The recent Australian federal budget has once again highlighted the need for an effective Left to combat the Right's ever-increasing push towards domination of Australian society. This push is no surprise given the natural tendencies of austerity capitalism. However, to those of the general public who believe wholeheartedly in the welfare state and want to reconcile social justice with a capitalist economy, this budget strikes a real blow. We need to show that the budget is not only short-sighted but that the existing system is failing to keep its promises.

Cutting higher education and pushing towards an American-style education system reveals the inherent biases of the capitalist state and the current two-party system. This should come as no real surprise considering the cuts already pushed by the previous Labor government. These higher education cuts restrict the access of poorer, potential students, and also cut along a gender axis that is often ignored.

As the current state of the welfare system shows, we cannot even trust the capitalist system to function in a way that it promises. The social security net is being used as a disciplinary tool against workers and the unemployed, and a subsidy for business with programs like Work for the Dole.

But this Right-ward trend not only makes the time ripe for a Left resurgence, but for a further, extreme Right-wing one too, in the form of fascism. Parallels between the rise of fascists in Britain and the rise of similar elements in Australia should worry us all. This is further exacerbated by the role of the state in the control of the border, and the state-sanctioned racism behind it.

Anarchism is at a low ebb in Australia, as it has traditionally been. As anarchists, we are constantly having to reinvent the wheel - in how we act, how we organise, and how we discuss issues. It is the failure of previous generations of activists that we have little history to draw on in that regard. We must have these discussions now in order to be as effective as we can be in the present and for those in the future.

Editors
www.anarchistaffinity.org

LABOUR AND DIRECT ACTION IN AMERICA - THE SEATTLE SOLIDARITY NETWORK

By Tom

In 2007 a group of activists from Seattle decided they needed to try a new approach to help working people stand up to their bosses and landlords directly and personally. The result was a network called "Seattle Solidarity"; a directly democratic, mutual-aid network of working people. "SeaSol" is an inspiring new strategy of networking that is neither a union or a party; they exist to support individuals to overcome hierarchical barriers, encouraging and backing them up in direct actions against their employees or landlords. The model has been largely successful, winning most campaigns, and inspiring similar networks around the globe.

Antonio became a member of SeaSol who joined after learning about some of their past victories. His issues regarded his employer: 'Working regular 6-day, 72-hour weeks, Antonio received no breaks, no overtime pay, and was paid less than $7 per hour (far below Washington State's minimum wage)'. Together, Antonio and SeaSol voted and agreed to 'fight for 30 weeks of back wages, or $6,710.' In an example of group direct-action, SeaSol (consisting of roughly 50-100 members) and Antonio walked into the store he worked at and delivered their letter straight into the hands of his boss- requesting that he meet their demands. The boss contacted a lawyer and made some attempt at bargaining for less than their demands, but after

only one more direct action from Seasol and Antonio, the boss caved and paid on the spot!

Not all actions are as straight forward, however, and many campaigns have had to escalate and continue for a long time. The democratic approach means that when someone approaches SeaSol with an issue, the group votes on whether they deem the issue reasonable and worthwhile undertaking. If so, the approaching person decides on what actions SeaSol are allowed to undertake around their issue. For example, if an action might result in unreasonable retaliation from a persons employer, and the worker is unwilling to face that, then SeaSol will not proceed with that action. However, there is a 'level' based system of actions in order to avoid such conflicts. The first action sees the group delivery of a letter of demands to the landlord/boss, giving them two weeks to meet their demands. If these are not satisfied, the second action involves a more public approach. Seasol will distribute leaflets and letters to the neighbours/investors, and organise pickets outside the establishment/housing block. In these actions they try to use as little political langauge as possible in their interaction with the public, sticking to plain and simple language to highlight the essence of the matter. A typical leaflet might read 'Did you know that this restaurant pays its employees less than minimum wage?'

A frustration with traditional unions and NGOs, especially in the case of small-scale issues in the workplace or with landlords, led to the idea of building a network that could take on such issues in a more personal and straightforward way. According to one member the drive behind SealSol 'originated from frustration with symbolic and ineffectual anti-war and anti-globalisation protests and anarchist propaganda groups that had limited relevance to most people's lives.' The organisation does not have an explicit political mission– they do not exist to overthrow capitalism, there is no clearly defined political project, and the organisation has had to learn-as-they-go regarding issues around the various ism's of discrimination. As a consequence, the organisation is changing, learning and adopting processes to help better themselves, and in the meantime, is doing an amazing job improving the lives of many people.

SeaSol helps to educate workers and tenants, teaching people that demanding dignity and fairness from an employer or landlord is not 'causing trouble', but is instead standing up for basic rights. Actions undertaken help put the working class back on the offensive, rather than scrambling to defend the few rights they have through traditional institutions.

SeaSol has proven to be an inspiring example of direct democracy, direct action and class-organisation outside traditional organisations, entirely capable of engaging in battles and winning. There may be limits to the organisations political capabilities, but it certainly does what it sets out to do – inspire, and win victories for working-class.

You can find more information at:

http://www.seasol.net/
http://libcom.org/library/seasol-interview

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

By Mali

The current Liberal government's changes to higher education reflect a neoliberal agenda, in that they are attempting to change the entire way that higher education is thought of and organised in a 'prosperous' society like Australia. They are positing a series of radical right-wing reforms that aim to create a market of universities, this will create a class divide, largely excluding the working class.

To put it simplistically, the previous model worked in the way that once a previous student earned enough, they could pay back their loans and pay tax which would pay for the next generation, then that generation would pay for the next through their taxes and then it would be paid back, and so on. While this system still involved debt and an assumption that all people who have a degree will earn more, it was superior to what is suggested through the new system. This new system will create an even worse debt burden for students.

However, it is not impossible for education to be free under capitalism. It should be an expectation that the government make higher education free. There are any number of fields where excessive government spending are prevalent; the military budget is an example. Or the excessive funding of

the Australian Ballet School. The next obvious answer is tax on the ruling class and corporations. The suggested new, de-regulated system assumes that people attend university purely to earn more money in their careers. This neoliberal conception of the individual pursuit of education is at odds with reality, as people attend university for various reasons. It also ignores all the manifold forms of oppression that affect outcomes for students, placing all blame, and pressure around failing or succeeding upon the individual.

If it is assumed that students only study to earn more, degrees that lead to higher earning potential will be prioritised and those which do not will decrease in quality or be cut altogether. We have already seen the kind of choices made by universities with this in mind, what has been devalued, defunded and threatened to be cut has been units such as gender studies and indigenous studies. This is not a coincidence. It is obvious that the system this government is working towards is one where all universities are private companies with no funding from the government that compete with each other in a market system. De-regulation of fees is just the thin edge of the wedge. Supporters of this have, and will, continue to argue that this will bring prices down, however, the reality is that our university system will divide along class lines. Currently Australian universities are of a high standard in world terms, once deregulated, there will be a divide between "good" universities and "cheap" universities. The quality of education will decrease at these "cheap" universities, yet the quality will not necessarily increase at the "good" universities. This is where the class divide will exist.

As we have seen in recent years, all universities will cut costs by mistreating staff; they will further casualise positions, keep wages at a minimum and attack working conditions. This divide been "good", expensive universities and their "cheap" counterparts will create a further class divide where only the rich will be able to afford the "good" education. In contrast, the social mobility of those from low and middle-income families will continue to be wrecked. The most alarming part of this plan for higher education is CSP places for private institutions, it is clear that this government want to make private and currently public universities part of the same market. This is more than likely to create what they call in the UK "cashpoint" colleges, rather than improving the quality of education for the most people. These "cashpoint" colleges take public money and abuse the loan system in place to use students like ATMs; the result being empty classrooms in some universities and over-crowded ones in others. As once students have taken out loans to attend university it is only in the university's interest to keep them so long as they are getting fees: there is little incentive for students close to burning out to continue. Thus, these institutions value courses that will make money over providing a quality, well-rounded education. The current model that is being pursued by the Liberal party, is to take us as far down the market route as the American university education system. We do not want neoliberal education in Australia. We are all well aware from the American system, the cost of higher education in America stops people from attending a quality university, or

going to university at all.

We reject that this is the best model, that Pyne idealises as the best model for Australian higher education. At the moment, according to analysis by the National Tertiary Education Union, a medicine degree costs the ridiculous sum of $60,000, however with deregulation and interest rates, it could cost up to $200,000. It is hard to work exactly how much a degree will cost as it will be up to the discretion of each university, but it guaranteed to be to the detriment of university students and staff.

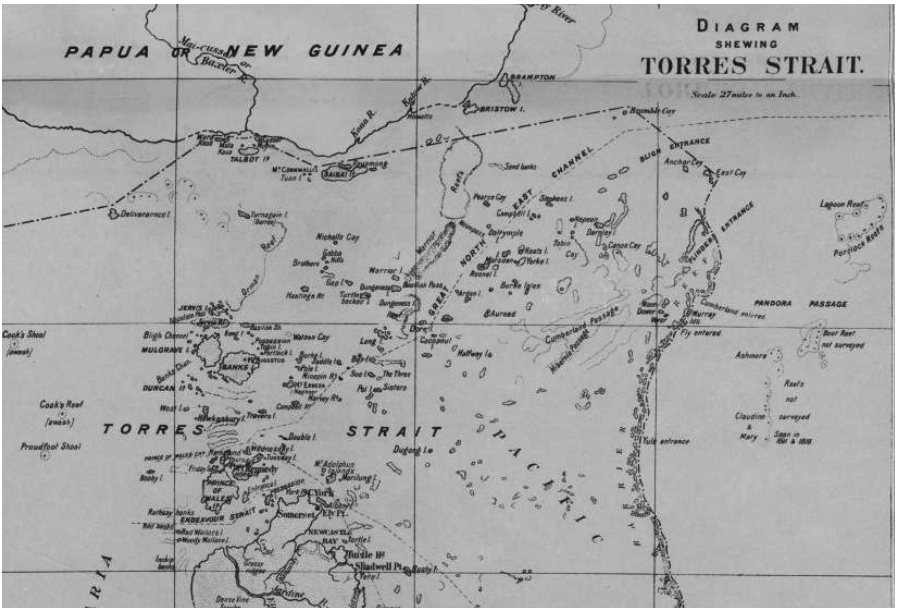
This new model will reinforce the growing disparity between Group of Eight universities, and other tertiary institutions. Universities such as those in the Go8 can more readily capitalise on a prestigious reputation and will outpace other universities in a price gap, narrowing the options low-income students have as prices diverge. This, in turn, will cause inequality between universities, not only in what is available to students, but also in funding to these universities - universities with higher fees will be better funded,however, better resources cannot be promised, as universities will consider themselves more of a company, therefore their concern will be in profit not education quality.

There is also a less publicised aspect on the issue of privatising education in Australia, that is how women will be affected with these changes. Due to the socialisation of gender in relation to work, women currently dominate total enrolments in the humanities compared to other degrees such as engineering and the sciences. As outlined above, the systemic undermining of less profitable degrees such as the humanities will lead to the disproportionate decrease in women who attend university. Plus, as total debt increases with time, this will negatively effect women, who are more likely to take time off work due family commitments (also due to socialisation), which will increase the amount and amount of time to pay off their debts.

The move to this explicitly neoliberal mode of tertiary education may fall under the radar of many Australians: this is because changes to student loans are expected, going by international trends, the main concern is the privatisation of education. We can see that there is an underlying agenda to move to a model which exacerbates unequal opportunities for a broad range of students, particularly those who come from low income, rural, indigenous backgrounds and international students (who are already treated as "cashpoints" and forced to live in poverty). Education needs to be preserved as an opportunity for all. Education should be free for all.

BORDER VIOLENCE AS SETTLER NATIVISM

By Lia



The following article is adapted from Lia Incognita's speech for the Movement Beyond Borders public forum held on Wurundjeri land at the Victorian Trades Hall on Saturday 30 November 2013. The forum was organised by the Beyond Borders Collective, with speakers Kaneez Raza, Angela Mitropoulos, Dawood, Ruben Blake and Lia Incognita sharing their perspectives, followed by questions and discussion with the audience. You can watch the video of the forum online: http://vimeo.com/81249630 (1 hour 54 minutes)

Asked to contemplate what a cross-border politics in Australia could look like today, I want to stress that for me, a movement *beyond borders* is not a movement of *no nations* or against nationhood. In fact one of the earliest interactions I had with the Beyond Borders Collective when it first formed was to question a photo on the Beyond Borders page at the time which showed a banner stating 'no borders, no nations'.

I believe supporting Indigenous sovereignty is essential to cross-border politics, and indeed no contradiction, if a cross-border politics understands that all people have the right to deter-

mine their law and the future of their land, though no nation has the right to refuse entry to vulnerable peoples. This is no contradiction unless the only way you can conceive of a country is as private property – which unfortunately seems to be not only a popular metaphor but the dominant interpretation driving government policy. As Lorenzo Veracini said recently in *Arena* magazine (No. 125, Aug/Sep 2013), "global condemnation of Australia's stance in 2001 was met with 'No one can tell me what to do', 'Nobody understands us', and 'I didn't do it' responses (that is, they threw the children overboard). Furthermore, Australia had a Prime Minister who was extraordinarily in touch with public sentiment was speaking about entry to the country as if he was sixteen and talking about his room: 'We will determine who comes to this country and under what circumstances'."

We should not accept this metaphor, this myth that a nation is dependent on border policing, and that a country is analogous to private property.

Another question this panel was asked was *how can we break from the language that defines the discussion around borders now*? This is imperative because a lot of pro-refugee rhetoric doesn't challenge the problematic ways the discussion has been framed by the right. We need to resist phrases like 'genuine refugees' or 'economic migrants' or 'the lucky country' when it has only ever been lucky for some. We need to resist language that feeds the lie of *terra nullius* by suggesting Australia is 'young', 'free' and full of empty space. We need to refuse to make these constant ongoing reassurances that only a small, manageable number of refugees will arrive, that they will be harmless and grateful and assimilate, that they will contribute labour and consumable diversity but nothing disconcerting or transformative. We need to reject this rhetoric not only because it legitimates a claims process that is traumatising, invasive and victimising, but also because it legitimates the Australian government's right to decide.

The perceived threat of people crossing borders is only part of what motivates Australian policy, so assuaging this anxiety is only part of challenging border violence. Operation Sovereign Borders is very explicitly and obviously about the colonial state performing sovereignty, as are earlier iterations of border control. This tactic has been part of Australian history since the start of colonial occu-

pation. The Colony of Victoria passed the Chinese Act limiting the number of Chinese immigrants on 11 June 1855, before even the first Constitution Bill passed the Victorian House of Commons. And, of course, the Immigration Restriction Act was quite famously the first major piece of legislation passed after Federation in 1901. As well as forced eviction from their lands, there have been numerous controls on Aboriginal people's movement in their own countries through Australia's history. This includes the exemption certificate system by which one could leave a reserve and access rights otherwise denied to Aboriginal people at the time, such as the right to own land or open a bank account, but in exchange was required to seek state permission before visiting family on reserves.

Border violence is central to colonial governments in Australia establishing and legitimating themselves, not least by promoting the notion of Australia as a single country and presenting the border as a natural geographic feature, formed by oceans and waters as Suvendrini Perera discusses. And, in fact, Australia's colonial past is brought up quite often in relation to border violence, for example in images of the First Fleet as 'boat people'. This imagery is important because the fear of invasion as retribution is a powerful motif in white Australian imagination, a motif that Meaghan Morris calls 'the chain of displacement'. Border violence is part of projecting the invader as outside and other, and functions as a concealment of European invasion.

But bringing up the colonial past can also normalise or nativise settler colonization, and erase Indigenous subjectivity and sovereignty in slogans like 'we are all boat people'. A focus on the moment of invasion or on the colonial past positions colonisation as history. It makes colonialisation a done deal, to which the only sensible responses are regret and apology, or pride and forgetfulness - but Australia has a colonial present. The border is not a natural or inevitable thing and neither is colonisation.

Understanding colonisation as an ongoing and always incomplete process suggests a future that's open to change. It shifts the onus of explanation to those who want to create and maintain borders rather than those who want to question them. It challenges the myth that refugees are a breach in an otherwise secure border. And it reaches through to a space where white Australia is and can only ever be a fiction that is made material through violence.

INTERVIEW WITH KOJO BARBAH FROM SOUTH LONDON ANTI-FASCISTS & THE ANTI RAIDS NETWORK

Kojo Barbah is a London based activist & a founding member of South London Anti-Fascists. He is also a member of the direct action migrant solidarity organisation the Anti-Raids Network.

Maybe we can begin by discussing the origins of South London Anti-Fascists (SLAF). Though London is a city with a long, continuous and quite notorious history of anti-fascist organising, SLAF only came to my attention last year, in the wake of the murder of British soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich on May 22nd. How and when did the group come together? Was the decision to reactivate the group out of mere necessity, in response to far-right attempts to capitalise on Rigby's death, or were there other factors?

South London Anti-Fascists were originally formed by trade unionists in 2008, namely Battersea and Wandsworth Trade Union Council and Croydon Trade Union Council. It was in reaction to the London Mayor and Assembly elections, which returned the highest proportional vote for the fascist British National Party (5%) in London and guaranteed them a seat in the Assembly. The vote, though overall still small, was acutely concentrated in Barking and Dagenham, poor deindustrialised North East London suburbs where the BNP were made the official local council opposition with 12 elected councillors. In South London, Morden was also a flashpoint for far-right activity. In 2009, the BNP's membership was leaked and though some people on it were never fully paid up fascists there was a sizeable number in this area, including a small scaffolding business run by a fascist which still operates today. Our view was that the far right were gaining ground in traditional working class areas and the privatisation agenda pursued by Labour had abandoned and alienated working

class interests. We were lucky to have a paid organiser to support our efforts. The far-right needed to be tackled using a diversity of tactics and the divided efforts of Unite Against Fascism (UAF) (predominantly SWP) and Searchlight/Hope Not Hate (HNH) were clearly not working.

Antifa at this time was at a low point as the BNP had moved away (though never completely abandoned) from street confrontation to wearing suits and appearing like professional politicians. Also, there were stories of Antifa attempting to blow up cars belonging to the wrong people and getting sent down for it. SLAF worked initially as a collective where HNH, UAF and autonomous antifascists could work together to organise against local threats and support individuals and communities who were targeted or concerned about local activity. We dwindled in activity as the threat of the BNP receded after 2010. The EDL emerged as a new threat and the UK Independence Party, though marginal, were in the background. I was the chair and my political orientation was changing too. I moved from a democratic socialist orientation to a more social anarchist position. During our down period, I read a lot more!

Lee Rigby's death definitely prompted a reactivation. I personally got a lot of calls asking what should be organised as the then leader of the EDL, Tommy Robinson, was coming to Woolwich. We were disorganised and too small in number to respond so initially we had to watch him on TV unopposed. A meeting was called by a prominent local anarchist a day later and I suggested using the SLAF banner as it happened in our patch. We made a callout to confront the EDL outside Downing Street and have started to hold regular meetings ever since.

Organised antifascists like Anti-Fascist Action (1985-1990's) and the contemporary Anti-Fascist Network have stressed, alongside the necessity of counter mobilisation and confrontation on the streets, the importance of 'filling the political vacuum'. This type of counter analysis generally consists of a class-struggle critique of capitalism, but often extends to critiques of the state, political liberalism and nationalism. SLAF seems to take this responsibility very seriously, and argues persuasively that struggles against all other forms of oppression (ubiquitous police harassment and violence inflicted upon communities of colour through policies like the Met Police's 'Stop and SEARCH'; the targeting of sex workers in Soho; 'raids' by the UK Border Force targeting migrant workers and asylum seekers to name but a few) are also antifascist activities. Can you elaborate on this connection?

There isn't unanimity in our group on this, we have Trotskyists and some who avoid political labels but this is the majority view.

Anti-fascism, bluntly, is stopping fascists from growing either in number or in confidence at the very least. At the maximum it is dismantling their capacity to be effective. Liberal antifascists believe antifascists are bad because they are illiberal and pay only lip service to parliamentary democracy. We oppose fascists because they seek our complete domination by exterminating working class power.

When we reformed, we wanted to express our beliefs about the nature of fascism and the state. Fascism is the ultimate expression of capitalism's need to control and subordinate human activity to its logic and authority. The state is its most effective tool. When

societies are failed by capital, the preferred solution is state repression. However in liberal democracies, unlike military dictatorships, repression cannot be nakedly deployed, apologetics are utilised to explain the contradiction of affirming human rights and the exercising of sub-human treatment. The law is the crystallisation of this – the targeting of minorities, whether it is asylum seekers, cultural groups or sex workers is the State practicing and perfecting its power to oppress. The more we allow this to happen, the better the police get at wielding it, the more polished politicians are at arguing for dehumanisation, and the more efficient media outlets are in convincing the public. We oppose state repression because it is antithesis of our power, which is our solidarity. We want to bring together the full spectrum of our human expression against state oppression. Capital, through the state, wants to divide and categorise us into economic utilities and human resources.

Fascism is capitalism unrestrained by historical appeals to morality or universal rights. The popular appeal of this doesn't happen overnight, but is a culture that can take decades, or in times of crisis, a few years to develop and become entrenched. If we do not resist state oppression then we allow the tools of our destruction to sharpen and be ready to put into fascist control.

In an excellent piece published on the SLAF blog in May ('Anti-Fascism One Year On From The Lee Rigby Murder'), you identify the predominance of 'populist' anti-immigrant rhetoric in the run-up to the European elections as a reason 'antifascism is necessary but insufficient', adding 'in our analysis, the state is a much bigger threat and generator of popular racism' (than UKIP, BNP etc). This is an observation with great relevance in the Australian context, where social justice campaigns often ignore structural issues, instead focusing on appeals to politicians, commentators and the state to be nicer, more compassionate and less racist. Given Australia's role as a global pioneer of mandatory detention of asylum seekers, and the fact that much of this infrastructure was built by the Australian Labor Party, this too seems insufficient. How does SLAF identify the role of the state in creating, exploiting and perpetuating racism? Any thoughts about organising outside of borders and against the state?

Australia's legacy of white supremacy is an outpost of British imperialism. The policy of White Australia may have been publicly restrained by the British but it was tacitly endorsed and clearly financed. In managing a global empire, Britain has learned to be less explicit about its racial hierarchy but it is clearly a deeply embedded part of British culture.

We as a group have not theorised how the state has created racism, but the works of Walter Rodney, Theodore W. Allen and bell hooks would illuminate here. I believe that racism was an imperialist construct invented to justify enslavement, genocide and subjugation of darker skinned peoples and their cultures. It is necessary for imperial capitalist accumulation to continue and allay moral qualms about inhuman treatment. If they are not human, went the theory, then it was justified.

It also helped and still does help the ruling elite manage class relations. Nationalism and whiteness create a powerful collective identity that politicians use to generate a sense of pride and superiority amongst the

white working class. Invoking whiteness, however subtly, signals that to be white is to be associated with being the dominator not the dominated, to be part of the history of Kings and Queens not the enslaved and impoverished, and that they are heirs to the pioneers of democracy and modernity and not savagery and barbarism. This is a myth of course, but it is said or inferred so often that it is widely believed. Even if racial myths based on biology have waned, they have transferred seamlessly into cultural myths. These ideas underlie why immigration controls are popular. They refer to the mortal danger that their biology or now culture may be irreparably damaged by the contamination of foreign bodies.

These myths aid class relations for the ruling class in another way, as they can form powerful associations to aid labour discipline. The welfare scrounger is the class equivalent of the asylum seeker. In other words, a pariah, a human to legitimately loathed. The stereotypical connotations of being Black, that is to be lazy, unable to organise your own affairs, scheming, preferring base pleasures to self-improvement and lacking a "decent" disposition provides a basis for reducing state social subsidy and weakening the power of organised labour. Racism and class hatred are interrelated, it is difficult to deploy one without making reference to the other. In breaking down these myths, we require socialisation, solidarity and struggle. Racial myths have been largely destroyed by the act of racialised people fighting to be recognised as human and white working class people living and working with racialised people and accepting that reality.

South London Anti-Fascists is part of the UK wide Anti-Fascist Network and the London based Anti Raids Network.

Anti-Fascist Network
http://www.antifascistnetwork.org

South London Anti-Fascists
http://www.slaf.org.uk

Anti Raids Network
https://network23.org/antiraids

London Black Revolutionaries
http://www.facebook.com/London-BlackRevs

Movement For Justice
http://www.movementforjustice.org

Unity Centre Glasgow
http://www.unitycentreglasgow.org

WELFARE ATTACKS AND COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE

By Rebecca Winter

The Liberal government has initiated one of the most significant attacks on the rights and conditions of welfare recipients in Australia that has been seen in decades.

The cuts

One of the key changes proposed is tightened restrictions and greater compliance requirements for unemployed people under 30 on Newstart or Youth Allowance payments. From July 2015, young people will be forced to endure a six-month 'waiting period' before they will receive any unemployment benefits (a 'hunger period' or 'homeless period' might be a more accurate description). During this period welfare claimants will be required to look for 40 jobs per month or risk an extended removal of support, even if they find casual or part-time work. Unemployed young people will also have to wait until they are 25 (rather than 22) to receive the marginally more liveable Newstart payment, which provides $100 more a fortnight than Youth Allowance.

After the six month wait, welfare recipients will be forced to do 25 hours of 'Work for the Dole' each week in 'individual work-like situations'.[1] If we think of a dole payment as the

1 http://www.humanservices.gov.au/corporate/publications-and-resources/budget/1415/measures/job-seekers/64-90066

'wage' for this labour, this means that if you're on Youth Allowance you will be paid $8.29 an hour for your efforts, or $10.61 for those on Newstart, which is well below the minimum wage of $16.87 an hour. And after six months of this, young unemployed people will once again have their payments removed for a further six months. The cycle begins again!

Young people on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) will also be hard hit by these attacks. If young people receiving the DSP are assessed to be able to work more than eight hours a week, they will be forced to undertake Work for the Dole or other job search activities in order to keep their payment. Young people who started receiving the DSP between 2008 and 2011 will also be re-assessed, and new tightened eligibility requirements will be applied, which means that some people who previously received this support will have it taken away.

The recent release of the interim McClure review into welfare paints a grim picture of future limitations on the DSP and expanded income management. The report recommends that the Disability Support Payment be restricted to claimants with a 'permanent' disability who have no capacity to work. Claimants who do not fulfil this condition would be moved onto unemployment payments, and would most likely receive lower payments than if they were receiving the DSP. This proposed change would target the majority of people on the DSP who either have a disability with periodic effects, or who have a long-term disability but nonetheless would be considered to have some capacity to work. McClure has noted that this proposed change will specifically target people with mental illnesses, such as depression.

The review also recommends that income management be expanded across Australia, so that young unemployed people and single mothers can only spend their dole payments on certain products from certain stores. Both the Labor Party and the Liberals have indicated that they would support the expansion of income management.

These changes will have a drastic impact on the lives of those who rely on government benefits. For those suffering through six months without any source of income, or DSP claimants now found to be to be ineligible for this payment, life looks bleak. Youth unemployment is currently at 12%. At least 700,000 people will be affected by these changes over the next four years, 550,000 of whom will be forced to apply for emergency relief services. These proposed cuts to welfare would 'save' $1.2 billion - a miniscule figure compared to the $12.4 billion to be spent on new military jets.

There are many reasons why we must create an organised resistance to these cuts and increased restrictions. The human impact of forcing hundreds of thousands of people onto even more inadequate welfare payments, or removing their access to this support entirely, is the most obvious and frightening consequence of these policies. Existing non-government forms of support for those living in poverty are already overwhelmed and under resourced. No one knows how unemployed young people whose support is removed will find the resources to survive through six month periods without any source of income. This will have its greatest impact on the most marginalised and oppressed groups of unemployed young people – those unable to access material support from their families, those fleeing abusive situations, people facing racist or an-

ti-queer discrimination, or those living in rural areas where jobs are scarce.

Welfare, discipline and capitalism

It's important to think about the role that attacks on welfare play in the capitalist system. Capitalism requires regular measures to depress wages in order to continue existing. For capitalists to increase their profits and minimise labour costs – to maximise exploitation – they must continually try to find ways to pay workers less. In contemporary times, we are told that this keeps the labour market 'competitive' and 'flexible.' In reality, this means keeping workers poorly paid and unable or too scared to fight for better conditions.

The current welfare system in Australia is, in part, the result of successful working class struggles for survival under capitalism. However, these changes highlight the fact that contemporary welfare regimes also play a powerful disciplinary role in maintaining a compliant and highly exploited workforce. The highly bureaucratised, dehumanising and inadequate character of Australia's welfare system benefits capitalists and their state allies by making unemployment as miserable an experience as possible. A highly disciplinary welfare system puts bosses and owners in a better position as a class to maximise the exploitation of their workers. Inadequate welfare makes it harder for workers to leave shit jobs which are underpaid or have unfair conditions. It also increases the risks of workplace organising, as young workers may face the prospect of having no income if they participate in industrial action and lose their job as a result of standing up for themselves and others.

Forcing young people to work for their dole payments provides a source of cheap or free labour to capitalists and allows them to drag down the wages of other workers. As Joseph Kay, from the syndicalist union Solidarity Federation, comments, measures like Work for the Dole are "a massive state subsidy to private capital."[2] In the UK, where 'Workfare' (an equivalent to Work for the Dole) was implemented across the country in 2011, there are documented instances of welfare claimants being used as a free replacement for part-time or casual staff.[3] For instance, in 2012 Asda sent workers home over Christmas and replaced them with welfare claimants on Workfare.[4] Work for the Dole programs also function to create an especially vulnerable category of workers. Welfare claimants on Work for the Dole cannot refuse to work, which means that if they complain about workplace conditions or take part in industrial action, they will risk being sanctioned for non-compliance and losing their dole payment with nothing else to fall back on.

One important thing to remember is that government measures to discipline workers are often trialled on the most oppressed sections of the working class. Income management was a key part of the 2007 Northern Territory Intervention. The Howard government justified its implementation by playing on racist and colonialist stereotypes about Aboriginal people being unable to manage their own affairs. Income management was introduced to 73 Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, and affected over 20,000 claimants. Income management has since been extended to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal welfare recipients in Bankstown (NSW), Logan, Rockhamp-

2 http://libcom.org/blog/new-social-workhouse-16022012

3 http://www.boycottworkfare.org/?p=3115

4 http://www.boycottworkfare.org/?p=306

ton and Livingstone, (QLD), Playford (SA) and Greater Shepparton (VIC). It is now likely that income management will be extended even further to cover welfare claimants across Australia. Thus, the prediction made by many Aboriginal activists that attacks on the rights of Aboriginal welfare claimants will be extended to other sections of the working class is becoming a reality.

If the McClure review's recommendations about income management are accepted, we may see Australia follow the UK's example and combine Work for the Dole with large scale income management. Through this, welfare claimants will be forced to labour for free for selected capitalists and then forced to spend their government benefits at these same shops, thus creating a double subsidy for capital. For instance, UK welfare recipients have been forced to work for companies like Asda and have then been required to use their welfare payments to buy from them as well, guaranteeing Asda both sales and free labour.

These examples highlight the coercive and exploitative character of the proposed welfare changes. These attacks will function to increase the coercive forces which affect both people currently working and the unemployed by placing both groups in a more economically precarious and less powerful bargaining position. The welfare cuts also allow the state to exert greater control over people's lives, by imposing certain forms of employment and certain purchasing patterns.

UK opposition to Workfare and Atos

When thinking about how we can successfully resist these cuts, we can look to welfare activists in the UK for inspiration. In 2011, the UK state announced the introduction of Workfare – a scheme similar to Work for the Dole under which welfare claimants are forced to do unpaid labour. The Boycott Workfare campaign was created in response, supported by the activities of Solidarity Federation.[5] This direct action campaign targeted companies using Workfare labour in a name and shame campaign which involved hundreds of pickets outside businesses across the UK. The campaign has achieved some important wins, by forcing at least 35 companies to reject Workfare as a result of the pickets.[6] The Boycott Workfare campaign was accompanied by other, more specific, initiatives, such as the 'Keep Volunteering Voluntary' campaign.[7] As part of this campaign, more than 393 organisations which use volunteers across the UK committed to boycott government Workfare schemes.

UK welfare activists also organised political actions against the notorious French corporation Atos, which was contracted by the state to determine who should be entitled to disability welfare payments and whether they should be forced to work. Atos decisions resulted in many people with a serious need for care being deprived of economic support. Significant numbers of people died or committed suicide in the aftermath of having this support withdrawn, some while waiting for the results of their appeals.[8] David Coupe, despite being housebound with a back injury, ulcers and diabetes, had his welfare entitlements cut as a result of an Atos assessment, and received no welfare for the last 10 months of his life before dying

5 http://www.solfed.org.uk/taxonomy/term/966

6 http://www.boycottworkfare.org/

7 http://keepvolunteeringvoluntary.net/

8 http://libcom.org/news/self-organised-claimant-resistance-atos-success-story-our-time-23022014

as a result of cancer.[9] Pickets across the UK were organised by welfare claimants at the offices of Atos and forced the company into an early withdrawal from their contract. In Southend, some Atos workers even joined the protesters picketing their office.[10] While Atos's back-down was a small victory, this fight is not over. Other companies, including Serco and G4S, are vying for a new UK government contract for similar services. Thus, the same companies who act as prison guards in Australian detention centres, and prisons across the globe, may become responsible for disciplining welfare claimants in the UK. Like the Pinkertons, these corportations are the private police of contemporary capitalism.

One emerging arena of struggle in the UK is the call for solidarity from welfare claimants to workers in the government or private agencies contracted to carry out the most punitive and exploitative aspects of the welfare system. In 2013, emails were leaked showing UK job centre employees are required to meet 'sanction targets' for welfare recipients, and job centres are ranked against one another in league tables measuring the number of welfare recipients who were being punished through the removal of financial support.[11] Welfare activists responded to this by organising pickets against job centres known to be using these targets. They have also called for job centre workers to refuse to give out sanctions or meet targets as a form of industrial action in solidarity with welfare recipients. Workers in this area and welfare claimants have attempted to organise a rank-and-file campaign within the Public and Commercial Services Union, although significant elements within the union have been hostile to this campaign. While this aspect of the struggle in the UK is still in the very early stages, it points to the possibility of attempting to find solidarity with workers within Centrelink or Job Network agencies in Australia.[12]

These forms of resistance are all limited – many UK companies still take part in Workfare, and Atos will be replaced by a new contractor. Yet, they still are interesting and potentially useful examples of radical struggle against welfare restrictions and cuts which could be used in political struggles around welfare in Australia.

Thoughts on successful resistance

We must fight back against the Abbott government's proposed cuts to welfare. We have to defend the limited and partial gains we have wrought from the state because we need these measures to survive under capitalism. Most of us cannot wait for a revolution to address our economic needs. However, we also need to acknowledge the

9 http://www.bigissue.com/features/3637/atos-deaths-and-welfare-cuts

10 http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/atos-protests-epileptic-diabetic-asthmatic-3167459

11 http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/mar/25/jobcentre-newsletter-sanctions-targets

12 https://libcom.org/blog/its-time-fight-benefit-sanctions-or-without-pcs-23042013

inadequacy of welfare payments and the coercive function of policies such as income management and Work for the Dole. We should be clear that we will never be able to build a welfare system that will allow the unemployed to flourish in this economic system, because it will not be consistent with the capitalist drive to maximise exploitation.

As some anonymous libertarian socialists noted in 1985, "The Welfare State is just the contemporary face of the capitalist state. If it offers all kinds of services and financial support - things that we need to survive - it doesn't do this because we need them, but because capitalism needs us to have them in order for it to survive. We shouldn't be surprised if capitalism 'snatches back' benefits or imposes new conditions for granting them as its priorities change. It is only able to 'service' our needs because capitalist society has developed through destroying our opportunities for doing so ourselves."[13]

The demand for a welfare system that truly supports those without work is at its core an anti-capitalist demand. While people who argue for a fair welfare system may not consider themselves anti-capitalists, the only way we can have a welfare system not constantly under threat from the ruling class, is to create an entirely different type society in which the interests of the minority who control production and distribution are not pitted against those who must work to survive. We shouldn't be ashamed to talk about the role of capitalism, the state, and other forms of oppression in maintaining the coercive and exploitative aspects of the welfare system. We won't be able to successfully confront the inadequacies of the current welfare system without understanding the role it plays in the broader political and economic context.

It's vitally important for us to attempt to prevent these attacks from becoming policy in the first place. But we also need to think about how we'll react if this part of the budget is passed by Parliament, and how we can create a more effective response to the already existing problems with Australia's welfare system.

We need to think about new locations for resistance. Central rallies in the middle of cities are one tool for resistance, but they are not the only form of action we can take. Other places we might focus our political organising on Centrelink offices, Job Network offices and businesses which employ welfare recipients on Work for the Dole. By broadening the reach of our political action we can increase our opportunities to organise with other welfare claimants, as well as bringing our collective power to bear the organisations and businesses responsible for carrying out these exploitative policies.

We can also look to models of organisation which unemployed people have used in Australia's recent history. The Wollongong Out of Workers' Union (WOW) was an anarchist influenced unemployed people's organisation which was formed in 1983.[14] WOW was unusual in that only unemployed people could become full members and have access to voting rights, meaning it was a group that was both about the interests of unemployed people and controlled by them. WOW's campaigns focused on demands for a living wage, a shorter working week, and long-term job security with fair conditions. They also explicitly linked the terrible sit-

13 http://libcom.org/library/welfare-state-isn%E2%80%99t-now-never-was-%E2%80%9Cgenuine-gain-working-class%E2%80%9D

14 http://libcom.org/history/wow-factor-wollongong%E2%80%99s-unemployed-dispossession-class-history

uation of unemployed people to the functioning of capitalism. The group involved hundreds of members, and used direct action tactics, such as occupying "the local Social Security offices, the local taxation department and even the national headquarters of the Labor Party in Canberra."[15] Members of WOW set up an office in a squatted house, and for a period of six years turned this space into an organising space, a welfare rights drop-in centre and a soup kitchen. They also created a newspaper (The Gong) and helped initiate the National Union of Unemployed People. While this model might not work in all situations, it is certainly worth thinking about whether the form of unemployed-led organising WOW members used to such great effect would be useful in our contemporary contexts.

Another part of our response to these attacks on welfare should be to provide practical support to those who will be most impacted by these changes, if they are implemented. This support doesn't need to be the depoliticised charity of organisations like the Salvation Army, who ultimately support the system they clean up after. Rather, we should create our own forms of mutual aid which are based on solidarity rather than charity. As Paul Bowman notes, while charity is based on pious submission to a depoliticised notion of misfortune, solidarity involves identifying the cause of suffering and working with those who share a common enemy to transform the social and economic structures which create this suffering. One of the central ideological justifications for capitalist exploitation and state control is the idea that we need these ruling class controlled, hierarchical organisations to take care of one another. By doing what we can to take care of one another, as part of our organised political resistance, we can demonstrate that this system doesn't provide us with what we need, and that we have the capacity to organise a society of our own that could fulfil these needs. To truly take care of one another, though, we need to take control of the economic and social resources that are currently controlled and used for profit by the few. We should provide what support we can, but also remind ourselves that building a new society within the shell of the old is but only one step we need to take. Ultimately, we need a revolutionary transformation of the economic and political order to move from that old world into a free, classless society.

15 Ibid

Resources

http://www.solfed.org.uk/is-this-farewell-welfare

http://plantowin.net.au/2014/07/the-radical-history-of-unemployed-activism/

http://libcom.org/history/wow-factor-wollongong%E2%80%99s-unemployed-dispossession-class-history

SLACKBASTARD ON FORTRESS AUSTRALIA

Andy Fleming is a Melbourne based writer, anarchist and creator of the prominent antifascist blog Slackbastard. We sat down with Andy to talk about nationalism, borders and the political functions of mandatory detention.

I want to discuss mandatory detention, but I want to dig below the usual moral repugnance and discuss a few means and ends. I once had an experience with some USyd Labor Club kids who simply would not believe that it was the ALP in 1992 who built much of the infrastructure of the contemporary border regime. Whilst I found the ignorance quite shocking at the time, I now wonder if it was at least partially informed by their inability to comprehend why Labor would have felt it necessary to introduce mandatory detention. Was it prescient political triangulation, pre-empting the rise of Hanson/Howard rhetoric, or is this too simplistic? What other functions does mandatory detention serve?

At the time, the Minister responsible, Gerry Hand, stated that:

"I believe it is crucial that all persons who come to Australia without prior authorisation not be released into the community. Their release would undermine the Government's strategy for determining their refugee claims or entry claims. Indeed, I believe it is vital to Australia that this be prevented as far as possible. The Government is determined that a clear signal be sent that migration to Australia may not be achieved by simply arriving in this country and expecting to be allowed into the community."

As I understand it, the precise reasons why Labor elected to establish the system when it did remain a little obscure. That is, critics questioned the

need for such a system to be established at all, and noted that there appeared to be no pressing reason to do so. To more fully answer the question would require an examination of Labor thinking on the matter at the time: something I've not explored myself. I suspect that the answer may be found by locating the policy within a broader framework; that is, the transformation of Labor party politics under the Hawke-Keating (1983--1996) governments. In this regard, I think there is both continuity and disjunction with previous policy. Otherwise, I believe state controls over transnational labour movement and capital flows play a key role in arriving at a better understanding of Australian government policy during this period. In which context, Angela Mitropoulos's essay on 'The Exhaustion of Australian Social Democracy' is I think a useful treatment.

Transnational labour and capital is a crucial part of this discussion, but this is something you hear almost nothing of in the contemporary refugee campaign. Why do you think that is? Does the scapegoating of refugees and asylum seekers merely provide political cover for the expansion of policies that exploit migrant labour & depress wages? Can you sketch out the connection between the two?

To begin with, I'd suggest that many if not most of those involved in 'the contemporary refugee campaign' – a concept which requires some unpacking – are motivated by humanitarian concerns rather than, say, mobilised on the basis of an analysis of the capital/labour distinction and its application in a local (Australian) context. In other words, with some exceptions, most attention is being given to that category of persons known as asylum seekers or refugees, and to activities which seek to support their efforts to settle in Australia.

The distinction between the 'good' refugee and the 'bad' refugee (or migrant worker) is often expressed in economic terms: those fleeing persecution in another country have nominal rights to do so while those seeking to migrate to Australia simply in order to improve their economic or social status are regarded as illegitimate. Determinations regarding the nature of cross-border movement of labour – and thus the shape of the local labour market – are the result of calculations made by government and state. The international legal treaties to which the Australian state is a party provide a framework for these determinations; often ignored in practice, and subject to international condemnation as a result – to little, if any obvious effect. The chief task of the state is to control these population flows in the interests of the elite institutions which dominate the economy.

I'm not convinced that the scapegoating of refugees and asylum seekers is simply about providing political cover for attacks upon working conditions: here a distinction should be made between support and function. To begin with, it seems to me that this kind of scapegoating relies for its effectiveness – its popular appeal – upon long-standing racist tropes and xenophobic sentiment. Popular support for the policy of mandatory detention and the construction of a Fortress Australia is just as often expressed in non-economic or 'cultural' terms and it's these concerns which seem to generate the most excitement among supporters, while the actual function of such policies are broader and more extensive.

Punitive forms of state discipline - such as welfare quarantining or extended waiting times for access to social security programs - are programs that are 'piloted' on already oppressed and marginalised groups (e.g. the introduction of the 'basics card' in Indigenous communities) a long time before they are

rolled out to the broader population. Is it fair to argue that a normalisation of the prison system, particularly the component of it under for-profit control, is also an intended consequence of the spectacle of mandatory detention? What else might fall into this category?

'The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.'
~ Dostoevsky, The House of the Dead

It's certainly the case that punitive policies of this sort are invariably imposed upon, at first, the most marginalised populations – for obvious reasons. The same may be said of the industry which has developed around 'border protection', though in this case the Australian state is pioneering managerial techniques which are then exported and developed in international as opposed to domestic markets.

The privatisation of the prison industry dates from roughly the same time as the introduction of mandatory detention under Labor (in 1992) and may be regarded as forming one part of a broader social transformation often referred to as 'neoliberalism'. An account of the development of neoliberalism in Australia and elsewhere in the world, rooted by some in popular challenges to austerity in the so-called Third World in the 1960s and 1970s, is a larger topic. In any case, the privatisation/corporatisation of prison systems has obvious benefits to the state. Not the least of which is rendering conditions (and the systemic abuses) inside prisons that much more obscure to the general public. As defence, the state often invokes some concept of "efficiency"; a loaded term which, like many others in popular discourse, requires translation into English before being of any use. Broadly speaking, these and similar measures are governed by institutional political and economic considerations; of creating entrenched and systematic forms of social control which are both effective and, as far as possible, profitable, with the social costs being borne by the general population.

There is, to my mind, a close link between Australia's unreconciled colonial identity and the resonance of anti-immigrant rhetoric with 'ordinary' Australians. Though the language has changed from the language of the white Australia policy (we now deploy the navy to turn boats back out of apparent concern for the lives of the people aboard), access to Australia and Australian-ness is as zealously defended as ever. How do we, especially those of us who continue to benefit from the privileges inherent in 'being' Australian, begin to challenge these myths?

It's likely the case that popular anxieties over immigration are informed by some lurking sense of historical injustice. That is, the Australian nation is understood as being an especially precarious 'imagined community', one whose foundation is the theft and murder of non-Whites (Indigenous peoples) by Whites (British Empire), whose geographical situation is Asia, not Europe, and which is subject to continual attacks upon its sovereignty by both outsiders and domestic elements. A brief survey of both far right literature and important segments of the popular media on the subject reveals a good deal of evidence to support this thesis. As to how to combat such ideas and practices, I think Ken Knabb provides a useful (if somewhat lengthy) guide in the following:

"It's often said that a stateless society might work if everyone were angels, but due to the perversity of

human nature some hierarchy is necessary to keep people in line. It would be truer to say that if everyone were angels the present system might work tolerably well (bureaucrats would function honestly, capitalists would refrain from socially harmful ventures even if they were profitable). It is precisely because people are not angels that it's necessary to eliminate the setup that enables some of them to become very efficient devils. Lock a hundred people in a small room with only one air hole and they will claw each other to death to get to it. Let them out and they may manifest a rather different nature. As one of the May 1968 graffiti put it, "Man is neither Rousseau's noble savage nor the Church's depraved sinner. He is violent when oppressed, gentle when free."

Others contend that, whatever the ultimate causes may be, people are now so screwed up that they need to be psychologically or spiritually healed before they can even conceive of creating a liberated society. In his later years Wilhelm Reich came to feel that an "emotional plague" was so firmly embedded in the population that it would take generations of healthily raised children before people would become capable of a libertarian social transformation; and that meanwhile one should avoid confronting the system head-on since this would stir up a hornet's nest of ignorant popular reaction.

Irrational popular tendencies do sometimes call for discretion. But powerful though they may be, they are not irresistible forces. They contain their own contradictions. Clinging to some absolute authority is not necessarily a sign of faith in authority; it may be a desperate attempt to overcome one's increasing doubts (the convulsive tightening of a slipping grip). People who join gangs or reactionary groups, or who get caught up in religious cults or patriotic hysteria, are also seeking a sense of liberation, connection, purpose, participation, empowerment. As Reich himself showed, fascism gives a particularly vigorous and dramatic expression to these basic aspirations, which is why it often has a deeper appeal than the vacillations, compromises and hypocrisies of liberalism and leftism.

In the long run the only way to defeat reaction is to present more forthright expressions of these aspirations, and more authentic opportunities to fulfil them. When basic issues are forced into the open, irrationalities that flourished under the cover of psychological repression tend to be weakened, like disease germs exposed to sunlight and fresh air. In any case, even if we don't prevail, there is at least some satisfaction in fighting for what we really believe, rather than being defeated in a posture of hesitancy and hypocrisy.

Andy writes about politics for outlets such as New Matilda and Overland. He also keeps a close watch on the 'master race' on his blog http://slackbastard.anarchobase.com

LESSONS FROM BROADMEADOWS AND VILLAWOOD

By Dan

Viewed against the backdrop of a campaign which has been largely stagnant since the Howard years, it is worth taking some heart from recent actions outside the Villawood and Broadmeadows detention centres. Not because these actions represent any radical shift in the tactics employed by the refugee movement, or because activists were able to do any more than delay the forced relocations. It's not even because enough attention was drawn to the plight of those being removed to Christmas Island that it forced any sort of political reckoning on the subject of Fortress Australia. Single actions are rarely definitive in the context of broader social movements, but we should nevertheless greet the energy of these responses with a measure of cautious optimism. I say cautious because these actions have also highlighted long-term problems within "The Refugee Campaign™" that demand our urgent attention.

It is not in any way controversial to observe that what the refugee campaign has been doing for the better part of a decade no longer - or has never - worked. Some point out that no one in the broader movement can actually claim to have a working strategy at this point in time, which whilst superficially true, strikes me as a less than compelling argument for ignoring questions of strategy. As a response to questions about why orthodox tactics aren't even capable of leveraging reforms, organisations like the Refugee Action Collective argue in favour of a passivity that borders on apathy, that almost compels us to throw up our hands in despair. The situation grows ever more desperate, we're told, not

because our methods of campaigning are ineffective, but because the campaign is not sufficiently developed, it has not been 'built' enough.

What this means, in practical terms, is depressingly familiar to those of us who have participated in refugee solidarity campaigns: the dilution of political content and analysis to accommodate the 'moderate' views of allies in the clergy or Labor For Refugees; a demonstrated hostility to direct action or any diversity in tactics; ever more poorly attended 'set piece' rallies in city centres; endless leafleting of 'safe' neighbourhoods like Brunswick or Newtown and perpetual demands to sign and share this very important petition to call on the Australian government to have compassion for these 'good refugees' (as opposed to those dastardly 'economic migrants').

Rather than developing a politics that dismantles popularised notions of borders and "illegals", the rhetoric of the 'official' refugee movement has retreated from any semblance of structural analysis into total supplication before the state. There is precious little value in targeting individual politicians (however despicable) for their excesses without clearly identifying and critiquing the power structures that empower these politicians, but even groups with radical pedigree like RAC insist on characterising the depravity of the Australian border regime as essentially a management question.

If we were engaging with these perspectives only in the abstract, it would still be a troubling state of affairs, but these attitudes also fundamentally inform the way that actions are planned and executed. With only a few hours notice, the fact that activists were able to pull enough people out to keep pickets on both entrances of the Broadmeadows detention centre for the whole night and much of the next day is in itself worthy of note. It signals, amongst other things, that no matter how insipid the political response has been for so long, there are still people with the resolve to fight. Admittedly, with little time to organise and even less time to develop strategy and tactics, the prospects of a few dozen people maintaining an effective blockade against the resources of the state are not particularly good. Acknowledgment of grim conditions, of course, is no argument at all about why we we shouldn't try.

The purpose of pickets and blockades is a lot more than symbolic. It is about bringing pressure to bear in the most effective manner possible, to sabotage the ability for business as usual to continue. The fact that the infrastructure of the Australian border (even the onshore detention centres) lays ever increasingly outside the effective reach of activists demands that, where there exists a possibility to somehow disrupt "Operation Sovereign Borders", it must be seized. Simply put, such actions should be treated much more seriously than presenting another opportunity for participants to chant for the TV cameras to expose the public to brand RAC. Despite all of the good indicators, the energy and the enthusiasm, the swiftness of the response, this is essentially what happened at MITA.

While discussions earlier in the morning revolved around debates about whether to obstruct all vehicles entering or exiting the facility, the mood changed quite decisively with the arrival of senior members of the Refugee Action Collective. Immediately from the megaphone came the instruction that there was basically nothing we could do, so let's put on a good show for the media, bear some witness, we can all go home. Although one would be tempted to dwell on the

cynicism of this notion, what is particularly instructive is implicit. Despite the scope of the problem, political theatre rather than political action is the favoured response. The effect of the speech was poisonous, and whatever potential for civil disobedience existed in the crowd was quickly harnessed and dissipated in favour of the methods of respectability politics.

The first two blockades at Villawood detention centre in April this year, where the initiative and energy came from Students Thinking Outside Borders, provide a quite striking contrast to this experience. Initially, despite being in receipt of the same information about the scheduled 'relocations', the hierarchy of RAC largely dismissed the possibility, indeed the desirability, of any kind of direct or confrontational response. Happily, activists organised by STOB mobilised anyway, and with only a small group, were able to disproportionately disrupt the transfers before they were finally arrested. (For whatever it is worth, they also broke into the news cycle, which is seen by RAC as being a fundamental end in of itself.)

The much larger blockade that occurred over the following Friday night and Saturday, which involved hundreds of people at its peak (requiring dozens of riot police, the dog squad, a police helicopter and a mobile command centre to overcome) and significantly disrupted the transferals for hours on end is a great example of what can realistically be accomplished, even at very short notice. That we managed to pull so many people out on a Friday night, who were enthusiastic and angry and focused, is in no small part due to the confidence inspired in people by the actions of those who blockaded on the first day. Acts of well organised civil disobedience resonate with people.

Arriving on Miowera Road on that Friday night, to find already dozens of people engaged in a functionally democratic discussion about what needed to be done and how it could be achieved, was an invigorating experience. A lot of people began to realise the potential of their collective agency that morning. Whilst I can't speak on the behalf of others, it seemed to me that this was largely because for once, we had the audacity to talk about actually resisting. Rather than working with the cops, we elected police liaisons and legal observers (who were to prove invaluable the following morning.) We elected media contacts. We had an actual discussion about tactics that didn't merely default to 'Rally, 1pm, Sydney Town Hall.' When RAC finally arrived the next day, the management of discontent as per usual began, but could not overcome the resolve and solidarity built during the night.

I'm not collecting these thoughts because I believe we should refuse to work with RAC. Plainly, we haven't the luxury of doing that. Rather, we should organise with them when we can and out-organise them when we can't. Energy and space exists. With organisation and initiative, with developed politics, with some resolve we can stop fighting on the back foot.

ANARCHIST AFFINITY'S STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The following points of agreement are neither complete nor final. They represent, at best, where our group was at the time they were adopted.

1. As anarchists we fight to create a self-managed, socialist and stateless society, in which all contribute freely according to ability, and through which all have full access to the material basis for pursing their individual and collective fulfilment. In this libertarian socialist society, individual freedom is harmonised with communal obligations through cooperation, directly democratic decision making and social and economic equality. We believe such a society is both desirable and possible, and we actively work toward overcoming the hierarchies, exploitation and systems of oppression that stand in its way.

2. To confront oppression in all its forms, the self-organised activity of all persons experiencing oppression is necessary. Systems of oppression manifest both as structures in the economic system and in the ideology of the dominant culture. Within the dominant culture of our society, intertwined oppressive systems include (but are not limited to) sexism, racism, queerphobia, transphobia and ableism. These oppressive systems, whilst occurring within the context of capitalism and shaped to serve its purpose, are not reducible to capitalism. Unless we actively struggle against all oppressive power systems, these hierarchies will be reproduced both within our own organisations and in any post-capitalist society. We see fighting against these forms of oppression as just as important to the creation of an anarchist society as fighting capitalism and the state. Only by working to eliminate oppressive power relations within the working classes will we be able to create a revolutionary movement capable of genuinely transforming society.

3. Australian capitalism is founded on an act of genocide – the murder and dispossession of this continent's indigenous people. Capitalism on this continent was built on the seizure and exploitation of indigenous land, and continued attacks on indigenous communities are perpetrated by Australian capitalism and its racist state in the pursuit of what lands and resources that remain. We unequivocally support the ongoing struggle for indigenous self-determination in Australia, and recognise that indigenous sovereignty over the Australian landmass was never ceded.

4. Capitalism is a social system based on the private ownership of the means of production (land, factories, workplaces, machinery and access to raw materials). A tiny minority own the means of production and profit from the productive labour of the working class. The working class consists of all whose access to the means of existence requires that they place their ability to labour at the service of capital. This includes all who labour for a wage, all who are presently unemployed, and all who labour in the reproduction of the working class (domestic labour). Work-