



Solidarity

Issue No. 38 / September 2011

\$3/\$5

**QANTAS, BANKS,
BLUESCOPE:**

**PROFITS
GO BOOM
BUT JOBS
GO BUST**

BREAK O'FARRELL

BREAK THE WAGE CAP Page 10-11

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. NET.AU

full content from the magazine / online-only updates
/ up to date details of demonstrations and meetings

SUBSCRIBE

Solidarity is published monthly. Make sure you don't miss an issue—send in this form along with cheque or money order and we will mail you *Solidarity* each month.

- 5 issues—\$15
- One year (12 issues)—\$36
- Two years (24 issues)—\$65
- I would like __ copies to sell

Name.....

Address

.....

.....

Phone

E-mail

Cheques/MOs payable to Solidarity Publishing.
Send to PO Box A338 Sydney South NSW 1235 or
phone 02 9211 2600 for credit card orders.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS

Sydney

Thursday 1 September
**From the Tampa to Malaysia: Why
Labor attacks refugees**

Sydney Solidarity meets 7pm every
Thursday at the Brown st Hall, above
Newtown library on King Street, Newtown.
For more information contact:
Jean on 0449 646 593
sydney@solidarity.net.au

Melbourne

Tuesday 30 August
**Freeing Palestine: Can change come from
within Israel?**

Melbourne Solidarity meets 6.30pm every
Tuesday at Melbourne University Student
Union, Graham Cornish A room, 2nd floor.
For more information contact:
Chris on 0403 103 183
melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Solidarity 2011: Ideas to change the world

Saturday September 3, 11.30-5pm
Graham Cornish rooms, Union House,
Melbourne University
Sessions include: *Borders and refugees,
the new politics of white Australia with Ian
Rintoul*
*From Cairo to Athens: Can revolution
spread?*
Is Labor finished?
*Carbon tax and climate change: why have
The Greens embraced the market?*

Call 0403 013 183 or email melbourne@solidarity.net.au for more info

Brisbane

For more information contact:
Mark on 07 3123 8585 or
brisbane@solidarity.net.au

Perth

For more information contact:
Trish on 0405 597 598 or 08 9339 7128 or
perth@solidarity.net.au

Magazine office

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

Solidarity No.38
September 2011
ISSN 1835-6834
Responsibility for election
comment is taken by James
Supple, 410 Elizabeth St,
Surry Hills NSW 2010.
Printed by El Faro,
Newtown NSW.

CONTENTS

ISSUE 38, SEPTEMBER 2011



FEATURES

16 **New recession fears stalk global economy**

James Supple

20 **Islamophobia and Norway's terror attack**

Amy Thomas

23 **Paris Commune: the first workers' state**

Lachlan Marshall

REFUGEES

7 **Labor and the refugee campaign**

28 **Not Malaysia, not Manus Island**



REPORTS

Qantas slashes jobs 4

Income Management exposed 6

Carbon tax debate 8-9

NSW schools face market reforms 10

Public service pay deals 10

NSW unions fight O'Farrell 11

NSW austerity lies 11

INTERNATIONAL

Why is East Africa in famine? 12

London riots 13

Libya after Gaddafi 14

REVIEWS

Pacific War 15

Mozart's Sister 22

Tamil Tigriss 23

Things they say **Qantas job cuts need to be fought—and fast**

“Karl Marx said it right. At some point capitalism can self-destruct itself because you cannot keep on shifting income from labor to capital without having excess capacity and a lack of aggregate demand”.

Nouriel Roubini, Economics Professor at New York’s Stern School of Business, who predicted the subprime mortgage crisis

“There’s a growing realisation that we are in a bit of a hole”.

Tim Hodgson, head of Towers Watson think tank

“The problems are pretty serious and deep, and let’s face it, there has not been any concrete proposals so far”.

Rajiv Jain, a New York-based money manager who oversees about \$15 billion at Vontobel Asset Management, thinks governments have no answer to the economic crisis

“We can be confident about one hypothesis—few if any of the rioters own their own homes... Property ownership, and for most of us this means home ownership, is the key to creating a law-abiding society.”

Alan Moran from the right-wing think tank the Institute of Public Affairs explains what he thinks is behind the London riots

“If riot info and fear is spreading by Facebook & Twitter, shut them off for an hour or two”.

British Tory MP Louise Mensch takes a leaf from former Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak’s book on containing civil unrest

“They got away with a lot more than a few fucking pairs of trainers.”

Comedian Russell Brand targets the real looters in the UK—the bankers

“Mr Murdoch has never asked any journalist to do anything improper.”

A News Limited spokesperson convinces nobody

“It is simply a political tool to undermine the last bastion of bourgeois morality—the traditional nuclear family.”

Miranda Devine admits her real reasons for opposing same-sex marriage

By Tom Orsag

IN MID-AUGUST, Qantas announced plans to restructure its international arm, or Mainline, into Asia with a hub in Japan and a second Asian airport, at a cost of 1000 jobs in Australia.

Yet Qantas just announced an interim profit \$552 million, up 46 per cent on last year’s and one of best in the world. According to the *Financial Review*, Qantas is sitting on a cash balance of \$3 billion and its earnings are predicted to grow by 31 per cent in 2012.

Qantas unions now have a fight on their hands to save jobs. With the pilots (APIA), engineers (ALAEA) and ground staff (TWU) unions all balloted for strike action over their expired Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs), the groundwork could not be better for a united fight to defend jobs, a decent pay rise and improved conditions.

However, the signs are not good. There has been limited industrial action so far. Aircraft engineers in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide are due to take turns to stop work for one hour each day from the end of August. But strangely, the association has offered to organise for other workers to cover for those on strike, provided they are paid overtime.

The ALAEA are also floating the suggestion of a High Court challenge, as Qantas’ push into Asia may breach the Qantas Sale Act of 1992. But court challenges invariably become an excuse for union officials not to organise industrial action.

Warehouse workers covered by the National Union of Workers (NUW), struck for a day in late July over job security and wages, but are not currently balloting for strike action.

Qantas is in a race to the bottom, using its new hubs in Asia to cut its “operating” or “running” costs—the pay and conditions of pilots, engineers and ground staff.

Qantas CEO Alan Joyce insists that Qantas will only survive if their plans proceed, but the media reports Joyce’s move as “unveiling a five-year plan to increase profits.”

Joyce is also trying to play the workers of its cut-price subsidiary, Jetstar, who have worse wages and conditions, against those of Qantas workers.



Above: Qantas CEO Alan Joyce is slashing jobs to boost profits

Qantas unions are also appealing to nationalism to try to influence the Labor government.

ACTU Secretary, Jeff Lawrence says Qantas’ plan “really brings into question whether Qantas is truly an Australian airline.” Even Adam Bandt MP, the most left-wing of The Greens, said it was an issue of “ensuring we maintain an Australian air industry.”

But nationalism is a dead end for the workers. Transport Minister, Anthony Albanese, showed whose side the government is on. After meeting the Qantas boss, he declared, “Job losses are always regrettable, but the government acknowledges that this is a commercial decision taken by Qantas.”

Qantas is vulnerable to industrial action and international airline workers have shown it is possible to fight and win.

Garuda pilots in Indonesia struck for 24 hours in August for wage parity across the company. Philippine Airlines and Japan Airlines also have current disputes over job losses and contract labour hire.

News Limited reported, “Financial analysts predicted that Qantas’s five-year survival strategy would fall apart if the unions...succeeded in pressuring the government to force the airline to pay higher wages in Asia.” Neil Watson, in the *Herald Sun*, reported that there was “a worldwide shortage of pilots.”

If the unions want an to save the jobs at Qantas they will have to mobilise their members to strike for it. Time is running out.

.....
International airline workers have shown it is possible to fight and win

EDITORIAL

Jobs and living standards cut so bosses can profit

RENEWED PANIC on global stockmarkets shows that the economic crisis that began in 2008 is entering a new stage. This time in addition to debt problems in Europe that threaten to drive governments into default and bring down the banks, growth in the real economy is failing.

Desperation and rage has burst onto the streets of Britain as riots shook the country. This comes on the back of brutal cutbacks to government services and spiralling unemployment.

Until now Australia has been relatively unscathed, with low unemployment and a booming mining sector thanks to continued economic growth in China.

But now, even before recession hits, corporate Australia is moving to slash jobs and throw workers on the scrap heap—all while continuing to chalk up record profits and hand out huge CEO salaries. BHP Billiton's profit for last year was \$22.46 billion, the highest ever in this country.

Westpac increased its profit to \$3.17 billion for the last six months of last year, then turned around and announced 1000 job cuts. The *Financial Review* explained why, noting, "headcount reductions and offshoring would help Westpac achieve good earnings growth"—read bigger profits. The other banks are expected to follow.

Qantas made \$552 million in the last financial year, more than a four-fold increase on the year before. But it is pushing ahead with a restructuring plan and 1000 job cuts.

Some industries, like retail, manufacturing and construction, are being squeezed by the strong Australian dollar and weak consumer spending. This has led to 1000 job losses at BlueScope steel and 400 at OneSteel.

But their CEOs are not even taking a pay cut—at BlueScope executives pocketed a staggering \$3 million in bonuses in the year to June.

An average CEO at one of the top 100 companies earns \$2.4 million, according to research cited in *The Australian*. The top 10 per cent of them can expect to grab an obscene \$5.1 million a year.

But the jobs massacre is set to continue. Tim Rocks, from investment bank Merrill Lynch, told clients in late August that there are, "100,000 job losses in the pipeline". The bank says it has already tallied 7000 job losses since June, with many more going



Above: The new NSW Liberal government wants public sector workers to take pay and job cuts

unreported.

Unemployment edged up to 5.1 per cent in July, its first rise in a year. Full-time job growth also slowed. Just 26,000 jobs were added in the six months to July, compared to 39,000 a month in 2009.

Cutbacks and the cost of living

We are also getting a small taste of the budget cuts being imposed overseas. In NSW the new Liberal government has public sector workers in its sights. It has pushed through new laws allowing it to directly set public sector workers conditions and impose pay cuts through a wage cap of 2.5 per cent on pay rises.

A series of job cuts are also expected in September's budget, with the Department of Primary Industries facing a 25 per cent cut and hundreds of job losses.

Federal public sector workers are also battling a below inflation pay cap. Inflation is running at 3.6 per cent. But the Analytical Living Cost Index compiled by the Bureau of Statistics showed a 4.5 per cent increase in costs over the last year.

It's no wonder Tony Abbott's campaign about the carbon tax and the cost of living is biting. Workers are feeling the pinch. But what is the Labor government doing to make life easier?

Instead of looking after workers, Labor continues to pander to business

with endless talk about "economic reform". It tries to sell the carbon tax as "the same sort of economic reform, hard economic reform, which this country has fronted up to in the past". This is precisely the language John Howard used to justify WorkChoices, and the Hawke-Keating government before it used to justify its own neo-liberal onslaught. It means nothing more than a ruthless agenda of cutting wages and trashing living standards—all so business can keep turning in record breaking profits.

With job losses growing, and the threat of another world recession, we need to learn from those resisting austerity in Greece and across Europe. The Greek government has been shaken by a succession of huge general strikes.

Qantas workers are gearing up for industrial action against the job cuts. In the federal public service the fight over pay deals is continuing.

Nurses, public servants, teachers and firefighters will all be taking stopwork action on September 8 in NSW against Liberal Premier Barry O'Farrell's attack on public sector workers.

This needs to be the first step in a concerted union campaign to force an end to the agenda of cutbacks and neo-liberalism, and send a message that workers will resist if business tries to sacrifice more workers' jobs to maintain their bulging profits.

New evidence damns use of Income Management

By Paddy Gibson

A NEW report has damned Labor's income management policy. The report is from the Equal Rights Alliance (ERA), representing more than 50 groups advocating for women's rights.

Income management "quarantines" between 50 to 70 per cent of Centrelink payments. Mostly these funds are put onto a BasicsCard that can only be used to buy "essential items" at government approved stores and some is held back to pay bills.

The system was first imposed on Aboriginal communities under the Northern Territory Intervention. It has since been introduced in some areas of Western Australia, Cape York and expanded to the whole Northern Territory. Further expansion to five new "trial sites" across Australia is planned in 2012.

More than 180 women with direct experience of Income Management participated in surveys and focus groups, making this the most extensive study of the system. Seventy-nine per cent said they wanted to exit Income Management immediately.

The report blows apart key myths peddled by Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin about Income Management. Eighty five per cent of women said they had not changed what they buy since being put on the BasicsCard. Seventy four per cent said it had not made looking after their family easier and three quarters did not feel safer.

A key theme in the report is the discrimination and the shame of using the card. Ninety two per cent of people on Income Management are still Indigenous and a number of those included since the Northern Territory expansion have been refugees. There was a strong perception amongst those surveyed that BasicsCard was only for black people. Seventy four per cent agreed with the statement, "people aren't as nice to me when they see I use BasicsCard".

There report documents outrageous impositions on daily life—such as women wasting all their phone credit trying to check their BasicsCard balance, or transactions routinely failing due to lack of funds. In many cases Centrelink had failed to pay bills or rent on time, leading to a scramble for cash before services were cut off. Many had extreme difficulty obtaining



Union tour commits to ban on waste dump

KEY UNIONS have pledged to ban work on the proposed waste dump at Muckaty station following a fact finding tour. Senior officials from the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), Electrical Trades Union (ETU) and Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) visited Tennant Creek and the proposed nuclear waste dump site in August. Members of the union delegation included Peter Simpson, ETU Queensland and NT secretary and MUA Assistant National Secretary Ian Bray. The unions also agreed to organise reportback meetings to build awareness among union members about the campaign against the waste dump. The ACTU also has a formal policy of supporting any unionist who refuses to co-operate with the waste dump plan. Women who are Muckaty traditional owners performed a dance to welcome the union officials. Photo: Tennant and District Times

medicine.

One woman developed a health condition due to stress from Income Management. Another reported her son saw no need to study maths at school because, "the government does it for you on the BasicsCard". Income Management epitomises everything that is wrong with the NT Intervention.

The racist assumption that Aboriginal people can not manage has provided the ideological cover for the seizure of millions of dollars of Aboriginal assets in the NT. Administering income management will cost \$350 million over the next four years—while remote communities are branded "unviable" and their services and employment programs are slashed.

The campaign against the NT Intervention has initiated a petition demanding a moratorium on Income Management.

The petition is also sponsored by a new coalition in Bankstown, "Say No to Government Income

Management", formed following the announcement in May that Bankstown would be one of the five new "trial sites" for Income Management. Their founding statement, published in the local press, gained endorsement from more than 40 organisations, including Unions NSW, the Migrant Resource Centre, Catholic Care and Uniting Care.

The moratorium campaign is designed to tie together resistance to the Intervention with the growing strength of the Bankstown campaign. It demands immediate amnesty for the more than 15,000 people still on Income Management in the NT and the shelving of plans for further expansion.

Intervention Rollback Action Group spokesperson Barbara Shaw, from Mt Nancy town camp in Alice Springs, will tour Sydney from October 2. Protest action is planned at Bankstown Centrelink to take forward the moratorium campaign and demand Barbara is taken off Income Management immediately.

Why the refugee movement must relate to Labor

By Mark Goudkamp

HOW THE refugee movement relates to members of the Labor Party is again assuming strategic importance for the campaign. The question will become even more crucial in the lead up to the ALP National Conference in early December.

It is undisputed that the Gillard government is particularly nasty on the question of asylum seekers. Since the defeat of John Howard in November 2007, there has been far more continuity than change in relation to mandatory detention, offshore processing and the exaggerated rhetoric around “people smuggling”.

Labor’s few positive changes—the abolition of Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs), the ending of the Pacific Solution, and the elimination of the 45-day rule (which restricted work rights for asylum seekers who arrived by plane)—were all implemented in the first year of the Rudd government.

These reforms had been a central feature of the platform of Labor for Refugees (L4R), which had built up tremendous support inside the ALP and the unions under Howard. By the 2004 ALP National Conference, when Mark Latham was Opposition Leader, L4R had the support of the entire Left faction (with the notorious exceptions of Julia Gillard, Jenny Macklin and Martin Ferguson) as well as significant sections of the rightwing unions. L4R motions calling for community processing and ending TPVs were passed at every state ALP Conference.

The issue of how to relate to Labor and L4R was a serious question for the movement at the time. Members of the Democratic Socialist Party (now Socialist Alliance) opposed RAC constructively engaging with Labor. They went so far as to form a rival Free the Refugees campaign group, although it was wound up a couple of years later.

At that time, Socialist Alternative members gave verbal support to those of us from the International Socialist Organisation (now Solidarity) who argued that engaging and encouraging Labor for Refugees was a strategic priority for the movement. Now however, Socialist Alternative has positioned itself as the anti-Labor group, treating Labor as a monolith, and showing little concern for what is happening inside it.

But in 2011, L4R is reviving. Its



Above: Labor for Refugees marching at World Refugee Day this year

convenors are more prepared than ever to publicly oppose the federal Labor government’s policies. They have been active at state conferences and issued a scathing media release criticising the Malaysia Solution. In Victoria, at last count, 79 local ALP branches had signed up to L4R. In NSW L4R has endorsed three RAC-initiated motions for distribution to NSW branches and are heading to Canberra to lobby MPs in early September.

Building the campaign

In Melbourne’s Refugee Action Collective, where Socialist Alternative members could have put forward campaign initiatives, there are no plans for a major rally or anything else to deepen and extend the movement between now and the end of the year. The one thing that is being promoted is the idea of travelling to Sydney for the rally at the Labor National Conference.

The combined efforts of the grassroots campaign spearheaded by the RAC groups (and L4R inside the party) is having an effect, with federal ALP MP Anna Burke speaking out about the Malaysia Solution, along with 14 WA state MPs.

A strategic task of the refugee campaign must be to break the bipartisan agreement between Labor and Liberal leaderships. By working with unions and L4R to deepen the opposition inside the Labor Party,

the movement can more effectively expose Gillard and Bowen’s disgraceful refugee-bashing. Opposition to the Labor leadership from inside the labour movement can only encourage the majority of organised workers to break from Gillard and support the refugee campaign.

There is a real debate inside the party about whether Labor has to accept anti-refugee policies as the only way to win elections and a real tension between Labor policy and the Labor leadership.

The far left can’t simply engage in pious grandstanding about Labor’s sellouts. If we simply denounce Labor without making an effort to work alongside those who want to challenge them, then the audience inside the party, and those outside who look to Labor, will not take us seriously. Such an approach risks cutting the movement off from the very organised workers that are essential to it.

The protest outside the ALP national conference is not just another protest or another opportunity to shout at Gillard. The campaign needs to make a special effort to ensure the protest involves the maximum number of Labor members, supporters and unionists.

This will require building the rally with unions and L4R to make sure that Labor’s leaders know there is a movement with roots in the labour movement determined to fight for the humanitarian policy they have turned their back on.

Labor for Refugees have been active at state Labor conferences

DEBATE: SHOULD WE DE

The carbon tax has been a subject of much debate on the left and in the trade union movement. We asked **NSW Greens MP John Kaye** why he thinks we should defend the carbon tax and how the movement can respond to Abbott's climate denial



Should people who want to see action on climate change support the carbon tax?

I'm going to be out there defending the carbon price package as a prelude to real action. It's an important advance but there's a lot more to be done.

The carbon price goes a small distance to neutralising the pressure from market forces to build and operate more coal and gas.

The highest single priority is to stop the building of new fossil fuel power stations and to begin to process of closing down existing fossil fuel power stations.

We need a timetable and a fairly rapid one that says we are getting out of coal entirely, we are getting out of gas, and we are 100 per cent renewable. The technological possibilities are there. If we do it properly there's massive job creation potential in renewables—but what isn't there is the political will. That can only be created by a mass movement demanding action not just to protect the climate but also to create jobs in renewable energy.

What we should be focusing on is defending the carbon package but also the arguments around closing coal-fired power stations and public investment in renewable energy, particularly solar thermal and wind.

It's a major improvement on the CPRS, but that's not to say it's perfect. I think The Greens Senators and Adam Bandt in Canberra did a very good job.

One of the key positives is that the [emissions reduction] caps are set on a five year basis. The CPRS locked



in targets that ran over a 15 to 20 year period which would have meant that responding to the new scientific evidence would have been impossible because you would have been taking away a property right, which means compensation [to polluting industries].

The big problems with the package are that 50 per cent of the permits can come from overseas, which means using dodgy international offsets.

The other major problem is some of the industry compensation goes to the wrong people. There's no sensible argument for compensating coal-fired power stations or the aluminum smelters. Those smelters have grown fat off the public purse. We need to make them pay their full cost of carbon. Likewise giving a quarter of the carbon cost back to coal-fired electricity generators makes no sense. They should leave our economy as quickly as possible—there's no reason for propping them up.

Tony Abbott is attacking the carbon pricing package by saying it will put up power prices and the cost of living. How should people who support climate action respond?

No one should take Tony Abbott at his

word. We do have a great big tax on everything and it's called the Goods and Services Tax. The GST is a good six and a half times greater in terms of its impact on households budgets than the carbon tax would be. The GST over the next three years will collect about \$130 billion in revenue whereas the carbon tax will only collect about \$20 billion.

The propaganda that Tony Abbott is putting around is entirely misleading, he is playing politics with the future of the planet.

He's feeding the climate deniers, so that instead of just battling the coal companies and the fossil fuel industry to achieve a transition to a jobs rich climate safe future, Tony Abbott is now stirring up a lot of people who are swallowing the mythology he is putting out there.

Some are arguing the carbon price needs to go higher in order to drive the transition away from fossil fuels, what do you think about pushing for that?

Pushing up the carbon price will collect more revenue which is a good thing and it will increase the competitive opportunities for other technologies. The risk is it will fall on the shoulders of lower and middle income households.

The compensation package protects them at the moment, any increase in carbon price would have to have a locked in compensation package for households.

I think you also reach a point where there are cheaper and better things to do, and more fair and just things to do, than putting up the carbon price.

I think it would be cheaper just to put a ban on new coal-fired power stations, put a phase out date on existing coal-fired power stations, create direct public investment and create a bond market that allows investment in a renewable energy future.

I don't think the tax is an instrument that will get us there on its own. People who talk about a \$70 or \$80 or \$100 a tonne carbon tax are not really calculating through what impact such an impost would have on households.

FEND THE CARBON TAX?

Solidarity's James Supple argues the carbon tax is undermining public support for climate action and obscuring real solutions to climate change

THE GOVERNMENT claims there is no alternative to a carbon pricing scheme. John Kaye says it's a "prelude to real action".

But the carbon tax package will do next to nothing to cut greenhouse gas emissions—and it is fostering a backlash against climate action.

The carbon tax aims to introduce "pricing incentives" and leave the decisions about cutting emissions to corporations and the free market. Instead the government should be guaranteeing renewable energy is built by funding it themselves. Supporting the carbon tax obscures these very straightforward steps that could be taken to reduce emissions and shift to renewable energy.

John says the priority should be to stop building new fossil fuel power stations and that we need a timetable for a renewable transition. We certainly agree with him.

Unfortunately, the focus of the climate movement so far has been to spend time defending the indefensible carbon tax.

The main impact of the carbon tax will not be more renewable energy but a shift to gas power. But new fossil fuel power, both coal and gas, needs to be banned.

Once new gas plants are built they will lock in new sources of emissions for at least 30 years, the life of a new power plant.

The renewable energy technologies we need already exist. In July one of the new solar thermal power plants in Spain became the first to supply uninterrupted power over a 24-hour period. It is able to store 15 hours worth of power from the sun using a storage system.

Over 4000MW of solar power plants will be built in the next three years, enough to replace the equivalent of two and a half Hazelwood power



Above: Tony Abbott addresses an anti-carbon tax rally in Canberra, stoking climate denialism

stations. German rooftop solar panels alone will produce 85 per cent of the entire Hunter Valley's power generation capacity by the end of this year. Spain is also aiming to have wind power alone provide 25 per cent of its power by 2020. Denmark already has 20 per cent and also exports power from wind turbines.

The carbon tax has handed Tony Abbott a gift because it will increase power bills and see costs passed on to workers, sending Labor plummeting in the polls.

It is not surprising so few people trust the government when it says household compensation will cover the price rises. The same thing was said about the GST, but the fact is people were out of pocket.

The carbon tax will also get the blame for wider rises in the cost of living.

Despite Labor promising to "ease the squeeze" on living costs when it came to power in 2007, it has done nothing. In the year to June they rose 4.5 per cent, according to a Bureau of Statistics Living Cost Index.

The Greens have made a serious mistake by tying themselves to the carbon tax. Greens leader Bob Brown admitted in mid-August that, "The presumption that the damage done by gas is half that done by coal is under very serious questioning". He rightly added that we needed to "move straight to renewables."

Yet that presumption that we should shift to gas is at the heart of the logic of the carbon tax. This underscores the problem with helping Labor sell a scheme that both won't cut emissions and is deeply unpopular. It is The Greens' obsession with using their parliamentary numbers to cut deals that has led to this debacle.

But a climate campaign calling for thousands of new jobs in renewable energy, paid for by government spending to ensure power costs don't rise, would isolate Abbott and the climate deniers. We could demand that polluting corporations who have made billions out of wrecking the planet pay for this, not ordinary people.

The carbon tax is not a step in that direction.

It will not even deliver Labor's pathetic 5 per cent reduction target. As John admits, the package allows business to put money into dodgy offsets instead of reducing emissions.

We need to push a stimulus package for the planet, just like the \$57 billion spent in Australia on stimulus after the global financial crisis hit. Such a program of government investment in renewable energy, public transport and energy efficiency could slash emissions and create jobs.

Most importantly, it could win back public support for climate action.

The Greens have made a mistake by tying themselves to this tax

Liberal porkies on budget hole

THE NSW Liberal government is gearing up for severe budget cuts, with reports that some departments are facing spending cuts of 25 per cent.

According to *The Daily Telegraph*, 400 jobs in the NSW Health Department head office and 300 in Corrective Services face the axe, with more jobs in community services and other departments to be outsourced. Eleven of the 31 jobs at the Forest Science Centre have already been abolished.

O'Farrell's promise to increase school maintenance by \$60 million also looks set to be broken. And he has left open the possibility of full privatisation of electricity (including poles and wires) and the ferries.

To justify the cuts, the NSW Liberals are claiming the budget is in dire shape, citing falling revenue to justify claims they face a multibillion dollar deficit.

But Premier Barry O'Farrell has already been caught fibbing about his supposed budget problems. First, just days after the election, he claimed to have found a \$4.5 billion "black hole" that the previous Labor government had hidden. Then it became a \$5.2 billion hole. But a review by Treasury found the budget "hole" was only \$1.93 billion, rising to \$2.5 billion if the government covered the cost of the solar bonus scheme.

It turns out this is not actually a "hole" but an estimate of future state government income over the next five years, up to 2015. Plenty of things influence such estimates, such as booms and slumps, property sales and other things that influence tax revenues. As *Crikey* put it, the claim of a black hole was "a load of statistical noise and rubbish".

So there is no reason to believe the Liberals when they claim budget cuts or austerity on public sector wages is necessary. They have tried to claim their 2.5 per cent wage cap and their new IR laws are needed because the previous NSW Labor government did not hold public sector workers to making productivity trade-offs.

O'Farrell claims the state government's wages bill is too high. But what he is really saying is that he will make public sector workers take wage cuts to cover the Liberals' budget. We should demand that big business foots the bill through higher taxes on corporate profit.

All out to beat O'Farrell—Break the wage cap, back the teachers



By James Supple and Ian Rintoul

Above: TAFE teachers rally last year

TENS OF thousands of teachers, nurses, firefighters and public servants are expected to rally on September 8 to launch the campaign against NSW Liberal Premier Barry O'Farrell's attempt to impose a 2.5 per cent cap on public sector wage increases. With inflation running closer to 3.6 per cent, O'Farrell is out to cut real wages.

O'Farrell has passed laws that prohibit the Industrial Relations Commission from allowing increases over 2.5 per cent unless they are directly funded by cuts to things such as penalty rates, overtime and carer's leave.

He claims that workers must sacrifice for a budget "black hole" but he's lying (see left column).

However, a question mark hangs over the willingness of either the public sector unions or Unions NSW to wage an industrial campaign to break the pay cut.

The PSA, which represents over 80,000 public servants, has accepted the 2.5 per cent pay rise while saying it will be challenged in court. PSA secretary, John Cahill, told *The Daily Telegraph*, "we will take it all the way to the High Court if we have to."

But O'Farrell will be beaten by an industrial campaign or he won't be beaten at all. There is an old saying that you can't win in the courts what you can't win on the ground.

So far, the campaign by Unions NSW and many union officials falls short of what we need. Instead of calling large combined union delegates'

meetings to build for the September rally as they did at the start of the Your Rights at Work campaign against Howard's WorkChoices, all they have done is call local rallies.

They are proposing to set up suburban community campaign groups but these seem designed to be part of a community campaign focused on voting out the Liberals in four years' time.

By that time wages will be a long way behind. In any case, a strategy of relying on a future Labor government ignores the fact that the previous Labor government was also for a 2.5 per cent wage cap.

Thousands will lose their jobs between now and the next election if O'Farrell gets his way. Conditions lost in that time will be hard to claw back.

The Teachers Federation, one of the larger and better organised public sector unions, faces bargaining on a new pay deal at the end of this year and needs to prepare now to take O'Farrell head on and break the pay cap.

Defying fines

Unfortunately, the concern among some officials about the threat of fines for taking "unlawful" strike action is a huge barrier to building the industrial fight. The PSA has authorised strike action for public servants to get to the rally. While it is expected that the Teachers Federation will call a strike for the day, fear of fines has made them reluctant to declare strike action from the outset.

But the risk of fines is minimal. Unions have defied the threat of fines before. NSW TAFE teachers struck in defiance of the Industrial Relations Commission in late 2009 to fight against the threat of longer work hours.

No unions were fined when thousands of unionists went on strike and blockaded the Parliament House in 2001 to stop the then Labor government attacking workers compensation. Nor were any unions fined for the strike action against the privatisation of electricity in 2007.

To beat O'Farrell, the unions are going to have to defy the laws and risk the fines. We need a mass delegates meeting to follow up the rally, to plan more united stop work action and make a clear call to back the teachers.

.....
O'Farrell claims that workers must sacrifice due to a budget black hole

NSW teachers face new push for market reforms

By John Morris

President, Canterbury-Bankstown
NSWTF branch

NSW PUBLIC school teachers, already fighting to protect public service pay and jobs, now have another reason to take action against the new Liberal government. In early August NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli announced a consultation process about “empowering local schools” with the release of the *Local Schools, Local Decisions* document.

This follows Gillard’s federal push for school principal autonomy and fulfils another element in the rolling out the “New York model”. This agenda encompasses mass-testing as a basis for performance based pay, school based hire and fire and even the closure of so called “non-performing” schools. Translated, it is the government’s attempt to put the blame for inadequate resourcing onto schools and teachers themselves.

Piccoli’s department has trotted out the same failed ideology by suggesting that poor student outcomes can be blamed on the poor performance of teachers and this can only be addressed by giving principals the right to hire and fire.

NSW Teachers Federation President Bob Lipscombe said that, “While some local decision making such as purchasing from local suppliers is worth considering, we do not want to see the situation where principals are transformed into managers and accountants, at the expense of educational leadership.”

Despite promising at the election to retain the state-wide staffing system (which provides an incentive to teach in the most difficult remote schools by allowing a later transfer to a more favourable location) the Liberal state government proposes that, “Schools directly manage an increased percentage of the total education budget, including the budget for school based staff.” NSW teachers won a bitter campaign in 2009 to retain the state-wide staffing system.

In the shadow of an ongoing pilot of the scheme (in 57 schools across NSW), the document promotes the further corporatisation and marketisation of public education.

These developments give added importance to the staffing and salaries campaign commencing later this year. Teachers need to push for decisive

action to ensure that a state-wide staffing system is not only retained but strengthened.

We need the biggest possible attendance of teachers at the 8 September rally to show the government that it is not only pay and jobs. Teach-

ers values the conditions in which children learn and will take action to protect them.

Further details on staffing, pay and to get involved in teacher activism, Activist Teachers NSW homepage, <http://activistteacher.com/>

Public service sees red over pay cap



THE NEW federal Department of Community Services (DHS) is moving to ballot workers on a new agreement based on the 3 per cent pay cap being imposed across the federal public sector. This comes after workers have voted down new agreements in the ATO, Defence, Customs, Immigration and the Bureau of Meteorology.

Hundreds of quarantine workers took strike action in late August after rejecting their agreement.

The stakes are even higher at the DHS, as the merger which created the department means six previously separate agreements are being rolled into one. The new department employs 45,000 staff, about 25 per cent of the federal public service—encompassing Centrelink, Medicare, the Rehabilitation Service and the Child Support Agency.

DHS management are desperate for their offer to be voted up. Some managers have even threatened staff with job losses if there is a “no” vote. They have argued that there is no money for pay rises, even putting out material claiming productivity savings “cannot be used to fund a pay rise”.

This is especially galling as senior management are not cutting their own recreation or personal leave. Management are keeping the good conditions for themselves, while overworked staff must struggle on.

Australian Salaried Medical Of-

ficers successfully argued at Fair Work Australia that they must be covered by their own Agreement—showing that doctors want out of this horrible offer. This will delay management putting their offer to a vote and the CPSU is asking that they take this opportunity to re-open the negotiations.

Management will not move without industrial action. Members and delegates are angry at the inadequate offer. But the law that created the new merged super-department means no one can take industrial action until the last of the old agreements expires in December. Even so the union’s efforts to boost its membership and make its presence felt are having an impact.

A day of action where union members showed their opposition to management’s offer by “wearing red” in July was strongly supported and caused management to shift. Their new offer backtracked on an effort to cut recreational leave by 1.5 days a year.

Concurrent negotiations on new agreements across multiple public sector departments are a product of the CPSU’s efforts to line up expiry dates in order to push for a service-wide agreement. The Labor government has refused to agree to this.

But with so many agreements now up for negotiation, the union has the chance to organise united industrial action across the public sector.

.....

The union’s efforts to boost its membership and make its presence felt are having an impact.

Somalia's famine: how world leaders let people starve

By Hal Hewson

ON JULY 20, the UN declared a famine in southern Somalia. This is the first official famine in 25 years.

It is estimated that some 10,000 children had already died before famine was declared. In August the UN increased the number of regions of the country declared in famine and predicted the situation would worsen.

The famine has triggered a refugee crisis, with almost a million people fleeing to neighbouring countries. Overcrowding in refugee camps has led to further health problems, like outbreaks of measles and cholera. Infant mortality has trebled.

The UN estimates that 12 million people are at risk across the region. It says it needs \$2 billion for the relief effort in Somalia and has so far received less than half. It is clear that this disaster will get worse before it gets better.

But what causes famine today? A common view is that there are more people to feed than there is food produced. The world is more populated than it has ever been. But food production has outstripped population growth at every stage. The UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation points out that there is now 15 per cent more food available per person than 20 years ago, even with a population increase of 1.8 billion.

The immediate explanation for the famine in Africa is the severe drought. An unusual La Nina has disrupted seasonal rainfall. In Somalia, this caused crop failure and in some places a loss of up to 60 per cent of livestock.

But blaming famine on natural disasters lets governments off the hook, ignoring the fact that the response to a crisis can dramatically reduce its impact.

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network had been forecasting the threat of famine since last November, so preventative steps could have been taken. Tony Burns, director of operations for Saacid, the oldest NGO in Somalia, said in an interview, "the lack of food stockpiling reflects badly on the international humanitarian community".

Somalia's chaotic state has undoubtedly made the situation worse. It has had only six months of stable government in 20 years.

Some have tried to blame the impotence of the relief effort on



Above: A woman and family in a Kenyan refugee camp who have fled Somalia's famine

an Islamic militia, Al Shabab. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton claimed that Al Shabab was, "preventing assistance to the most vulnerable populations in Somalia".

However not everyone agrees. Anna Shaaf of the International Committee of the Red Cross said, "the limits are more on the side of logistics than access. In fact Unicef and the Red Cross consider purchasing food and scheduling flights as their main concern". Tony Burns of Saacid said that while Al Shabab may be blocking escape routes for refugees in the south they are, "not monolithic... they are hardcore in some places but very moderate in others".

The New York Times noted that emergency efforts were being hampered by "American government rules that prohibit material support to the militants, who often demand taxes for allowing aid deliveries to pass through."

US intervention

The US is directly responsible for the rise of Al Shabab. It grew out of the ruins of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which arose from attempts to impose a system of justice in opposition to the warlords that dominated the country after 1991.

When the ICU began to develop into a central government, the US backed an Ethiopian invasion in 2006, fearing Islamic control. The

US continues to back warlords trying to install a transitional government that has little popular support among ordinary Somalis.

The economic policies imposed by the US are also to blame. Until the end of the 1970s Somalia was actually food self sufficient.

But the policies of the IMF and the World Bank have distorted underdeveloped economies by encouraging them to grow cash crops for the world market.

Agricultural development aid has been cut from 20 per cent to 4 per cent of total development aid. However the same standards don't apply in the developed world, where subsidies have risen to more than \$250 billion. That is more than 70 times the assistance given to help farmers in the third world.

Local farmers are further undermined when the subsidised food produced in rich nations is dumped onto the market, making it impossible to compete with the subsidised produce.

Governments conjured up trillions for the bank bailouts during the financial crisis and yet the aid fund for Somalia is struggling to reach even \$1 billion. The tragedy of the situation is that famine today is entirely preventable. Modern production, transport and storage make the distribution of food easier than ever. At the same time as conjuring up the means to end hunger, the dynamics of capitalism block this potential.

The tragedy of the situation is that famine is entirely preventable

Eyewitness: UK rioters' rage at a criminal system



By Carl Taylor, in London

FOR FOUR days in early August angry crowds gathered in poor, inner city areas of London and fought running battles with riot police. The spark was the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan, a young black man from Tottenham, who police claimed had shot at them. This was a blatant lie. Reports have shown police shot into their own radio and claimed Mark Duggan had done so.

As burning cars and looting made global headlines, Tory Prime Minister David Cameron responded by whipping up a moral panic. He described the events as “mindless violence”, perpetrated by “thugs” and “gang members”. Cameron has now pledged a “fight back”. His hypocritical demonisation of the young and unemployed is designed to disguise his government’s attacks on those very people.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, over 2500 arrests have been made in relation to the riots. The London police alone are aiming for 3000 convictions. Magistrates have handed down harsh custodial sentences to those convicted of looting or rioting. Some legal experts have described many of the sentences as “disproportionate” and “hysterical.” Two men were given four-year jail terms for using Facebook to incite others to riot, while one woman received an 18 month

jail term simply for receiving a pair of stolen shorts.

The hysteria has been amplified by the media, who, like Cameron, have rejected any notion of putting the riots in political context. Such was the level of moral outrage that the BBC were even forced to apologise after describing the rioters as “protesters.”

Voice of the voiceless

The rage on the streets was largely a response to the Tories’ attacks on working class people. They have taken a razor to jobs, welfare and public spending in the name of austerity. Cameron boasts his Welfare Reform Bill will “toughen up conditions for those out of work.” Half-a-million public sector jobs have been slashed and nearly one million young people cannot find work. In Tottenham eight out of thirteen youth centres have closed due to cuts.

While some of the anger expressed during the riots was misdirected at innocent people, most of it was aimed squarely at the police.

In Hackney, East London, ranks of riot police were pelted with bottles and bricks thrown from crowds of mostly young people venting their fury over the police harassment they endure daily. Young black men in the UK are 36 times more likely to be stopped and searched by a police officer than young white men.

Contrary to media reports, many rioters expressed their actions in politi-

Above: A scene on the streets of London, where police set up barricades and baton-charged rioters

cal terms. I heard one man yell, “this is the front line, just like Afghanistan,” as he hurled a bottle into police lines.

Another, sporting a balaclava and a can of spray paint, spoke to *Solidarity*, insisting similar riots would occur elsewhere: “It will [happen], it’s happening everywhere, people are rising up,” he said.

Even calls by a small group to loot a jewellers shop only metres away could elicit no response. The crowd’s anger was focused on the police who had by then retreated after trying unsuccessfully to drive the rioters into an adjoining street.

In calmer moments, discussions about the police shooting of Mark Duggan could be heard alongside calls to barricade the road to help repel further police baton charges.

One middle-aged man offered *Solidarity* his explanation for the anger gripping his community, “they [the Tories] have cut the benefits and people have got no jobs, what do they expect is going to happen?”

Blaming the victim

But Cameron is not about to accept responsibility. Instead he is handing greater powers to police to confiscate property and force people to remove face coverings. Area-wide curfews have been proposed to keep people off the streets at night. Those who have been convicted over the riots are now being threatened with eviction from public housing and the loss of benefits.

David Cameron wants the poor to take the blame for what he calls “broken Britain.” He has lamented Britain’s “moral collapse”, the “breakdown of the family” and “parental responsibility”. The hypocrisy is astounding. The only moral collapse has been at the top. Cameron himself was knee-deep in the recent Murdoch phone-hacking scandal and his MPs were caught last year racking in thousands in illegal expense claims. The Tory Sir Peter Tapsell, who asked if the government could round up rioters in Wembley stadium, was exposed for pocketing £23,000 a year rent for a second home in London.

The riots were an expression of despair and the outcome of a system of racism and poverty that is giving young people no hope for the future. Turning that collective anger into an organised fight back holds the key to challenging the real criminals and looters.

.....
“They have cut benefits and people have got no jobs, what do they expect?”

Gaddafi's gone—but West now wants to rule

By Feiyi Zhang

THE 42-YEAR old Gaddafi dictatorship is over. Rebel forces have seized Tripoli, the capital of Libya and Gaddafi's stronghold. The end of Gaddafi himself, the perpetrator of brutal repression, is welcome. But there is an uphill battle ahead for those wanting real economic and political liberation in Libya.

The rebels' military victory was secured by the backing of major Western powers in the form of NATO. NATO has conducted more than 8,500 bombing raids since March 19. Special forces worked on the ground to train rebel fighters and direct operations. Drones have bombed and collected intelligence from the skies.

The nature of the post-Gaddafi regime will now be decided by the West. Western leaders were all-too-happy to back Gaddafi before the uprising against him began in February.

The history of Western imperialism in the Middle East does not bode well for ordinary people in Libya. In Iraq, the US propped up Saddam Hussein when it was in their interests, but then waged a war in Iraq against Hussein, murdering one million civilians in the process.

The West has backed the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the major representative body. In the early stages of the uprising it was dominated by local rebel commanders. But the West has pushed to increase the influence of former Gaddafi loyalists that it regards as reliable. The TNC leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil was minister of justice in Gaddafi's regime from 2007 to 2011.

As the move on Tripoli began, TNC leaders were engaged in talks with US assistant secretary of state Jeffrey Feltman, who had traveled to Benghazi to discuss how to ensure "a stable, democratic transition".

Yet this body is in disarray. Last month Jalil sacked the entire executive body after the head of its military forces was killed by other rebels.

Its authority across the country is also unclear. Rebel fighters from Misrata told *The Independent's* Patrick Cockburn that the TNC did not represent them.

The West will attempt to shore up a regime in Libya that maintains law



Above: A Libyan rebel puts up anti-Gaddafi graffiti

and order rather than addressing the concerns of ordinary people.

NATO is interested in Libya as a way to impose its agenda on the revolutions across the Arab world and because of Libya's oil resources. They saw a chance to intervene in Libya and put a compliant regime in place.

In exchange for NATO support, the TNC was forced to agree to recognise oil deals and the agreement to police migration to Europe signed by the Gaddafi regime. They now talk of "recognising" that support if they are to rule Libya.

Popular revolt

Any victory in winning the initial demands of the movement against Gaddafi required a continuation and spreading of the initial popular uprising.

Instead, small groups of rebels undertook a military battle against Gaddafi that tied the movement with major imperialist powers.

The possibility for a genuine transformation of Libyan society was severely weakened when rebels called for the NATO "no fly zone" in March this year. This was seen as a way of preventing Gaddafi's armed forces from crushing the initial uprising.

But it meant that instead of uniting with the working class and poor

in Western Libya, including the two million-strong population of Tripoli, the rebels called for bombing. This meant supporting the bombing of ordinary people across the West.

It strangled the possibility of uniting against Gaddafi in a mass popular movement. Instead Gaddafi was able to use anti-Western rhetoric to galvanise support against NATO and rebel forces.

The key strategy for the Libyan movement should have been to split Gaddafi's army by uniting ordinary fighters across Libya against Gaddafi.

Instead the rebel alliance with NATO has led to worsening sectarian attacks against ordinary people. This emerged in recent revenge attacks by rebels on civilians with links to Gaddafi.

The end of Gaddafi's regime will be used by the West to rehabilitate the idea of "humanitarian intervention". We can't let them. The path of the Libyan revolution is a warning against the left backing "support" from the US and Saudi Arabia in Syria.

Saudi Arabia crushed the revolution in Bahrain with the tacit support of the US. These are no friends of democracy.

The political struggle in Libya depends on the continuing revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia that have a basis in uniting a movement of the working class and poor.

NATO is interested in Libya as a way to impose its agenda on the revolutions across the Arab world and because of Libya's oil resources.

Nationalist myths of Australia's war in the Pacific

Australia's Pacific War: Challenging a National Myth

By Tom O'Lincoln,
Interventions \$20.00 rrp

AS TOM O'Lincoln's new book points out, WWII is held up as a "good war", when Australia fought alongside the US for democracy and liberation. The example has been constantly cited to justify more recent Australian military adventures, like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Tom aims to focus on Australia's part in the Pacific War against Japan, unearthing the real aims of Australia's rulers in the war and the racism and war crimes of the Australian military. He has done us a great service in providing material to combat the nationalist myths about Australia's part in the war.

Tom, a lifelong socialist, chronicles the racism that imbues Australian ruling class thought and how it was directed against Japan many years prior to WWII.

To understand the Australian ruling class's aims in the war, as Tom points out, you not only have to understand Australia's role in WWII, but also its origins and history as a British colonial settler state: "Having built a nation by dispossessing Indigenous people, many white Australians feared someone might dispossess them in turn".

Australia's rulers have their own interests, separate and distinct from Britain and the US. Their prime concern has been to secure their own control of both the Australian continent and the immediate region. Their strategy for doing so has been to lock a larger imperial power into asserting their interests.

Reliance on Britain before WWII was never based solely on loyalty to the "mother country". This explains why PM John Curtin quickly moved from relying on Britain, even though he regarded himself and Australians as "sons and daughters of Britishers", to relying on the US in December 1941.

"Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it clear that Australia looks to America free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom," he proclaimed.



Above: Anti-Japanese posters in WWII encouraged workers to fight and not to disrupt the war effort with strikes

Australia's rulers were pursuing their own "sub-imperial" designs in the Pacific. Tom cites *The Age* arguing even in 1914 that New Guinea should be taken from Germany, "We have long since realised that we have a Pacific Ocean destiny." *The Age* wanted "the foundations of a solid Australian sub-empire in the Pacific Ocean."

In the 19th century, there was recurrent hysteria about possible invasion from Russia, France, China, Germany and Japan, without a shred of evidence to support such fantasies.

This produced vicious racism—particularly aimed at first the Chinese then the Japanese.

When Australian troops were assigned the occupation of Hiroshima after the dropping of the atomic bomb, one Australian army publication greeted the news by saying, "Australia Takes the Ashes."

No Japanese brides who married

Australian soldiers during their time in Japan were initially allowed into Australia. In 1948, Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell thought, "It would be the grossest act of public indecency to permit a Japanese of either sex to pollute Australian shores."

With such a focus on challenging the myths of the war, Tom has taken care with footnotes, and substantial bibliographical references, to back up what will be an unpopular argument. The 30 pages of works cited to make his case are an indication of how well-documented all this is. But we are not taught any of this at school and the mass media perpetuates an incessant, dumbed-down story about "heroic diggers at Kokoda."

Unfortunately, the Australian left has a poor record of standing up to this racism. Tom rightly argues that, "World War II played a major role in... drawing the bulk of the left into the national project. That Australia Communists simultaneously acquired a track record for racism highlights the dangers posed by nationalist politics for the Left."

The Communist Party paper *Tribune* welcomed the atomic nightmares of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with a racist cartoon of a Japanese man being struck by bombs, with the unself-conscious caption "Jappy Ending".

As a teenager in the mid-1970s, I gravitated to "left nationalism" as the only left alternative I knew of at the time to a rightward-marching Labor Party. This "left nationalism" has its roots in the Communist Party's move to the right in the mid-1930s, intensifying after WWII started.

Even today Greens like Bob Brown and many on the Labor Left are uncritical supporters of Australian nationalism. But as WWII shows there is nothing progressive about this.

Tom's book is great read, compelling and disturbing as to just how racist Australia's rulers have been.

It is a pity a more well-known publisher's deal for Tom's book fell through. Thankfully it could still be published with help from the Jeff Goldhar project.

Its wealth of detail will be an asset in the struggle against Australian militarism and war.

Tom Orsag

GOING DOWN: CHAOS AND CARNAGE IN THE WORLD ECONOMY

The economic crisis is back with a vengeance, argues **James Supple**

CHAOS ON global stockmarkets in recent weeks has revived fears that the world economy is heading back into meltdown. Around \$4 trillion dollars was wiped off the world's stock markets in the first two weeks of August. Financial analysts worldwide described the feeling as similar to the days after the collapse of merchant bank Lehmann Brothers in 2008, the event which triggered the global financial crisis.

There were two reasons for the immediate panic. One was the fear that government debt in Italy and Spain might be unsustainable. The "sovereign debt crisis" in Europe, which has led to massive bailouts to stop weaker European governments including Greece, Ireland and Portugal from defaulting on their debts, has put bigger economies at risk.

The other was the downgrade of US government debt.

The renewed panic shows the hollowness of the talk of "recovery" and the predictions that the worst of the global economic crisis was over.

Governments in both Europe and the US have amassed large debts as a result of the stimulus spending that was needed to avoid a catastrophic economic collapse after the economic meltdown of 2008. They also spent billions of dollars to bail out banks that were effectively bankrupt as a result of bad debts. Those bad debts are now held by governments.

The stimulus programs did provide some modest economic growth. But as they have run out, many economies are again on the slide.

Figures show the US economy grew by just 0.4 per cent in the first six months of this year, equal to less than a 1 per cent annual growth rate. This compares to an average rate since WWII of 3 per cent.

Reuters' August poll of economists revealed expectations that growth

across the European Union was also slowing, with an average expected growth for next year of 1.6 per cent. This is even the case in the stronger economies of France and Germany. France recorded a growth rate of zero in the April to June quarter and industrial production fell in Germany by 0.8 per cent.

Falling growth makes it harder for governments to repay debt, since it results in falling tax revenue. This is fuelling the fears about governments defaulting on their debts in the Eurozone and that the sovereign risk will spread to the bigger European economies.

Eurozone debt

A second bailout for Greece was stitched up by the French and German governments in July. In exchange the Greek government has promised further privatisation and increases in income tax, on top of austerity measures, like shutting hospitals. Public sector wages have been cut by 20 per cent and unemployment driven up to 16.5 per cent.

While the bailout will allow Greece to keep paying its debts for now, most believe that it will eventually default. Rating agency Moody's believes the likelihood of a Greek default is "virtually 100 per cent".

This risks spreading "contagion" across the European banking sector, threatening banks in countries like France and Germany with huge losses and even bankruptcy due to their holdings of Greek debt.

Greece is a small economy, its size estimated at between 1 and 2 per cent of the European Union as a whole. This has made it possible for the European Central Bank (ECB) to buy up Greek debts and stave off the immediate threat of default.

But there are now also fears about government debt in Spain and Italy,

after markets pushed their costs of borrowing money to over 6 per cent. When interest rates on government debt get beyond this level, it becomes harder and harder to repay the debt.

In early August the ECB was forced to step in, spending two days buying up Spanish and Italian debt in order to stabilise the situation. This has worked in the short term to drive down their costs of borrowing.

But Spain is the Euro's fourth largest economy, double the size of the economies of Greece, Portugal and Ireland combined. Italy is bigger still. The ECB is unlikely to be able to raise the funds necessary to bail out either government if it faced default.

A huge question mark hangs the European economies. On the one hand the size of Italy or Spain mean they are "too big to fail". But, on the other, as many have pointed out they are also "too big to bail".

If their interest rates remain stable, both Italy and Spain may be able to repay their debts by resorting to austerity measures. The Italian government has announced spending cuts of \$62 billion aimed at repaying debts by 2013.

But this locks them into a vicious circle, since government spending cuts take money out of the economy. Both the government and companies sack workers which in turn, means less money in the economy. That means lower economic growth and falling tax income, leaving the government with even less money to repay debts.

This is the cycle that the Greek economy has fallen into. The economy has contracted by 6.9 per cent over the year to the end of June, in the third year of recession.

US debt crisis

The US political system was mired in paralysis throughout July as politicians tried to stitch up an agreement to lift the country's "debt ceiling".



Above: Greek workers on the 48-hour general strike in June, calling for an end to IMF austerity policies

For a while it looked like the US may default on its debts. This could have triggered a major crisis across the banking sector, as world markets have viewed US government debt as “a safe option”. Due to the size and strength of the US economy, its government has been seen as the one body that would always be able to repay debts.

Republicans in the US Congress eventually agreed to a deal with Democratic President Barack Obama to launch a savage austerity program in exchange for raising the debt ceiling. As a result there will be at least \$2.1 trillion in cuts over the next decade—\$900 billion through an immediate cap on spending and the rest to be decided on by a “bipartisan committee” later this year.

But the uncertainty was enough for Standard & Poors to downgrade its rating on US debt to AA+. This is the first time in history the US’s credit rating has slipped below AAA.

Economist Paul Krugman concluded in *The New York Times*, “what we’re witnessing here is a catastrophe on multiple levels”. Like the austerity policies in the EU, the cuts in the US are coming just as government stimulus spending runs out. Emergency unemployment benefits, which allowed 3.8 million jobless Americans to continue receiving benefits, will expire at the end of the year. After this, there will be no unemployment benefits for anyone out of work for over

26 weeks—when ordinary benefits for the unemployed expire in the US.

The cuts will make it harder for an already struggling US economy to keep growing.

What is even more bizarre about the turn to austerity in the US is that it does not face any real debt crisis. US government debt is large, at over \$14 trillion dollars. But unlike Spain, Greece or Italy, the US has the benefit of extremely low rates on interest on its debt.

This means it does not face huge problems repaying its debt. In fact, as jitters spread on the stockmarket, there was a rush of investors trying to put their money into US government debt.

Is there a solution?

Things are much more serious for the global economy now than in 2008. Then, the state stepped in with huge government stimulus programs to rescue the world economy from the abyss. Interest rates were slashed in an effort to encourage businesses to borrow money.

But such measures are no longer an option if another serious recession hits. There are now such high government debt levels that even the US will find it harder to afford another major round of stimulus. Interest rates in the US can’t be cut much further. They are already at just 0.25 per cent, and the US Federal Reserve has promised to keep them at that “exceptionally low” level for the next two years.

What does all this mean for us?

Julia Gillard has commented that, “Australia is in a very different position with a strong economy that is the envy of the world.” Treasurer Wayne Swan believes that Australia can “ride out” any economic storm in Europe and the US because of possible growth in China.

Despite lower growth in the world economy, China has grown by 9.5 per cent over the last year.

It’s true that 25.3 per cent of our exports now go to China, as opposed to only 12 per cent to the US and EU combined. But the US and the EU, which together make up half the size of the world economy, are two of China’s major export markets. Economic stagnation there will inevitably hurt the Chinese economy.

Wayne Swan’s hope is that, “China [could] fire up its domestic engines of growth if external conditions fall sharply” by launching another huge stimulus program. It is a forlorn hope. Inflation in China is already a problem (6.5 per cent in July) and it is doubtful that it would boost domestic spending on the same scale as in 2008.

As the global stock markets crashed, \$40 billion dollars was wiped off the value of Australian stock markets. Tens of thousands of jobs are already being cut as the Australian economy slows. If China is affected by the economic problems in Europe and the US, the effect will be even more dramatic. Australia won’t be immune—more jobs will go.

.....
Things are much more serious for the global economy now than in 2008

NORWAY MASSACRE: THE UGLY FACE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

The anti-Muslim ideas behind Anders Behring Breivik's mass murder in Norway start with the political mainstream, argues **Amy Thomas**

THE MEDIA and the political establishment tied themselves in knots to avoid facing up to the Islamophobia behind Norway's terrorist attack.

In the first 48 hours after the tragedy, commentators rushed to blame Muslim terrorists without a shred of evidence to back it up. Rupert Murdoch's British tabloid *The Sun* even produced a paper with the shocking headline "Al-Qaeda attacks: Norway massacre."

When it was revealed that the perpetrator was not in fact a Muslim, but rather a far-right anti-Muslim, the tone changed: no longer was the killer a member of an organised and ideological terror network, but simply a sad, psychotic loner. Columnist Andrew Bolt was one of many to conjure up a story of a tortured childhood of schoolyard bullying and parental separation to "explain" Breivik's psychology.

Unbelievably, at the same time as claiming Breivik's actions were not ideological, many commentators have seized the opportunity to discuss his so-called "legitimate concerns" about multiculturalism and Muslim immigration. Piers Ackerman argued in Sydney's *The Daily Telegraph* that "Breivik... has opened an obvious wound in a policy which has been defended by the soft-Left in Europe and Australia". He also took the opportunity to denounce nearly the entire spectrum of Islam as violent: "Islamists say Islam is the religion of peace... a view that is contradicted by the sheer scale of the hatred the world has witnessed between followers of various Muslim sects, Shia, Wahabi, Salafi, Sunni and so on." *The Jerusalem Post* argued we should use the Oslo tragedy "as an opportunity to seriously re-evaluate policies for immigrant integration in Norway and

elsewhere." They were later forced to apologise for the editorial.

That the media could find a way to blame Muslims for the murders of a man who saw himself as on a crusade against Islam shows just how deeply rooted such anti-Muslim prejudice has become. It also exposes their responsibility for whipping up the climate of hatred that brought us this tragedy. As Norwegian socialist Randi Faerevik put it, "the attacks were the work of one man. But the ideas that informed and inspired him were not the ideas of one man."

The ideas that brought us Norway's attacks start with the political mainstream. The scapegoating of Muslims grew during the push for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, rhetoric about the need to fight Islamic terrorists and "bring democracy" to the Middle East provided justification to wage a war for oil and domination.

Islamophobia is still part of justifying these wars today. A *Washington Post* editorial written when the media was still assuming the Norway attack had been carried out by Muslims claimed: "This is a sobering reminder for those who think it's too expensive to wage war against jihadists."

Europe's crisis

For Europe's leaders, both conservative and social democratic alike, stirring up Islamophobia has also served another useful purpose since the onset of the economic crisis. Because Muslims are often the most recent wave of immigrants in Europe, they are a convenient scapegoat for governments.

For example, in the UK, the gap between the rich and poor has become the widest since slavery, according to Danny Dorling, author of *Why*

.....
Many commentators have seized the opportunity to discuss Breivik's so-called "legitimate concerns" with Muslim immigration

Inequality Persists. On top of this European governments are waging a war on public services and welfare. Blaming Muslims and other immigrants helps politicians deflect anger from themselves and the super-rich.

British Prime Minister David Cameron declared multiculturalism a "failure" that has helped "foster Islamic terrorism" on the same day he announced severe cuts, including 32,000 job losses in the public service.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has also attacked multiculturalism, and French President Sarkozy has opened up a dubious "public debate" on Islam after banning the burqa earlier this year. Belgium has also banned the burqa and Switzerland has banned the construction of minarets.

The stoking of anti-Muslim prejudice has been made acceptable by these leaders and has opened up the space for the far right to increase their size and confidence.

In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders' Party of Freedom, a far right populist party, picked up 24 per cent of the vote in the last election. Wilders, like Norway's Breivik, wants to stop "Islamisation" of Europe, stop Muslim immigration and the building of mosques.

And like many on the far right, Wilders says he rejects the crude, biological racism of the Nazis, concentrating instead of ideas of "nation", "identity" and "culture". But this is simply because the legacy of the Holocaust means overt biological racism would win little support. Whether it is inherent racial characteristics or cultural characteristics that are attacked, the overall effect is the same—to isolate and disempower members of particular racial groups and to sow division in society.

The British National Party, which

has Nazi origins, has enjoyed some electoral success. And in France, the Nazi party the National Front is expected to come second in the 2012 presidential elections. There has also been the worrying development of Nazi street-fighting thugs who attack Muslim communities. The English Defence League (EDL) mobilises its members to march through Muslim and Asian suburbs. Its leader has even praised David Cameron for “saying what we’re saying”. Neo-Nazi gangs are also a familiar sight on the streets of Eastern Europe, and a Nazi group has won seats in local government in Greece.

The Russian socialist Leon Trotsky, writing about the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s, explained how fascist ideas found an audience in times of economic crisis. He saw fascism as a reactionary alternative to working class solidarity and struggle in times of crisis: “if the Communist Party is the party of revolutionary hope, then fascism, as a mass movement, is the party of counter-revolutionary despair.” Racist ideas glue fascist organisations together, but they also aim to smash left-wing and trade union organisations.

The failure of Europe’s conservative and social democratic leaders alike to provide any solution to the crisis but cutbacks and austerity has created a polarisation between those who want to resist these attacks and those who have been drawn into blaming Muslims and immigrants for their situation.

The size and influence of the far right in Europe is smaller than it was in the 1930s but the attack in Norway underscores the importance of fighting its influence.

Standing with Muslims against racism and Islamophobia is crucial to winding back the influence of right-wing ideas—and not just in Europe.

The enemy at home

Australia does not have a serious far right threat, but Islamophobia and racism is a big feature of political life. In fact, Breivik declared in his manifesto that ex-Prime Minister John Howard was “one of the most sensible leaders in the Western world” and congratulated Peter Costello for urging Muslims to “integrate.”

Australia played a key role in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan along with the US. To help sell the war at home Howard sold fear of Muslims, warning of the “terrorist threat from Bin Laden cells in



Above: A campaign poster against the English Defence League, a neo-Nazi organisation that attacks Muslims in the UK

Australia.”

Regressive anti-terror laws were justified with rhetoric about the supposed threat of Islamic terrorism. Howard called for Muslims to “be Australian” and associated asylum seekers with terrorism, claiming during the Tampa crisis that “you don’t know who’s come and you don’t know whether they do have terrorist links or not.” Peter Costello advocated stripping citizenship from people who supported Islamic law and condemned “confused, mushy, misguided multiculturalism”.

After the 2005 London bombings, foreign minister Alexander Downer compared “fundamentalist Muslims” to Nazis.

The result was anti-Muslim violence. Petrol bombs were thrown at mosques and schools after 9/11.

Right-wing columnist Alan Jones stirred up racist hatred with comments like “[Lebanese people] simply rape, pillage and plunder a nation that’s taken them in. I can’t believe what I’m seeing. What did we do as a nation to have this vermin infest our shores?” His rants culminated in the mob violence against Muslims and Arabs during the Cronulla riots of 2005. Amazingly, John Howard denied the riots were racist.

While the campaigns against One Nation, for refugee rights and against the war in Iraq helped undermine some of this racism, anti-Muslim prejudice is still a major issue. A 2010 survey by the University of Western

Sydney found anti-Muslim sentiment in more than 40 per cent of those surveyed in every state and territory. That sentiment is sowed by politicians at the top who have consistently drummed home anti-Muslim rhetoric. Liberal politician Scott Morrison was in hot water last year over a leaked Liberal Party memo where he suggested the party capitalise on concerns about “Muslim immigration.”

Labor has a bad record too. In 2008, when racists mobilised to stop an Islamic school in Camden, Labor supported them. Last year Tony Abbott called the burqa “confronting” and Julia Gillard’s response was to agree with him.

Shamefully, the NSW parliament has just passed a law allowing police to order the removal of the burqa. It helps cement ideas that there is some kind of “security threat” from people in Muslim dress and will give the police more confidence to harass Muslim women.

This goes alongside the race to the bottom on refugee policy. There are obvious links—more than half of those behind bars in Australia’s refugee detention centres have fled countries in the Middle East.

Much like European leaders, neither Gillard nor Abbott have shown any indication that they want to unwind the hate and prejudice against Muslims that was responsible for what we saw in Norway. They have not learnt anything from the tragedy. We need to make sure we do.

STORMING HEAVEN: THE PARIS COMMUNE OF 1871

More than a century ago, workers in Paris demonstrated how to build a new society, explains **Lachlan Marshall**

SEVERAL TIMES throughout the past century workers have struggled against the state and taken control of society. The workers' councils in Portugal in 1974, shoras in Iran in 1979 and Poland's Solidarność in 1980 all demonstrated the potential of workers to run society in their interests. In 1917 Russian workers rebuilt a whole new democratic society from the ground up. But the first time workers took on the state and created a democratic society was the Paris Commune of 1871.

The Commune was of momentous significance for people who had been theorising the idea of a future socialist society. Up until the Paris Commune, Karl Marx and Fredreich Engels had no answer to what the capitalist state could be replaced with. The 1847 edition of *The Communist Manifesto* only offered the vague explanation that it would be "the proletariat organised as the ruling class."

It was Paris' workers that gave a concrete example of how to take power. *The Communist Manifesto* was revised in 1871, and the preface to the 1872 edition stated: "One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.'"

The Commune showed Marxists that the state machine must be destroyed and replaced by something fundamentally different, a workers' state. As Egyptian workers' struggle for a better society for themselves and as workers in Europe battle the economic crisis, the lessons of the Commune are as important as ever.

Rising tensions

The French empire experienced tremendous economic development through the 1850s and 1860s as industrial production boomed. The emperor, Louis Napoleon, sought to entrench his rule by military expeditions to Italy and then Mexico, where he installed a puppet, Maximilian.

Yet the Emperor's rule was not

firm. Opposition from parts of the bourgeoisie grew, who were resentful at the benefits accrued by a minority close to the emperor. Workers hated a regime that was presiding over their impoverishment; costs of living were surging ahead of wages.

As his imperial exploits began to founder (Maximilian was killed by firing squad) and the bourgeois republican opposition gained popularity, Napoleon opportunistically declared war on Bismarck Prussia.

Paris armed

But this attempt to consolidate his power backfired. Following humiliating defeat to Prussia, Napoleon abdicated and power fell to the republican opposition. But Bismarck invaded and demanded reparations. During a desperate five-month siege, destitute workers and artisans of Paris were forced to eat dogs and rats and lacked fuel to warm their homes.

The burden of defending the city fell to these city poor. They flooded into the National Guard, swelling its ranks to 350,000. In the process they transformed the National Guard into a democratic proletarian defence body, electing their own officers. As Karl Marx wrote in his history of the Paris Commune, *The Civil War in France*, "Paris armed was the revolution armed."

This upsurge from below generated a dynamic culture of resistance marked by "red" clubs and revolutionary newspapers. These people had not forgotten their repression at the hands of the bourgeois republicans in 1848 and it was lessons like this that were retailed in the peoples' press.

But neither had the bourgeoisie forgotten. The burgeoning armed resistance resembled the upheavals of 1792 and 1848 and began to concern the republican government as much as the Prussian invaders.

Following two attempted left wing coups, the republican leader, Favre, concluded that the only way to prevent civil war and protect the government was to surrender to Prussia.

The Parisian masses were indignant. Five months of struggle and sacrifice had come to nothing.

Favre gave only eight days notice for elections. The left lacked the time and resources to argue with France's vast peasantry and combat the reactionary ideas of priests and wealthy landowners. So a majority of monarchists returned to government and a former monarchist, Adolphe Thiers, was chosen to head the government.

The Parisians' had now been betrayed twice. Their defence of the city had been futile and now the reshuffle of the government betrayed the republic too.

A clash between the still-armed masses and the state was inevitable. The regular army remained disbanded.

Thiers moved to disarm the Parisians, dispatching soldiers to seize 200 cannons from atop Montmartre. Women led men in encircling the weapons and began arguing with the soldiers. Three times the soldiers defied the orders of their general, Lecomte, to fire on the people. During this impasse, 300 National Guards emerged banging drums to rally the masses to resistance. They overwhelmed and arrested Lecomte and his officers and took control of the city. By mid-afternoon of that day Thiers and his government had fled the city.

For the first time in history, armed workers were in power.

Workers' control

Paris was now effectively a new independent workers' state. Power was initially exercised through the elected leadership of the "central committee" of the National Guard. But authority soon passed to a new formation, the Commune.

The Commune was built on universal male suffrage, so delegates were subject to immediate recall from their electors. Their wages were restricted to a skilled worker's average wage, and they were held accountable for implementing measures decided on. This was far more democratic than anything capitalism had produced.

.....
The Commune was far more democratic than anything that capitalism had produced



Above: A cartoon of an armed Communeard holding the Commune's red flag

Marx explained that, "Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in communes."

The Commune combined economic and political power in the hands of the working class.

Shops or factories that were shut by employers were handed over to workers. Night work in bakeries was banned. Pensions were provided to widows, free education provided to every child, levies on debts accrued during the siege were abolished and evictions for unpaid rent were stopped. For the first time, the right to divorce was granted.

The state's monopoly over the means of violence, the armed forces, was done away with. The Commune had no independent army as the masses were armed. The Commune also demonstrated its internationalism by demolishing monuments to Bonapartist chauvinism, and assigning a German worker as minister of labour.

It broke down the separation between the society and the state, and legislative and executive powers.

This new society was the most democratic of political forms to have been created since the emergence of class society. Its achievements even put those of modern reforming governments to shame.

But the Commune was unable to meet a challenge from the French

state and its army.

Two streams of thought were influential at the time of the Commune. Both stemmed from the shortcomings of the Great French Revolution of 1793.

First were the ideas of August Blanqui. His method for achieving socialism was based on the radical yet isolated work of an organised minority acting on behalf of the masses. This strategy, without a solid mass base of support, had led to frequent imprisonment. Blanqui was incarcerated throughout the period of the Commune.

Another influential set of ideas were those of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, known as the "father of anarchism". Against the bitter political experiences of the French Revolution, Proudhon espoused a "non-political" strategy whereby workers could establish a new society based on "mutualism", the organising of cooperative businesses autonomous of the capitalist state.

But neither of these ideas helped the Commune to consolidate and spread its power in order resist the brutal offensive that was to come.

Supporters of Blanqui called for an immediate offensive on Versailles and the old regime. Followers of Proudhon condemned such military actions for requiring excessive centralisation of leadership. The Commune, they thought, would bring about more wholesale social and economic change through the power of a good example.

.....
Women fought side-by-side with men in defence of the Commune

During this indecision in the Commune, at Versailles the republican government was amassing troops. The republic conspired with the Prussians to release French prisoners of war who, along with recruits from the countryside, constituted the forces that would suppress the Commune. These new recruits were untouched by the new ideas sweeping through Paris.

By April, Thiers and his troops had encircled Paris and were bent on crushing the Commune. Bismarck agreed to allow the republican forces to travel through Prussian lines in order to wreak vengeance on the Commune.

The Commune was a powerful example of the potential of workers' control. Crushing it meant obliterating any trace of its existence.

Anyone who had fought for the Commune was immediately shot. Troops shot people after 30 second "trials" because they looked like Communards.

The London Times reported at the time: "The Versailles troops have been shooting, bayonetting, ripping up prisoners, women and children. So far as we can recollect there has been nothing like it in history. The wholesale executions inflicted by the Versailles soldiery sicken the soul."

The total number killed came to 30,000. Thousands more were imprisoned or deported.

Nipped in the bud

The Commune made incredible achievements in its 72-day existence. As Commune leader Artheur Arnould explained, "With only tiny resources this government not only fought a horrible war for two months but chased famine from the hearths of a huge population which had had no work for a year. This was one of the miracles of a true democracy."

Although the Commune did not allow women the vote, the rapid chain of events and the key involvement of women were upending people's world-views. Women fought side-by-side with men in defence of the Commune. The possibilities were there for greater emancipation of women.

Karl Marx wrote that the Commune represented the greatest challenge the new world of capital had faced. He called it "the political form at last discovered under which to work out the emancipation of labour" and wrote to his friend Kugelmann that the Communards had "stormed heaven".

Our fight for a new society today can only be enriched by its powerful lessons.

The unknown Mozart



Mozart's sister's musical gifts went unrecognised

Mozart's Sister Directed by Rene Feret In cinemas now

Mozart's Sister is a French film that tells the overlooked story of Maria Anna Walburga Ignatius Mozart, or Nannerl, as she is referred to by her family. The elder sister of Wolfgang, Maria Anna was a talented violinist, vocalist, pianist and harpsichord player who also composed music.

The film is set in 1763 when Maria Anna is 14. The family travels to Versailles in France where they are the guests of King Louis XV. As their horse carriage undergoes repairs some distance from the palace the family is forced to seek refuge in an abbey where the youngest daughters of King Louis XV live.

Maria Anna befriends Princess Louise, expressing her dissatisfaction about being carted across Europe in the freezing cold just so that her father can revel in the glory of his children. The Princess asks her to deliver a letter to a romantic interest once she arrives in Versailles.

Upon arrival, a servant gives her men's clothes and tells her to pose as a man in order to deliver the letter. This brings her into contact with the son of the King, known as the Dauphin, who is impressed by her golden voice and

other musical talents. They become friends and he commissions her to compose music that is received with acclaim and "could only have been written by a man". After a few meetings Maria Anna confesses that she isn't a man and the Dauphin continues to commission her work under her alias.

Maria Anna asks her father if she can be taught how to properly compose music but he refuses on the basis that it is not a profession that is open to women. He spends most of his time fostering the talent of Wolfgang.

Maria Anna decides to stay in Versailles after her father refuses to acknowledge that some of Wolfgang's compositions were written partly by her. The film portrays her attempts to establish herself as a composer and her tragic decision to throw her work into the fire. Almost none of her compositions survive to this day.

Although women are more recognised in music today, only two women featured in the *Rolling Stone* poll "Best 100 Guitarists of All Time" and only four in the top 100 of "500 Best Albums of All Time". *Mozart's Sister* is a great film that vividly portrays the limitations women experienced because of their gender. It is worth a look.

Rachael Cramp

Telling glimpse into Tiger

Tamil Tigress By Niromi de Soya Allen & Unwin, \$32.99

TAMIL TIGRESS is the memoir of Niromi de Soya, who in 1987, at the age of 17, left her middle-class family to join the Tamil Tigers. De Soya, who now lives in Sydney, says the impetus for writing the book came from the re-emergence of racist anti-refugee hysteria as boats of Tamil asylum seekers arrived in Australia.

The book was intended to raise awareness about their plight. It is a detailed and personal account of the civil war that engulfed Sri Lanka for 37 years.

As well as providing a personal story of civil war in Sri Lanka, *Tamil Tigress* gives an insider's glimpse into the operations of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers—hence the title of the book) and the politics of the Tamil national liberation struggle.

Oppression of Tamil Minority

Niromi's story begins with her move, in 1977, from the Sinhalese-majority city of Kandy to the Tamil strong-hold Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka to get a better education.

Only a few months before Niromi's departure, groups of Sinhalese killed a few hundred Tamils. The murderous riots broke out across the country after the Tamil United Liberation Front won the majority of Tamil votes in the election, standing for self-determination.

This result came in the context of a steady rise of anti-Tamil discrimination, such as the quota system introduced into universities to limit the numbers of Tamils and the "Sinhala

Only Act" of 1957 that made Sinhalese the only official language of a linguistically diverse island.

In the book, the historical origins of the explosive tensions between Tamils and Sinhalese (74 per cent of the population) and the role of British imperialism, are recounted in conversations between Niromi and her father. These conversations give a glimpse of how the British employed the classic colonial strategy of divide and rule.

During British rule, the Tamil minority were used by the British to work in the public service and administrative positions during its colonial rule over the Sinhalese majority.

Post-independence, however, the British handed power to the Sinhalese majority. "Ceylon" became "Sri Lanka", and the new ruling party (United Nationalist Party) began to emphasise virulent Sinhalese nationalism and to attack Tamils in order to divide ordinary people and shore up its own legitimacy. In this period hundreds of thousands of Tamils brought to Sri Lanka by the British to work on tea plantations were threatened with deportation to India, although their families had been in Sri Lanka for 100 years. The tensions culminated periodically with violent attacks—most notably "Black July" 1983, when groups of government sponsored Sinhalese gangs unleashed an anti-Tamil pogrom after the Tamil Tigers killed 13 Sri Lankan army soldiers. It is estimated that somewhere between 400-3000 Tamils were killed during "Black July".

It was against this backdrop of repression, military curfews and the murders of Tamils, whose

bodies were publicly displayed on road corners by the Sri Lankan government, that Niromi's indignation about these atrocities developed into a growing admiration for the Tamil Tiger resistance. The year of 1987 was the worst year of violence committed against the Tamil minority.

Niromi, after desperately longing to join the Tigers, writing celebratory poems of struggle for an independent Tamil state and waiting anxiously for the LTTE to change their opposition to recruiting female fighters, joined the Tigers—much to her family's dismay. She joined the Students Organisation of Liberation Tigers (SOLT) and later, the female guerrilla unit that went by the name the "Freedom Birds". Niromi vividly describes her struggle to deal with, and overcome, her own community's use of sexist shame to deter women from engaging in political activity—a feature that is by no means limited to Tamil society.

Unfortunately the book doesn't explore the politics behind the rise of the Tamil Tigers, whose prominence was by no means automatic and who only became the dominant political current among Sri Lankan Tamils in the 1980s.

Tamil Tigers

De Soya's account of her time in the Tigers reveals a great deal about the politics of the LTTE. Most striking of all is the elitist attitude of the Tigers towards the Tamil population. This feature, common to many national liberation movements, was evident even in the early days of its guerrilla strategy. But it became even more characteristic as the Tigers came to run a mini-state in the north.

s' doomed route to national liberation



While some Tamils saw the Tigers as heroic, their military strategy was a disaster

The Tigers came to be seen as the one force that could carry the hopes of the Tamils, and they had the sympathy of sections of the general Tamil population. But the Tigers saw their own armed struggle as key to the creation of an independent Tamil state, not a struggle from below for liberation involving the greater Tamil people.

While the Tigers' leadership alluded to a revolutionary struggle for an egalitarian society, in practice it was nationalist politics and a struggle for a separate Tamil state, not a socialist Sri Lanka, that characterised the Tigers' politics.

This was why the

Tigers attracted the support of Tamil intellectuals and the middle class (like Niromi and her student friends) who had been systematically excluded from Sri Lankan society by the virulent Sinhalese nationalism that dominated after independence.

Niromi recounts a number of occasions where Tigers were confronted with pleas from the Tamil population to leave their area and not make them the victims of their struggle with the Sri Lankan army. Many Tigers saw this as ingratitude and could not understand why their sacrifices were not appreciated by those they believed they were fight-

ing on behalf of.

The armed struggle strategy of the Tigers, while able to hold large areas of the country for a period of time, could not solve Tamil oppression for Tamils living outside the north, where they were still vulnerable to government-sponsored violence.

Instead of seeing the possibilities of resistance in a common class fight of Tamil and Sinhalese workers and the poor, the Tigers tended to see all Sinhalese as complicit with the government in their oppression.

Yet the political strategy of common struggle had played a major role in fortifying resistance to the

Sri Lankan government in the 1930s. In 1953 a country-wide general strike, the "Hartal", coordinated by left parties, brought the Sri Lankan government to its knees and forced the Sinhalese nationalist prime minister to resign.

Like the struggle in the 1930s, the general strike showed the potential of united class struggle to challenge the government.

One of the most disturbing accounts of the Tamil Tigers that Niromi recounts in *Tamil Tigress* is the gruesome murder of fellow Tamil Tiger members—again a feature of the politics of similar nationalist liberation struggles in the Philippines and South Africa. Alongside these murders went military action against rival political factions and organisations also fighting in the Tamil liberation movement.

What is also astounding from Niromi's account of her experience in the Tigers was the lack of political discussion or engagement by the membership with the strategy and tactics of the organisation. Members were instructed not to discuss politics amongst themselves and were often in the dark about various political deals made by the Tiger leadership.

The other notable section in the book is the "peace accord" brokered by the Indian government. At the time, the Indian government promoted its intervention as a "peace-keeping" mission to protect the Tamils. But it quickly became clear that India had its own imperialist concerns to gain a foothold in Sri Lanka and contain any independence sentiments that might spread to its own Tamil minority in the Indian

state of Tamil Nadu.

During the three years Indian "peacekeepers" were stationed in Jaffna and other parts of the north, there were numerous battles with the Tigers. The Tigers were now confronted with a war waged against them by both the Sri Lankan and Indian governments.

Given some of the senseless internal violence of the Tigers and how disastrously the Tigers' militarist strategy ended in 2009, Niromi's pacifist conclusions are understandable. But her denunciation of "violence against violence" misdiagnoses the Tigers' central flaw.

Rather, it was the failure of its perspective of armed struggle for a separate state and its extreme authoritarian response to the threat to its power by the Sri Lankan government.

The rise of the "war on terror", has been used by the Sri Lankan government to delegitimise the Tamil resistance by labelling the Tamil Tigers a "terrorist" organisation. But Tamil repression by the Sri Lankan government is just as real as it ever was. The end of the civil has brought new repression and ethnic cleansing of the Tamil minority from the villages and lands in the north.

Stories like Niromi's are an important voice for the Tamils that have been dislocated by the civil war and continue to be persecuted by the current Sri Lankan Rajapaksa government.

The book also deserves to be read to understand why the Australian government should free the Tamil refugees who are languishing in detention centres.

Jasmine Ali

PRESSURE MOUNTS ON MANDATORY DETENTION AS GILLARD RE-INVENTS THE PACIFIC SOLUTION

By Ian Rintoul

AS *SOLIDARITY* goes to press, the High Court has announced it will hand down a decision on the challenge to the Malaysia refugee deal on Wednesday August 31. Whether or not the 335 asylum seekers (42 of them unaccompanied minors) on Christmas Island are actually sent to Malaysia, depends on the outcome of that case.

But, regardless of the decision, the Gillard government remains determined to get around any legal obstacles to slam the door on asylum seekers. It now has a plan B—an agreement with Papua New Guinea to re-open the detention centre on Manus Island—the malaria-ridden twin to Nauru under the Howard government's Pacific Solution.

The Labor government's hypocrisy is astonishing. In November 2008, it boasted, "Labor committed to abolishing the Pacific Solution and this was one the first things the Rudd Labor Government did on taking office... Neither humane nor fair, the Pacific Solution was also ineffective and wasteful." Now Immigration Minister Chris Bowen boasts about opening the Pacific Solution mark 2.0.

It has been a bad few weeks for Gillard and Bowen, with mounting criticism of off-shore processing and mandatory detention. Immigration Department Secretary, Andrew Metcalfe, used a Senates Estimates hearing to pose questions about government policy: "How should we manage the issue of asylum? What is the balance between our international obligations to protect refugees and our need for strong border controls? Is immigration detention a deterrent?"

Metcalfe made his name as an enforcer of John Howard's ruthless anti-refugee policies from the days of the Tampa, totally committed to the idea that detention is a deterrent.

That he is airing such "concerns" is an indication of cracks even among those who brutally police the detention regime.

Meanwhile, Australian Medical Association president Steve Hambleton, speaking in front of both Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott, said, "The



AMA believes that the system of mandatory detention of asylum seekers is inherently harmful to the physical and mental health of detainees."

Another blow against mandatory detention came from the publication of *A New Approach, Breaking the Stalemate on Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. Signed by more than 30 prominent business and union leaders, it proposes phasing out mandatory detention within two years and significantly increasing Australia's intake of refugees over five years.

Endorsees include business representatives Heather Ridout and Janet Holmes á Court, ACTU secretary Ged Kearney, former Liberal leader John Hewson, scientist Sir Gustav Nossal and novelist Thomas Keneally.

And opposition is growing inside the Labor Party. Victorian Labor Left MP Anna Burke has publicly opposed both the Malaysia agreement

and re-opening Manus Island. Burke said Manus Island was, "a return to the Howard government's so-called Pacific Solution policy"—exactly. Now the Labor Left convenors must take a stand.

The Eltham Labor Party Branch (in Labor Left Minister Jenny Macklin's electorate) carried a resolution opposing the Malaysia agreement and became the 79th Victorian ALP branch to affiliate to Labor for Refugees.

The Australian Education Union and the National Tertiary Education Union have carried resolutions against the Malaysia Agreement and written to Gillard.

Public opinion shifting

But perhaps the most encouraging news was an Age/Nielsen poll reporting that 53 per cent of people favouring assessing asylum claims in Australia. Only 28 per cent said people arriving by boat should be sent to another country to be processed.

The poll puts the lie to the idea that politicians, both Labor and Liberal, are simply following anti-refugee attitudes in the community. That argument was always an excuse for their own lack of principles. Now it is even clearer that the refugee bashing is driven from the top down.

The poll shows that even against the weight of leaders of both political parties and most of the media, grassroots campaigning can make a difference.

On mandatory detention there is still a way to go, with only 32 per cent supporting asylum seekers living in the community while their claims are processed.

To end mandatory detention and off-shore processing, we need to keep shifting public opinion and mobilise it into a force that Gillard cannot ignore.

Rallies are planned in October around the anniversary of the sinking of the SIEV X and in December at Labor's national conference. The NSW Refugee Action Coalition has initiated a campaign to reinvigorate connections between the refugee movement and the labour movement. See www.refugeeaction.org.au for model motions you can move at your union meeting.

Above: Refugees in detention in Malaysia

It has been a bad few weeks for Gillard and Bowen, with mounting criticism of off-shore processing and mandatory detention.