over 800,000 workers missing pay. Some workers deemed "essential" have been required to work without pay whilst others have been sent on temporary leave. Some have struggled to pay bills, mortgages and even been forced to visit soup kitchens.

Trump claims there is a crisis at the border, and is trying to scapegoat "illegal migrants" for crime and cuts to jobs. In an address to the nation Trump claimed that, "Day after day, precious lives are cut short by those who have violated our borders." He even declared that "illegal immigration" hurts ordinary Americans as it "strains public resources and drives down jobs and wages."

But Trump's waste of billions of dollars on a wall comes at the cost of funding healthcare, schools and public services.

As many as 12,000 people are estimated to be travelling through

Mexico to the US in groups known as "migrant caravans", often made up of asylum seekers fleeing violence and organised crime. Honduras, for example has one of the highest murder rates in the world—800 per cent higher than that of the United States.

In the run-up to the midterm elections Trump used these caravans to create an illusion that the border was somehow under siege. In October, he announced that he would be sending another 7000 troops to the border.

The US launched tear gas across the border after some migrants tried to breach the border following a peaceful march in Tijuana. Hundreds of migrants who were downwind of the gas were affected. This theatre is being further used to support Trump's insane demand for the US-Mexico wall.

Despite their standoff with Trump the Democrats have proven themselves to be no heroes. They themselves agree to spending up to \$1.8 billion on a border fence as well as \$400 million on cameras and surveillance technology—accepting the false idea that migrants and asylum seekers are some sort of threat to "national security" or ordinary people in the US.

Tooba Anwar

The imperialist carve up of the country has been catastrophic for Syrians

Tory government divisions produce Brexit chaos

By Feiyi Zhang

THE BREXIT process has thrown British politics into crisis in a way rarely seen before. The failure of Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal means there is still no resolution in sight.

Parliament rejected the deal May negotiated with the EU by a mammoth 230 votes, the largest defeat for a government in the history of the British House of Commons. Since then May has refused either to contemplate serious changes to her proposal for Brexit or secure significant new concessions from the EU.

Yet May continues to survive as Prime Minister because the Tories, and her allies in the Democratic Unionist Party, still back her. A no-confidence motion brought forward by Jeremy Corbyn's Labor Party lost by 325 to 306 votes.

As it stands, Britain is scheduled to leave the European Union with or without a deal by 23 March. This raises the prospect of a chaotic "no deal" Brexit where Britain would exit without any agreement on trade terms with Europe. Business is desperate to avoid this.

The Tories are fundamentally divided over what kind of Brexit they want. And there is a big unresolved question over Northern Ireland, which the Tories want to take out of the EU trade zone without re-imposing a "hard border" with the Republic of Ireland.

May wants to maintain as much access to the European market for the banks and big business as possible. But this means accepting many of the EU trade rules, which is opposed by "hard Brexit" Tories who want Britain to be free to pursue its own trade agreements.

There is a longstanding division in the Tories over the EU. Big business sees the European market as central to expanding their profits.

But the "hard Brexit" Tories claim Britain would be better off operating independently to build trade relationships across the globe. This is based on the fantasy that Britain can again be a global power as in the days of the British Empire. But the popular appeal of racist nationalism has given it a new lease on life.

Many in the Labour Party and the left want a second referendum to try and overturn the Brexit vote. But this



Above: The division over Brexit could see the Tories forced to a new election

is a mistaken strategy. It pits the left against the majority of people who voted against the EU, including a third of Labour voters.

Refusing to accept the outcome will only drive Leave voters into the arms of the right.

EU, racism and neo-liberalism

Whilst many support remaining in the EU in defence of open borders in Europe, the EU itself is no anti-racist institution and does not guarantee freedom of movement.

After three months, EU citizens living in another EU country must meet certain criteria in order to stay. They must be in work, be seeking work with a genuine chance of getting it, be able to prove they aren't a "burden" on public funds and have health insurance.

The EU doesn't protect migrants or refugees. In 2008 the European Parliament adopted a new law that aimed to fast track mass deportations. It removed migrants' rights to legal representation and allowed states to deport unaccompanied children. Fortress Europe means refugees fleeing war and poverty drown in the sea.

The EU is a deeply neo-liberal institution. A founding treaty "prohibited" all restrictions on bosses' ability to make profits.

The EU was designed to boost the profits of business. It has facili-

tated the neo-liberal process whereby governments have abdicated responsibility for social services and privatised services to the benefit of corporations.

The 2007 Lisbon treaty enshrined the privatisation of public services in the EU. It committed member states to have balanced budgets and near-zero structural deficits.

The institutions of the EU are even more remote from pressure from below than national governments, and the key decision-making bodies are unelected—such as the European Commission, the Central Bank and the President.

The Tory government is in a deep crisis. The left must put forward an alternative to an undemocratic second referendum or the false choices of a soft or hard Brexit.

Pressing issues like funding for the National Health Service, job losses in the car industry and the rights of migrant workers in the UK could mobilise workers into a campaign that fights for nationalisation, workers' rights and for free movement of people.

Such demands require breaking from the EU and its neo-liberal strait-jacket.

Whilst Corbyn moving no-confidence motions in parliament helps demonstrate the weakness of the May government, a movement on the streets and in the unions is needed to push the weak Tory government out.

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As it stands, Britain is scheduled to leave the European Union with or without a deal by 23 March

Yellow Vests movement against inequality humbles Macron

By Charlie Kimber
Socialist Worker UK

THE FRENCH Yellow Vest movement has shown how deep class bitterness can suddenly turn from sullen passivity into extraordinary revolt.

It has seen ten weeks of inspiring challenge to the government of President Emmanuel Macron and his corporate supporters.

Macron came to office in 2017 resolving never to bow to strikes or protests. He said he would, at last, make French workers and pensioners accept the harsh facts of capitalist life.

But the Yellow Vest movement has forced Macron into humiliating retreats.

It exploded into view on 17 November last year when 280,000 people joined road blockades over fuel price rises. Some of Paris's poshest shops have been looted, and fires have lit up city centres across much of France.

Jeanne d'Hauteserre, the mayor of the 8th district area of Paris, said, "We are in a state of insurrection. I've never seen anything like it."

The movement has forced issues of poverty, low pay and inequality into national discussion. Above all it has given a focus for the bitter resentment at the arrogance and contempt the rich and politicians display towards ordinary people.

After Macron made concessions on 10 December, the head of the Medef bosses' organisation said, "It's true that 15 billion euros is a lot. But if it helps to restore civil peace, it's worth it."

Concessions

But the concessions led many people to conclude that Macron's rotten government could be forced to concede more—or be toppled by revolt.

The most visible and confrontational aspects of the movement are the mobilisations on Saturdays. But its real base is the blockades on roads, toll-booths and roundabouts, local events, and assemblies of hundreds where people thrash out their demands.

The Yellow Vests movement has encouraged creativity, social contact and shared the idea that people's problems are not because of their individual failings but the way society is organised.

There have been constant slurs that the Yellow Vests are guided by the far right. But although such elements do exist within it, the general trend has



Above: The Yellow Vests protesters have taken to the streets of France for ten consecutive weekends

been leftwards.

A major survey of protesters in Le Monde newspaper found less than 1.5 percent of those interviewed mentioned immigration as an issue that was important to them.

There has been a conscious process of weeding out fascists.

On 5 January in Bordeaux, far right activists were physically expelled from a Yellow Vest demonstration. In Paris members of Groupe Union Defense, a far right student group, have been removed from Yellow Vest events after chanting racist, sexist and homophobic slogans.

Sometimes the struggle itself has taught people lessons.

In Caen before Christmas the Yellow Vests had nowhere to meet because of state repression. The one place that welcomed them was a migrant squat. The assembly of 400 Yellow Vests took place in a warehouse where 200 undocumented people live. The right wingers hated it, but most people learned that the migrants were their allies.

Many Yellow Vests have also developed a hatred of the cops.

State forces range from the normal police to the CRS riot squads to the shadowy groups of masked men identified only by police armbands. All have been unleashed in huge numbers against peaceful protesters.

They habitually fire tear gas, percussion grenades and "flashballs"—a projectile fired from a special gun. Zineb Redouane, 80 years old, was

killed in Marseille after a police tear gas grenade hit her in the face.

More than 2000 people have been badly injured by police. According to the website Desarmons-les! (Disarm them!), four people have had their hands torn off by grenades and 17 have been blinded.

Macron hoped this would intimidate people off the streets. He failed.

People have learned many valuable lessons. Aline, a factory worker from Marseille, told *Socialist Worker*, "I used to think the police were doing their best in hard situations. I didn't sympathise with the students or the ecologists when they got attacked.

"Now I think the police are there for the rich, for the puffed-up people, and for the powerful."

Women have played leading roles and participated in large numbers. In some areas there are childcare services to enable women, particularly single mothers, to be part of the movement.

And there are experiments in movement democracy. General meetings regularly take place in a dozen cities and towns in order to coordinate protests and decide where to target next.

But the movement still has serious weaknesses. It is not yet big enough to guarantee defeat for Macron. Although they are far more militant, the mobilisations are smaller than the union-led ones last year.

To be really effective the movement has to be linked to action in the workplaces—strikes and occupations. This is how it can win.

It has given a focus for the resentment at the arrogance the rich and politicians display towards ordinary people

Rabaul 1929—Papuan’s first strike against Australian colonialism

By Tom Orsag

ON 2 January 1929, around 3000 Papua New Guineans (PNGers) in the town of Rabaul staged the first ever industrial strike by PNGers.

They hoped to end the poor wages paid by Australian colonial ventures.

The strike was defeated within 24 hours because of the strikers’ inexperience. But it showed the people of PNG how to organise against Australian imperialism.

At the time Australia ran PNG, after seizing control during the First World War. It did next to nothing to fund services or development. In 1921, Australia spent the equivalent of just \$1000 on “native education”.

The strike’s organiser was a 26-year-old boat captain, Sumsuma.

After running away to work on a plantation at the age of ten, by 1927 he was a well-respected captain on the Melanesian Co.’s motor schooner, Edith, a coastal trader out of Rabaul, and probably the highest-paid PNGer in Australia’s “Mandated Territory”.

As ship’s master Sumsuma was able to mix as an equal with crews of overseas ships that called into New Guinea ports. He, like other PNGers working on the ships, felt shame after hearing from African American crew that their wages were too low.

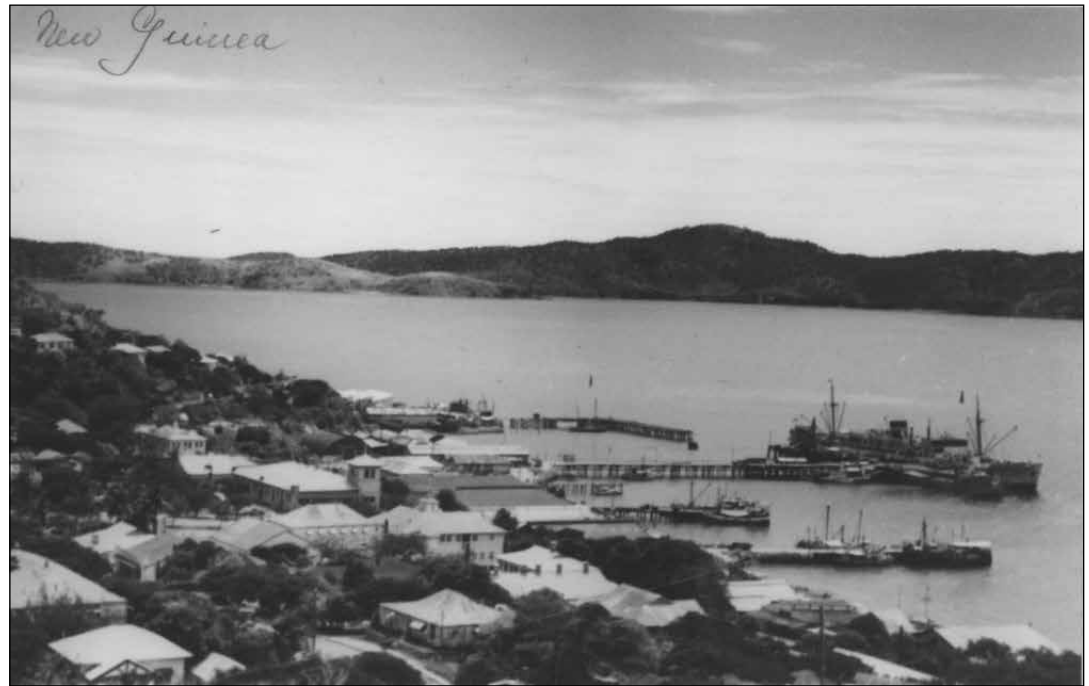
Rabaul at the time was a white colonial outpost, populated by Europeans who ran plantations or mining operations employing local labourers.

Sumsuma himself earned up to £12 a month. But most PNGers who were working for cash received just 6 shillings a month, around \$25 in today’s money.

During December 1928, Sumsuma began organising a strike by word of mouth among Rabaul’s 3000 PNG workers. He united PNGers from around coastal New Guinea and local Tolais, many recently hostile to one another. He kept their plans secret from every European, and gained the vital co-operation of N’Dramei from Manus Island, who commanded great respect as he had risen to a trusted role in the Australian Colonial Administration (ACA) police.

Although the commanding officers of the police were all either Australian or British-born, most of the police ranks were made up of local PNGers.

Workers began quitting Rabaul after dusk on 2 January 1929 and by late that night had gathered at the Method-



Above: The town of Rabaul as it was in the 1940s

ist and Catholic missions three or four kilometres out of town.

When the Europeans in Rabaul woke the next morning, “practically every native [sic] had departed out of the town”, one resident later told a friend in Australia.

N’Dramei chose a date when white officials were absent. He watched and waited until the Administrator, the Chief Judge, the Government Secretary and the Inspector were on leave or had left town.

The strike was entirely peaceful, with those who quit work simply waiting patiently for a response.

Sumsuma had expected the missionaries to mediate on their behalf. But they would not, and Rabaul’s employers refused to negotiate.

The Missionary heads both told the PNGers to return to work. The acting Police Inspector drove to the first mission, where there were about 1000 strikers. He argued for a return to work and ordered the police to “fall in”. Inexperienced in a strike, many did so.

The 2000 strikers at the Catholic Mission, further down the road, were more determined. Some held firm for two or three days, and a few never went back to work. But by mid-morning on 3 January the strike had collapsed.

Nonetheless, most of Rabaul’s expatriate Australian colonialists, especially the planters and bosses, reacted with fear and fury.

Many PNGers were beaten up by

their “mastas”, despite a timid ACA warning that private employers should not take the law into their own hands.

The government dismissed 190 police, sentencing most to six months hard labour as carriers.

A Royal Commission found Susuma and N’Dramei had been the leaders and instigators. They and 19 others were imprisoned for three years.

Prison warders beat Sumsuma so severely that he bore the scars for the rest of his life.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) argued that, “the strike shows that the first wave of the world-wide revolt of the oppressed colonial peoples has reached the shores of this colony of Australia”. It urged Australian unionists to support any further actions by workers in Papua, “who are fighting the same bosses as Australian workers”.

Up until the late 1920s, the CPA viewed Australia as an exploited colony of Britain, rather than an imperialist power in its own right. The Rabaul strike helped to shift this, leading to a new focus on specifically Australian forms of colonial rule, and solidarity initiatives in support of both Papuans and Aboriginal people in Australia.

Australia displayed all the brutality of a European colonial power in PNG. And, as Australia’s moves to assert influence in the south Pacific against China today show, that desire for imperialist dominance in the region continues.

Rabaul’s Australian colonialists, especially the planters and bosses, reacted with fear and fury

THE FIGHT TO END THE FRONTIER MASSACRES

Paddy Gibson explains the key role unions and the Communist Party played in preventing the punitive expedition planned in Arnhem Land in 1933

On 1 August 1933, Yolngu leader Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda fatally speared a NT police officer. Constable McColl was on Dhakiyarr's land on Woodah Island in East Arnhem Land, investigating the killing of Japanese trepang fisherman. McColl was holding four Yolngu women in chains at the time, trying to force them to help his investigation. They included Dhakiyarr's wife Djaparri Wirrpanda.

At the most senior levels of government, sending police out to massacre Aboriginal people and force submission to Australian law was still considered a necessary response to events like the spearing of McColl. A government inquiry had exonerated police responsible for killing scores of Aboriginal people in a massacre at Coniston in Central Australia in 1928. Now, both the NT Administration and the Department of the Interior in Canberra began to prepare a "punitive expedition" that would ride into Arnhem Land and "teach the natives a lesson".

This planned massacre never took place. Dhakiyarr's act of resistance inspired an unprecedented movement of support for Aboriginal rights across broad sections of Australian society. Crucially, socialists in the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) drove a campaign through trade unions and the Unemployed Workers' Movement that raised the threat of collective workers' action in solidarity with Aboriginal people.

The government was forced into a humiliating back down. This was the last attempt at a police massacre of Aboriginal people in Australian history.

Massacre plans

From the late 19th Century, Australian pastoral capitalism and mineral prospectors began to push into Yolngu homelands, bringing with them a genocidal model of settler-colonialism. The Yolngu had traded with Macassans and other ships sailing from Asia to harvest trepang (sea cucumber) for centuries. Where other

foreigners had sought exchange, the white Australians sought to conquer and exterminate.

In 1931, missionaries succeeded in having Arnhem Land gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve they would manage. But trepang expeditions by both Australian and Japanese ships continued. Several crews were killed by Yolngu war parties in this period, after conflicts over payment of wages and sexual abuse. Police also continued to conduct murderous patrols into the 1930s.

NT police seized on the killing of Constable McColl, immediately taking the initiative to prepare a war party. A telegram from the NT Administrator Robert Weddell to his superiors in Canberra on 27 August outlined the plan:

Strong demonstrative force imperative as natives numerous, hostile and cunning... will be civilians experienced bushman sworn in as special constables... propose arming party with twenty rifles and 2000 rounds of ammunition, twelve revolvers and 1000 rounds of ammunition and four shot guns and 300 cartridges. Please obtain and forward by Marella [a ship] without fail twelve .450 revolvers and 1000 rounds of revolver ammunition, twelve bandoliers also two pairs of best field glasses... in view of past experience consider casualties amongst these Aboriginals inevitable

In his own correspondence with the Interior Ministry, Constable Murey was also explicit about the need for brutal violence:

[Caledon Bay natives] have an abundance of confidence in themselves and have not, to our knowledge, yet been beaten... Whose blood will stain Arnhem Land, whether black or white, or both, only the future will tell. It will be vitally necessary for the Police Party to be able to bear losses and casualties and yet be numerically adequate to carry on the operation

Dhakiyarr's act of resistance inspired an unprecedented movement of support

to its finalisation.

The Interior Ministry organised to ship the requested guns and ammunition to Darwin. There was also strong, initial enthusiasm for reprisals from Interior Minister John Perkins, who told the press he would back Weddell's proposal in an upcoming Cabinet meeting and was confident of winning support. NT pastoralists were calling for blood and there was widespread public support in Darwin for a massacre to avenge McColl.

But one section of Darwin society was opposed. The radical workers' movement, particularly unemployed workers organised by the CPA, was constantly battling with police. Police broke up their camps and demonstrations, routinely jailing activists. Eighteen months prior, police fired live ammunition into an old hospital in Pine Creek being squatted by the unemployed.

The multi-racial Unemployed Workers Movement (UWM) fought against the North Australian Workers Union policy of restricting membership to whites.

Many UWM activists, traveling in the Depression looking for work, had made friends with Aboriginal people still living off their lands, including around Caledon Bay. Throughout August, the UWM *Northern Voice* carried articles expressing admiration for the the Yolngu, "aboriginals who had sufficient courage to pit their spears against the 303s of the police, rather than submit to the white man's domination... people are entitled to protect themselves from injustice and oppression".

Calling for action against the planned raid, *Northern Voice* drew on radical, anti-imperialist traditions within the Australian labour movement. During the First World War, the Industrial Workers of the World had run large scale campaigns urging workers not to enlist. Now, a similar appeal was made to disrupt recruitment for the threatened war party:

We call upon all workers and all people who believe in fair play

not only to refuse to enlist should volunteers be called for, but to actively endeavour to persuade others to refuse and to put every possible obstacle in the way of the authorities in order that we may not have another butchering expedition.

The article announced the formation of a “provisional committee” to “conduct a campaign against the proposed expedition”. Its most important work was sending telegrams and letters to southern cities, alerting potential allies to the massacre plans and calling for solidarity action.

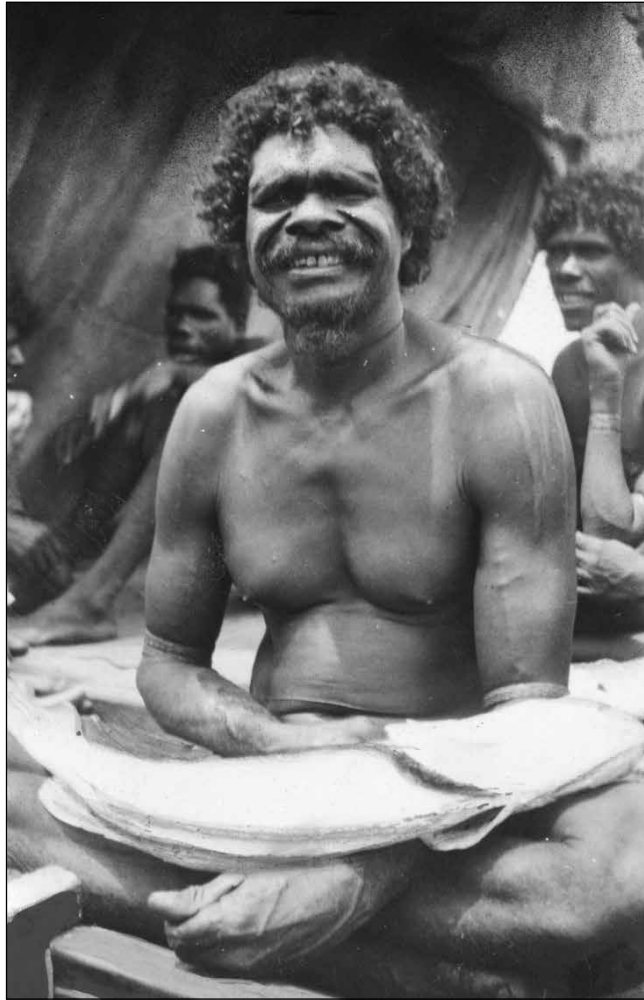
“We consider this an act of war”

Since its formation in 1921, the CPA had opposed racism and supported self-determination for colonised peoples, in line with the anti-imperialist policy of the Communist International. The party fought against the “White Australia” ideology of the mainstream unions and supported national liberation movements worldwide. However it largely ignored Aboriginal struggle in Australia, occasionally condemning brutal conditions, but accepting the idea that Aboriginal people were a “dying race”.

This began to change in the Depression. Across the country, unemployed whites lived side by side with black people in squalid fringe camps. Unemployed Aboriginal workers joined unemployed workers’ meetings in NSW and Queensland, putting forward their own demands for equal pay and an end to racist Protection laws. The CPA published a comprehensive pro-Aboriginal platform in 1931, denouncing continuing genocide through frontier massacres and child removal and demanding freedom, equality and self-determination.

The CPA’s politics were compromised by their uncritical support for Stalin’s dictatorship in Russia. But by the early 1930s they had built significant influence in the union movement, and held the leadership of both the UWM and the growing Councils Against War.

They used this support to mobilise against the proposed massacre. Most existing histories credit missionaries and upper class humanitarians for the lobbying effort that stopped the “punitive expedition”. But more than half of the approximately 70 resolutions of protest sent to Minister Perkins in late August through September came from workers’ organisations—including Victorian Trades Hall and the NSW Labor Council. The CPA agitated for



Above: Yolngu leader Dhakiyarr Wirrpananda, who fatally speared NT police Constable McColl

large meetings of protest that raised the threat of escalating action unless demands were met.

The missionaries still wanted to find ways to arrest the killers of McColl and the Japanese. But organisations influenced by the CPA opposed any foray into Arnhem Land on an anti-imperialist basis. On 6 September, the Punchbowl Unemployed and Distress Association wrote to Perkins that a members’ meeting the previous night had condemned the planned expedition, insisting the killing of McColl was justified as the “natives... were defending what was rightfully theirs”.

On 7 September the NSW Council Against War, with an executive that included representatives from major trade unions and Labor Party branches, resolved, “we consider this expedition to be a war against the Aborigines and accordingly demand the project be dropped”.

The government began to soften its stance. Prime Minister Joseph Lyons told the press that “the intentions of the Ministry have apparently been misunderstood” and claimed no punitive expedition had ever been planned. Lyons insisted, however, that police must be

sent to Caledon Bay to arrest the killers and that a heavily armed party was needed to protect nearby missions. The guns and ammunition were shipped to Darwin on 9 September.

Many church and humanitarian groups were happy that a massacre had been officially ruled out. But the CPA and its allies continued campaigning to stop any armed expedition whatsoever being sent to Arnhem Land. The CAW called a public meeting in Melbourne for 15 September that attracted approximately 500 people and resolved:

This meeting of Citizens strongly protests against the sending of any armed expedition that may be used against the blacks of the Northern Territory, and demands for them complete freedom to control their own affairs without any outside interference, and without encroachment, commercial or governmental, on their reserves.

The Argus reported on a speech to the meeting from Frank Brennan, a former Labor Federal Attorney-General:

Any killing by blacks of members of an armed expedition which might be sent against them would be justifiable homicide, because the tribes would know the expedition would be armed, that it would try to take some of their number as hostages, and was out to teach them a lesson.

In the face of growing opposition, the Lyons government backed down. They compromised to send an unarmed “peace party” led by missionaries to Caledon Bay to try and convince the Yolngu to come to Darwin for negotiations. These missionaries ultimately betrayed the Yolngu, handing Dhakiyarr and others over to the police, who had them tried and sentenced to death. Another mass campaign won Dhakiyarr’s freedom. But he disappeared soon after, most likely murdered by police.

Horrific injustices and violence against Aboriginal people continue to this day. But the 1933 campaign had forced an end to the long period of open frontier warfare that began with Britain’s invasion of Sydney Cove in 1788.

The breakthrough came when a section of the working class movement began to realise that they shared the same class enemy as Aboriginal people facing off against police guns and that common cause could be made against the capitalist system that oppresses and exploits us all.

IGNORING THE CAUSES OF RAPE

Germaine Greer's *On Rape* ends up trivialising rape and offering only meagre legal solutions that do nothing to tackle the system of sexist oppression, writes **Lucy Honan**

THE RAPE and murder of Palestinian exchange student Aiaa Maasarwe in Melbourne has seen an outpouring of outrage, grief and bewilderment made worse by the fact that it is only a few months since the rape and murder of Eurydice Dixon in the same city.

The attack has stimulated more discussion about the causes of rape and violence against women.

The shock of the very public attack hides the reality that the vast majority of sexual violence against women is perpetrated by someone they know—70 per cent by a partner or ex-partner. Strangers are responsible for only 1 per cent of sexual assaults.

Something is fundamentally wrong with a society that produces such sexism and violence.

On Rape attempts to unravel some knots in feminist anti-rape politics. Greer opens a discussion on the scale and damage of unwanted sex women endure, and the epic failure of our society to understand rape, let alone end it.

What is rape?

Ultimately though, her book is no help. Greer does not break out of the feminist politics where rape is an “evil” that men use as a weapon against women, and her solutions are meagre legal fixes.

It takes an analysis not just of relations between men and women, but class relations under capitalism, to understand what rape is about and how we can end it.

Greer points out how loaded with baggage and confusion the general understanding of rape is, and she tries to cut through the “clear as mud” mess. Unfortunately, her understanding is even murkier and she trivialises rape in the process.

To start with, Greer “declutters” the term rape to make it, for her purposes, exclusively instances of men penetrating women’s vaginas with their penises. Having ruled male, child

and transgender victims and the use of objects out of her analysis, Greer nonetheless thinks a far greater number of men are guilty of rape than the small percentage estimated by rape crisis centres.

She asserts that “non-consensual sex is commoner than deep communion between male and female”, and that “rape is a jagged outcrop in the vast monotonous landscape of bad sex”, implying that most men rape women, or at the very least, are on a continuum with rapists.

It is important to recognise the scale and impact of callous, alienating sex that women are enduring.

The #MeToo movement has thrown up countless case studies of sex that is violating and coerced. Some feminists have called this “grey rape”, while Greer creates her own category of “banal rape” for when a man has sex with a woman without concern that she is not into it and does not want it.

She gives examples of sex husbands have with wives that is begrudging and corrosive to the self-esteem of victims, and alienating to both parties.

But Greer’s analysis risks making rape itself mean nothing other than women’s reports of sexual discordance with men.

Collapsing these different categories of alienated sex into rape does not help us understand why some men “misperceive women’s reactions during sex” as Greer puts it, and why others correctly perceive their reactions and deliberately force sex; or why still others are not guilty of either.

Significantly, Greer wants to remove the relevance of a man’s will (and even to some extent, women’s will); their understanding and intentions in sex.

For Greer, as with much feminist analysis, men are still captive to a biological drive: “because the penis

Rape is one symptom of a sexist society that creates the conditions for rape

gives them so much pleasure, it is difficult for them to imagine that it is not doing anything for the recipient of their attentions.” And on a wider level, men and women are characterised as snared in a sexual culture that “may well be doomed” to rape.

Is rape a cultural construct?

Greer ends up undermining even women’s testimony of rape by making rape and sex a matter of interpretation. Her emphasis on the “ordinariness” of what she includes as rape, combined with a reductive focus on male and female genitals, descends into a down-playing of the trauma of rape.

Greer cannot fathom a victim impact statement that describes a woman’s rapist taking away her self-worth, privacy, energy, time, intimacy, confidence and voice: “why should a sexual assault take away these precious, intangible things?”

Greer’s view is that women should not hold penises as any special instruments of damage, “an elbow, a thumb even can do you more harm” than a penis, and she reminds us that no one respects vaginas much anyway.

That lack of respect is blatantly obvious when the President of the United States can brag about grabbing pussies, or think that dismissing this at locker-room talk makes it acceptable.

But her implication is that women should not be so precious either. She chastises women for fearing rape, “most of us are in greater danger of being mugged than raped, but we are not aware of mugging as an ever present danger”.

But rape does not exist only in the world of ideas. The deliberate violation of a person’s sexuality is both a subjective and objective event.

There is a difference in quality between rape and non-sexual assault by thumb. People can express sexuality in vastly different ways. But sexuality

remains a fundamentally distinct, and particularly intimate, aspect of our humanity, which can be disrespected and violated. Denying the independent existence of women's sexual desires and autonomy will certainly not help end rape.

Recent Canadian research has also contradicted the long-argued feminist position that rape is a way of men exercising power over women, rather than about sex.

They found it is an indifference to "expression of refusal and displeasure", not violence per se, that was a better explanation of rapists' behaviour.

Nor can we disconnect rape from the real social forces that create the dynamics of sexism and oppression that condition our lives, including our sex lives.

"Solutions" that focus on the way rape or consent is discussed, or how we negotiate our own personal relationships, cannot address the objective social conditions of oppression that make rape such an intransigent and predictable factor of life for many women under capitalism.

For Marxists, the unit of analysis for rape is not relations between men and women, or cultural ideas of sex, but the entire class relations of the society.

Under capitalism, women's oppression in the family and the commodification of women's sexuality, combined with social deprivation, create the conditions for rape.

Gender roles in the family

In Australia, gender roles in the nuclear family have undergone significant change since the 1950s, including women's increased contribution to and control over family income.

But pay inequality, the privatised model of childcare, and tax and parenting payments that punish single women, still perpetuate social inequality and the traditional role of women as responsible for the burden of caring for children and domestic labour.

Media moguls and corporate advertisers use sex to sell anything and everything as they buttress and normalise traditional gender roles and inequality with sexist media. Magazines advise on how to be a "hot wife", shareable columns provide 20 reasons to have sex with your husband even when you don't feel like it.

Women are still represented as sexual objects to be obtained for per-



Above: The #MeToo movement has triggered a renewed discussion about why rape is so common

manent ownership and sexual control by men.

When sex is pervasively portrayed as a commodity, it is not surprising that some men "take" it.

What can we do about rape?

Greer's trivialisation of rape contributes nothing to the fight against women's oppression.

Alongside the scale of the coercive sex relationships that she describes, her solutions are pathetically constrained. Reducing sentences for rapists to encourage more convictions presumes the courts could have a role in dealing with rape.

Yet the prevailing social attitudes, and those of the police in particular, mean that most complaints of sexual assault don't even get to court, and when they do, so often, it is the women who are on trial.

Women should be safe at home, at work, on the street. Rape is one symptom of a sexist society that creates the conditions for rape.

There is a very strong correlation between poverty and rape. It is a risk factor for both perpetrators and victims of rape, which is a compelling reason to see the fight against unemployment as part of the fight against rape.

The struggle to end rape is not a

struggle of women against men and cannot be reduced to a struggle against male behavior. The individual acts of violence against women are embedded in a class society that systematically subordinates women; to end rape we have to end that system.

It is only in 2019 that Queensland has legislated to make it mandatory for state schools to offer pants or shorts for female students.

But across the country, private schools, including all-girls schools, are resisting the move.

Female bar staff at Perth's Amplifier Bar have just won their fight against a boss who wanted them to wear low-cut t-shirts at work.

We are not doomed to patterns of rape. Ideas change in struggle, and women and men have a common interest to struggle against women's oppression and the system that sustains it.

Every challenge to discrimination and sexist gender roles is a challenge to the prevailing system.

It will be women and men fighting together for union rights, equal pay, for job security against casualisation, and in campaigns for free childcare, and equal access to education that help to lay the basis to overthrow the society which creates the conditions for rape and sexual violence.

UNIONS AGAINST LABOR QUEENSLAND LABOR'S HISTORY OF STRIKEBREAKING

Unions formed the Labor Party. But Queensland history shows that again and again, Labor governments have betrayed their own working class supporters, argues **James Supple**

QUEENSLAND PRODUCED Australia's first Labor government in 1899. This was credited as the first Labor government in the world—although it was a minority government, and lasted just a week.

When it won majority government in Queensland in 1915, Labor remained in power with one short interruption until 1957.

The Labor Party was a creation of the trade unions, with the party's first manifesto announced at a meeting of unionists in 1891 under the Tree of Knowledge at Barcardine, an open-air meeting spot.

The formation of a political party to represent the working class was a challenge to the existing pro-business parties. It showed workers had begun to recognise they had distinct class interests opposed to those of the employers.

But it was also a response to industrial defeat—the loss of the shearers' strike, one of a series of major strikes that were crushed in the 1890s.

And the new Labor Party was controlled by the trade union leaders, who are naturally conservative due to their role as professional mediators between workers and bosses, rather than rank-and-file workers themselves. This remains the case today with union leaders controlling half the votes at Labor Party conferences, and often climbing into the ranks of Labor MPs.

Union leaders saw influence in parliament and the use of the state as an alternative to the strikes and industrial action that are the real basis of exerting workers' power.

But once in government, there were soon tensions between the Labor MPs and the more militant unions. Union officials were elected by the workers in the union, and more directly represented them and relied on them for support.

But, in government, the parliamentary Labor Party and Labor MPs (even if they had previously been union officials) saw their responsibility as running capitalism, not simply representing workers' interests. That meant that in moments of crisis, they ended up siding with the bosses.

In 1922 the government refused to reverse an Arbitration Court ruling that cut the basic wage.

Union leaders were livid. There were even moves to set up a separate Industrial Labour Party, although this came to nothing.

After failing to influence their political representatives through the Labor Party, in 1925 rail unions used their industrial muscle to stage a one-week strike, forcing the Labor government to end the wage cut for all state government employees.

Shortly afterwards Bill McCormack took over as the new Labor Premier, determined to take a harder line.

Sugar strike

Another major strike broke out on the railways in 1927. This began in what seemed a small local dispute in a mill in South Johnstone, near the sugar town of Innisfail in north Queensland.

Mill work was seasonal, with most workers only employed part of the year. A new management at the mill decided to pay off the whole workforce, reduce staff numbers and re-advertise positions for the new season.

As soon as they re-opened with the new workforce, all the AWU members voted to strike. The union members demanded the mill give preference for jobs to those employed the previous season, as was the practice across the industry. Instead known union activists had been excluded from work.

The workers began picketing but management was intransigent, appealing to local farmers to work the mill as scabs. Although the Arbitration Court

In government, the Labor MPs saw their responsibility as running capitalism, not representing workers' interests

ordered the strikers back to work, they refused.

The AWU officials initially did not support the strike, fearing it could spread through the whole sugar industry. The AWU, then as now, was a notoriously right-wing union and a strong supporter of the Labor government.

They tried to take control of the dispute by declaring it an official strike. But the workers rejected their recommendation to accept an arbitration decision. The strikers voted to stay out on strike by a vote of 310 to 28.

Now three months on strike, the strike committee asked the local Innisfail Trades and Labor Council (TLC) to put a ban on the movement of sugar from the mill.

Waterside workers refused to move it, so management tried to ship it by rail.

Railway workers refused in turn, and were stood down.

The Labor Premier Bill McCormack decided to take the unions on—even though the union movement, from more militant unions to the conservative AWU, was united behind the strike. He declared that all members of the Australian Railways Union (ARU) would be summarily dismissed, and only re-hired if they would sign a pledge to obey management instructions—in effect agreeing to scab.

Since it was illegal to single out members of one union, the government sacked all 18,800 railway workers across the state, shutting down the whole rail system.

But trade union solidarity began to crack, with the separate train drivers union the AFULE agreeing to negotiate with McCormack without the ARU. Railway workers also began to break ranks and sign the pledge.

The rail unions gave in, agreeing

to sign the pledge in return for no victimisations. The South Johnston mill workers were forced by their union into accepting terms they had previously rejected.

The Premier had set a precedent in how far a Labor government was willing to go to support employers and to break a strike and attack the unions and workers it was supposed to represent.

McCormack arrogantly declared that, “The dispute ended up as it should have ended—in a recognition of the right of parliamentary government.”

The 1948 strike

A Queensland Labor government would resort to even more extreme anti-union measures during the nine week railway strike of 1948.

Following the end of the Second World War there was a surge in strikes, as workers sought to make up for the sacrifices during the war years and the Depression. The strain on the rail system from the war meant the rail system was in need of repair, leading to a series of rail accidents. Workers’ frustrations grew.

Victorian metalworkers on the Federal Award won big pay increases in June 1947.

Government rail workers in Queensland put in a claim at the Arbitration Court for a pay rise to match.

Noting that the pay rises had already been passed on in other states, they asked for a quick decision.

But Queensland had the highest unemployment in the country, and the state government was determined to maintain lower wages in order to attract investors.

The Arbitration Court stalled. It had already been sitting on their claim for the introduction of weekend penalty rates for seven months. Efforts to lobby the Labor government, their employer, to accept the claim failed.

If they waited for arbitration, it was clear they were going to get a bad decision.

Workshop meetings and a secret ballot held in January 1948 voted overwhelmingly for strike action. The unions launched a limited strike restricted to the running sheds where engine repair and maintenance work was done, hoping this would pressure the Labor government into granting them the pay rise.

Instead the government refused to negotiate and adopted ruthless measures to try and break the strike. First it established an emergency system of



Above: Unionists after their release form jail following the defeat of the 1891 shearers’ strike

road transport as an alternative to the rail system.

Then it shut down the railways across Queensland, locking out an additional 14,000 railway workers. This was designed to overwhelm the unions with the cost of supporting so many workers without pay. The federal Labor government aided the betrayal by blocking welfare payments to rail workers.

With the strike now an all-out test of strength against the Labor state government, the Communist Party began to play a crucial role in the dispute. It was near the peak of its influence in the working class, with party members elected as officials in a number of key unions.

Ted Rowe, a Communist Party member and federal official with the Amalgamated Engineering Union, arrived in Queensland to help the Central Disputes Committee, which grouped together unions involved in the strike.

The strikers sought solidarity from other unions, convincing the separate train drivers’ union to strike and attempting to pull out workers on Brisbane’s tramways.

Coal miners voted to black ban coal trains, and railway workers in NSW, Victoria and South Australia also imposed bans.

On 1 March the Seamen’s Union and the Waterside Workers Federation

joined the strike, shutting down ports with the aim of disrupting the emergency road transport system.

In response the Labor government secured a return to work order from the Arbitration Court and then declared a “state of emergency”. This allowed it to ban picketing and make advocating strike action a crime. It also backed this up with new draconian enforcement powers that gave the police authority to enter any home or building and disperse gatherings, as well as make arrests without a warrant.

On St Patricks Day, 17 March, hundreds of police used the new powers to attack a union demonstration, intentionally bashing a number of people including lawyer and Communist Party MP, Fred Paterson, who was acting as a legal observer. He was severely injured and took months to recover.

This brutal assault backfired, producing widespread outrage about the extreme attack on civil liberties and a new wave of support for the strikers. Brisbane Trades and Labour Council called a demonstration, but the government refused them a permit. The press spread rumours police were planning another violent assault.

Ten thousand workers defied the law to march to King George Square. The government had failed to break the strike and had to give in.

Skilled railway workers won a large pay rise, almost double what the government had initially offered, including weekend penalty rates. There were no victimisations and unionists imprisoned during the strike were released.

It was a tremendous victory, won through defying the law, solidarity strike action and an actively organised strike campaign, with mass pickets up to 2000 strong outside workplaces.

But it also showed again how far a Labor government would stoop to attack trade unions and hold down wages because it was committed to running the system.

The tensions between the workers, union officials and the Labor Party remains a fundamental characteristic of the Labor Party today.

Many times in the years since 1948, Labor in power has put the interests of capitalism and the employers before those of the workers. The 1948 rail strike is a lesson in the kind of solidarity and union action that will be needed to win pay rises and defend penalty rates—and in why we can’t rely on a Labor government.



LIBERALS' RACISM FEEDS FAR RIGHT

By Tom Fiebig

IN EARLY January 150 racists and fascists gathered at St Kilda beach in Melbourne, boasting that it would be “Cronulla 2.0” where they would “reclaim the beach” and recreate the racist riot of 2005.

Neil Erikson and Blair Cottrell, both active in stirring up racist bigotry against Muslims as well as self-declared admirers of Hitler, organised and led the event.

A number of those at the rally openly displayed their fascist politics, with one caught on camera carrying an SS helmet, and several giving Nazi salutes. In the immediate lead-up to the rally, Antipodean Resistance, a neo-Nazi group associated with Cottrell, plastered swastikas on a Jewish aged care centre in Caulfield.

Disgracefully, Senator Fraser Anning, who recently called for a “final solution” to Muslim immigration, was a keynote speaker at the event, charging taxpayers \$2800 for a business class flight to be there.

In the aftermath, even Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the Murdoch press distanced themselves. But it has been the mainstream media panic about “African crime” and the racism from the Liberals against the Sudanese community that has given the far right legitimacy.

Media reporting of several incidents in December played a large role in circulating racist myths about a “crime wave” on Melbourne’s fore-

shore. The media again blamed the African and Sudanese community, by focusing on one particular incident involving up to 20 young African men.

Channel 7’s *A Current Affair* on New Year’s Eve was particularly repulsive. It broadcast a segment titled “The ‘race war’ brewing on Melbourne’s streets”, featuring an interview with Neil Erikson (where the interviewer failed to mention Erikson’s convictions for racial vilification and other offences) and a masked “Vietnamese teenager”, who called on people to “hurt any African youths” they see.

The week before the rally, Erikson and his supporters found yet another opportunity to stir up racial tensions by filming and harassing African youth playing soccer on the beach, sparking a stand-off between the groups.

Stopping the far right

An anti-fascist counter-demonstration of around 300 people successfully opposed the far right rally on the actual day, both outnumbering and drowning them out with anti-racist chants.

It was important that their protest was challenged. Counter-demonstrations make it harder for the far right to organise by exposing their racism and fascism for what it is.

But to effectively stop the far right we also need to challenge the racism in the political mainstream that has legitimised them.

The Liberals’ Peter Dutton and

Above: Fascists showing their true colours at the St Kilda rally

Prime Minister Scott Morrison have helped conjure up the panic about African crime in order to provide an effective scapegoat and a distraction for their party’s unpopular anti-worker agenda. Dutton claimed, ridiculously, that Victorians were afraid to leave their homes to go out to restaurants because of African gangs. Then leader of the Victorian Liberals, Matthew Guy, echoed this rhetoric, campaigning on a tough-on-crime agenda in the lead up to November’s state election.

The Liberals’ humiliating defeat in the election was a welcome rejection of this politics of fear.

But Victorian Labor Leader Daniel Andrews also made concessions to it, toughening bail laws and attempting to introduce racist anti-association laws that would’ve granted police expanded powers to prevent people as young as 14 from associating with those convicted of serious offences. In the end the anti-association laws were quietly dropped following a backlash.

The media has not only fanned the law and order panic but often directly given the far right a platform. Last year, Cottrell was invited onto Sky News as a “right-wing activist”, after previously being interviewed on Channel 7 and ABC’s Hack Live.

As the federal election approaches we can expect more racist fearmongering from the Liberals. Building the anti-racist campaigns against the fearmongering against the Sudanese community and to welcome refugees will remain crucial.

The media panic about “African crime” and the racism from the Liberals has given the far right legitimacy

Solidarity