

REFUGEES, EQUAL MARRIAGE TURNBULL IS WORSE THAN TRUMP

GREENS

Lee Rhiannon and left face
pre-selection contest

REFUGEES

Death by detention
on Manus Island

UNIONS

Changing the rules that
gave us enterprise bargaining



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SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Things they say

A war on our way of life that politically-correct activists have been prosecuting for years now
Tony Abbott on the campaign for equal marriage

A small but fast growing group opposed to our way of life is bending Labor to its will
Pauline Hanson says Muslims are after our way of life too

The voluntary postal voting method ... flies in the face of Australian democratic values.
It is likely to ensure that not only will a minority of Australians vote, but also that large sections of the community will be disfranchised.
Malcolm Turnbull on a postal vote for a Republic in 1997

We can never be confident that there won't be another financial crisis
Janet Yellen, US Federal Reserve Bank Chair

This fight is far from over.
Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, head of US-led coalition forces fighting Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, on Mosul after its declared "liberation"

What I want to do is I want to fucking kill all the leakers and I want to get the President's agenda on track so we can succeed for the American people.
Anthony Scaramucci aka "The Mooch" on his aims as Trump's Communications Director

This is a major catastrophe for the American country. So I'm asking you as an American patriot to give me a sense of who leaked it.
The Mooch tries to convince New Yorker journalist Ryan Lizza to give up his sources

In an organisation as large as Commonwealth Bank, mistakes can be made
The bank tries to explain away 53,700 breaches of money laundering laws totalling more than \$77 million

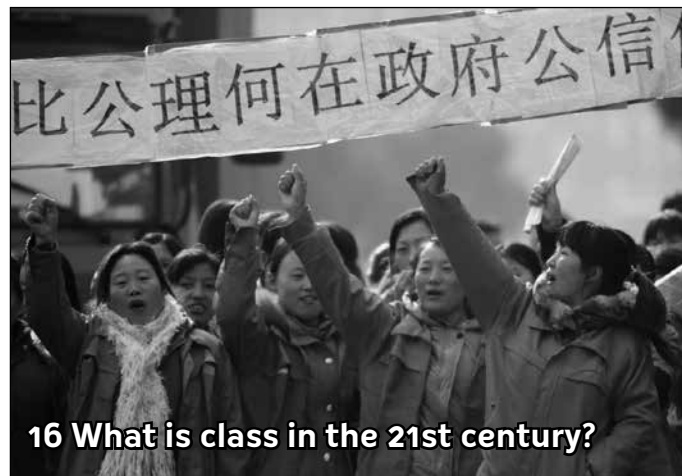
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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

One hundred companies cause bulk of emissions

JUST 100 companies have been responsible for 71 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emitted since 1988, a new report says. The "Carbon Majors Report", published by the non-profit CDP and the Climate Accountability Institute, also found that more than half of global industrial emissions can be sourced to just 25 corporate and state-owned entities.

Pedro Faria explained that the report, "pinpoints how a relatively small set of fossil fuel producers may hold the key to systemic change on carbon emissions".

ExxonMobil, Shell, BP and Chevron as well as state-owned companies such as China's coal producers, the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Aramco) and Gazprom are the top three polluters overall. According to the report, if fossil fuels continue to be extracted at the same rate for the next 28 years the consequence will be a four degree temperature rise by the end of the century, causing water shortages and mass species extinction.

Police decorate cars with Aboriginal art

THE QUEENSLAND Police Service has introduced two patrol cars featuring indigenous art. One of the new vehicles features a blue and white dot painting-style design and another is decorated with white and ochre coloured patterns and cross hatching. The two cars will be fully operational as part of patrols in Townsville.

Northern Region Assistant Commissioner Paul Taylor said, "Given these patrol cars will be out on the road virtually every day, it's a way for us to publicly express our desire to strengthen our relationship with Indigenous people". The headline on the Townsville police website describes the cars as "Deadly".

In the Townsville region Indigenous kids aged 10-16 are 16 times more likely to be charged with an offence and 28 times more likely to be thrown in a watch house than non-indigenous people of the same age.

'Sophisticated' mincer attack feeds terror scare



THE MEDIA has again been filled with a lurid terrorism scare, following arrests in Sydney over a supposed threat to place a bomb on a plane.

The Australian Federal Police dramatised it as, "one of the most sophisticated terror plots attempted on Australian soil". Police would have us believe that a bizarre plan to hide explosives in a kitchen mincer counts as "sophisticated". The bomb had precisely zero chance of actually making it through airport security.

The would-be bombers didn't go through with their plot, whether because the device was too heavy to fit into luggage or because they got cold feet. AFP Deputy Commissioner Michael Phelan has confirmed the bomb never made it to airport metal detectors. But he said a similar dummy device constructed by police for tests was detected by airport security scans 100 per cent of the time.

Police raided six homes across Sydney and arrested four people. Two of them have already been released. The first, Abdul Merhi, was held for 70 hours in custody before release without charge. But his name and identity had already been broadcast all over the media as a "terror suspect". His 39-year-old brother, Khaled Merhi, was charged with a minor weapons offence, not related to the terror plot, and released after being held for eight days under Commonwealth terror laws.

Two others have been charged over the bomb plot, Khaled Khayat, 49, and his brother Mahmoud Khayat, 32. Police also claim the men were also constructing a hydrogen sulphide poison-gas bomb. The AFP says the gas bomb was nowhere near operational, telling media they, "were a long way from having a functional device".

One million homes empty across the country

NEW ABS statistics show that up to 11.2 per cent of properties in Australia are lying empty, up from 9.8 per cent in 2006. Over two decades Australia has acquired 2.1 million new homes, but 360,000 of them remain vacant. University of NSW urban policy expert Hal Pawson described the level of under-occupancy as "cruel and immoral" saying, "There is gross under-occupation across Australia". He told Fairfax media up to one million homes have three or more extra bedrooms in addition to what the owner would require.

Recent research by the Grattan Institute found that amongst the population as a whole home ownership has been falling for three decades. Among 25-34 year olds it is down 6 per cent in the last decade alone.

Research and writing by Adam Adelpour

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

Banksia Hill hell for child inmates

A SHOCKING report has exposed the appalling conditions at Banksia Hill, WA's only youth jail. The report was handed down in July by Neil Morgan, Inspector of Custodial Services.

It revealed that since the start of 2016 there have been six suicide attempts and hundreds of self-harm incidents amongst boys and girls locked up at the facility.

Heavily-armed Special Operations Group (SOG) officers have been regularly deployed at Banksia Hill. They used stun grenades and pepper spray on inmates and trained gun laser-sights on three boys, during an operation to get them off a roof. The use of "mechanical restraints" reached record levels in 2016 with controlled escorts used 244 times and physical restraints used in 266 incidents.

Inmates have also been regularly denied basic rights by having their food restricted and being subjected to extended lock-downs that prevented them getting legally required exercise time.

The report also said it had credible claims that CCTV footage and electronic records had been deleted and falsified at the facility. To test the claims investigators requested CCTV footage from the Department, however the Department, "then advised the footage had been recorded over after we had requested it".

WA has the highest rate of Aboriginal children in youth detention in the country after the Northern Territory, with Aboriginal children 54 times more likely to be detained, according to government figures.



EDITORIAL

Equal marriage, inequality, racism— all out to turn up the pressure on Turnbull

MALCOLM TURNBULL is lurching from one disaster to the next. Way behind in the polls, he is continually pandering to the right of his party, with his political authority fatally damaged.

The Liberals have descended into open warfare again over equal marriage. With their plan for a plebiscite blocked, the pressure to deal with the issue and deliver equal marriage has only grown.

Five Liberal backbenchers have forced the issue, demanding a parliamentary vote on equal marriage. Turnbull can't delay the issue indefinitely. He now says he wants it dealt with by December.

Their new plan is a farcical proposal for a voluntary postal vote in September. The government hopes to survive a High Court challenge by having the Bureau of Statistics run the vote, not the Electoral Commission. This is a desperate attempt to give Turnbull a fig-leaf so the right-wing of the Liberals will allow a vote in parliament. But it's likely some Coalition MPs will keep trying to delay no matter what happens with the postal vote.

There is no need for delay. Parliament could simply vote on the issue now.

Further protests can pressure MPs to cross the floor and side with Labor, Greens and independent MPs to bring on the vote.

In desperation, Turnbull is continuing to beat up fear about terrorism and national security. Peter Dutton's promotion to head the new Home Affairs super-department was yet another stunt to fan racism against refugees, migrants and Muslims.

But it's not winning them support. According to Fairfax media, young people in particular now agree that, "the threat of terrorism in Australia is seriously overblown and is being manipulated... as a source of distraction from other issues", according to focus groups.

Labor turns left

Labor's Bill Shorten has declared tackling inequality his "defining mission" and taken a lurch to the left. Low wages growth has seen workers' pay go backwards. Add in the cost of housing, soaring power bills and cuts



Above: Snap rally in Sydney demands an immediate parliamentary vote on equal marriage

.....
Some Coalition MPs will keep trying to delay equal marriage no matter what happens with the postal vote

to penalty rates for 700,000 workers and it's a toxic mix.

Treasurer Scott Morrison just tried to dismiss anger about inequality by saying, "it has actually got better".

Shorten is now going after family trusts used by the wealthy to avoid tax, saying there should not be "another set of rules" for the rich. Tax academic Dale Boccabella has estimated family trusts see the rich avoid at least \$2 billion annually in tax. Shorten's plan will claw back around \$1 billion a year.

Labor also says it will restore the tax on the top 2 per cent of income earners Turnbull scrapped, overturn the cuts to penalty rates, put \$17 billion more into schools funding over a decade and modify negative gearing to deter property investors.

Shorten has also tried to highlight Turnbull's failure by promising a referendum on a republic, four-year parliamentary terms and marriage equality within 100 days of coming to office.

Labor has sniffed the wind and is trying to tap into the thirst for change that fed Jeremy Corbyn's surge in

the British election. But Shorten is no Corbyn.

Labor remains in lock-step with the Liberals over refugee detention on Manus and Nauru, and has done nothing to stand up to their Islamophobia.

In announcing his crackdown on trusts, Shorten said it was part of delivering, "responsible budget savings"—not taxing the rich to fund housing, hospitals and universities. Shorten also stresses that addressing inequality will boost economic growth, sending a signal to the bosses that Labor has their interests in mind.

Changing the rules

Labor's industrial relations spokesperson Brendan O'Connor has talked up the need to change workplace laws, saying that in increasing inequality, "the dwindling bargaining power of workers and their representatives has played a central role".

This is music to the ACTU's ears. But Labor is yet to make any commitments. Labor is not going to give us the right to strike or scrap the fines that penalise industrial action.

It was a Labor government, under Paul Keating, that introduced the current restrictions on the right to strike associated with enterprise bargaining. When ACTU Secretary Sally McManus said unions were right to break unfair laws Bill Shorten distanced himself, saying that changing the law should be left to a Labor government.

That's why we need a serious union campaign to fight the penalty rate cuts, the Building Code and the Australian Building and Construction Commission. We can't wait for the election—the cuts to pay and conditions are hitting now.

The decision by unions in NSW to call a stopwork rally on 18 October is an important step forward. We need a campaign of ongoing industrial action to fight Turnbull, and pressure Labor to deliver change.

We need to be prepared to fight Labor too if they don't deliver on industrial relations and wages. But the ACTU is still sitting on its hands, preparing for a campaign to elect Labor when the next election comes.

Unions in NSW have shown the way forward. We need delegates meetings and stopwork rallies across the country to build a fightback.

Campus record of sexual assault product of a sexist society

By Amy Thomas

AUSTRALIA'S UNIVERSITIES are fostering an environment where sexual assault and harassment are commonplace, a new Human Rights Commission report shows.

The shocking findings, based on a survey of 30,000 students and submissions from 1849 others, found that 51 per cent of students were sexually harassed on at least one occasion in 2016. Twenty six per cent were harassed in a university setting and 1.6 per cent were sexually assaulted in a university setting.

Women were three times as likely to be assaulted, and trans and gender diverse students reported disproportionate levels of harassment in particular.

Old boys club

Though the report obscures this fact, it is Australia's top universities and their residential colleges that are bastions of sexual assault. At Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra, one of Australia's top institutions, where most students live in residence, students are twice as likely to be sexually assaulted.

Students living in residential colleges are the most likely to be assaulted and most assaults occurred at social events at university or in residences, on university grounds, or in the residences themselves.

The younger brother of the NSW Treasurer was recently charged with rape at a St John's college after party at Sydney University. In court, his lawyer accused the victim of lying and asking her friends to "inflict ... red marks" on her in order to accuse him of rape. He was acquitted.

Colleges have been more than reluctant to address the issue, and university administrations, concerned about upsetting the moneyed elite connected to them, have dragged their heels on challenging this.

Sydney University's notorious St Paul's College tried to boycott a major review into sexual assault at the university's colleges run by former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick. Earlier this year it said it would, "not be involved in the Broderick Cultural Renewal Project".

It follows a long history of scandal at St Paul's, where a "pro-rape" Facebook page was set up in 2009. It was forced to back down in June following media reporting on a Facebook post



Above: Students protest in the aftermath of the report at Sydney University

by a St Paul's student who referred to women as "harpooned whales" and wished other students "Happy slaying".

The College's warden, Ivan Head, responded by warning students to be careful of such comments because it might affect their job prospects. Head has since retired in disgrace.

Also this year, students at Sydney University's Wesley College printed "slut-shaming" lists of women who had allegedly slept with the most people.

According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, business leaders with links to the colleges' ruling bodies tried their best to undermine and stop the review.

Sexist society

Very few students reported their assault or harassment to authorities, and only 4 per cent believed universities were doing enough to prevent abuse. It's an accurate perception. There are few consistent systems to deal with complaints, and the processes can be difficult, traumatic and non-transparent.

One submission to the report revealed that a student who was raped by three class members, and reported this to the university, was then enrolled in a class with two of the perpetrators.

It's not just university administrations that turn a blind eye to sexual assault and harassment, but society as a whole. Many of the "old boys" of

colleges like St Paul's join the privileged elite at banks, corporations and in politics.

The report suggests that things like "alcohol" and "easy access to residences" are "contributing factors". But the real question it fails to address is why the victims of assault—predominantly women—are seen as less than human by their perpetrators and by society.

This culture of sexist impunity at universities mirrors that of the football codes, the Australian Defence Force, and private schools. Courts rarely convict in cases of sexual assault, and it is still legal in some Australian states to discuss a victim's sexual history in court.

We live in a deeply sexist society that pays women less than men, still entrenches women as primary carers in the home, that sexualises women's bodies to sell products, and that commodifies sex and sexuality.

A 2014 National Community Attitudes Survey found that Australian attitudes to sexual assault have worsened, with 43 per cent of respondents believing the sexist myth that men rape because of uncontrolled sexual urges, one in three saying women often led men on and invited assault, and one in six saying that a woman could mean yes when she says no.

As well as demanding change at universities, we must fight the structural sexism that reproduces such horrors.

.....
It's not just universities that turn a blind eye to sexual assault and harassment, but society as a whole

Lee Rhiannon faces challenge in Greens pre-selection in NSW

By James Supple

ANOTHER POLARISING pre-selection contest has begun in the NSW Greens, over the party's Senate ticket for the next federal election. NSW upper house MP Mehreen Faruqi is standing against sitting Senator Lee Rhiannon, who is up for re-election.

The federal party room's attack on Lee Rhiannon in June, excluding her from party room meetings, has turned her into an important symbol for members in NSW.

She is the most prominent representative of the left-wing grouping that has dominated the NSW Greens, often at odds with party leaders like Richard Di Natale.

Greens members have rallied around her in defence of grassroots democracy in the party and the ability to bind the way MPs vote, as well as in opposition to Di Natale's parliamentary pragmatism that saw the party flirt with supporting Turnbull's Gonski 2.0 schools package.

In the statement announcing her decision to seek pre-selection, Rhiannon defended a vision of The Greens as "a party of protest that supports social movements", and positions itself firmly as wanting to see the defeat of the Turnbull government and its war on workers.

In contrast to the right of the party who favour trying to win small business and Liberal votes, she pointed to the importance of class issues like housing, Medicare, unions and the right to strike and the way, "thousands of people's hopes and dreams have been shattered by entrenched inequality".

Di Natale and the party's right want to see Lee Rhiannon pushed out of the Senate. They have waged a long-running campaign against Rhiannon and the NSW Greens, who are seen as an obstacle to dragging the party to the right.

It is disappointing that Mehreen Faruqi, someone who has a good record of standing up to racism and defending grassroots democracy in the NSW Greens, has chosen to stand against her.

Faruqi has been encouraged to run by other MPs in the NSW Greens who have little sympathy with Lee Rhiannon's more left-wing approach. She will have the backing of the party's right in NSW.

A defeat for Lee Rhiannon in the pre-selection would be a serious



Above: Greens MPs Lee Rhiannon and Mehreen Faruqi attend an iftar dinner

blow to the left in The Greens. While the federal party room's attack on her backfired, boosting her personal standing, she is by no means assured of winning. The left has lost the last two pre-selections in NSW, held within a few months of each other last year. On both occasions, the pre-selection was won by explicit candidates of the right.

This time the right is backing Faruqi as a "compromise candidate" who will draw votes from both more left-wing and more moderate Greens members. If the right can marshal the support it mustered behind candidates in the last two NSW pre-selections, as well as confuse enough left-wing Greens members into voting for Faruqi, she could win.

What kind of party?

At stake is not simply who sits in the Senate. Greens leader Richard Di Natale's negotiations with Malcolm Turnbull over Gonski 2.0 almost led to disaster for the party. Supporting the plan would have alienated The Greens from their many supporters among teachers and all those who want to see The Greens fight Turnbull.

The drift towards focusing on deals in parliament, or "delivering outcomes" as Di Natale puts it, risks the kind of disaster that befell the Democrats when they supported John Howard's GST.

The left cannot afford to be complacent. A much greater effort to campaign amongst the membership is needed than in the past.

There should have been meetings called around Gonski 2.0 and the party room's attack on Lee, defending the importance of working with teachers and education unions.

Her pre-selection campaign is a chance for public meetings setting out an alternative vision for an explicitly left-wing party. In the era of Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders, The Greens need to fight against the political mainstream and put forward radical left-wing solutions to inequality and neo-liberalism. This can attract not just existing Greens members but many supporters as well.

The campaign will need to be explicit about the issues at stake. Every Greens member and supporter needs to understand the politics behind divisions in the party.

Events are coming to a crunch for the left in the NSW Greens. There will be another tightly contested pre-selection next year for candidates for the next NSW state election.

This will pit two sitting MPs, the left's David Shoebridge and the right's Jeremy Buckingham, against each other.

If Shoebridge loses he is unlikely to win re-election, removing the only Greens MP in the NSW parliament associated with the left. If both Lee Rhiannon and Shoebridge lose, the left will not have a single MP.

The left needs to get organised. The future of the party as a force for supporting struggles outside of parliament is at stake.

.....
A defeat for Lee Rhiannon in the pre-selection would be a serious blow to the left in The Greens

Tokenistic plan for Indigenous ‘voice to parliament’ stalls

By Paddy Gibson

IN JULY, the government-appointed Referendum Council delivered their final report, following two years of consultation with Aboriginal people about “recognition” in the Australian constitution.

The consultations, or “dialogues”, culminated in a major conference at the Yulara resort near Uluru. Many black activists criticised these dialogues for being “invite only”. Despite this, there were clear expressions of the anger felt in communities at the ten year government-sponsored campaign for tokenistic “recognition” in the constitution, while daily oppression and poverty continue and demands for self-determination, treaties and justice are ignored.

The Uluru conference was widely reported as supporting Noel Pearson’s proposal for an Indigenous representative body, a “voice to parliament”, being enshrined in the constitution. This proposal was endorsed by the Referendum Council, who said it was the only option for constitutional reform that would meet Indigenous aspirations.

But the push for a “voice to parliament” just continues the tokenism of the “Recognise” campaign and does nothing to challenge black oppression. Pearson carefully crafted the proposal to appear non-threatening to the Liberal Party and the business community. The composition of the “voice” would be determined by the parliament of the day, could be hand-picked, and would have no powers to veto legislation. Its only function would be to offer advice—which could simply be ignored.

A number of Aboriginal leaders opposed to Pearson’s plans walked out of the Uluru conference and the proposal has been slammed by activist groups like the Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance.

This opposition was locked out of the exclusive Garma festival in Arnhem Land in early August, whose primary sponsors are Rio Tinto and the Commonwealth Government. Conservative Indigenous figures like Pearson, Marcia Langton and Galarrwuy Yunupingu held court with Turnbull, Shorten and corporate representatives to push for the “voice”.

But even this tepid proposal has gained no traction with Turnbull and looks destined for the political wilderness. Turnbull refused to commit to



Above: Malcolm Turnbull with Galarrwuy Yunupingu at the Garma festival

supporting the “voice” and even rejected Shorten’s proposal for a Parliamentary Committee to simply “consider” the Referendum Council report.

Shorten played cynical politics at Garma, saying Labor would support a

referendum for the “voice”, but only if the Liberals do too. This is in marked contrast to his clear commitment to hold a referendum on a republic if Labor wins the next election—without any such precondition.

Shackled to a hospital bed, Indigenous man dies in custody

ERIC WHITTAKER, a 35-year-old Gamilaroi man and father of five, died while shackled to his hospital bed on 4 July. He had been refused bail for minor charges and sent to prison. The circumstances of his death remain unclear. Eric is the latest in a number of horrific deaths in custody in NSW. His family joined a protest on 19 July demanding justice and an independent inquiry. The protest had been planned for some time to mark one year since Wiradjuri woman Rebecca Maher was found dead in a Maitland police cell.

Mr Whittaker’s family have been provided conflicting reports on the head injuries which caused his death, with police claiming he fell in an office, and Corrective Services that he fell in the prison yard. Neither account is immediately consistent with the doctor’s report that the bleeding started at the top of his skull.

Mr Whittaker was taken to Westmead hospital, where he was shackled to a hospital bed, despite being on life support. Requests to have the shackles removed were refused by Corrective Services, who instead demanded the family delete pictures taken of the appalling scene. After life support was turned off, the

family were given only 10 minutes in the room before being hustled out.

The denial of bail and subsequent incarceration happened in the context of recent, harsh changes to NSW bail laws. These laws extend the presumption against bail to a swathe of offences and have led to a 20 per cent increase in incarceration. This has had a massive impact on Aboriginal people in particular. Since the Coalition took power in NSW in 2011, Indigenous incarceration has risen by 35 per cent. While there have been deep cuts to social support services, the Coalition has committed \$3.8 billion to building thousands of new prison beds.

Mr Whittaker’s family also lost Eric’s 26-year-old cousin David Dungay Hill to death in custody in December 2015. Dungay was held face-down, restrained, and tranquilised by riot cops in Long Bay jail. His final words were “I can’t breathe”. Aboriginal rights campaigners are planning a national week of action against deaths in custody and youth prisons in the last week of September, when the NT Royal Commission examining abuse of juvenile detainees hands down its final report.

Daniel Cotton

Turnbull refused to commit to supporting the “voice” and even rejected Shorten’s proposal for a Parliamentary Committee

Another Manus death— Turnbull is worse than Trump



By Ian Rintoul

THE DEATH of Hamed Shamshirpour has rocked the Manus detention centre. Hamed, a 31 year-old Iranian refugee, was found hanging from a tree on 7 August behind the school, near the East Lorengau Transit Centre.

Hamed's death is the fifth at the detention centre, and comes at the same time that Australian Border Force and PNG Immigration are trying to drive refugees out of the detention centre with forced closures of compounds.

A shocking history of abuse and mistreatment surrounds Hamed. His mental health had seriously declined. Even in 2015, when he was brought to Melbourne for medical treatment, he requested help for his mental health but was returned to Manus, where his mental health deteriorated badly.

His distressed behaviour led to

him being jailed and repeatedly beaten by PNG police. In January this year, he was released from jail and placed into the East Lorengau Transit Accommodation.

The government denies all responsibility for Hamed's death. They would not even notify the family that Hamed had died. But like the four others, Hamed has been killed by a detention system that was established, funded, and administered by Australia. There is more blood on the hands of Turnbull and Dutton.

The government can't hide behind the argument that they are saving people from drowning at sea. It is deliberate government policy that is taking their lives.

Reporting on Hamed's death, the *Washington Post* headline screamed, "Trump said the Australians were 'worse than I am' on immigration. A tragedy may prove his point."

Above: Refugees in the detention centre on Manus hold a vigil for Hamed

Arrests on Nauru as protests re-ignite

MEANWHILE ON Nauru, disappointment and despair has turned to anger as the hopes of resettlement in the US have been snatched away again.

Protests have spread from the gates of the refugee settlements to the detention centre and, significantly, to immigration offices at Beach House and to the OPC 1, the administrative centre of detention operations on the island.

The OPC 1 protest struck a nerve. Five people were arrested and beaten when police attacked the peaceful protest on 8 August.

On the night of 8 August, a transport bus was burned at the OPC 1 gates.

A hastily convened court on 9 August (the day after their arrests) convicted and jailed four of the refugees on charges of unlawful assembly for 14 days.

A shocking history of abuse and mistreatment surrounds Hamed

THE LEAKED transcript of the conversation between US President Donald Trump and Malcolm Turnbull over the deal to settle some refugees in the US, reveals Trump telling Turnbull, "You are worse than I am."

Trump asks, "What is the thing with boats? Why do you discriminate against boats? No, I know, they come from certain regions. I get it."

But Turnbull explains it is not that the boats come from "certain regions", Australian policy bans anyone who arrives by boat.

Trump is impressed and thinks being worse than him is a compliment. But as incredible as it seems, on refugees, Turnbull is worse than Trump.

In fact Turnbull started the conversation emphasising an earlier discussion with Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, about how Australian policies had informed the immigration policies of the Trump administration.

Trump came to power promising to build a wall between Mexico and the US. Turnbull already has a "wall"—a naval blockade between Indonesia and Australia—that is ruthlessly policed to repel asylum seekers.

Turnbull also praises Trump's prioritising of minorities in his executive order banning the citizens of seven Muslim countries from entering the United States. Turnbull boasts of Australia's own discriminatory policy towards Syrian refugees, "Ninety per cent will be Christians," he tells Trump, a "deliberate policy... I have taken."

Turnbull is revealed as callous and hypocritical. Turnbull tells Trump, explicitly, that the agreement with the US, "does not require you to take any." And when Trump questions why 2000 people are imprisoned on Manus and Nauru asking, "Why haven't you let them out," Turnbull says Australia knows everything about them and they are not bad people.

The transcript makes sickening reading as Turnbull both grovels and boasts to Trump of how alike they really are. In the process the US deal is also exposed as a shabby trick.

But it also reveals the significance of the fight against Turnbull. When Trump is taking inspiration from Australian refugee policies there is every reason to redouble our efforts to end detention, end the turn-backs and fight to bring all those on Manus and Nauru to Australia.

Ian Rintoul

Bureau outlook stormy as staff step up industrial action

By a CPSU member

CPSU MEMBERS at the Bureau of Meteorology have been ramping up industrial action.

Recently, for the second time, Bureau staff sent management a clear message with a convincing “no” vote on their latest Enterprise Agreement (EA) offer.

It’s now been about three years since our current EA expired and almost four years since staff have had a pay rise.

The government’s restrictive public sector “bargaining framework” has now been relaxed, and as a result more and more agencies have finalised new agreements.

The stunning exception to this trend is Bureau Management who are still trying to strip rights from the agreement and put them into unenforceable policy.

Management’s are proposing cuts to shift work penalties, remote locality allowances, and travel entitlements in exchange for a measly pay rise. Any staff who depend on these entitlements have effectively been offered no pay rise when the loss of conditions are taken into account. Some staff are also concerned that relocation entitlements are going to be stripped from the agreement.

Bureau staff have been taking back to back half-hour rolling stoppages of up to 3.5 hours across the country, along with stop work demonstrations outside offices.

Work bans and actions are also being imposed, such as attempting to read out statements over the radio (before being cut off by the presenter), and not responding to non-Severe Weather inquiries.

There are positive indications that industrial action is putting much more pressure on this time.

Management are scrambling to find replacements, and to try and take control of the radio broadcasts. Some work is also going out later than scheduled as an unavoidable consequence of being down at times to a skeletal staff.

Management has finally agreed to re-examine the cuts to conditions, but as yet have made no concessions.

The union has extended industrial action until 23 August, and plans to keep up the pressure until they shift.



Above: A stopwork protest outside the Bureau of Meteorology in Sydney

Industrial action is putting much more pressure on this time

NSW universities move towards strikes

WORKERS AT three NSW universities are moving closer to strike action in the face of their management’s attacks on working conditions and pay.

Workers at Sydney University, University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and Western Sydney University (WSU) are all going through enterprise bargaining negotiations.

The NTEU has already balloted members for industrial action at Sydney Uni, succeeding in clearing the hurdle of 50 per cent of ballots returned. With a planned restructure looming after negotiations, one of the key issues has been job security. Management has refused to accept a “no forced redundancies” clause in the agreement that would guarantee people redeployment in comparable positions instead of being sacked.

There have been some concessions won such as including workers from one of the labour hire companies in the agreement for the first time and rebuffing plans to stop advertising professional roles internally. Management had also initially wanted to scrap the 40-40-20 rule that gives academics time to do research but have backed away from that after the union decided to begin the strike ballot.

But the bosses are still pushing to remove caps on teaching-only roles. And they want to remove Scholarly Teaching Fellow (STF)

positions, which are a pathway out of casual jobs. Management is also refusing to provide sick leave and other forms of leave to casuals. And they are yet to make an offer on pay. Union members are meeting on 17 August to develop a plan for industrial action.

At WSU workers voted 99.5 per cent in favour of industrial action and have already taken a one-hour stoppage for meetings. The bosses want to strip away limits for workloads and are proposing a 1.3 per cent pay rise, a real wage cut taking into account inflation. They are also trying to get rid of STF positions. Professional staff face losing their flex leave entitlements. There is also a restructure of admin, including a pay downgrade for many staff.

At UTS staff are fighting for transition into permanency for fixed term and casual workers and payment for all work for casuals, as well as joint consultation committees and parental leave for all staff. If these demands are not met in two weeks they too will ballot for action.

These struggles will have to link up with the fight against the Turnbull government’s cuts of \$1.1 billion from higher education funding. The university bosses will attempt to use this as an excuse to go even harder slashing the pay and conditions of workers.

By Miro Sandev

Wages and inequality: Why are workers feeling the pinch?

By David Glanz

IF YOU'RE feeling worse off financially, it's because you are. Wages in Australia went backwards in real (after inflation) terms in the first quarter of 2017.

It's part of a long-term decline. According to the Australia Institute, wages and super contributions fell to just 46.2 per cent of national GDP in the first quarter of 2017, below the previous record low in 1959.

We deserve a pay rise—and the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, Philip Lowe, agrees.

His speech in late June urging workers to ask for higher wages raised eyebrows. As the ABC put it: "It wasn't quite Karl Marx, but, for a central bank boss, it was heady stuff..."

Marx called capitalists "a band of warring brothers". Individual employers are happy to keep their own wage bill low—but they would prefer other bosses to pay more, to boost workers' consumption.

Lowe's role means he speaks for Australian capitalism's overall interests. And he's concerned that rising electricity and gas bills will mean workers having less to spend on discretionary items.

It's a process that's already under way, according to the head of Coles, John Durkan. Speaking in late July, he said families were spending less on fresh food and meat in favour of cheaper groceries.

Households in the bottom fifth of income distribution had experienced average cost of living increases of 8 per cent since 2011, compared with 6.2 per cent for those in the top fifth.

Treasurer Scott Morrison shares Lowe's concerns about low wage growth—not least because it means less revenue from income tax. But the federal government has been leading the way in offering miserly increases to public servants.

There are two reasons why he and other employers are getting away with this for the moment.

One is the continuing decline in union membership. Where unionism remains strong, as in commercial construction, wage rises are around the 4 per cent mark. But too few workers are in strong unions or any union at all.

The results can be no pay rise—staff at the Bureau of Meteorology, for example, haven't had a pay rise in



Above: Fighting against wage cuts outside the Esso plant in Gippsland

four years—or pay cuts, in the shape of reduced penalty rates.

Traditionally, economic growth and falling unemployment help workers gain higher wages. But economists are reporting that the recent rise in full-time jobs isn't the whole picture.

The proportion of underemployed people—those who have a job but want or need more hours—rose to 8.8 per cent in the second quarter this year, the worst since 1978.

So it appears that some workers are prepared to go with minimal or no pay rises in the belief they may be able to get more hours overall.

Debt

The other issue worrying Philip Lowe is rising household debt, which as a share of total after-tax income rose to 190 per cent in March, among the highest proportions in the world.

The National Debt Helpline took more than 150,000 calls last year and on current volumes they're expecting that figure to rise to 182,000 this year.

When interest rates rise from their current historic low, that will tip many workers into mortgage stress, and many already in stress into crisis.

Again, it's already happening. In March, 22 per cent of the 3.1 million households with mortgages in Australia were suffering mild stress—cutting spending or running up credit card bills to make their home payments.

About 1 per cent of households are in severe stress—behind with their repayments.

So it's no surprise that when Morrison said it was nonsense to say that inequality was rising in Australia, he was howled down by many—including the "Bolshevik banker", Philip Lowe.

Lowe, like many members of the ruling class, are not just worried about workers' spending power—they're also concerned that the squeeze on workers will lead to a rise in political anger.

The Age reported a discussion among business leaders and academics at the Australian National University in June.

Peter Varghese, a former head of the Department of Foreign Affairs and now Chancellor at the University of Queensland, summed up their angst.

"Every now and then," Varghese said, "I just wonder whether this was a gathering of the Ancien Regime and that we are all eating cake at Marie Antoinette's party."

"One day we might wake up and find the peasants are revolting."

The more far-sighted members of the ruling class can see the contours of a revolt against neo-liberalism similar to the ones in Greece, France or Britain beginning to take shape under the surface of society.

Their fear is our hope.

.....
Household debt as a share of total after-tax income rose to 190 per cent in March, among the highest proportions in the world

French socialist: 'There will be no honeymoon for Macron'

French socialist Denis Godard delivered this speech at the Marxism 2017 festival in London in July

LET ME begin by breaking the hype about President Emmanuel Macron, who has portrayed himself as different to other politicians. Macron is not a new figure. He has been a banker and a Minister of the Economy.

Macron is not clean. In just a few weeks three key ministers had to leave the government because of corruption.

Macron plans to sack more than 100,000 workers in public services and introduce a new labour law. Politically he is not particularly "liberal". He has already announced a new "anti-terrorist" law strengthening the state and the police and, symbolically, invited Trump to a military parade in July.

But most of all, Macron is not strong. Yes he won a landslide victory at the parliamentary elections with 370 MPs out of 577. But his candidates got only 16 per cent of the registered voters in the first round. In the second round the abstention rate broke records. It is estimated that less than one in every four people over 18 living in France, registered voters, non-registered or foreigners, expressed a choice for one of the candidates.

And that is to say nothing about the lack of cohesion of his newly formed party.

This lack of legitimacy is a result of the economic crisis which has seen French capitalism's position weakened in the last ten years, compared to the other developed countries.

It should be a warning for all of us that, in this context, a fascist party, the National Front, got 11 million votes in the second round of the elections.

Strikes and mass movements

But the growth of fascism is not inevitable. There is another side of the instability in France, which is the high level of working class combativity.

Everybody knows about the big movement of last year, not only the national days of strikes but the occupied squares and the Nuit Debout movement as well. This didn't stop during the election campaign this year. One of our comrades estimated that from the end of January to the end of March there were one million strike days, often invisible in the national media, but an unprecedented level during an electoral campaign.

There was a big movement against



police brutality around the case of a young black man, Adama, killed by the police last July. This took new momentum after another young man, Theo, was raped by the police in February. After the destruction of the refugee camp in Calais, the refugees were moved to different locations, but this spread the movement of solidarity all over the country. These movements against police brutality and racism converged in a 15,000-strong demonstration in Paris on 19 March. Again this was a huge achievement in an election period.

There were two other significant events. The first was the big movement in the French colony of Guyana that ultimately won. One demonstration gathered 10 per cent of the population, the equivalent of a six million-strong demonstration in France!

The second event is the demonstrations from mainly young activists against National Front meetings during the campaign of thousands in Nantes, Bordeaux and Paris. In Corsica young activists stormed a National Front meeting to disrupt it.

The seven million votes and mass meetings organised by Jean-Luc Melenchon's election campaign also expressed the radicalization through a radical left-wing stance against austerity. All this means there will be no honeymoon for Macron: the pressure on the trade union leadership and the CGT has seen them call a new national day of strikes and demonstra-

Above: French unionists demonstrate against Macron during his time as Minister of the Economy

tions on 12 September.

Melenchon and the left

The big weakness in the situation is the state of the organised left. The crisis of the Socialist Party is good news. Even their candidate in the presidential election, Benoît Hamon, has decided to leave the party to build his own movement.

The big man in the left is now Jean-Luc Melenchon. But there are serious problems with him.

In the process of his campaign he weakened the political organisations that previously supported him by setting up a new, very top-down movement around himself. And politically he nearly dropped references to class struggle for appeals to nationalism, claiming he was a patriot and arguing that the only solution for refugees was for them to stay at home, since France could not welcome them. He dropped the use of red flags and the Internationale from his meetings for the French flag and the French national anthem.

The issue of building class unity is vital in a country where one third of the working class is either black or Arab. This means taking a clear stand against racism, against Islamophobia, police brutality and in solidarity with refugees.

France is an example of the instability, political crisis and class confrontations that are becoming common in many countries. This situation creates huge dangers but also huge opportunities for revolutionaries and the left.

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There is another side of the instability in France, which is the high level of working class combativity

By Lachlan Marshall

Mosul 'liberation' leaves city destroyed

LAST MONTH Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory against Islamic State (IS) in Mosul. But there was little to celebrate for the city's residents.

The assault by the Iraqi army and a Western coalition including Australia and the US dragged on for nine months, devastating the city and its inhabitants.

Bombing by the US-led coalition has killed hundreds of civilians and displaced hundreds of thousands more. The coalition dropped almost 5000 bombs in June alone.

Airwars, which tracks civilian casualties, says that deaths in Iraq and Syria have massively spiked since Trump came to office, averaging 12 civilian deaths a day—that's 2200 since January, almost as many as during the eight years of the Obama administration.

An Amnesty International report estimates that Iraqi and coalition forces killed as many as 5800 civilians in west Mosul between February and June.

Hoshyar Zebari, a former government minister told *The Independent's* Patrick Cockburn that, "Kurdish intelligence believes that over 40,000 civilians have been killed as a result of massive firepower used against them, especially by the federal police, air strikes and Isis itself."

Amnesty accuses the Iraqi military and its coalition allies of violating international law.

US Air Force Brigadier General Andrew Croft claimed, "we use the most precise and discriminate weapons we can ever use and are available in the world to avoid targeting civilians." But Amnesty's report reveals that the Iraqi army repeatedly fired untargeted rockets into civilian areas, leading to massive loss of life.

"Starting in January 2017," the reports says, "pro-government forces carried out a series of unlawful attacks in west Mosul, relying heavily on explosive weapons with wide area effects such as IRAMs (Improvised Rocket Assisted Munitions). With their crude targeting abilities, these weapons wreaked havoc in densely-populated west Mosul and took the lives of thousands of civilians."

The coalition dropped leaflets instructing Mosul residents to place children's clothes on their roofs to mark civilian homes. But these homes were bombed anyway. Amnesty also accused IS of transferring civilians into areas of heavy fighting and using them as human shields.



After the coalition "liberated" Mosul, Iraqi forces proceeded to torture and execute suspected IS fighters.

Human Rights Watch has received information about execution sites, including one in western Mosul where 17 corpses were discovered in pools of blood. Video emerged of Iraqi soldiers throwing captured fighters off cliffs, then shooting them.

More of the same

This kind of brutality and sectarian violence were precisely what led to the emergence of IS in the first place.

IS was born out of the chaos produced by the US-led invasion of Iraq and the occupiers' efforts to stoke sectarianism. It then grew during the civil war in Syria.

Belkis Wille from Human Rights Watch describes how Shia-dominated Iraqi forces, "have carried out campaigns of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and extrajudicial killings. These have all been key push factors for young Sunni Arab men to join Isis."

Reports tell of Shia flags flying in Mosul, a statement that the city, a Sunni majority area, is now under Shia military occupation.

Even the commander of US military operations against IS told the BBC, "If we're to keep... ISIS 2.0 from emerging, the Iraqi government is going to have to do something pretty significantly different."

Guerrilla resistance by IS in Iraq will continue. And the Iraqi army's elite unit, the American-trained Coun-

Above: Journalists escorted through the rubble in Mosul by Iraqi troops

ter Terrorism Service, has lost 40 per cent of its troops.

Raqqa

Now the focus is on the battle for Raqqa, IS's de-facto capital in northern Syria. It is already the target of hundreds of US-led coalition bombs every day.

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces are closing in. But their backbone are fighters from the Kurdish militia the YPG.

The Kurds have a long-held aim of establishing a self-governing territory in the Kurdish areas of northern Syria.

In the 1970s, Bashar's father, Hafez al-Assad, evicted tens of thousands of Kurds in Raqqa province in order to resettle Arabs. During a government offensive in December 2015 Kurdish fighters seized Arab towns. In Raqqa, a mainly Arab area, there is fear of further Kurdish incursions.

Skirmishes between Arab and Kurdish militias have already broken out, and there is a risk of a free-for-all once the ousting of IS creates a power vacuum.

The US-led coalition's cries of triumph are hollow. They are only fuelling the bitterness and alienation that allowed IS's growth in the first place. Intervention by foreign powers can only make things worse.

The bombing must stop so ordinary people in Iraq and Syria have the chance to regroup and struggle for their own liberation—just as millions across the Arab world showed they could in 2011.

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Amnesty's report reveals that the Iraqi army repeatedly fired untargeted rockets into civilian areas, leading to massive loss of life

HOW ENTERPRISE BARGAINING TRADED AWAY OUR CONDITIONS

The acceptance of enterprise bargaining has seen union officials trade away rights like penalty rates, preparing the ground for the Fair Work decision, writes **James Supple**

SALLY MCMANUS, secretary of the peak union body the ACTU, has called for action to “change the rules” over industrial relations. Workers’ reduced bargaining power and restrictions on the right to strike are driving inequality and low wages growth.

The decision to cut penalty rates for workers in retail, fast food, pharmacies and hospitality by the so-called “Fair Work Commission” is a graphic example of how the system is failing workers.

But it has also been the willingness of union leaders to work within the industrial relations system, trading away conditions like penalty rates, which led to this situation.

Today’s industrial relations framework was established by the shift to enterprise bargaining under Paul Keating’s Labor government. This began in 1991, initially with the support of the ACTU.

It spread rapidly from 1994, when Keating’s Industrial Relations Reform Act entrenched enterprise bargaining as the main mechanism for winning pay rises. Before this industry-wide Awards determined in the Industrial Relations Commission had been more important.

Central to the new system was the idea that wage rises should be contingent on agreeing to “trade-offs” by sacrificing conditions to ensure “productivity increases” for business. Keating himself said in 1991 that enterprise bargaining was necessary so that businesses could, “obtain the great productivity advances available from changing workplace arrangements and conditions”. What this really meant was forcing us to work harder and longer in order to boost corporate profits.

It was also enterprise bargaining legislation that restricted “legal” industrial action to defined “bargaining periods” when negotiating a new

enterprise agreement. Strike action around any issue that emerged after bargaining was finished, whether job cuts, safety breaches or other workplaces changes, became illegal.

Basing negotiations at a workplace or enterprise level, as opposed to industry-wide, was designed to force workers to take responsibility for profits at the company where they worked.

Penalty rates and shift loadings paid for working outside usual hours were among the first conditions to be traded away, as bosses pushed for more “flexible” hours of work.

One way of doing this was to lengthen “ordinary working hours”. This meant extending the hours when employees could be required to work, and often abolishing penalty rates during these hours.

In 1994 the Commonwealth Bank and Advance Bank used enterprise bargaining to introduce work at ordinary rates, without penalties, on evenings and weekends. Email Appliance factories began paying ordinary rates for any work between 6am and 6pm.

Rodney Adler, boss of insurance company FAI, boasted that enterprise bargaining meant, “We can now operate until 9pm, seven days per week during holiday periods without paying penalty rates.”

Even where penalty rates were retained, bosses used the new system to impose around the clock shift work. Academics at the Workplace Research Centre at Sydney University tracked the impact of the new system. In 1997, they wrote, “It is clear that working time arrangements in Australia are being transformed. Fewer employees now work ‘standard’ hours.”

At Coles and Bi-Lo, unions agreed to a deal in 1996 that saw “ordinary hours” redefined to cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Other employers simply demand-

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Penalty rates and shift loadings paid for working outside usual hours were among the first conditions to be traded away

ed an increase in the working day. At Alcoa the work week was extended from 38 to 42 hours, while Richmond Council in Melbourne increased the working day from 7.2 to 7.7 hours.

Elsewhere, bosses used enterprise bargaining to impose job cuts. Qantas cut over 3000 jobs in exchange for a 6 per cent pay rise over two years.

Enterprise bargaining did deliver pay rises, at the expense of these “trade-offs”. A “no disadvantage test”, which still applies today, meant agreements were supposed to leave workers better off overall.

But that wasn’t how most workers saw it. Around 60 per cent reported an increase in work effort and between 50 and 60 per cent said work had become more stressful, according to government surveys collected in the first two years of the new system. One quarter of workers reported working overtime, and almost half of them were doing it unpaid.

Enterprise bargaining also increased inequality between workplaces and eroded solidarity between workers within an industry. Workers at well organised companies where the union was strong were able to extract higher wage gains and keep more of their conditions. Other workers in the same industry might be left with much lower wages and conditions.

In construction, workers at large projects run by the big companies have been able to win significant wage increases and rostered days off. But workers on smaller, suburban sites where the union does not organise get less.

Bosses have also been able to “divide and rule”, even within companies, by dividing workers up into different sections. Agency bargaining in the public service, for instance, meant that the workforce had to negotiate enterprise agreements agency by agency as opposed to one agreement for the

whole workforce. This has eroded solidarity between workers who might be in the same union, but get vastly different conditions. The end result is lower union bargaining power overall.

Union officials' role

Union officials and many workplace delegates swallowed the idea of helping the bosses improve productivity, imposing the measures on the workforce that were making them work harder.

Not surprisingly, many workers began to resent the way their own union representatives were working with management to cut their conditions. At the ANI Bradley foundry in Brisbane the tensions even led to a fist fight between the union delegate and another worker.

The decline in union membership accelerated, as less and less workers saw the point in being in a union, falling from 40.5 per cent of the workforce in 1990 to 28.1 per cent by 1998.

There was a decrease in secure, full-time employment and an increase in casualisation, from 15.8 per cent of the workforce in 1984 to 27.7 per cent in 2004. The growth in part-time work has also meant more precarious employment for many, with a third of all part-time workers without guaranteed hours of work each week.

This same approach to workplace bargaining continues today. Its outcome was exposed in the appalling deals agreed by the SDA at employers like Coles and Woolworths that, in some cases, scrapped penalty rates altogether.

The agreement at Coles was so bad that it left workers worse off than the basic Award, supposedly a minimum legal standard. The SDA argued that workers got an hourly pay rise under the deal, but that was little solace for the many part-time and casual workers who lost their penalty rates.

The agreements at other big retail employers are just as bad. Payslips from Woolworths, KFC and Hungry Jack's examined by Fairfax newspapers show workers there had been underpaid by millions of dollars, compared to what they would have got under the basic Award.

Trading away penalty rates created the ground for the Fair Work decision in February that cut them across the board for retail, fast food and hospitality workers. Once unions agreed to start scrapping penalties in enterprise bargaining agreements, it helped erode the idea that workers should be paid more for working on weekends and



Above: Workers at Sydney University on strike during enterprise bargaining negotiations in 2013

public holidays.

And it is not just the SDA selling out workers. Labor leader Bill Shorten has been embarrassed by media scrutiny of deals his old union, the AWU, agreed when he was at the helm and shortly after. But the whole union movement accepted the idea of trade-offs and sacrificing conditions as part of enterprise bargaining.

Opposition

Right from the beginning of enterprise bargaining, there was significant opposition to the trade-offs and cuts to conditions from rank-and-file union members.

A number of workplaces rejected deals approved by their union officials. In early 1994 workers at the Sheraton Wentworth Hotel in Sydney voted down a deal promoted as “exemplary” by the ACTU. Their union officials had already implemented it at two other Sheraton hotels. It scrapped penalty rates, absorbing them into workers’ annual salaries so that management could have “flexible” rostering.

Most union officials agreed to deals cutting conditions, arguing they were the only way to get a pay rise. But there were a handful of disputes that showed a way to win pay increases without trading off conditions—organising an industrial fight. In 1994, the year enterprise bargaining began in earnest, firefighters in NSW won a 13 per cent wage rise after refusing to accept trade-offs. They voted down five shoddy deals and imposed work

bans and rolling strikes.

Workers at Franklins warehouses in NSW held a week-long strike the same year against efforts to introduce speed-ups and increase casual staff, forcing the company to both retreat on the trade-offs and agree to an immediate pay rise.

It is only such a fightback in the workplaces that can defend penalty rates, stop the erosion of pay and conditions and build union strength. This will require defying the industrial relations laws that restrict the right to strike and make it harder to organise effective union action.

Sally McManus’ comment that unfair laws need to be broken was celebrated across the union movement. But these words need to be put into action. The outcome of enterprise bargaining has shown that there is no chance of partnership between bosses and workers where both benefit.

There has to be an end to the acceptance of trade-offs and efforts to help business boost productivity and profits. And unions need to reject the straight-jacket of enterprise bargaining and fight for industry-wide conditions and pay rises using the “pattern bargaining” that our industrial relations system has tried to ban.

We need to fight both the bosses and the law in order to win gains on pay, rights at work and union power.

Further reading

Enterprise bargaining: A no win game for workers by Tom Bramble

WHAT IS CLASS IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

Apparent changes to the way we work can make it seem as if the working class no longer exists. But **Joseph Choonara** argues that we still have the potential to change the world

ONE OF the most famous works in Marxist literature, the *Communist Manifesto*, ends with the battle cry, “Workers of the world unite.”

When the revolutionary Karl Marx wrote those words in 1848, the world’s workers constituted about ten or 20 million people.

They were just 2 or 3 per cent of the global population, confined to just a few areas.

Today everything is different. In 2013, according to the International Labour Organisation, the majority of people participating in the global labour force were, for the first time in human history, wage labourers.

There are now 1.6 billion wage labourers, an increase of 600 million since the mid-1990s.

Yet there is a huge debate about the ability of the working class to challenge capitalism.

For instance, in 2011 the left wing academic Slavoj Žižek described a 2.6 million-strong public sector pensions strike in Britain as “a revolt of the salaried bourgeoisie”.

He wrote, “The chance to be exploited in a long-term job is now a privilege.”

His article combined two arguments. First, the mass of people are too downtrodden and precarious to resist. Second, a small minority is too privileged to have any interest in fighting.

To understand class in the 21st century we have to start somewhere different.

Marx argued that the working class occupies a specific position within capitalism. This gives it special interests and capabilities, and will tend to push workers into struggle.

Workers don’t own the means of production. They have to work for a capitalist in order to survive. And in that process they are exploited, because capitalists derive their profits from paying workers less than the

value of goods they create.

A number of things follow from this.

The working class constitutes the overwhelming majority of society. It is the only class with the numbers and social weight to drive through a revolutionary transformation. And capitalists depend on it to make profit.

This makes exploitation different to oppression.

For instance, being subject to racism gives me no particular power. But when I’m subject to exploitation, I have a potential power over capital.

The working class is also a collective class. Capital is compelled to draw together machinery and workers in huge concentrations. In Britain roughly half of workers toil in workplaces of 100 people or more.

Capital then puts workers in similar positions, so they can understand and identify with one another.

And the constant pressure on capital to extract more profits from workers pushes them to organise and fight.

The working class is the most consistently militant class in history. Slave revolts took place every 100 years or so. Peasant revolts broke out every 20, 30 or 50 years.

With workers there are strike waves or revolutions every few years somewhere in the world.

Workers can feel powerless a lot of the time and so can accept ideas that run contrary to their own interests. But an alternative set of ideas—based on solidarity, common interest and so on—always coexists with that.

The situation is dynamic.

Ideas

Workers’ ideas usually change because of two things. First, mainstream ideas begin to break down in moments of crisis.

Second, ideas change when work-

The constant pressure on capital to extract more profits from workers pushes them to organise and fight

ers fight, through going on strike or taking industrial action to fight for better wages, improved conditions or over wider political issues. They can recognise their common interest and capacity to resist capital and transform the world.

At their high points working class struggles open up the possibility of revolution. When workers go on strike and stop production they show that capitalist wealth depends on labour—and that a world without need is possible.

But when the working class isn’t fighting, it can seem that it no longer has this power.

Some people think changes such as the decline in manufacturing in developed countries like Australia or Britain mean workers are too weak to challenge capitalism.

But manufacturing never employed over half the workforce in any country.

And manufacturing output remains high even though the industry employs fewer workers.

Factories and their workforces have been more productive so that they can turn out the same amount of goods with less workers.

This gives small groups of manufacturing workers power. Those at one point of the production chain depend on others. Small groups can shut down entire networks.

The decline of manufacturing is not a decline of the working class. Marx never argued that production was about the production of stuff. He argued that the working class produces profits for the capitalists.

Amazon workplaces, for example, produce nothing themselves but employ up to 3000 people in the run-up to Christmas. Work is monitored constantly.

But they have the potential to organise and fight because they are drawn together and exploited.

That's also true of workers who don't directly generate profits, such as finance workers. They don't create new value but they are central to the smooth functioning of the financial system.

Privatisation in the public sector means many of these workers have acquired a power to hit profits. And even when non-privatised public sector workers fight they have power.

Teachers' strikes for instance can cost the economy millions of dollars because schools shut and people have to take time off work to look after their children.

Such strikes also help others see that resistance is possible.

Some say work is more precarious now and this affects workers' power.

Most people accept the argument that work is becoming increasingly casualised.

Casual work

The number of casual workers in Australia increased in the 1980s and 1990s, but since then has been stable for two decades at around 20 per cent of the workforce.

There are attacks on workers. But the form of attack isn't predominantly moving permanent workers into casual positions.

Some writers, such as Guy Standing, overstate what he calls "the precariat" because he throws in other groups such as part-time workers.

However, part-time work isn't a way of making workers peripheral. It's a way that huge numbers of people, particularly women, have been drawn into the workforce and given permanent jobs.

They do not have different interests to other workers.

Most workers in Australia remain full-time, around 61 per cent of the paid workforce, with another 26 per cent in part-time positions.

And the longevity of employment has gone up. More workers are in long term work than ever before in advanced countries, especially in Britain and the US.

There are, and always have been, some workers in weak positions.

In Marx's day the biggest occupational group was domestic servants—often young women who were quite isolated.

But other workers in weak positions, who were said to be unorganisable, such as dock workers, did organise, struggle and improve their conditions.



Above: The working class today is over 1.6 billion strong, with literally millions of workers drawn into strikes in places like India

We can't generalise from the situation of the weakest workers.

And it isn't always easy for bosses to sack workers.

When the global economic crisis hit in 2008 most bosses in Australia held onto workers while attacking their conditions or reducing their hours. This reduced the increase in unemployment.

It can be disruptive to kick people out of work. It affects morale and can lead to struggle.

It can be costly. Almost every group of workers has some degree of training and experience that is valuable to the capitalist class.

Defeats

So why do we feel so precarious? Since the 1980s working class people have been hammered.

There have been extraordinary defeats on a global scale from which the working class movement has not yet recovered.

The ruling class has been able to engage in an offensive against labour.

Restructuring has also drawn new workers into new areas of employment like IT and services.

Much of the workforce has little direct experience of class struggle. Strong unions remain in a

handful of industries like construction and in some areas of the public sector. But there are huge areas of the economy where there is virtually no union organisation. Socialists and left-wing ideas have also been marginalised.

In this situation people can feel much more vulnerable than they are. But the reorganisation of the working class doesn't rob it of its potential power.

As US socialist Hal Draper puts it, workers don't simply exist. They mature with the experience of struggle.

This begins to restore confidence. Workers in new areas of the economy will ultimately fight because of their position in capitalism.

We have to anticipate those struggles. They will open up a much wider audience for socialist and revolutionary ideas.

But even today the audience isn't tiny. We have to relate to that audience and patiently try to win an argument about working class power if we want to break this rotten system.

Socialist Worker UK

THE 1945 SAIGON UPRISING WORKERS & ANTI- IMPERIALISM IN VIETNAM

When France returned as a colonial power to Vietnam in 1945, the Vietminh were determined to hold back social revolution, writes **Mark Goudkamp**

THE EVENTS surrounding the 1945 Saigon insurrection against imperialist French troops re-occupying Vietnam at the end of the Second World War have been overshadowed by the US war in Vietnam two decades later.

But Vietnam in the 1930s and 1940s was one of the few places at the time where Trotskyism played a central role in the labour movement.

Two groups, *La Lutte* (Struggle) and the League of International Communists, had significant influence, particularly in Saigon and its twin city Cholon. During the uprising, they played a leading role in setting up scores of Popular Action Committees.

A small group of Vietnamese students in Paris were convinced by the writings of the Russian revolutionary, Leon Trotsky. Stalin's rise to power in Russia had crushed the revolution and seen the adoption of socialism in one country, as Stalin sought alliances with imperialist powers like Britain and France. This also led Stalin to a "stages theory" of revolution, which held that underdeveloped countries like China and Vietnam could only achieve nationalist revolutions that brought local capitalists to power. The lessons of the Russian revolution of 1917, where a democratic revolution grew over into a socialist revolution bringing workers and peasants to power, were ignored.

In China in the 1920s, Stalin's approach proved disastrous, as the Communist Party held back workers' struggles and allowed a nationalist party to take power and unleash vicious repression against workers.

The Vietnamese Trotskyists sought to develop a Marxist strategy in opposition to the Indochinese Communist Party that was led by Ho Chi Minh and loyal to Stalin's Russia.

French colonial rule

French colonial rule in Indochina was brutal, but it also generated massive resistance.

In 1930, rebellious soldiers in the north and peasants across Vietnam staged an armed uprising. The French responded by destroying the villages—bombarding some, while security police reduced others to ashes.

The Vietnamese Trotskyist Ngo Van Xuyet recalled in his autobiography *In the Crossfire*: "Between May 1930 and June 1931, I counted newspaper reports of no less than 120 peasant marches and more than 20 strikes in Cochinchina [the southern part of the French Vietnam]."

From 1934, a coalition of revolutionaries (Stalinists, Trotskyists, and anarchists) began to produce a legal French-language newspaper, *La Lutte*, and to stand in Saigon City Council elections. This alliance, which struggled against both the colonial regime and the pro-French bourgeois Constitutional Party, lasted nearly three years. Ngo recalls how meetings were, "filled to overflowing with the common people of Saigon and infiltrated by Sûreté cops [the secret police]", with speeches using taboo words like "union", "capitalist", "proletarian", "strike" and "class struggle".

But in 1935 the "Franco-Soviet Mutual Assistance Pact" was signed, and the Indochinese Communist Party, following Stalin, put Russian foreign policy before revolution, and dutifully supported the French empire.

Faced with this turn by the Communist Party, Ngo Van and other comrades split from *La Lutte* to form the League of Internationalist Communists (LIC). As Ngo writes: "We feared that the victory of Vietnamese nationalism over French imperialism would simply mean the rise of an indigenous bourgeoisie, and that the desperate condition of the exploited workers and peasants would remain the same as ever."

But the Trotskyists' influence was growing. They organised a large secret meeting with delegates from 40 factories and workshops in Saigon-

The Trotskyists denounced compromise with the French colonial regime

Cholon to set up the Syndicalist Workers Federation.

The police issued a statement of alarm, "The workers are supporting the Trotskyist party more than the Indochinese Communist Party."

In Saigon council elections in 1939, with the Second World War looming, the Trotskyists humiliated both the Stalinised Communist Party and the Vietnamese bourgeois parties.

The Communist Party had campaigned for democratic reforms but supported the French government's conscription of 20,000 extra soldiers to defend their empire in the coming war and a new armaments tax.

The Trotskyists denounced all compromise with the French colonial regime and argued for a "united front of workers and peasants" against war.

They wrote to Trotsky, now living in Mexico after being expelled from Russia by Stalin, that, "despite the shameful coalition of the bourgeoisie of all types and the Stalinists we have won a stunning victory." Trotsky was overjoyed.

World War II

When the war broke out, the French authorities ruthlessly repressed both the Trotskyists and Communists. While the Japanese army swept through Asia in the early 1940s, it was only in March 1945, as they faced defeat by the Allies, that the Japanese imprisoned the French authorities and took direct control of Vietnam, trying to present themselves as liberators from colonial rule.

Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party created the Vietminh (Vietnam Independence League). Its program excluded any reference to class struggle and agrarian revolution. Instead, its aim was: "To expel the French and Japanese fascists and to establish the complete independence of Vietnam, in alliance with the democracies."

The new Japanese Governor launched the JAG (Vanguard Youth) to try to tap Vietnamese nationalist senti-



Vietnamese Trotskyist Ngo Van Xuyet

ment and maintain control. “In the cities, the [JAG] movement soon became the de facto power in every factory, every office, every workshop and every school... It was the same in the countryside, from the main county towns to the smallest hamlet,” Ngo wrote.

When the Japanese army surrendered to the Allies on 15 August, it left a power vacuum. Vietminh troops entered Hanoi and took control of northern Vietnam.

But workers did not simply want national independence. Near Hanoi 30,000 coal miners elected workers’ councils to manage production, taking control of public services, the railways and the telegraph system. “In this working-class ‘Commune’, life was organized with no bosses and no cops”, wrote Ngo.

However, the Vietminh, in line with the Stalinist “stages theory” was determined to limit the struggle and crushed any efforts towards workers’ revolution. They looked to deal with Britain and the US, boasting: “[We have] collaborated closely with the Allies in the fight against the French and the Japanese. We will thus be in a good position to negotiate [independence].”

Most of the nationalist groups now aligned themselves with them. The Vietminh announced that they were forming an interim government.

The Vietminh urged people to co-operate with the Allies, declaring, “Every building, public or private, should display the national flag of Vietnam, surrounded by the flags of the British, the Americans, the Russians and the Chinese.”

The Vietminh denounced the Trotskyists who were organising the workers, “A certain number of people who are traitors to the Fatherland. We must punish the gangs who are stirring up trouble.”

In the north, Ho Chi Minh had already eliminated his political opponents. Now the Trotskyists in the LIC organised to resist in the south. “We put out a leaflet and distributed it in the Central Marketplace, calling on the population to arm themselves, to organize themselves in people’s committees and to set up people’s militias...”

“In Saigon, large numbers of people’s committees arose spontaneously as organizations of local administration... Embryonic people’s councils were springing up everywhere”.

In some provinces peasants spontaneously took possession of the land. “‘The land to those who work it’ had once been a Communist party slogan, but now, shamefully, in the name of independence, party militants tried to



Above: A commander in the French colonial forces returns to Vietnam in 1945

restrain the peasant. The peasants responded by threatening to lynch them.”

Although the Communist-led Vietminh cravenly welcomed British General Gracey’s arrival in Saigon, he quickly ejected their interim government. The Vietminh urged the population (along with its armed forces) to disperse into the countryside and to, “remain calm, as the de facto government hopes to obtain negotiations”.

But Gracey freed and re-armed French soldiers, who unleashed a reign of terror against the local population.

The city centre fell to the French, supported by British forces. But the outskirts of the city and the suburbs, where most of the poor lived, was controlled by a coalition of insurgents (including some Vietminh). Saigon was surrounded. What happened in the city was now crucial.

In Saigon, workers at the Go Vap tram workshops, influenced by the Trotskyists, broke with the Vietminh labour union and formed their own workers militia.

Under fire from two sides

However, the Trotskyists were under fire from two sides—Anglo-French troops and the Stalinist Vietminh. It was the latter who murdered most of their leaders.

Ta Thu Thau (a very popular Trotskyist who had been elected three times to the local council) was captured and murdered by the Vietminh on his way back from the North.

A week later, the Vietminh sent police against the Tan Dinh people’s committee in Saigon where the Trotskyists were very active. Weapons were seized

and 30 delegates imprisoned.

French forces were failing to break out of Saigon. But on 3 October, the Vietminh called for insurgents to *only* fight the French. This “appalling and deadly folly”, as Ngo describes it, allowed British Gurkhas and Japanese troops to pass freely through insurgent controlled areas and re-take strategic positions, enabling the French to break the resistance elsewhere.

Within months, masses of French troops had re-established colonial rule.

Ngo fled for France, one of the few Trotskyists to survive the Vietminh’s massacres. He later wrote that: “Of all those who had taken part in the revolutionary opposition movement and who had remained in the country, barely a one survived.”

The Saigon uprising exposed the counter-revolutionary policy of Stalinism on a scale no less significant than the crushing of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 and the Spanish Revolution of 1936-39.

The Vietminh fought a guerrilla war against the French, defeating them in 1954. But Vietnam was then divided with Ho Chi Minh controlling the North while a US-supported dictatorship controlled the south.

A heroic war to unite Vietnam finally defeated US imperialism in 1975. But the Communist Party, after crushing the hopes of workers’ revolution in 1945, simply set about building an independent Vietnamese state capitalism. It was the Trotskyists, and the insurgent workers’ struggles they took part in, that showed the possibility of the struggle against imperialism to build genuine socialism from below.



NSW UNION DELEGATES CALL STOPWORK RALLY

By James Supple

UNION DELEGATES in NSW have voted to hold a union-wide stopwork rally on Wednesday 18 October to step up the fight against the Turnbull government's war on workers.

A combined union delegates' meeting at Sydney Trades hall of 250 workers, mostly construction union delegates, backed a motion from the CFMEU construction union to call the day of action.

Unions NSW Secretary Mark Morrey seconded the motion and spoke in favour of it. But the peak union body, the ACTU, backtracked on earlier suggestions it would co-ordinate the October rally as part of a national day of action.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus addressed the meeting, but would only say, "We need to be ready to mobilise nationally, and we will do that at some point". She said the ACTU was working on a list of demands as part of its campaign to "change the rules" on industrial relations which would be ready, "either at the end of this year or early next year". It wants to wait until this is ready before organising national mobilisations.

McManus and the ACTU are clearly focused on a campaign around the next federal election, delaying any day of action until closer to the election date. The focus of her speech was on the "need to win public opinion" through finding examples of worker exploitation that, "demonstrate how unfair those [work] laws are".

Above: Delegates at the meeting at Sydney Trades Hall vote for action

Unions need to fight now, not simply wait to elect a Labor government at the next election

But Turnbull's laws targeting construction workers, through the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) and the new Construction Code, are already making life harder for construction unions. The cuts to penalty rates in retail, hospitality, pharmacies and fast food came into force on 1 July. Unions need to fight these attacks now, not simply wait to elect a Labor government at the next election, still up to two years away.

The meeting heard updates from a range of union campaigns, showing how the so-called Fair Work Act is stacked against workers. In higher education the NTEU is challenging rampant casualisation and the ASU is fighting the refusal of the Fair Work Commission to grant domestic violence leave.

It is by mobilising now that the union movement can both defeat the attacks and make sure the Turnbull government is booted out when the election comes. It is also the only way to keep the pressure on the Labor Party to reverse the attacks on workers if they get elected.

Defying the law

In moving the motion, Denis McNamara, from the CFMEU Committee of Management, said, "I'm a bit disappointed the ACTU and Sally McManus didn't mention a day of action or a date".

"It's good to talk about how bad laws need to be broken but we can't just talk about it."

Construction unions have already

held two nationwide stopwork rallies in March and June to fight the ABCC and the Construction Code.

As McNamara said, "The CFMEU, in our two rallies, we've broken the law. We went on strike and we marched out in the street. We got letters telling us if we did it we'd be fined. We threw those letters away. Not one of us has been fined."

He was backed from the floor by other speakers including John Henry from the firefighters' union, who said, "The only way you can win is by withdrawing your labour. We need to stop work, everybody, every union."

The push for the October stopwork rally in NSW came from the CFMEU, backed by rank-and-file unionists from other unions. Activists brought along petitions with the signatures of 550 unionists calling for a delegates meeting and a union-wide stopwork rally.

Delegates at the meeting were overwhelmingly from the CFMEU, with only a handful of rank-and-file members from other unions.

Amending the official motion, Denis McNamara moved for another combined delegates meeting in mid-September. This can be an important step in pulling more unions into active support for the day of action.

Delegates' meetings in other states could also push for similar stopwork action in October and beyond. An ongoing campaign of stopwork action can stop Turnbull implementing his new Construction Code, kick the ABCC off building sites and stop the cuts to penalty rates.

Solidarity