

# Solidarity

Issue No. 58 / July 2013

\$3/\$5



**STOP RUDD'S HORROR PLAN**

**LET THE**

**REFUGEES IN**

Rhetoric and reality:  
remembering Rudd  
round one

How workers stopped  
the war: lessons from  
the Vietnam campaign

Building a left  
alternative: The  
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**Riots, resistance and refugees**

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**Europe: Crisis, austerity and resistance**

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## WHO ARE SOLIDARITY?

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.

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## Things they say

**We do have real threats, we do have real enemies. Some of them are internal and they have to be monitored.**

Tony Abbott reveals a lot about ASIO at a speech at the opening of its new multimillion dollar headquarters in Melbourne

**Julia Gillard was one of the great reforming prime ministers of Australia. There. I want that one on the record now, before it becomes conventional wisdom in a few years time.**

Does union leader Paul Howes think that cuts to single parent payments and university funding will go down in history as great reforms?

**I am an Alpha female, a go-getter who will climb up the ladder and not look behind... When it comes to us the sisterhood, it's is non-existent. I categorically do not do house-**

**cleaning, it's low dollar productivity.** Bahar Etminan, editor of an online lifestyle web site, showing how well she can relate to the lifestyles of working women

**I would very much like it to arrive. I'm going on holiday soon.**

The Queen wasn't happy the Royal Baby didn't conform to her busy schedule of holidays from her life of parasitic luxury

**Most women have the attention span of a gnat.**

UK Prime Minister David Cameron explains why women prefer tennis to cricket

**A transition to democracy.**

*The Wall Street Journal* on the rule of General Pinochet in Chile, which it says Egypt should copy. Pinochet's regime killed and tortured thousands

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# INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

## World record bank profits

THE BIG Four banks—ANZ, Westpac, Commonwealth and NAB—ranked as the most profitable in the developed world, according to figures released by the Switzerland based Bank of International Settlements in June. This year it is likely their collective profits will hit \$26 billion—that’s \$71 million per day.

These are the same banks that cut 3300 jobs last year and have already slashed 1330 so far this year. They blame the job cuts on the post-GFC economic slowdown. But their profit figures tell the real story—they are sacrificing their workers out of sheer greed.

## Packer plans blood-stained casino in Sri Lanka

AUSTRALIAN GAMBLING king-pin James Packer has lined up a greasy deal with the genocidal Sri Lankan government that will enable him to build a Crown casino-hotel complex in Colombo, the country’s capital. Opening in 2016, the \$365 million dollar project will include a 400 bed luxury hotel, a 36 storey entertainment complex and of course a casino.

Packer’s shiny monstrosity will be constructed as a joint venture with Sri Lanka’s biggest gaming corporation Rank Holdings run by Ravi Wijeratne, a crony of President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family.

It doesn’t seem to bother Packer at all that the Rajapaksa government mercilessly bombed Tamil civilians at the end of the civil war in 2009, or that 200,000 Tamils interned in camps during the war have been denied the right to return to their lands, in a form of ethnic cleansing.

In fact, the craven billionaire’s embrace with Rajapaksa’s blood soaked government is so tight that he even managed to line up a sweetheart deal that will see his casino get a decade long tax holiday.

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

## Billionaire says scrapping minimum wage will help the poor



RIGHT-WING US billionaire David Koch has declared that scrapping the minimum wage is the best way to help the poor. The business mogul worth \$43 billion made the claim in an interview about a \$200,000 media campaign the Koch Foundation just launched in Kansas.

The minimum wage, apparently, like all government regulation is an “obstacle” that prevents prosperity and creates a “culture of dependency”. Minimum wage workers who are struggling to pay the bills, buy food and pay rent just need to be paid less—that will solve all their problems. Of course Koch’s strident rejection of government intervention is suddenly nowhere to be seen when it comes to his own multinational group of companies, Koch Industries. It benefits from government contracts, oil subsidies and bailouts.

## Recording shows Murdoch wasn’t sorry about phone-hacks

WHEN MEDIA mogul Rupert Murdoch faced a British parliamentary committee over the phone hacking scandal that engulfed his newspaper business he said, “This is the most humble day of my life”. Now a secret recording of Murdoch addressing journalists at the Sun has revealed that, off camera, he was not quite as contrite. “It’s the biggest inquiry ever, over next to nothing,” he complains.

Murdoch rag *News of the World* had bribed police and hacked the phone of murdered school girl Millie Dowler. But as far as he was concerned, “We’re talking about payments for news tips from cops: that’s been going on a hundred years”. It seems all the “payments” Murdoch has shelled out over the years for lavish dinners and parties to senior government and police figures must have slipped his mind. They certainly helped encourage their refusal to investigate the systematic criminal activity associated with the Murdoch empire for many years.



## NSW Liberals out to end environmental challenges to development

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS will be denied legal aid under farcical new laws passed by the NSW Liberal Government. Coming into effect on July 1, the decision is a blow to communities and individuals that wish to challenge the environmental impact of major mining and commercial developments.

This is an attempt to cut funding to the Environmental Defenders Office, following new cabinet approved guidelines stipulating that legal agencies funded by the NSW government must channel resources away from “political advocacy or political activism”. Disgustingly the government has tried to paint the decision as a push to makes sure legal aid goes to the most “disadvantaged”.

What they are in fact doing is blocking serious channels for holding their mates at the big end of town accountable. Environmental legal aid is used to fund cases which do nothing more than ensure companies have the most basic level of accountability. The Blue Mountains Conservation Society took Wallarawang Power Station to court to stop it dumping heavy metals into the Cocks River, which feeds into Sydney’s water supply. The federal government has since stepped in to make up some of the funding shortfall.



# EDITORIAL

## Rudd: Labor's saviour already turning sour

KEVIN RUDD has decisively dashed any illusions that he might end Labor's race to the right with Tony Abbott. His deal with PNG is a drastic and ruthless move designed to stop any refugees arriving by boat from ever resettling in Australia. Thousands joined protests around the country less than 24 hours after Rudd's announcement.

This is a shameful attempt to mimic what John Howard executed when he set up the Pacific Solution in 2001. And like Howard's anti-refugee policies, it is a cynical attempt at an election fix. Ever since the number of asylum boats began to increase in 2009, Labor has introduced more and more draconian "deterrence" measures against refugees in the belief that this was necessary to appease voters in suburban marginal seats. They have consistently capitulated to racism and stirred up myths about "queue jumpers" and people smuggling. So the spectacle of a parade of Labor MPs trying to justify Rudd's new plan in terms of saving lives at sea has been truly sickening.

His refugee policy is the clearest sign that Rudd is retaining the same approach that destroyed Julia Gillard—attempting to outflank the Liberals on the right over refugees and accepting neo-liberal budget discipline.

Rudd may have temporarily restored Labor to a competitive position in the polls, giving it some hope of winning the election. But setting out on this path means that he will end up destroying support for Labor.

Rudd's early popularity is explained partly by who Kevin is not. Tony Abbott has never been a popular leader—just 34 per cent registered approval of his performance as leader, the second lowest for an opposition leader in history, at the end of last year. It has only been the anger at Julia Gillard that has made Abbott look good. A March poll in the *Financial Review* found that although 53 per cent of voters in marginal seats would prefer a Labor victory at the election, just 32 per cent were planning to vote for Gillard.

So the best thing going for Rudd, is that he is not Abbott, and he is not Gillard.

He has shamelessly promoted himself as the victim of the political elite, as a popularly elected Prime Minister unfairly knifed by the Labor



Party factional leaders. Rudd has continually talked about the need to move beyond "old politics" and "negativity", and to put partisanship aside to deal with the challenges facing the nation.

But Rudd's PNG solution has exposed him to be a practitioner of the same "old politics" and to be the same kind of grubby, callous politician as those he says he opposes.

### Rudd policies

He has also moved to terminate the carbon tax, by promising to move to an emissions trading scheme one year early. This will slash the level of the carbon price, from the current fixed price of \$24 to an expected \$6. The carbon tax was useless for dealing with climate change anyway, but Rudd is not proposing to put anything in its place.

Rudd talked initially of reversing Gillard's \$2.3 billion cut to universities. But now Minister Kim Carr says the government can't do that, but simply wants ideas from university Vice-Chancellors about the best way to make the cuts.

Rudd made noises about wanting to reverse the cuts to single parents payments, but has since made no promises.

In the context of Rudd's rush to the right, The Greens are a clear vote to the left of Labor. The Greens' election platform shows what Labor could

**Above: 1000 on the streets on Sydney in response to Rudd's PNG announcement**  
Photo: Sydney University Greens on Campus

do, but won't. It spells out how taxing the massive profits of the banks and mining companies, as well as the super rich, could raise \$42.7 billion.

This could fully fund the money Gonski recommended spending on schools. Labor's spending plan actually only boosts funding by \$500 million spread over the next four years.

It could reverse the cuts to universities, and boost funding by 10 per cent, fund a \$50 a week boost to Newstart, and reverse the cuts to single parents payments.

On its own voting left is not enough—we need to build the struggle outside parliament. Both major parties agree on punitive policies to keep out refugee boats, meaning The Greens balance of power in the Senate can't prevent this. It is the same story in most areas of politics; Labor and Liberal agree on much more than they disagree on.

Over refugees, the challenge is to rebuild a campaign out of the outrage at Rudd's PNG plan that is capable of taking pro-refugee arguments into workplaces and suburbs and shifting public opinion.

The national demonstrations on university campuses this semester are a further chance to build the fightback we need against cuts. These struggles outside parliament hold the key to shifting politics to the left and winning real change.

.....  
**The best thing going for Rudd is that he's neither Abbott nor Gillard**

# Australian imperialism, aid and the PNG deal

By Ian Rintoul

ONE OF the appalling aspects of the PNG solution—and the entire Pacific Solution—is the way the Labor government has coerced poor, small Pacific countries to be complicit with Australia’s human rights abuses. It reveals how Australia’s military and economic power dominates the region, and PNG in particular.

PNG has been able to extract some concessions from Australia because of the Labor government’s desperation to have a political fix for the election. Indeed there are suggestions that PNG approached Australia. PNG’s Prime Minister Peter O’Neill has boasted that Australia has agreed to give PNG control over the foreign aid money given to PNG. According to O’Neill,



Australia is also spending hundreds of millions of dollars for roads, universities, navy bases and other unspecified projects.

However this obscures the fact that despite winning formal independence from Australia in 1975, Australia still treats PNG as a neo-colony. O’Neill was backed by Australia when he came to power in 2011 in a constitutional coup. PNG is the largest recipient of Australia’s foreign aid—totalling \$500.7 million in 2011-12.

## Mining boom

In 2012, Australian investment in PNG was valued at \$18.6 billion, only \$1 billion less than the value of Australian investment in China. Australia is PNG’s largest trading partner, and PNG exports five times more to Australia than China.

Most of the Australian investments are in resources, particularly gold mining and oil and gas. A mining boom has seen the PNG economy grow an average rate of 6 per cent over the last 10 years. Australian companies have made billions.

Yet, according to the World Bank, PNG poverty levels “have not changed significantly over the last 15 years”. In the capital, Port Moresby, poverty has actually risen. Over 37 per cent of the total population lives below the poverty line.

Australia also maintains strong military links with PNG and has directly intervened from time to time, such as in the Bougainville independence struggle, to back the PNG government and defend Australian mining interests.

In May this year, Julia Gillard negotiated a “Joint Partnership Declaration,” under which at least 19 Australian Federal police agents will be inserted into the PNG police force in “advisory” and “capacity building” roles.

In July, Kevin Rudd announced that another 50 AFP officers would be sent to PNG by the end of 2013.

There are 9000 West Papuan refugees living in shocking camps on the Indonesian border who will not benefit at all from the deal with Australia.

In fact, more than 100 asylum seekers from Papua New Guinea itself have been granted refugee status in Australia over the last three years.

Above: An Ausaid project in PNG, part of the \$500 million annual aid budget

## Report shows refugee numbers part of global trend

THE UN refugee agency’s new Global Trends 2012 report puts refugee arrivals to Australia into context. It also shows that Australia’s recent increase in refugee arrivals has been a product of a global surge in refugee numbers, with 7.6 million people newly displaced, the highest number since 1999.

In the 12 months to June 30 this year around 25,000 asylum seekers arrived here by boat, a figure which has sent the government into hysterics. Yet it still only made up 13 per cent of Australia’s total immigration intake for the year and was only marginally above the expected refugee intake, recently raised to 20,000.

### Global perspective

Far more people (out of attachment to home or lack of means of escape) stay in their home state than cross a border to seek refuge.

Out of 45 million people forcibly displaced by the end of 2012, the vast majority (28.8 million) were internally displaced. Those that do leave their countries do so out of sheer necessity.

Pakistan, with 1.6 million refugees, remains the top host country, followed by Iran with 868,200.

Pakistan is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention, and the situa-

tion of refugees there remains acute. Hazaras in Quetta, where the ethnic minority is concentrated, are in a state of siege from Sunni extremists. Hundreds have been killed in recent years. Last month a market bomb blast killed 28 people. Pakistan is threatening to expel thousands of Hazara refugees back over the border into Afghanistan.

### Drop in the ocean

Last year on average 23,000 people per day were forced to seek asylum—almost the entire year’s asylum claims in Australia. At the end of 2012, Australia hosted only 0.3 per cent of the world’s refugees, and 2.14 per cent of its asylum seekers.

Australia’s stance is emblematic of the rich countries’ more generally. Fully 81 per cent of refugees worldwide are hosted by developing countries.

No amount of deterrence can stop desperate people boarding boats. Only immediate resettlement of refugees from Indonesia and a policy that prioritises safe passage for boats that do come—rather than crackdowns on people smuggling and efforts to shirk Australia’s responsibilities—can guarantee the rights of refugees.

Lachlan Marshall

.....  
**Despite winning formal independence from Australia in 1975, Australia still treats PNG as a neo-colony**

# Stop Rudd's ruthless PNG plan: no to Fortress Australia

By Ian Rintoul

LABOR'S PLAN to shut out asylum seekers completely and finally fulfils the project started by John Howard and the Immigration department in 2001—to create a Fortress Australia that denies asylum to anyone arriving by boat.

That a Labor government would be so callous and so totally politically bankrupt has galvanised pro-refugee sentiment and brought thousands of people to demonstrations in cities across Australia.

The circumstances of Rudd's announcement are uncannily similar to Howard's Pacific Solution announcement just before the election in 2001. Howard used the SAS to prevent asylum seekers on the Tampa being sent to Christmas Island. The navy was then used to send them all to Nauru, with Howard declaring that no refugee from Nauru would ever set foot in Australia.

Rudd has extracted an agreement from Papua New Guinea's (PNG's) government that anyone found to be a refugee will be imprisoned on Manus Island, and then resettled in PNG. Rudd is desperately hoping this brutal Refugee Resettlement Arrangement (RRA), an attempt to outflank Abbott on the right, will get him over the line at the election.

Whether Rudd (or Abbott, if he wins the election) can actually implement the "PNG Solution", however, is another matter. The RRA is not a legal document, and it only says that anyone arriving after July 19 is "liable" to be sent. It is the same wording used in the Pacific Solution, under which only a small number of arrivals were sent.

Even though Rudd insists that there is no cap on the numbers that can be sent, PNG's Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has made it clear that PNG does have limits on how many people it can or will take.

Immediately, there is no room on Manus to send many asylum seekers. The government has been shifting people off the island, but that still means there is only room for 300 to 400 people. And since the riots on Nauru destroyed the centre, there is no capacity there either!

It is likely that asylum seekers now arriving by boat will be held in Australian detention centres. If boats keep arriving, the government could be overwhelmed just as it was when it



announced the Pacific Solution 2.0 in August last year.

The government has been trying to build a permanent facility on Manus for almost a year, but nothing has started because of arguments between vested interests about who is going to profit out of it. The Manus Member of Parliament says it will take two years to build a permanent detention centre, and he wants it on another island, not Manus.

All this is good news for the campaign. The RRA is vulnerable to political pressure, here and in PNG. It is only valid for a year. The proposed mega-detention centre for 3000 won't be built in the next year. Tony Abbott is not even willing to commit the Opposition to Rudd's PNG solution.

Shamefully, both the left and right of Labor are using the cover of deaths at sea to justify their support for this policy. This is an appalling attempt to cover the scale of the human rights abuses they are inflicting. If they really cared about saving lives they could process more asylum seekers in Indonesia and resettle them directly in Australia. They could use the planes that are flying people to detention on Manus Island to bring these asylum seekers to safety in Australia.

## Welcome the boats

At his press conference alongside PNG Prime Minister O'Neil Rudd declared that, "the Australian people will never accept boat arrivals". But this is simply not true.

In 2007, when Rudd was elected, a majority of Australians were in favour

**Above: The camp on Manus Island where asylum seekers will be sent as part of the "PNG Solution" still consists of tents after almost a year of operation**

of refugees. But rather than stand up for refugee rights, first Rudd and then Gillard, have spent the last four years introducing anti-refugee policies—first opening Christmas Island, then Curtin, accompanied by endless tirades about people smugglers and restarting the Pacific Solution—feeding anti-refugee sentiments. Labor has handed the political initiative to the Liberals and is now desperate to out-flank them from the right.

In 2001, John Howard announced that all boat arrivals would be sent to Nauru and none would ever set foot in Australia. But Australia did end up resettling most of the refugees from Nauru. This can be won again.

Following Howard's announcement, concerted campaigning and protests by the refugees and the movement in Australia shifted Labor policy, and began creating divisions in the Liberal Party. Opinion polls slowly but surely began to shift in favour of refugees. By 2004, the Liberal Party had released all women and children from detention and by 2006 had released all long-term asylum seekers. Labor won office in 2007.

Obviously, the election outcome won't stop the PNG solution. And there are tens of thousands of asylum seekers in Australian detention centres and on bridging visas who are not being processed and do not have the right to work. Both the Coalition and Labor are committed to offshore processing. A concerted campaign going beyond the election can make sure that Rudd's PNG "solution" is beaten and stop the downward spiral on refugees.

**The Manus Member of Parliament says it will take two years to build a permanent detention centre**

# Rudd's party reform is an attack on the unions

By James Supple

KEVIN RUDD has moved to entrench his control within the Labor Party with his proposed party reforms.

But Rudd's real aim is to weaken union influence in the party, and take it in an even more right-wing direction, emulating Tony Blair's "New Labour" project in Britain.

The political rationale for this has been laid out by Rudd ally, now Treasurer, Chris Bowen in his new book *Hearts and minds: A blueprint for modern Labor*. Labor should adopt social liberalism, he says, drop its socialist objective and cut its links with the unions, in a move that would cut Labor's organised connection with the working class.

Of course, in parliament, Labor has implemented right-wing policies that have betrayed their working class supporters every time they have been elected. But Labor's connection to the unions can be and sometimes has been an explicit counter to the conservative pull of parliament.

Typical of a modern Labor minister, Bowen argues that Labor is "the party of economic growth", free markets and individualism. Gone is the recognition that capitalism creates inequalities or injustices that a Labor government should seek to remedy. Gone is any idea that the working class need a party of their own to oppose the hold of big business and the rich on society.

Bowen explicitly argues that Labor needs to revisit the link "between the party and the unions". He and Rudd want Labor become another openly capitalist party like the US Democrats.

Rudd's intervention in the NSW branch, ushered in under the cover of corruption scandals, is primarily aimed at doing this. The changes will significantly alter the make-up of the powerful Administration Committee. Under Rudd's plans 50 per cent will be elected by the party rank-and-file, rather than at the Labor conference where the unions have greater influence.

Rudd has also made it harder to change the federal party leader, by requiring 75 per cent caucus support for change. This is partly designed to neutralise any Liberal Party electoral advertising about the constant leadership battles between Rudd and Gillard. No doubt he also wants to



save himself from another challenge. But it will also significantly increase the power of the federal leader over the party.

Leaders will be less accountable to the factions and consequently, this will erode the power of the unions, around which the main factional power blocks are organised.

His move to give ordinary party members 50 per cent of the votes in the ballot for party leader would also, in effect, diminish union influence over who becomes leader.

More say for party members sounds like a good thing and has been welcomed by many. But the parliamentary leaders are not about to let rank-and-file members run the Labor Party.

The Parliamentary Party is not compelled to implement Labor policy democratically determined at Labor conferences—and Rudd is not about to change that. All the talk of "rank-and-file control" is code for making Labor less accountable to the workers it is supposed to represent.

What Labor really needs is policy change, not Rudd's reforms. Labor's adoption of neo-liberal policies has meant the parliament party operates as Liberal-lite. Labor's shift to the right over privatisation, union rights, unemployment benefits, refugees, and many other issues has produced a

**Above: Rudd wants to detach the Labor parliamentary caucus from any continued links with the organised working class**

massive disillusionment among members and seen the committed working class vote for Labor steadily decline.

## Union links

The unions can be a part of a fight inside the party against its right-wing direction. In 2008 the unions united with rank-and-file Labor members to secure an overwhelming vote against power privatisation at the NSW Labor conference. This vote on its own was not enough to stop the sell-off. But it does show the way union officials are more likely to oppose aspects of the neo-liberal agenda than the Labor MPs.

The union vote inside Labor is in practice controlled by the union officialdom. But while they represent a bureaucracy with their own interests, they nonetheless maintain a more direct connection to the working class movement than any Labor MP.

If Labor were to sever its links with the unions, it would mean the end of any organic working class connection with the party. It would leave MPs completely unhindered in embracing neo-liberalism and competing with the Liberals' as the best managers of capitalism.

Rudd's party reform proposals, like so many of his grand policy announcements, conceal a cynical, right-wing, pro-business agenda.

**The unions can be a part of a fight inside the party against its right wing direction**



By James Supple

## Kevin Rudd: rhetoric versus reality

FOR REFUGEE supporters, any illusion that Kevin Rudd was more progressive than Julia Gillard came crashing down after he announced his new PNG “solution”.

But Rudd’s primary vote is still higher than Gillard could manage. Many Labor supporters argue that Rudd must push right-wing policies to win the election and beat Abbott. Yet it was precisely this strategy last time around that made Rudd, and Labor, unpopular.

### Rudd round one

Rudd came to power in 2007 in a thumping landslide. He called Howard climate change denier, promised to withdraw troops from Iraq and, most importantly, make industrial relations “fair” by tearing up WorkChoices, Howard’s most-hated policy.

His clever symbolism and talk that built up hopes of change won him support. Rudd talked of “fresh ideas” and “working families”. In his early days as Prime Minister, Rudd’s approval rating soared to record levels as he ratified Kyoto and apologised to the Stolen Generations.

Many commentators argued that Rudd won the election because he portrayed himself as a younger version of Howard and a self-proclaimed “economic conservative”. In reality, a deep-seated desire for change explained the scale of Howard’s defeat. Far from reshaping Australian society in his own image, Howard made people less conservative and more pro-union.

When Howard took power, only 17 per cent preferred increased social spending to tax cuts. Nine years later it was 47 per cent, according to the country’s largest survey of social attitudes. Support for privatisation plummeted, from 30 per cent support for privatising Telstra to 9 per cent. Those who thought big business had too much power rose to 62 per cent.

### Pro-business

There was a glaring contradiction between the hopes for change and Rudd’s actual policies. Rudd’s pro-business approach meant he did not deliver significant change over industrial relations and climate change.

As soon as he became Labor leader Rudd moved to reassure business he would work for them. He set up a special business advisory council, chaired by Rod Eddington, a board member of corporations includ-



**Above: Kevin Rudd’s credibility on climate change was destroyed by his CPRS climate policy**

ing Murdoch’s News Corp, Rio Tinto and JP Morgan. Rudd had such a close relationship with Australian Industry group chief Heather Ridout she was described as a de facto member of Cabinet.

Although Rudd talked about scrapping WorkChoices, big business was by and large happy to live with his IR laws, because they kept the bulk of WorkChoices intact.

Rudd thumbed his nose at the unions. He refused to get rid of the ABCC, Howard’s anti-union commission set up to harass the building unions.

For all his talk about “working families” Rudd delivered little for them. Talk of action to halt the rising cost of living came to nothing. Even the stunt of his (long forgotten) GroceryWatch scheme was abandoned.

When the global economic crisis hit, Rudd stepped up his rhetoric against “extreme capitalism” but delivered only quick cash injections into the economy, designed to maintain business profits. The school buildings and insulation scheme fiascos saw people begin to question whether his government was capable of delivering on its promises.

Despite the apology, he continued and entrenched Howard’s “Intervention” in Aboriginal communities in the NT, a return to assimilationist policy.

When Rudd decided to shelve his CPRS climate plan it destroyed his credibility, and saw him lose a million voters in a fortnight, according to Newspoll. It exposed how little sub-

stance was behind his showy rhetoric and grand statements.

Rudd had spent over a year and a half promoting his emissions trading scheme, with lofty rhetoric about addressing “the greatest moral challenge of our time”, then seemingly dropped it overnight. His deference to business meant he was unable to tackle climate change. He was unprepared to do anything that would damage business profits, or take action after global moves stalled at Copenhagen.

Ominously, he quickly sacrificed his principles on refugees. Though he shut down the Pacific Solution to start with, as soon as the Coalition attacked him over boat arrivals he back flipped, freezing refugee visas for Afghan and Sri Lankan asylum seekers, and tearing up Labor’s promises to make detention a last resort.

By the time he announced his mining super profits tax, most people were no longer listening. And as always his plan was compromised, given most of the proceeds of the tax were set to be handed back to big business. Rudd pitched the scheme around its suitability for business, not to Labor supporters.

With his public support in freefall, the Labor caucus moved against him in the hope of saving the 2010 election.

Right now, Rudd’s last disastrous term is all-but-forgotten. But he remains the conservative neo-liberal politician he was then, with the same political strategy. Once the disconnect between his media stage show and his actual politics resurfaces, it won’t be long before disillusionment returns.

## Nauru burns—riot on

ON FRIDAY 19 July, the Nauru detention centre burned to the ground. The flames on Nauru were the backdrop to Rudd's announcement of the "PNG Solution". The protest was not in response to Rudd's announcement. It was directed at the injustice of the Pacific Solution.

Friday's riot followed days of rowdy protests by asylum seekers angry and frustrated by the months of delays in their processing. Recent arrivals from Palestine, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq had been told that it would six or seven months before they would even be interviewed, and that they could be kept on Nauru for up to five years regardless of whether they were found to be refugees or not.

Asylum seekers who had already been interviewed expected to get answers to their refugee claims. But there were no answers.

They had planned to breakout and march to the airport and then return to the detention centre. But frustration and anger boiled over when they were prevented from leaving the camp.

One hundred and fifty-two people are being held in badly overcrowded conditions at Nauru police headquarters, pending charges of riot, unlawful assembly and perhaps arson.

The remaining detainees are now being held in tents on a makeshift site with conditions deteriorating rapidly. There are two toilets for around 250 people; and no running water for drinking or washing.

"People are getting sick; there are big queues for the toilets," *Solidarity* was told by one asylum seeker from Nauru. "One man self-harmed, and people are collapsing from the sun. The security guards are treating people badly, yelling at people and pushing them. They are all carrying handcuffs.

"Some of the people in prison didn't do anything," he said.

Rudd plans to build a mega detention centre for 3000 on Manus Island. But no detention centre can withstand against the kind of revolt we have seen on Nauru.

The Nauru asylum seekers have lit flames that might yet spread to PNG and Canberra.

**Ian Rintoul**

## Nurses strike challenges NSW Libs



NURSES ACROSS NSW held one of their biggest strikes in history in NSW on July 24. Over 5,000 striking nurses packed into a meeting at Sydney's Olympic Park and voted for another round of industrial action.

Nurses are demanding increased nurse-patient ratios to preserve the quality of care. They are asking for one nurse to three patients in emergency departments, and a four-hour cap on patient contact time in eight-hour shifts.

180 hospitals were affected by the strike, running at minimal staffing levels. The Olympic Park rally was livestreamed to protests at 17 other regional centres.

Edward, a nurse, wrote that he took strike action because, "I am campaigning for every nurse to be able to work in an area where they are adequately staffed, so that they can

### Nurses are demanding increased nurse-patient ratios

provide the high level of care all nurses strive to provide, though often are unable to... I am also striking to send a message to this government that their behaviour and attitude towards nursing and midwifery staff is unacceptable."

The NSW government, led by Barry O'Farrell, is crying poor. But they found the money to run two full-page advertisements in the paper to claim the Nurses' industrial action was unjustified. They are offering a 2.5 per cent pay rise, of which 0.25 per cent is a superannuation increase, in exchange for no improvements in conditions. The 2.5 per cent pay cap policy has been imposed on the rest of the public sector.

If the nurses can beat this and win improved conditions, they will set an example for all the NSW unions.

**Amy Thomas**

## Locked out Yallourn workers dig in for the fight

SEVENTY FIVE power workers at Yallourn remained locked out after four weeks as *Solidarity* goes to print. The workers have now set up a 24-hour protest camp near the power plant.

Their dispute with the company has dragged on for a year in the face of management's intransigence. A non-union agreement was overwhelmingly rejected by the workforce in a secret ballot in April.

The company's first offer to its workers after locking them out without pay actually offered a lower pay rise and less allowances than its previous offer.

This follows ongoing industrial action at the plant in an attempt to reach agreement since March, including a 24-hour strike and a series

of work bans.

But only workers from one union at the plant, the CFMEU, have been locked out. Another 34 maintenance workers covered by other unions remain at work, although they are also covered by the same Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. "Given the CFMEU is doing all the heavy lifting here in this process, the onus now really is on those other unions to step up—none of them yet have sought protected action ballots," Greg Hardy, state secretary of the CFMEU's mining division told the Latrobe Valley Express.

The union's key concern is securing a consultation clause, requiring the company to negotiate before any future restructuring or effort to cut jobs.

# Refugee crisis a chance for Greens to build public opposition



By James Supple

GREENS LEADER Christine Milne was a clear voice of opposition to Kevin Rudd’s appalling new refugee plan. Her angry press conference soon after Rudd’s announcement struck a chord and fed into the strong showing at snap rallies across the country.

There will be further protests over the coming weeks, and The Greens should go all out to promote and champion them. Refugees are an issue that saw The Greens consolidate a support base to the left of Labor in the 2001 Tampa election and after. The party has held firm against offshore processing despite strong pressure from the media and the political establishment to buckle.

But this pressure has resulted in some in The Greens thinking the issue is not a good one for the party to highlight. Until now the issue has been far from central to The Greens’ election campaign.

Christine Milne did not mention the issue in her introduction to the party’s election manifesto “Standing up for what matters” and it did not feature in the official launch.

## Minority government

So far The Greens have continued to try to sell their “achievements” working in minority government with dumped Labor leader Julia Gillard.

**Above: Greens members joining the demonstrations for refugees**

Photo: Sydney University Greens on Campus

They see this experience of wringing tiny concessions through parliamentary deals as a model for the future.

Deputy Leader Adam Bandt claims Gillard “progress(ed) some significant reforms but was never really given a fair go by her own side”.

Yet this was the Prime Minister who had just cut university funding by \$2.3 billion and confirmed the cuts to single parents payments. The Green’s Agreement with Labor did nothing to prevent their lurch to the right, paving the road for a likely Abbott victory.

And chasing the votes on the basis of being “responsible” junior partners in government has not been a success even in their own electoralist terms. The Greens have in fact suffered in the polls.

## Carbon tax

Greens Leader Christine Milne says the carbon tax is the “reform I am most proud of”.

Following Rudd’s plan to shelve the tax one year early, The Greens have positioned themselves as it’s sole remaining defenders, threatening to block his changes in the Senate after the election.

But there is no enthusiasm for the carbon tax. This was always a policy compromised by what was acceptable to Labor and big business.

Even at \$24 the carbon price was not going to drive a shift to renew-

ables. Former Climate Change Minister Greg Combet admitted the aim was “bringing on baseload gas-fired electricity”. Gas power is claimed to be a “cleaner” fuel, but when the emissions in mining are included can produce 70 per cent of the emissions of coal. Building new gas plants meant the carbon tax was going to see Australia increase emissions out to 2020 by 7.5 per cent—with a “reduction” only achieved by buying offsets.

Worse it has been impossible to defend because the cost of any “price on carbon” can easily be passed onto by ordinary consumers, giving Abbott a massive free kick.

Real action on climate requires forcing the government build the renewable energy plants that we urgently need - and to tax the actual profits of corporations destroying the planet to fund this.

## Unions

The Greens also need to seize every opportunity to appeal to working class Labor voters. This is the largest social base for a left-wing vote that The Greens can hope to win over.

There are serious debates in sections of the union movement about whether to continue supporting Labor candidates. In both the 2007 and 2010 elections a number of left-wing unions made substantial donations to The Greens, including the ETU in Victoria, the CFMEU construction union and the AMWU.

Last month the NTEU National Council voted to recommend a vote for Greens candidates in the Senate, as well potentially some lower house seats, for the first time.

Opening up the possibility for unions to affiliate to the Greens would be an even more decisive step in creating a real base for the Greens in the working class. Starting a debate about union affiliation should be a key priority for the large numbers of union activists who support the Greens.

Greens members, particularly its student membership, have played an important role in the recent mobilisations against Rudd’s PNG “solution”.

Rather than pitching themselves as responsible players inside parliament, a consistent orientation towards mobilising Greens members in social movements fighting at the grassroots could have a big impact shifting Australian politics to the left.

# Prepare for action as verdict looms for Bob Carnegie

By Mark Gillespie

A FEDERAL magistrates' court verdict is overdue for Bob Carnegie, a union and community activist who faces 18 contempt of court charges. Justice Burnett told Bob to expect a verdict in late May or early June, but as *Solidarity* goes to press there is still no word.

Construction unions took strike action in February during Bob's trial and have talked of further action if he is jailed. This needs to involve serious national strikes to have an impact.

The charges arise from Bob's role in organising solidarity with 600 construction workers during a nine-week strike at the Queensland Children's Hospital last year.

The dispute began when a plastering contractor went bust leaving 100 workers on the site without jobs or entitlements. Abigroup, the principle builder, refused to negotiate with the union about looking after these workers and was adamant they'd just bring in another subcontractor to finish the work.

While Abigroup ran the site, they only employed two non-supervisory workers. All work was outsourced to subcontractors, which bid against each other, driving down the rate. Contractors often tender too low and then go bust, leaving workers out of pocket.

Workers on the site were not about to see 100 of their workmates treated this way and walked out on strike to establish decent industry standards. They demanded a union enterprise agreement with Abigroup that included a clause ensuring all subcontractors would be paid the same rate for the same work.

But Abigroup did everything they could to resist these demands. This included the extensive use of the law to try and break the strike.

Union officials from the CFMEU, BLF, ETU, and Plumbers' Union received court orders banning them from the site and from speaking to workers within 100 metres of it. Abigroup also set up cameras to constantly monitor activities at the site entrances. Individual rank and file workers, too, received court injunctions.

This is where Bob Carnegie, a long time rank and file seafarer and a former organiser with both the MUA and BLF, played a crucial role. He stepped in to help organise the dispute, re-badged as a "community protest" to



get around anti-strike laws.

Regular meetings in the nearby Serbian community hall made sure the workers had control of the dispute. Their determination and solidarity only grew as the dispute progressed.

Getting support from other workers too was crucial and transport, maritime and mine workers, as well as community activists, raised money. When one worker's son was diagnosed with leukemia, MUA workers volunteered to pay his rent.

The dispute began to spread to other building sites. A turning point came when strikes began to effect other companies owned by Lend Lease, Abigroup's parent company. There was a national strike of construction workers in Baulderstone's, owned by Lend Lease, in September.

The outcome was a victory for the workers. Abigroup negotiated a union enterprise agreement that included a clause covering subcontractors.

This was a victory for all construction workers. Shortly after, other major construction companies offered to negotiate union Enterprise Bargaining Agreements too.

While charges against individual workers on the site were dropped, Bob was singled out. Within 36 hours of the conclusion of the dispute he faced 54 counts of breaching court orders and a civil case for damages.

This was later reduced to 18, but they still carry serious consequences

**Above: Unions rallied in Sydney on the day of Bob Carnegie's trial in February—but more action like this will be needed if he faces jail**

including massive fines, damages and even the possibility of a jail sentence.

## Anti-strike laws

The attack on Bob is part of broader attack on the unions' ability to challenge anti-strike laws. Construction unions in Victoria were recently found guilty of five counts of contempt for failing to comply with court orders to end the blockade of Grocon's Emporium and McNab construction sites last year. Their penalty could run into the millions of dollars.

Anti-strike laws, first introduced by the Hawke Keating government but strengthened under Howard, and maintained by Rudd and Gillard, make it almost impossible for workers to effectively fight for their rights. Unions have often looked for ways to dance around these laws with "community protests" like at Abigroup. But increasingly governments and employers are trying to tighten the noose.

This means unions face two choices: either abide by the law and cease to be effective, or defy the law. The lesson from the Queensland Hospital dispute is that the law can be successfully defied if the dispute is well organised, rank and file members are involved and solidarity action is delivered.

The same sort of defiant campaign will be necessary to defend Bob Carnegie—and key to making sure unionists aren't intimidated out of taking effective strike action in future.

**Within 36 hours of the conclusion of the dispute Bob faced 54 counts of breaching court orders and a civil case for damages**

# SYRIZA retreats as Greek crisis deepens

By Amy Thomas

THE RIGHT of the Greek party SYRIZA won a victory over its left bloc at its founding conference in mid-July in Athens. The conference brought together 3500 delegates from around Greece.

SYRIZA captured the attention of the international left after it won 26 per cent in the Greek elections in the elections last June, taking 72 seats in parliament. Their rise followed the spectacular collapse of the Greek Labor-type party, PASOK, who lost their support in the midst of rising strikes and protests against their implementation of vicious austerity measures.

SYRIZA captured the vote of the rising left mood by opposing the repayment of the debt and standing against austerity measures.

The “trioka”, made up by EU leaders, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, has negotiated the bailout terms and austerity measures with Greek leaders, so Greece can remain in the Euro.

But the dominant right inside SYRIZA, led by Alexis Tsipras, has refused to contenance breaking with the European Union (EU), and by extension, the negotiations over the Greek debt. Tsipras and the dominant right faction inside SYRIZA have set their sights on winning control over the Greek parliament and attempting to moderate Greek capitalism.

Recently, SYRIZA has also signalled they are willing to take government by forming a coalition with a nationalist breakaway from the rightwing party New Democracy, the Independent Greeks.

As part of this, Tsipras, in the world’s of journalist Nick Malkoutzis “has been on a mission to mould SYRIZA into a party of government rather than collection of leftist factions.”

At the conference, Tsipras was successful in his push against the independent left and socialist groupings inside SYRIZA. They have been given a short period of time before they must dissolve entirely. This is designed to mute criticism of the party’s trajectory.

At the conference, proposals from the Left Platform of maintaining support for leaving the Eurozone, imposing public control on banks and nationalising strategic sectors



Above: Alex Tsipras, the leader of SYRIZA

of the economy were all rejected by around 70 per cent of the conference delegates.

SYRIZA also changed their policy of cancelling the debt entirely to a policy of cancelling some of the debt and negotiating the rest, moving away from the policies that inspired their massive rise in support.

The austerity measures are not saving the Greek economy from capitalism’s crisis—they are making it worse. Now is not the time for SYRIZA to capitulate to a renegotiated version of austerity, but the time to use their influence to build the struggle against it from below. Sadly in May, SYRIZA moved to head off high school teachers’ strike in response to sackings.

Just after the SYRIZA conference, the Greek government passed a plan for another 25,000 public sector job cuts. But the Greek working class is still on the move. A massive three day strike by local government workers, and a general strike in their support, was a test for the government.

Two months ago, the government tried to close down the Greek national broadcaster, but Greek media workers occupied the station and continue to run it under workers’ control. This action already forced one partner out of the coalition government in June. It’s by building on this kind of workers’ action that a real challenge to the power of the trioka and the Greek elite will come.

## Greek worker: “the strikes are making it harder for the government”

“WE STRUCK for three days in July against plans to sack 4,000 local government workers. People have struck a lot—both in general strikes and in our own disputes.

People can see that the strikes are making it harder for the government. So when the union consulted us on what to do, we held local meetings and workers overwhelmingly voted for an all-out strike.

Our strike started on the day that the mayors’ organisation was holding its conference. Lots of workers went to their hotel and surrounded it, demanding that they stood with us.

The mayors voted to join the strike, support workers’ occupations in town halls and to close offices that weren’t occupied. There was no local government service for three days.

There was a huge turnout for a general strike on Tuesday June 16. And we protested outside parliament the next day while MPs voted on the sackings.

They only just got it through, by 152 votes in a parliament of 300, but they are going ahead. Local workers’ meetings called to keep the strike going. But the national union didn’t take a lead, and we ended up going back to work.

But everyone knows this isn’t over. Workers have agreed to stay in touch so we can respond to any new cuts over the summer. The union will be forced to call more strikes.

**Costas Fininis, Vrillissia town hall worker  
Socialist Worker UK**

# Islamophobic police provoked French riot

RESENTMENT AT the racist policing of France's Muslims exploded in riots in the town of Trappes near Versailles, in July.

Police stopped Hajar, a 20 year old Muslim woman, when she was shopping with her family on Thursday of last week. Hajar wears the full veil—which under a Islamophobic French laws, is illegal to wear in public. Within minutes she and her husband had been arrested.

Police accuse Hajar and her husband of not co-operating, but Hajar told the Collective Against Islamophobia in France.

"As usual I cooperated with the check," Hajar told "I was about to lift my veil when one officer began to shove my mother violently."

.....  
**At least one police officer praised fascist leader Marine Le Pen**

When Hajar's husband objected, she says officers threw him to the floor, grabbed Hajar by the head and pushed her onto the bonnet of the car.

Both were handcuffed, arrested and "yelled at as if we were dogs". Hajar's husband was detained overnight.

Hundreds of people surrounded the police station on Friday, demanding Hajar's husband be released—this became a riot that continued long into the night and began afresh on Saturday evening. People burned cars and bus stops.

The state responded in full force. One 14 year old boy lost his eye to a police "flashball" grenade.

One of six men arrested on Friday needed 15 stitches, with large head

wounds and a leg in plaster. He says seven cops beat him, yelling insults including "you deserve to die".

Cops boasted about their exploits on social media. At least one praised fascist leader Marine Le Pen, head of the French party the National Front, on Facebook.

But according to Interior minister Manuel Valls, "Police did their job perfectly".

"The whole town is angry," one resident told journalists. "Do you really think we're in revolt over one police check that ended badly? The whole atmosphere here makes us want a revolution."

**Dave Sewell**  
**Adapted from Socialist Worker UK**

# Trayvon Martin case: a verdict on US racism

By James Robertson, in New York

A VERDICT of "not guilty" for George Zimmerman, the white neighborhood watch volunteer who murdered black 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in February 2012, was met with outrage in cities across the US.

Zimmerman plead not guilty to murdering the unarmed teenager and maintained that he had acted in self-defense. This ridiculous defence was only successful because of the racism that pervades the US justice system.

Zimmerman's lawyers painted Martin as a thug, playing on racist cliches of black men, and presenting to the jury an image of someone that Zimmerman was entirely justified in fearing.

That it was Zimmerman who had stalked Martin—who was walking home with iced tea and Skittles—instigated the confrontation and carried a concealed weapon didn't matter.

In the end the verdict was clear: Martin was guilty of walking while black.

The day after the acquittal, rallies took place across the US.

Thousands gathered in New York City. People's outrage and frustration was palpable. The march spontaneously took to the streets, stopping traffic and chanting, "If we don't get no justice, they don't get no peace!" and "Hey hey ho ho, the new Jim Crow has got to go!"



**Above: A potent image at the protest for Trayvon in Times Square**

Drivers honked in support, took placards to hang in their windshields, and the march doubled in size. When police tried to block the way, protesters barged through their lines, chanting, "Whose streets! Our streets!"

The march finished with an occupation of Times Square, where speakers addressed the need to take the struggle against racism and the racist justice system forward.

The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) is calling for a federal civil rights investigation against Zimmerman. Activists are also calling for the scrapping of New York's "stop and frisk" laws that permit police

to search individuals at random, and which have entrenched racial profiling in the NYPD. Eighty seven per cent of the people detained under the laws are black and Latino.

In Florida, where Martin was murdered, and several other New York states, activists are calling for the removal of Stand Your Ground Laws, a type of self-defense law that gives individuals the right to use force to defend themselves. These laws allowed Zimmerman to be acquitted. In fact, white people who kill black people in states with Stand Your Ground laws are 354 per cent more likely to have authorities find their homicide justified than the other way around.

# Workers and the poor resist fuel price hike in Indonesia

By Vivian Honan

THOUSANDS OF Indonesian students, unionists and workers took to the streets in anger in June as the government forced through major cuts to fuel subsidies. The cuts mean a whopping 44 per cent petrol price rise.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhono (SBY) boasted in his 2009 re-election campaign that he was the only president to ever lower the price of subsidised fuel. But he has now pushed through cuts that will force the majority of the population into further poverty.

The fuel price rise only adds to the hardship from similar subsidy cuts to electricity late last year. Mika, an organiser for the union alliance Sekber Buruh told *Solidarity* that the prices rises will hit hard, “because [many people] use motorbikes that require two to three litres of petrol a day, and then on top of that the subsidy cut has also sparked a rise in the cost of other basic necessities too.” These include transport, food, clothing and other basic goods.

However, intent on passing the bill after mass mobilisations of students and unions stopped similar fuel price rises last year, large numbers of police were deployed and protests were heavily repressed.

Nineteen thousand police armed with water cannons and tear gas were deployed in the capital Jakarta on the day the legislation was voted through. Meanwhile protesters in Tenate, North Maluku, were fired on with rubber bullets. Several students and a photographer were seriously injured. Tear gas was also used against protesters in Jambi, Sumatra.

## Workers mobilise

Despite the police repression, tens of thousands of workers rallied in the industrial region of Bekasi, just outside of Jakarta. Militant workers in Bekasi last year won a new minimum wage of approximately \$217 a month. Now however, with the rise in the cost of petrol and other goods, that money won't go far.

Workers poured out of factories and rallied other workers at neighbouring plants to join them on the streets. They paralysed three industrial areas and stopped production for several hours. Several major union confederations and alliances were involved including the FSPMI and Sekber Buruh.



**Above; Indonesian workers gather outside a factory to join a protest against the fuel price hike**

Said Iqbal, the President of the Confederation of Indonesian Workers Union (KSPI) has said that if the government does not respond they will call for a national strike in August when President SBY is set to give his budget speech.

Subsidies on basic goods have been important for keeping down the cost of living for the poor in Indonesia.

However, following the 1997-98 Asian economic crisis the IMF cut a deal with the Suharto dictatorship to cut subsidies in exchange for bailout loans. Suharto increased fuel prices by 70 per cent in May 1998 triggering large protests which helped bring down his dictatorship.

Habibie, who then took over as President, continued with the IMF's agenda, aiming to deregulate the energy market totally by 2003. As a result the oil and gas industry was further opened up to foreign investment and the state-owned oil and gas company, Pertamina, was forced to compete directly with the international market. Fuel prices increased again in 2002 and in 2008, prior to this year's price hike.

Yet big business and foreign investors insist that the cuts to subsidies continue. The powerful Employers' Association (Apindo) has even come out against the pitiful cash handouts SBY has offered the poor as compensation for the price increases this time.

Not only is the government at-

tacking workers' living standards, it is moving to crack down on dissent in an effort to protect the interests of business.

After passing the legislation on the fuel price rise, parliament turned to debating the Societal Organisations Bill. The law allows the government to monitor the activities of unions and political organisations and require them to, “maintain the unity of the state, uphold morality and ethics and nurture the country's religious and cultural norms.” According to the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, this, “will set-back democracy by silencing the community.”

The Indonesian government is set on welcoming foreign investment and so is moving to suppress any protests that threaten to disrupt business operations.

The rising strength of the workers' movement in Indonesia is the likely target. On the day the bill was passed workers from the major union FSPMI were set to walk out for a national strike only for the union leadership to call the strike off.

Strikes in Indonesia in recent years have won better wages and conditions for some of the lowest paid workers in southeast Asia.

Continuing and deepening the strikes will be needed if workers are to successfully fight off both the fuel price rises and the attack on their right to unionise.

# ENTRENCHING THE NT INTERVENTION: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE RESISTANCE?

**Paddy Gibson** looks at how the ruthless imposition of Intervention measures in the NT has undermined resistance, and what this means for the future

THE NT Intervention (Northern Territory Intervention Response, NTER) was launched by Liberal Prime Minister John Howard just before his final election campaign in 2007. It was an attempt at a final dispossession, to sweep away the “Aboriginal problem” and to bury the idea Aboriginal self-determination.

Throughout his eleven-year term he promoted conservative historians fighting “history wars”, denying the frontier massacres and the Stolen Generation.

Howard argued it was the failings of Aboriginal people themselves, and their refusal to assimilate into “mainstream” culture and the market economy, that were to blame for the third world conditions in many communities.

In the NT where the Commonwealth can exercise direct control he planned to smash Aboriginal organisations and disperse Aboriginal communities living on their land. He ripped up the Land Rights Act. He announced the abolition of CDEP, an employment program employing 7500 Aboriginal people, which had been just enough to keep remote communities functioning.

Once again, Aboriginal people were to be subject to a protectionist regime controlling their lives and forcing them to assimilate.

When the Intervention first broke, very few in Australia’s progressive institutions were willing to openly denounce it. The Labor Party capitulated, voted for it and then expanded it when they took office in 2007.

Howard mercilessly exploited the emotive issue of child abuse to silence, or stifle, any criticism.

A open letter to Minister Mal Brough initiated by the Australian Council of Social Services and signed by 60 organisations on June 26 2007 said, “we welcome your commitment to tackling violence and abuse” while meekly noting “in their present form the proposals miss their mark and are

.....  
**Once again, Aboriginal people were to be subject to a protectionist regime controlling their lives and forcing them to assimilate**  
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unlikely to be effective”. The letter called for more “consultation”, but not for an end to the Intervention or for Aboriginal control.

Many Aboriginal communities themselves however, seeing what was at stake openly resisted the NT Intervention from day one. Within a week, Aboriginal women in Alice Springs led a protest rally that burned a copy of the legislation.

Their resistance won support from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal activists across Australia. An Alice Springs meeting of a new “National Aboriginal Alliance” which included left wing Aboriginal leaders from the eastern states such as Michael Mansell and Larissa Behrendt slammed the plan as an “invasion”.

After Labor’s election in November 2007, there was a national call for a rally in Canberra. On February 11 2008, the day before Rudd’s apology to the Stolen Generation, more than 2000 people marched from the Aboriginal Tent Embassy to Parliament House protesting the Intervention. This was one of the biggest rallies for Aboriginal rights since the 1988 Bicentenary march.

## **Fightback**

City-based committees such as the Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney saw that the battle over the Intervention had significance far beyond the NT. Across Australia, a serious fight was needed to challenge the Intervention and the impact of racism on the political system. The power of wider social forces outside isolated NT communities would be crucial to actually beat back the Intervention.

In 2008 there was a series of public forums and street demonstrations as Labor conducted a “review” of the Intervention. A convergence in September 2008 featured a meeting of the “Prescribed Area People’s Alliance” (PAPA), with more than 100 delegates from Aboriginal communities living

under the Intervention issuing a statement for full repeal of the laws. Five hundred people marched through Alice Springs, the biggest protest in Central Australia since the 1970s marches for Land Rights.

A complaint by PAPA regarding the Intervention was upheld by the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

But by 2009 however the Intervention was well and truly entrenched. CDEP cuts and the abolition of local government councils had seen thousands of jobs lost and millions of dollars of community assets confiscated.

The “review” had found widespread evidence of discrimination and misery under the Intervention, but Labor did not budge an inch. Government Business Managers sat safely in compounds on formerly Aboriginal land.

More than 15,000 people had been given a new BasicsCard to control their Centrelink payments, and confine spending to particular shops. The groundwork was in place to ensure that the new political order would continue long after the 5-year “sunset clause” attached to NTER legislation.

Central to this was forcing Aboriginal communities to sign “voluntary” 40-year leases that would last beyond the compulsory leases imposed by the NTER. The government first moved against the Alice Springs town camps, represented by the Tangentyere Council.

Tangentyere had successfully resisted a pre-Intervention ultimatum from the Howard’s Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough. But Labor’s Minister Jenny Macklin was more ruthless, threatening to compulsorily acquire the town camps forever unless Tangentyere signed a 40-year lease.

The anti-Intervention campaign gathered significant institutional support for Tangentyere. A statement condemning the Intervention and Macklin’s attack, “Keep Aboriginal Housing



in Aboriginal Hands”, was endorsed by a wide range of trade unions, welfare and Aboriginal organisations and published in The Australian newspaper in September 2009.

But even at this crucial point, very few of these organisations called their members to protest. Aboriginal Land Council’s could have put hundreds of streets, but preferred to “box clever” and not risk government funding. Reconciliation Groups circulated emails, but made nothing like the effort seen for the “bridge walk” in 2000.

Tangentyere eventually signed over the town camps, “with a gun held to our head” as Executive Director William Tilmouth described it. After Tangentyere fell, other major remote communities followed.

Nonetheless the campaign continued to fight. In 2009, hundreds of people from the community of Ampilatwatja staged a “walk-off”. They set up a protest camp on traditional grounds just outside of the NTER leased area. Senior Alywarr leader Banjo Morton said at the time, “They had us penned there like bullocks in a yard. We needed to step outside of that yard and stand up”.

A trade union backed work-brigade traveled to Ampilatwatja, working with the local community to construct a house at the protest site. This was the first house built on Aboriginal land for Aboriginal people since the Intervention in 2007. It also began to rekindle solidarity networks with the unions that had historically played a central role in the fight for Aboriginal rights.

In 2010, Aboriginal workers being paid on the BasicsCard addressed stop-work and other union meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra.

By 2011, when the Labor government proposed a series of laws called “Stronger Futures”, organisations ranging from ACOSS to the Catholic Church condemned them. In the NT communities, people used the Stronger Future “consultation meetings” to express their anger. The Yolngu Nations Assembly released fiery statements that galvanised online support, including a petition of more than 40,000 signatures, “Stand for Freedom”, against Stronger Futures

But there was still no sign that the broader forces now clearly opposed the Intervention were prepared to force an open confrontation with the government that was needed. Many NT leaders became demoralised. The last anti-Intervention rally held in the NT was in June 2011, with the



Prescribed Area People’s Alliance leading a crowd of 300 people through the streets of Darwin.

### Conditions getting worse

Since the Intervention there are more than twice as many NT Aboriginal people in prison, more than twice the number of children are being removed, the unemployment rate is worse, third world health conditions such as trachoma and glue ear are rife, self-harm incidents have increased five fold and there has been no let up in the horrific rates of domestic violence.

There are no new houses outside sixteen “hub towns”, and even here these have made barely a dint in chronic overcrowding.

Removing publicly funded community development programs has not led to a booming market economy; it has just left people to rot in deeper poverty. There has no massive increase of Aboriginal jobs in the mining industry, but there has been a slow drift of even more people into overcrowded camps in urban centres where many are caught in cycles of homelessness and alcohol abuse.

The Intervention has increased the prominence of Aboriginal spokespeople willing to embrace punitive policies and corporate “solutions”. Noel Pearson, Marcia Langton and Warren Mundine have been joined on the national stage by NT Aboriginal Liberal politicians like the new NT Chief Minister Adam Giles and Bess Price.

In the 2012 NT election, the

**Above: A protest against the take-over of the Alice Springs town camps represented by the Tangentyere Council, was a turning point in breaking resistance to the Intervention**

Country Liberals ran on a platform of restoring community control over local government and ending neglect of small communities and outstations. This cynically tapped the deep anger in NT communities at the process of reform since 2007—but it was enough to sweep them to power on the back of Aboriginal votes.

In power the Country Liberals have meted out even more brutal Intervention-style punishment, putting 100 more police in urban areas, establishing “mandatory rehabilitation”, criminalising Aboriginal drinkers and slashing the budget of support services.

The oppression confronting Aboriginal people across Australia has intensified since the NT Intervention.

There is deep anger amongst many grass-roots Aboriginal activists at the hollow symbolism of “constitutional recognition” being pushed by the government as the next great hope in Indigenous affairs.

A dogged fight against the national expansion of income management continues to keep the severe discrimination faced by Aboriginal people in the NT on the agenda.

We can’t say which issue will be the focus of the next wave of struggle for Aboriginal rights. But the lessons of the campaign against the NT Intervention will be crucial for that fight. The legitimacy of the “new assimilation” represented by the Intervention is in tatters. But the fight for Aboriginal self-determination needs to find ways to break through.

# LESSONS FROM HISTORY HOW A MASS MOVEMENT ENDED WAR IN VIETNAM

**Danny Hardiman** looks at the lessons of the movement against the Vietnam War in Australia, and how it turned the tide of public opinion

THE MOVEMENT against the Vietnam War was a pivotal moment in radical Australian history. Over a period of five years the movement grew from a handful of militant students and trade unionists to hundreds of thousands of supporters across the country.

It was able to win the withdrawal of Australian troops from the war, radicalise a wide layer of society and completely shift the weight of public opinion.

It is a struggle mostly remembered and taught today in the context of the 1960s, supposedly solely brought about by the so-called “spirit of the times” of resistance and generational revolt.

But when the war was first announced it was enormously popular, and it was only due to the dedicated and courageous actions of a militant minority that the movement was able to grow and seriously derail the Australian war machine.

When Menzies first announced that Australia would begin sending troops and advisors to Vietnam there was little opposition.

This was at the height of the anti-communism of the Cold War period, and a wide layer of society bought into the idea that fighting the Viet Cong was necessary for the struggle against communism both at home and abroad.

At this stage, the main opposition came in the form of a handful of left-wing unions, Save Our Sons, a women’s group who fiercely opposed conscription, and the Youth Campaign Against Conscription.

They helped to spread the arguments against the war, beginning the fight to shift public opinion against it. However the war still had majority support and these opponents remained on the fringes.

The first Youth Campaign against Conscription was formed in November 1964 in response to Prime Minister

Bob Menzies’ announcement that conscription would be restarting. The campaign gained momentum with an advertisement in *The Australian* on 19 June 1965. YCACs were set-up across the country and students in particular began organising marches, protests, sit-ins, draft card burnings, meetings, and vigils.

For left-wing unions, the first action came as wharfies, seamen and builders walked off the job in Melbourne and protested outside the US embassy. In 1966 the Seaman’s Union publicly refused to sail cargo ship the *Boonaroo*.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions was pressured to adopt an anti-war position, but it also warned that it would not sanction union action to prevent supplies reaching troops in Vietnam.

Save Our Sons announced their opposition to the war right from the onset and organised several vigils and demonstrations. In some places they had strong links to the labour movement, so when five SOS members were arrested for distributing “Don’t Register” leaflets, workers shut down the Port of Melbourne in protest and thousands attended a vigil. The women were released after 11 days.

Perhaps the clearest example of the war’s early support came in the 1966 Federal Election. Though the ALP walked a fine line between opposing Menzies whilst supporting the American alliance, it did campaign strongly against the war in the lead-up to the vote.

Menzies and the Liberals would win in a landslide, however, and this led many to blame the ALP’s opposition to the war for their crushing defeat.

## Militant protests

Activists responded by adopting more militant and confrontational protest tactics. But far from alienating the

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## When Menzies first announced that Australia would begin sending troops to Vietnam there was little opposition

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activists this helped to spark debate and helped sway public opinion in the movement’s favour.

In 1966 students in Melbourne organised a sit-in during a parade and the tactic caught on. The most famous example of this was during American President Lyndon Johnson’s visit to Australia in October 1966. There, students organised a sit-in in front of the President’s motorcade, creating a huge media shitstorm and immortalising NSW Premier’s Atkins comment that they should just “ride over the bastards”.

But the most controversial protest came in the middle of 1967 when students in the Monash Uni Labour club voted to set up a committee to collect funds for the National Liberation Front of Vietnam.

For the right-wing, this was an action equivalent to treason, not only opposing the war but actively “aiding the enemy”. The university’s attempt to ban the collections, far from intimidating students, galvanised them into action, turning the debate into one of civil liberties and the right to oppose the war.

But more importantly, the radicalism of the aid campaign shifted the debate towards the left and outside the “respectable” avenues of mainstream society.

As Albert Langer, a student radical from the time, described, the debate shifted so far that it was no longer good enough simply to oppose the war, rather, “being a radical in the moment meant collecting funds for military. Being a moderate meant opposing the war and collecting funds for medical aid”.

By the end of 1967 both militant trade unionists and a number of students had done some considerable work in building up an active campaign, and though they were still a minority, they had begun to slowly turn public opinion.

With 1968 came the “Tet Of-

fensive” launched by the National Liberation Front of Vietnam. This changed the way people perceived the war effort and meant many now saw that the anti-war movement had been right. As Hall Greenland, a student activist at the time, describes:

“Up until then the troops had been pouring in, the bombs were raining down, the body count was all over the place, and there was this imperialist triumphalism about what they were doing in Vietnam and how they were winning.

“That propaganda was pumped out all through 1966 and 1967 claiming the Viet Cong were being smashed to pieces. And then suddenly the resistance is occupying every major city and town in South Vietnam. In some places it took months to get them out.

“People just realised that they’d been lied to and that the war wasn’t being won and that there was something else going on which they needed to look at and think about. And the movement took off here and in the US.”

Student protests stepped up, with a famous protest outside the US embassy in Melbourne on 4 July that saw thousands battle mounted police well into the night.

Many unions were pushing to take a more prominent anti-war stance. The Rebel Unions of Victoria, which represented two-thirds of the unionists in the state, publicly stated that:

“We encourage those young men already conscripted to refuse to accept orders against their conscience and those in Vietnam to lay down their arms in mutiny against the heinous barbarism perpetuated in our name.”

By the end of 1968 only 49 per cent of Australians supported continued involvement, with support falling throughout 1969.

### Stop work to stop the war

The high-point of the struggle were the Moratorium marches of 1970. Far exceeding the expectations of organisers, around 200,000 people came out to march against the war around the country—100,000 of those in Melbourne.

The slogan of the Moratorium was “Stop work to stop the war”. As socialist historian Phil Griffiths describes:

“The Moratoriums were the most important industrial actions. They were huge demonstrations against the war, but they were also strikes. Be-



**Above: Opposition to conscription and resistance to the draft was key to the anti-Vietnam movement**

tween a half and two-thirds of people at the weekday rallies were workers. They drew everyone in.

“I was working at a conservative high school at the time of the second Moratorium in 1970. Around half the teachers struck. That feeling fed into everything. In 1969 the government jailed a Communist Party union official for refusing to pay a fine for organising a strike. One million workers struck in the middle of a war and forced the government to release him and scrap the law against trade unions.”

However, there were initially tensions in the union movement over the Moratorium, with the ACTU leadership split over whether to support it. This was reflected in State councils, with Victoria, NSW and Tasmania voted not to support the Moratorium.

This deadlock reflected tensions over the appropriate role of trade unions, and whether they should take up political issues. The strongest support came from the 26 Rebel Unions that had broken from the Victorian Trades Hall Council a few years before, who actively opposed the war and also the idea that trade unions should only be used for industrial issues.

For a social movement to be successful orientating to working class militancy is crucial. This is because when workers take action it not only disrupts the day-to-day functioning of the capitalist state but actively impacts

on profit and production.

Though militancy amongst students and several smaller unions was successful in winning over public support, to actually win the fight it was necessary to go further and push for strike activity amongst a wider layer of workers.

In doing so, this signalled to the government that unless troops were withdrawn strike action could increase and become more widespread. Thus, in December 1971 Liberal Prime Minister John Gorton announced all troops would be withdrawn, forced by both NLF resistance and the anti-war movement.

The movement had won, not only in forcing the withdrawal of troops but in giving birth to a new revolutionary left that would take part and shape future struggles in the coming decade.

The fight against the Vietnam War shows how militant actions can change public opinion and bring about wider radicalisation in society.

Starting from a small minority, the movement grew until it was able to win over a layer of workers that could take action that would directly impact on the government and the bosses.

As we continue in our fights today, it offers rich lessons in how campaigning and radical protest action can open up debates and shift public opinion, to help build movements that can win.

### The high-point of the struggle were the Moratorium marches of 1970

# CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY: A SYSTEM RUN FOR THE RICH

In our democracy the key economic decisions are not open to democratic control, but are made by CEOs and the rich, argues **James Supple**

DISILLUSIONMENT WITH the state of our democracy runs deep. Few institutions are more distrusted. Just 34 per cent of people trust federal parliament, according to an Essential poll in March, compared to 70 per cent for the ABC and 74 per cent for the High Court. Half a million young people aged between 18 and 24, one quarter of the total, haven't even enrolled to vote.

It's not hard to understand why. Many people instinctively understand that the major political parties look after the rich, when they aren't looking after themselves. Just 12 per cent of people think government is run in the interests of "all the people" according to a 2010 election survey.

Democracy in parliament is compromised enough. We get to vote in federal elections only once every three years. In between elections governments can do what they like to ignore the democratic will of the people.

The first budget of any government is traditionally the "horror budget"—the time when it announces its most unpopular cuts to public services, privatisations and attacks on workers. John Howard's first budget in 1997 was one of his worst. Queensland Premier Campbell Newman adopted a blitzkrieg of program cuts and job cuts in the public service. Three years later governments hope that the anger will have faded.

Even when we do go to the polls it seems there is little choice—with both major parties committed to similar neo-liberal economic management and pro-business policies.

But the real problem is that we have only a narrow form of political democracy. This system has been designed to leave the main source of power under capitalism—the wealth and property of the rich—untouched.

Mining bosses like Gina Rinehart and Andrew Forrest, and multi-millionaires like James Packer and Rupert Murdoch are just the best known representatives of the "1 per cent" identified by the Occupy movement. They include the CEOs and senior managers

**Just 12 per cent of people think government is run in the interests of "all the people"**



**Right: Many people are rightly contemptuous of the antics of parliament**

of the major multinational corporations that dominate the economy. This small minority of society control the vast bulk of the wealth, running the major corporations and enriching themselves further in the process.

The top 5 per cent of income earners took just over 20 per cent of all earnings in Australia in 2010.

Wealth, which can be inherited and accumulated over many years, is even more concentrated. There are no accurate figures for how much the top 1 or top 5 per cent of Australians own. But households in the top 10 per cent have almost 50 times the net wealth of those bottom 10 per cent, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Their control over the operations of the economy makes them more powerful than any government. The ability to cut off new investment and take their money out of the country through “capital flight” gives them the power to wreck whole economies. This was exactly the threat the mining companies held over the Labor government when they announced a mining tax that would take back some of their enormous profits.

Through decisions to close down factories and offices they have the power to throw thousands of people out of work. Jim Cairns, left-wing deputy leader under the Whitlam Labor government recognised this.

The government found, he said, “we have to respond to the needs and demands of the large companies... When the large companies threaten to put thousands out of work we have a choice—we allow them to do it or we transfer millions of dollars from other sections of the community to them in the hope that people can be kept in their jobs.”

Governments have handed car manufacturers billions with this aim in recent years. Ford was given \$1.1 billion since 2000. But it is sacking 1200 people and closing its plants anyway. Holden received \$2 billion in the same period but is threatening to shut up shop as well, at the cost of another 3500 jobs. Yet at no point has any government been prepared to nationalise the plants if the companies won't guarantee jobs—afraid of the challenge to big business this would require.

## Corruption

The enormous wealth of the 1 per cent also corrupts even the limited political democracy we do have.

Winning an election requires money—and lots of it. In the financial year of the last federal election in 2010 the Liberals spent \$108 million compared to Labor's \$88 million.

It will come as no surprise that the Liberals do well from the corporate elite: for the last election Clive Palmer's company gave them \$300,000, IT millionaire Danny Wallis chipped in \$100,000 and the Pratt family's business empire gave \$150,000.

But Labor also did well from the corporate sector, with hundreds of thousands from property magnates and over \$150,000 from agricultural firm Manildra. The banks had a bet each way with NAB giving \$150,000 to the Liberals and \$100,000 to Labor, ANZ \$100,000 each and Westpac \$55,000 each.

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## The enormous wealth of the 1 per cent also corrupts even the limited political democracy we do have

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These donations come with strings attached. John Thorpe, former President of the Australian Hotels Association admitted he considered donations worth the expense because it meant business could, “get interviews with ministers... interviews with staffers, and that does help us in our policies and our regulations.”

Big business is not going to donate to anyone who threatens their profits. This means that any party or candidate that stands up to the corporations will face a huge disadvantage compared to the army of professional staff and paid advertising that the pro-business parties can afford to fund.

Then there is the power of the media to contend with. Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation controls 70 per cent of Australia's print media, and enforces a viciously right-wing editorial line.

But most media operations are big businesses. Many are owned by conglomerates that also run mining companies and banks—think of Gina Rinehart's stake in Fairfax and Channel Ten. They will go out of their way to attack and distort the views of anyone who challenges the power of the corporate bosses. Look at the way that the *Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun* waged war on The Greens over their drugs policy, concocting a bizarre hyped up scare campaign with claims that they wanted to sell drugs like “ice” and ecstasy in an effort to discredit the party. *The Australian* has been just as open about its desire to see The Greens “destroyed”.

## State bureaucracy

Parliament itself is only one part of the wider state apparatus that confronts any elected government. While a new government might replace the heads of departments in areas of the public service like Immigration, tax or health, beneath them sits a vast bureaucracy of senior managers and officials whose careers outlast many governments.

The upper levels of public service management are built into the structures of power and privilege of the ruling class and serve the same interests. Former General Peter Cosgrove, who ran military operations in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq, now sits on the board of Qantas. In April Brisbane's *Courier-Mail* detailed how a raft of former senior public servants had moved into jobs in the Coal Seam Gas industry, after formerly working on approvals of new mining developments.

This means that the state bureaucracy has its own agenda, and will

work to frustrate government policy if it poses any challenge to the ruling class.

At the core of the state is the armed might of the police and the military. Like the rest of the state, they are led by career officials who identify with the ruling class. If a parliamentary government began to threaten capitalism and the 1 per cent's control of the economy, the ruling class would not hesitate to use them to overthrow the government if necessary.

This is what happened in Chile in 1973 when Salvador Allende's government helped spark a workers' movement that began to threaten capitalism in Chile. After months of encouragement from the ruling class establishment, the military staged a bloody coup.

## Real democracy

A genuinely democratic society is only possible when economic decisions and the wealth of society are put under popular control. This cannot be done through taking control of parliament. It requires a mass movement of millions that builds new institutions of popular democracy from below.

Such a democratic process has occurred in many of the great revolutions of the last hundred years. In every case, the struggle for control of the economy was expressed in the fight between new organs of workers' power and the old bosses and management in the factories and workplaces.

In Poland 1980 Inter-Enterprise Strike Committees sprung up to coordinate a wave of factory occupations that went beyond simple wage demands to press for legal trade unions, freeing political prisoners and better health care. In Chile in 1972 “cordones” in the factories organised to stop their bosses paralysing the country through shutting down production, taking control of running many factories into the workers' hands. The new organs of workers' democracy formed a parallel government that challenged the old capitalist state for power.

This process went furthest in the Russian Revolution of 1917, where for a short period a workers' government based on soviets, or factory councils, actually took power.

Revolutionaries are not indifferent to the outcome of elections—we should fight to keep Abbott out of office and welcome a higher vote for The Greens. But it is in the workplaces and on the streets that the struggle for real democracy must be waged, through building mass struggles capable of winning revolutionary change.

# Night Games: An apology for football rape

ANNA KRIEN has achieved something quite remarkable with her terrible new book, *Night Games: Sex, Power and Sport*.

She set out to write a “balanced and fearless look at the dark side of footy culture”, according to the book’s jacket. Instead she has produced an apology for rape and sexual assault by elite Australian Rules Football (AFL) and the National Rugby League (NRL) players.

Not one Australian professional footballer has been convicted of sexual assault in almost 30 years, despite, in the words of journalist Jacqueline Magray, that accusations of rape and sexual assault by footballers have “become about as annual as the footy season itself.”

In the shameless tradition of Helen Garner, author of *The First Stone* and Joe Cinque’s *Consolation* (who is, unsurprisingly, thanked in the acknowledgements), Krien dresses up tired old sexist arguments in a phoney intellectual examination of complexity and pages of mock awkward, self-reflective anguish.

## Women on trial

The book follows the rape trial of an aspiring Victorian AFL player, Frances David Pope, referred to as Justin Dyer in the book.

Yet despite the fact the trial itself is riven with sexism, Krien reserves most of her sympathies for the defendant. It is really his personal saga that is subject of the book.

The complainant, Sarah, alleges she was gang raped by three other footballers, and then by Pope.

But aside from suggesting this might have

been a legal manoeuvre to make Pope the fall guy, Krien doesn’t question the sexist assumptions of police and the judicial system that saw only Pope, and none of the others, charged.

The sexist system was bias against Sarah from the start.

A 2007 Australian Institute of Criminology report, Juror attitudes and biases in sexual assault cases, concluded that the sexist attitudes brought into the courtroom influence the low conviction rate and that “stereotypical beliefs about rape and victims of it still exist in the community.”

Defendants’ lawyers can no longer make a victim’s sexual history part of their case in Victoria, but otherwise it’s a free-for-all of sexist questioning about what a victim was wearing or insinuations that she asked for it.

Unsurprisingly, many women do not report rape or assault to the police, either out of a sense that it is useless or a sense of shame and confusion because of ideas that women are somehow to blame when they are attacked.

There is limited research in the area, but a 1996 Bureau of Statistics study found that only 15 per cent of women who had experienced sexual assault reported it to the police.

On top of that, only a small proportion of rape and assault complaints actually lead to charges. Yet Krien argues that the 12 per cent conviction rate of rape in Victoria not evidence of sexism, but evidence for what she calls “the grey zone between rape and consent”. Effectively, she is saying that rape is often not really

## Despite the fact the trial itself is riven with sexism, Krien reserves most of her sympathies for the defendant

rape.

For Krien, it’s the “grey zone” that results in women being prone to exaggerate; to claim rape when none has occurred. In other words, she dresses up an old sexist tripe about lying, manipulative women to justify the disgraceful actions of the footballers.

She said on a writers’ festival panel, “I think it’s very difficult for someone to reflect on a disturbing sexual encounter without feeling pressured to conclude that there was a victim and a perpetrator, that it was rape... And, ultimately, this is what *Night Games* is about—that strange place between consent and rape, one that the slogan ‘No means No’ doesn’t allow for.” So what does “No” mean?

Krien ends up giving credence to the argument that women bring it upon themselves—by wanting sex with footballers or that by dressing in a revealing fashion that they are invite assault.

She wonders for a whole chapter if “groupies” willingness to have sex with footballers “confuses” the issue of consent. Apparently that some women do consent to sex with a footballer, or several footballers, is the reason why players cannot tell the difference between consensual sex and rape.

“How else do these guys get it into their heads that this is okay?” she asks.

It all amounts to a conclusion that excuses Pope: “Whatever he did that night he thought it was OK. The herd said as much”. Sarah, on the other hand, “had no language to explain the grey zone, to explain what was lost in translation between the sexes.”

## Sexism?

At one point Krien asks, “Why did he [Pope] not see her [Sarah] as fully human?” There is one answer to this question Krien ignores completely—sexism.

There is absolutely nothing in the book that tries to put the problem of sexism in football in the context of sexism in society, or to seriously examine the roots of sexual violence. The attitudes towards women inside elite football and its commercial culture are an extreme case of a wider sexist society that regards women as inferior.

Women are still paid less than men, still expected to perform the majority of domestic labour in the home, as well as child care, and are still often stuck in low-paid, part-time “caring” jobs.

The front cover of Krien’s own book (a mannequin with no head provocatively holding an AFL football between her legs) is an example of how sex is used to sell just about anything. Women are judged on their appearance and told that an impossibly thin, hairless, heterosexual, cellulite-free feminine ideal somehow represents our sexual liberation.

Women’s sport is universally regarded as inferior. In the big business world of commercial football, getting rewards, fame and fortune for grunting, sweating and crash-tackling is the domain of men. For the women, well, there’s cheerleading and being “groupies”.

A society that treats women’s bodies and sex itself as commodities, and socialises everybody to believe women are inferior, is a society that inevitably produces rape



and sexual assault.

Krien recycles ideas about the “stereotypical rapist” hiding in the bushes implying there is some fact associated with this myth, and that rape is to blame on deranged individuals outside of society: “The public idea of a rapist is, it seems, that of a twisted loner, most likely a male with an underlying mental illness, who seeks out his victims with the full intention of raping them. Popular footballers most certainly do not fit this category ... and that is a good thing.”

But popular footballers abusing women does fit a very common pattern of institutionalised sexism. The revelations of the abuse of women in the Australian Defence Force provide yet another example of a culture of sexist impunity.

On top of that, the sexism is defended and covered up by the media and the legal system.

Krien seems to want to

argue that it’s footballers who are oppressed by the stereotype of people seeing them as rapists.

She doesn’t mention that Matthew Johns, who was at the centre of the Cronulla Sharks rape scandal exposed by *Four Corners* in 2009, was given his very own television show the following year.

Other footballers have been forgiven, or even publicly celebrated, for their sexism—take the entire cast of *The Footy Show*, in particular the disgraceful misogynist Sam Newman, as a case in point.

Krien reports on police head honchos who covered up for footballers, notoriously for AFL player Stephen Milne, and also for NRL player Bryan Fletcher.

The tradition of “paying off” women who come forward with complaints is summarised in this jaw-dropping quote from John Elliott, former

**Above: AFL player Stephen Milne, recently charged with four counts of rape**

**“We’d pay the sheilas off and wouldn’t hear another word”—former Carlton President John Elliott**

president of Carlton and a former Liberal Party President, “I think we had people who claimed to be raped by our players—women they were—not men—on four or five occasions.

“Not once did any of those stories get into the press because in those days we probably had only twenty people writing in the press and they weren’t interested in all that sort of nonsense. We’d pay the sheilas off and wouldn’t hear another word.”

Like Eddie McGuire responding to the furore over his racist attack on Aboriginal player Adam Goodes, the lesson learned from reports of sexual assault is “the mike was on”, in other words, don’t get caught.

But Krien doesn’t draw any useful conclusions from any of what she reports.

Even when admitting there is a problem she has no solution—just a para-

graph that says: “Players, however, who tread the grey zone of rape and treat women badly, can be made accountable ... they can be changed, if their codes make it so, if their clubs quit covering up and if the world of football stops being a sanctuary for tired old sentiments such as ‘boys will be boys’.”

This amounts to saying it will stop when it stops.

The kind of sexist culture that exists in the AFL and NRL however, is a stark manifestation of the sexism reinforced by wider society—advertising, the media, the legal system, politicians and sexist policies. That is what must be confronted if we want to see a world without violence against women.

Unfortunately, this book only confuses that aim and lets the perpetrators of sexism off the hook completely.

**Amy Thomas**

# EGYPT'S SECOND REVOLUTION



By Lucy Honan

A MASS uprising in Egypt has forced out President Mohammad Mursi just one year after he took office.

The military was forced to step in and remove Mursi after over 17 million people took to the streets against his regime. The military is a key part of the Egyptian ruling class and leading the counter-revolution. But they were forced into action by the mass movement, just as they were when they removed Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.

The anger and the confidence behind this second revolution has been developing since the first revolution that overthrew Mubarak in 2011. The Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammad Mursi was popularly elected—but he was unable to satisfy the demands of the Egyptian revolution for bread, freedom and social justice.

Nearly half the population of 90 million live below or near the poverty line of \$2 a day. Unemployment is higher than under Mubarak.

So the Egyptian people in their millions insisted that democracy must mean more than a ballot box choice between dictators, and removed him.

Since 2011, the flight of capital, the drastic 60 per cent drop in foreign exchange reserves and the steady loss of the value of the pound has driven the economy into a downward spiral. The price of importing bread skyrocketed. Mursi wanted to resolve this crisis with a \$4.8 billion IMF loan, but

he could not impose the fuel subsidy cuts that the IMF demanded on a revolutionary population.

But while hardship was deepening, so was resistance and struggle. Since Mursi's election, there has been a new wave of strikes. There were an average of over 450 strikes and economically motivated protests each month between July and December. Between January and March 2013 they surged again, with 800 each month.

Mursi's response was to resort to terror and repression—attacking, jailing and torturing activists. “And thus”, writes Sameh Naguib of the Revolutionary Socialists, “Brotherhood rule became merely an extension on all levels of the Mubarak regime against which the Egyptian people had revolted.”

But the experience of power and confidence could not be so easily deflated. The nationwide “Tamarod” (“Rebel”) petition and four days of street protests were enough for the ruling class to realise that Mursi had to go.

## The military

When General Abdel-Fattah Al Sisi, head of the Egyptian armed forces, stepped in to oust the Muslim Brotherhood on June 30, the calculation was not one of how to save the revolution, but how to undermine it. By sacrificing Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood, both the army and the rest of Egypt's ruling class hoped to dampen down the protests and find

a more acceptable face for Egyptian capitalism.

Sameh Naguib has written, “Expectations of change are sky high. They are higher even than they were when we brought down Mubarak. But the possibility of any new government being able to offer genuine reforms is very limited”.

The interim government led by Adly Mansour offers the same neo-liberal agenda as Mursi and Mubarak, which demands ordinary Egyptians accept cuts to living standards to boost growth.

It will be unwilling to seize the wealth of Egypt's millionaires and redistribute wealth to address poverty. The new leadership has spent its first days working with the army to reaffirm alliances with the Gulf states, the US and Israel.

The army is very publicly flexing its muscle, with massacres of Muslim Brotherhood supporters and public shootings. The Revolutionary Socialists are only too aware that, “what happens today to the Islamists will happen tomorrow to the workers and the leftists” as the army grasps for control over the population. There are renewed arguments about why the army are no friends of the people, and serve to maintain the power of the rich and the stability of Egyptian capitalism.

The second revolution will need to become a third—one that puts power in the hands not of the Army or another pack of neo-liberal cronies, but the people themselves.

.....  
**17 million  
people took  
to the streets  
against Mursi's  
regime**  
.....

**Solidarity**