

# THE PLATFORM



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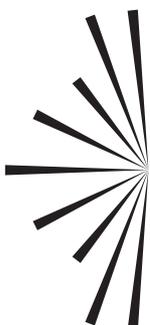
Racism and Labour Organising in Australia  
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Anarchist Affinity's Statement of Principles



This publication was written, printed and distributed on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. This land was stolen by white colonisers, sovereignty has never been ceded. We must act in solidarity with their fight for justice, and that of all colonised peoples.

Thank you: Dan, Tess, Dave Kerin, Tom, Kieran, Ben, Sam and Rebecca.



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*"Everyone's worried about stopping terrorism. Well, there's really an easy way: stop participating in it."*

**- Noam Chomsky, 2002**

**W**e are only year into the Abbott regime, and already we have seen dramatic changes to the Australian political climate. The current government has begun a programme of radically stripping civil liberties in the name of security, whilst expanding the circus of 'anti-terrorist' propaganda and policing. They herald another war, supporting the US in cleaning up the excesses of their imperialist campaigns in the Middle East. While the drum beat of war sounds, attacks on the rights of the working class are passed in parliament with barely a whisper from the politicians and media, though we have seen some signs of working class resistance.

In our third issue of The Platform, we explore Australia's racist colonial legacy, and its relationship with war. We look at the recent nationwide 'terror raids', and the subsequent spree of racist violence against Muslims and people of colour. In particular, we examine the role of national security theatre in continuing the colonial project of defining 'Australian' identity and ask what an antifascist response might look like.

After 100 years of attempts to reinvent the pointless slaughter of the 'Great War', we examine the politics of war remembrance. From the Aboriginal warriors who fought and died resisting colonial invasion, but who are deemed not worthy of commemoration by the state, to the conscription of the dead soldiers of the Western Front.

We continue to address the need to develop better processes for dealing with sexual violence in our communities, as well as questioning recent criticism of the public 'calling out' of those who commit sexual violence and appeals for more 'compassion' for perpetrators.

Finally, we take a look at worker's organising. Tom discusses experiences and approaches to organising in the hospitality industry, and in an interview with Dave Kerin, we discuss the Earthworker cooperative and its potential as a limited form of workers' control of production. As the hysterical dogwhistling about immigration continues, we discuss racism in the union movement, particularly in relation to responses to the 457 visa category, and look to examples of anti-racist organising within the labour movement as an alternative.

Every week brings a new attack on the working class and oppressed communities in Australia. Anarchists and others on the left need to start taking seriously the importance of acting in \*genuine solidarity\* with marginalised communities.

Anarchist Affinity

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# TERROR RAIDS IN THE AGE OF TEAM AUSTRALIA

By Dan

**B**efore dawn on Thursday the 19th of September, more than 800 agents of the Australian state descended on more than twenty properties in Sydney's west. This unprecedented show of force yielded a mere fifteen arrests, only one of whom has been charged. It's not the outcome of the raids but rather their glossy Hollywood production values that we should look to when attempting to understand their function.

While the machinations of 'Operation Sovereign Borders' lie shrouded beneath layers of official secrecy, accounts of the terror raids were painstakingly detailed. Bellicose headlines proclaimed our salvation from the imminent jihadist threat, while the moment by moment specifics were spelled out below in lurid techno-thriller prose. High definition video - shot by the Australian Federal Police and the NSW Police's own media units - was made available to media outlets almost instantly, painting a flattering and heroic portrait of the dashing plod in action.

That the raids served to soften up some political terrain for the Iraq War mark 3 is an obvious, but incomplete, analysis. This ar-

gument assumes that the political class care what the people who live on this continent think about their military ventures. It's true that the prospect of war serves a range of domestic political functions - the appearance of "Tony Abbott: War Prime Minister" in the wake of a deeply unpopular federal budget is not a coincidence. But after 13 years in Afghanistan, it's increasingly unclear what the phrase 'Australia at war!' even means. The reality is that Australia doesn't go to war out of necessity, in service of high-minded democratic ideals or even to capture the Arab world's oil wealth for ourselves. And it's about more than an excuse for patriotic sabre rattling. These commitments have a consistent logic. They function as payment of tribute to our US patrons, whose economic and military hegemony defends the fundamental interests of Australia's violent colonial project.

As insipid as the collective memory of Australia's complicity in past imperialist exercises might be, it is no longer 1914, and people don't flock behind such obvious declarations any more. Thus, the state must look elsewhere for excuses, and the search begins to identify and delineate an 'oth-

er'. A collective subject capable of bearing responsibility for any and all ills within our society, or the world more generally. Whilst gaining some political cover to help smooth the way for Australia to enter the war in Iraq/Syria may be one part of the Abbott government's strategy here, it is more relevant to note some of the other things the Abbott government stands to gain politically (and materially) by saturating the national conversation with endless reminders of the existential threat of the Islamic Isis 'death cult'.

In settler states like Australia (or the US, Israel or Canada), the most existential of fears is the loss of the dominance of the colonial class and its identity. Australian history overflows with examples of the various 'foreign' perils that nationalists feared would take root and collaborate to destroy the society from within. In the modern west, particularly Anglophone countries, the political label 'terrorist' fulfils this function perfectly, and perpetually, because it can be redefined to suit basically any political ends which might emerge. It can, for instance, be used to reinforce the moral authority of the state's monopoly on the use of violence and force. All acts of active resistance to occupation or colonisation are deemed to be terrorism. Any form of struggle by any oppressed population can be wholly delegitimised due to its (perceived) association with terrorism. Anyone reluctant to support highly repressive, draconian-

an measures designed to 'prevent' terrorism is guilty of being sympathetic to terrorism.

Whether the threat was credible or not, and it is now quite obvious that the existence of such a plot was hardly 'imminent' (in fact, little more than posturing by a small group of poorly organised extremists who authorities had been monitoring closely for a number of months), the crude propaganda value of such a stunt for the political class is enormous. But this isn't the only benefit. Such performances are also crucial in developing the legitimacy of an all-seeing surveillance apparatus and militarised police force.

Since the crisis of 2008, economic growth has stagnated or collapsed as capital struggles to extract profit in the context of a prolonged global downturn. This crisis produced both an opportunity and an imperative for renewed attacks on the working class, in the form of a series of measures that are generally termed economic austerity. Whilst capital and state have always shared a common interest in the protection of private property, a program of austerity that worsens the material conditions of large segments of the population requires much more robust methods of repression. Instability, whether along geopolitical fault lines or domestic class lines, might on occasion represent a threat to state and capital. But what it more often represents is a massive opportunity. Insecurity, even the per-

ception of it, can be harnessed by the state, commodified by private industry and exploited for profit.

But this process requires legitimisation - a set of narratives to help sell the imperative of social control. In the Australian context, the threat posed to us by a racially or culturally 'inferior' other has been wielded in service of this end. Since the European invasion, constructed identity statements (first British, then Australian, always white) have been used to bludgeon people into distinct categories of belonging or rejection. These identities serve to create and reinforce binaries between 'us' and 'them', on the basis of highly arbitrary notions of what constitutes 'Australian-ness'. Such narratives imply the need for unity between workers and their masters, whatever their disagreements, under the banner of their common 'Australian' (European) identity. We can trace the lineage of the current 'Team Australia' narrative through the logic of Terra Nullius, the White Australia policy and the institution of mandatory detention. Though these identity statements have their foundations in the chauvinism of the British Empire, they have far greater utility for the ruling class than simply the expression of imperial prejudices. The ideology of white supremacy is used to justify the genocide of Aboriginal people, the enclosure of their lands and their continuing dispossession. It erases the role of slave labour in the 'development'

of the Australian nation and its economy. It divides workers by immigration status, ethnicity, language and cultural background, determining an individual's worthiness and virtue on this basis.

The 'plot' that sparked the raids (to kidnap and behead an Australian citizen in an 'ISIS style' terror attack) invokes the high-profile murder of British soldier Lee Rigby, who was murdered by Islamists on a London street in May 2013. It's worth comparing the two incidents because, though the Australian plot was over before it had even begun, the response from the Australian press has in many ways exceeded the level of hysteria sparked in Britain by an actual murder. As Rigby's killers understood well (and, one suspects, Abbott and co.'s spin doctors do too), even the thought of such an act has the capacity provoke a storm of fear, disgust and outrage that carries the message - retribution against crusading western foreign policy - well beyond that street in Woolwich. That the press did this most important job for Rigby's killers is a bitter irony, and it had immediate, dramatic consequences.

In Britain, as in Australia, where ethno-religious tensions have been threatening to boil over for years, it is just not credible to suggest that the immediate and vicious anti-Muslim backlash that ensued was anything other than deliberate. In fact it was utterly predictable. It proved a godsend for declining far-right 'street

movements' like the English Defence League, for example, who flooded into Woolwich in the hours after the attack attempting to whip up a pogrom under the guise of 'securing the area'. In the days and weeks that followed, attendance at EDL marches spiked frighteningly, and all across the UK communities of colour bore the brunt of a vicious, protracted campaign of racist violence. Shops, flats and cars thought to belong to Muslims were covered in racist graffiti or had their windows smashed. Mosques were threatened, invaded and desecrated with pig entrails. On at least two occasions, they were firebombed. Muslims, particularly women, were attacked on the streets and one elderly man was stabbed to death on his way home from worship.

Such a spree of retaliatory violence, though given energy by the far right, is ultimately the product of a media narrative that emphasises the collective guilt of the entire Islamic community. As in the wake of every terrorist scare, British and Australian Muslims have been routinely summoned before the court of public opinion and, down to the individual, instructed that they must publicly and at every possible opportunity apologise on behalf of the entire Islamic community. These communities must disavow terrorism (or Sharia, halal and a host of other poorly informed canards about Islam) or be labelled guilty of terrorist sympathies themselves.

The imposition of the burden of collective guilt is a product of the highly radicalised association of the term 'terrorist' with 'Muslim person' or 'person of colour' that is so ubiquitous in western societies. The possession of an Islamic identity, or even an identity that can be 'read' as Muslim, is viewed in a binary against dominant cultural norms of our society, and rendered unworthy in the face of our superior values. This is, of course, atrocious nonsense. But it has dramatic, long lasting effects.

The lives of young men of colour, already subject to a host of radicalised and structural oppressions in white supremacist societies like Australia, are further devalued. What this means, in blunt concrete terms, is that 'Australians' are less surprised and less outraged when the cops shoot them. Portrayals of a race, faith or other defining characteristics as associated with terrorism can be used to excuse the harassment, warrantless detention, brutalisation, torture or experience of racially motivated violence of anyone who also happens to possess some of these characteristics. The Islamic State's sophisticated propaganda and public relations campaign relies in no small part on exploiting the profound fear and alienation felt by people of colour, but particularly by young Muslim men, in places like Australia. The threats and acts of violence against the Islamic community, which have skyrocketed in the wake of the raids,

are exactly what their strategy requires.

It is important to highlight that the acts of violence inflicted on the Muslim community are committed, often quite specifically, in pursuit of some notion of service to the Australian state (think the cries of 'Aussie Aussie Aussie' and the rhetoric about protecting Australia during the Cronulla riots). Unlike repercussions for the Muslim community, when white Australians throw scalding coffee in the face of a Muslim woman on her way to work, or attack the home of a Muslim family with a shotgun, it is apparently an 'isolated incident'. When white Australians attack mosques and Islamic community centres with racist graffiti, desecrate them with pig heads on spikes and phone in bomb threats against them, it may even be condemned by some members of the political class as a despicable act. But the guilt is never distributed collectively. When people of colour are racially abused and assaulted on public transport, or when scarves are pulled from women's heads on the streets, it is seldom even the individual – and never Anglo-Australia – that is in any way held to account.

Other popular narratives, even the ones wrapped in appeals to liberalism and humanitarianism, also follow this logic. For example, the lives of Islamic women (who experience overwhelmingly the worst of the harassment and abuse) are conscripted and

exploited in a narrative of victimhood which strips them completely of their own agency. Though the existence of gendered oppression in Islamic communities is beyond contention, it is both disingenuous and despicable to suggest that this is in any way a situation unique to Islamic communities.

So with a sense of outrage stirred, the existence of gender oppression and inequality in wider Australian society is conveniently cleansed from the public mind and Muslim society is placed under the microscope. Unlike women from white societies, we are told, Muslim women are categorically oppressed, and they require the benevolent intervention of our superior democratic values to 'save' them. (No, don't ask them what they actually think. That's not how this works.)

The irony of such statements emanating from the cartoonish, born misogynists of the parliamentary Liberal Party is simply staggering. But these narratives often find deep purchase amongst liberal minded Australians, who find obvious prejudice distasteful, but nevertheless want to ride on the Team Australia cultural superiority bandwagon. Such narratives worked with the Northern Territory intervention, with the Stolen Generations, and with 'children overboard.' And these narratives will keep working until we dismantle them.

The question of how anarchists, antifascists and others on

the left should respond in such a toxic climate is vexed, and I don't pretend to have any grand answers. But there are a few things that warrant a mention.

It should be obvious, first of all, that the more romantic tactics we associate with European anti-fascism are of very limited value in this situation. Of course, if a nationalist organisation should be so emboldened as to attempt to mobilise or organise publicly by exploiting this situation, it should be vehemently opposed. But I think such an outcome is somewhat unlikely. For all its attempts to channel mainstream Islamophobia into a broader nationalist street movement, the Australian Defence League is still riding on the coattails of the state (the ADL claims to work 'closely with ASIO', for instance). This is not a situation where focusing our all our attentions on shutting down the same old bunch of boneheads is useful. We should heed the political lesson of militant antifascist movements throughout history and understand that if we can't present a credible, alternative analysis of how and why these things are happening, we've already lost.

Because the disgusting acts of racial vilification, harassment and violence suffered by Australian Muslims and other people of colour in the days since the raids are not motivated by any specific organisation or political tendency (beyond the imperatives of the white colonial state), organising to

prevent them is an extremely difficult task.

This violence, after all, is retributive and overwhelmingly opportunistic. It can't be countered on the streets the same way as the threats posed by nationalist groups are. But it is not leaderless, disparate or incoherent in its inspiration. This violence was cultivated by the Australian state, and therefore our response must begin with and be defined by our opposition to the activities of the Australian state and the role it plays in oppressing communities of colour from Bankstown to Baghdad.

We should not presume when approaching this task that these communities need to be told how to organise or defend themselves, and we should certainly resist any and all attempts at party building in such a situation. This is not a moment for leftists to demonstrate the worthiness of their particular ideology to marginalised communities. Indeed, the inability of the left organisations to restrain themselves from doing this time and time again is a primary reason why the left is viewed with suspicion in many of these communities. It is time for us to work in solidarity with besieged communities, acting however we can to support them, rather than acting insultingly on their 'behalf'. If we are unwilling to listen to what communities of colour say about how to best resist the oppression they experience every day, we should just give up now.

Equally, whilst we can and should blame racist politicians and pundits for peddling their despicable bullshit, we cannot ignore the fact that such opinions are much closer to being the norm in contemporary Australia than notions of anti-racism or class solidarity. This reflects badly on generations of Australian leftists who have been unable (or unwilling) to advance a genuinely popular form of anti-racist politics, a kind that stresses class solidarity without becoming beholden to the type of class reductionism that all but declares that dismantling racism can wait until after the revolution.

We have to take seriously the fact that racism in Australia is not simply a distraction, thrown to the workers to inoculate bosses against the class struggle. It is a tremendously pervasive ideology, including amongst the working class, and opposing it effectively begins with acknowledging just how big the task before us is.

This piece was written for a few reasons, but mostly to contribute in some small way towards developing some ideas about the kind of antifascism necessary in Australia right now. And so, to end, I hope to help begin that conversation.

An effective Australian anti-fascism must be able to explain declining living standards, casualisation and unemployment. It must identify not only capital, but also the state, as the beneficiaries of racial division amongst the working class. It must describe how these

institutions help to create and benefit from these divisions.

But it cannot simply reduce the situation to this narrow analysis. Our antifascism must be intersectional because solidarity doesn't work without collectivising all struggles for liberation.

An Australian antifascism must identify the settler-colonial nature of our society, because the 'lucky country' is nothing but the proceeds of a crime more than 200 years in the act.

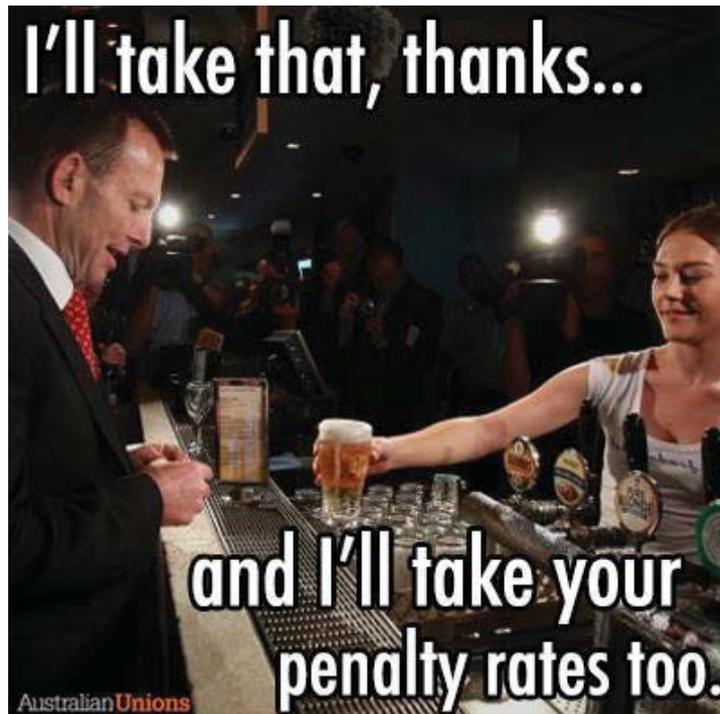
Violence is absolutely inherent in white Australia, no matter what top-down constructions of multiculturalism claim. The flag cannot be rehabilitated, nor can patriotism. Appeals to a more benevolent past only help to obscure the fact that it never existed.

We must identify expressions and experiences of racism in Australia as both structural and deeply personal. It has never been isolated. It is something which occurs every day, and thus, our antifascism must stress the need for everyday interventions, all the way from rhetorical to physical, against the perpetuation of white supremacy.

It is largely due to the incompetence of the Australian far right, and not our own efforts, that we don't have a much bigger problem on our hands. This is serious. And we need to be too.

# SLAVING IN THE KITCHENS: HOSPITALITY IN AUSTRALIA

By Tom Cameron



*"When one comes to think of it, it is strange that thousands of people in a great modern city should spend their waking hours swabbing dishes in hot dens underground"* - George Orwell, *Down and Out In Paris and London*.

**T**he cook is one of the oldest professions. The process of collecting, preparing, cooking and finally sharing food is inherent to the human condition. It is a ritual of union, based on a need, made

into a defining pleasantry. But under capitalism this social relationship, like any other, is commodified and turned into something almost unrecognisable. The process of bringing satisfaction and joy to the diner involves sucking the joy out of the score of people involved in bringing food to their plate. In modern capitalism the kitchen and 'front of house' are highly exploited and put under a system of intense pressure requiring production to happen faster and faster. In an industry where it's commonly said '50% of businesses fail' those

who own these failing (and succeeding) businesses try to pass the losses on to those of us who work.

Hospitality as a working career tends to mean one of two things to modern Australians, either it's what we really want to do, or something we get stuck doing while trying to move on to other industries. As such, the industry is full of transient workers: people studying, travelling, or just filling in time while looking for more meaningful work. This is often quoted as an argument against attempts to organise workers in hospitality. However, for another good portion of us, this is our career, and for many a chef, it's a passion too. We have the lowest award rate for a trade qualification, and the industry is rife with people who are paid under the award rate, in exploitative conditions. It's not uncommon for workers to do 16+ hour days, sometimes without breaks, or hours per week well in excess of double the normal working week. Conditions that make for potential rebellion and an opening awaiting organisation.

In my experience of hospitality work, workers 'resistance' to this extremely exploitative and intense situation is based on informal methods of direct action. The industry has no culture of unionism, and often relies on people in difficult circumstances who may have little experience in traversing the difficulties of legal avenues and negotiated bargaining to achieve better conditions.

So, for example, in one café a

worker was electrically shocked, and when we informed the boss he said that she should keep working. We closed the kitchen, threw out the faulty equipment and collectively told the boss we wouldn't work that section until the problem was fixed. In another example, a waitress who had to work long hours for little pay, servicing a large dining room night in night out, developed the idea that she could 'book' in huge tables for the night's service, bookings that didn't actually exist. The table would sit empty and we could all work an easier night because of it.

The industry also has a romanticisation of hard work which is difficult to overcome. When people complain about the long hours, working all weekend, no breaks, hot and dangerous conditions, or a lack of appropriate equipment, it often gets written off with a 'harden up' attitude. Everyone knows deep down that it's an impossible situation, but people find it hard to admit it to one another. If we all admitted how horrible the industry is, we'd probably have a breakdown. Though that often happens. I've seen four head chefs and two floor managers have breakdowns through the 6-7 kitchens I've worked in. From locking themselves in the coolroom to literally collapsing and vomiting blood from over-work, stress, and the mandatory drug habits that come with achieving impossible levels of output.

The bourgeois press often de-

cries workers in hospitality struggling for better conditions and pay. Cries of 'you it will bankrupt us' abound. If a business cannot even afford to pay a living wage, it should not exist. It is not socially useful. It is not even worthwhile in the capitalist-liberal sense. But this is the logic of capitalism.

Melbourne being the 'food capital of Australia,' we are particularly attuned to the fancies of the market and trends amongst foodies around the world. A current headline is the excitement over Heston Blumenthals 'Fat Duck' moving to Melbourne. And do you know why he chose Melbourne over, say, New York?

*"We wanted to open there. I've got some good chef mates in the business in New York and they all said the same thing: 'If you can't be union-free, don't touch it'"*- Heston Blumenthal

That is, in Australia you have a thriving market, and low labour conditions. Even worse than New York apparently, though America has a world reputation for horrible hospitality conditions.

But things can change. A number of years ago a small group of activists attempted to import the concepts behind the New Zealand "UNITE" union to Australia, with some small successes. While being nominally a 'fast food and services' union, they organised a variety of hospitality workplaces. From Bakers Delight to the Carl-

ton Club, 7-11's and a successful campaign organising Brunswick Street. The responses from workers shows that potential for organisation exists. UNITE was extremely small, and not well financed. It relied heavily on the activity of a few core activists. As such I would say UNITE's weaknesses are obvious. United Voice (formerly the LHMU) is technically the union for hospitality workers. The LHMU had two 'sections'; the 'Miscellaneous' (Cleaners, Security Guards, Ambos etc) and the 'Pissos' (basically restaurant/cafe workers.) The Misco section is well organised, and runs consistent campaigns involving workplaces all over Australia. As for the 'Pissos', besides the Casino, I do not know of any workplaces in hospitality they have organised. However, I think this is because of material conditions. Few workers I've ever met in hospitality were ideologically left or unionists. It makes for a hard starting ground in Australia's union/political structure for a union to simply walk in and start organising workers. UV's lobbying actions to 'defend our penalty rates' etc will go nowhere without on the ground organisation and direct action.

United Voice, like most of the union movement is fighting back against the Abbott government's workplace relations laws. Specifically in regard to hospitality, this means an attack on weekend rates. If one reads the bosses 'Restaurants and Catering' reports, every year they recommend a slashing

of weekend rates, penalties and awards:

“The system further disadvantages the services sector (and in particular restaurant and catering businesses) by enshrining penalty rates based on industry-wide traditions. Penalties for working on Saturday and Sunday (and after 7pm) when restaurants and catering businesses do most of their trade makes no sense. Employees want to work these hours and businesses need to have them work, yet the business is penalised.”

Removing penalty rates would put incredible stress on suffering workers should it succeed. Many people around Australia rely on those ‘weekend rates’ to help them get by. They sacrifice parts of their weekend for an elevated rate on Sunday. Often these Sunday shifts mean the difference between paying rent or not, especially for those who work part-time and have other commitments etc. Think of single mothers and the under-employed, etc. Should the Liberals succeed in slashing penalties, a lot of us will be fucked. And we will be giving up a part of our life (weekends and nights), missing out on important social life, for no reward. These attacks are coupled with an increased tendency towards casualisation and part-time work. Couched in terms of ‘flexibility’, much like other industries, hospitality thrives on disciplining the working class and giving them

few rights.

We know that methods of organising exist, and opportunities will present themselves. As for what action we should undertake, that is to be debated. I think it’s possible to begin to build unions amongst hospitality workers, however transient or resistant they may be, and use the resources available through United Voice to assist self-activity and negotiate better contracts to back up the sporadic direct actions that break out. I believe workers - not in the ‘glamorous’ restaurants, but rather your day-to-day cafes, pubs, bars and restaurants frequented by the working class - are where the beginnings of self-activity will occur. Workers here have less of the ‘I will make it as a celebrity/top chef’ attitude. They are disgruntled line cooks, wait staff, dishwashers and baristas who’ve been trapped by the lack of opportunities in neoliberal Australia.

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# 'CALLING OUT' AND THE LIMITATIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES

Content warning: sexual violence.

*By Rebecca Winter*



**R**ecently, I've been getting into discussions about whether calling out perpetrators of sexual violence and their supporters is a useful tactic. Some have suggested that calling out is often unhelpful and doesn't allow healing to occur. Instead, they suggest that we should focus on less public ways of responding to sexual violence. Apparently, we need to have more compassion for perpetrators and belief in their ability to change.

It has become fairly common for people to criticise 'calling out',

as though public criticism of the actions of others began with the invention of tumblr. Some of these criticisms come from a genuine desire to think about how we can build more effective cultures of criticism within the left. But all too often, people criticise calling out to avoid dealing with underlying disagreements about which actions are actually worth criticising in the first place.

When it comes to calling out perpetrators of sexual violence, the criticisms often miss the mark. One problem is that it's often not clear what is really meant by call-

ing out in the first place. Is someone calling someone else out if they tell their friends they were raped? Or if they name the perpetrator to those around them? What about if they talk about their experiences in a group environment? Or does calling out only refer to public Facebook or website posts?

Given this ambiguity, I think saying that calling out is unhelpful risks discouraging sexual violence survivors from speaking about their experiences. I worry that it will set up a hierarchy of the 'good' survivor who deals with their trauma in private, or with a small group of supporters, and the 'bad' survivor who talks publically about their experiences and names the perpetrator. Our society already has an intense focus on and judgment of what survivors do in the aftermath of being assaulted. We need to be careful not to increase this by focusing on how publically people talk about sexual violence.

The main reason why calling out can have bad consequences is that rape culture is still strong and thriving. Naming a perpetrator or speaking about sexual violence in public still often gets an extremely hostile response from friends of the perpetrator and others who wish to deny the prevalence and seriousness of sexual violence. We should be focusing on creating an environment in which survivors can speak about their experiences without having to endure shaming and hostility in response, rather than encouraging them not to pub-

lically name the people who hurt them.

We must not underestimate the importance of calling out as a method of alerting people to the existence of perpetrators, if this is what the survivor wishes. The person who raped me tried to assault four other women before he raped me, but I didn't find out about this until it was too late. If there had been more open communication and if the people around him had not ignored his behaviour, then maybe he wouldn't have been in the sort of environment where he could repeatedly try to assault women and get away with it. I certainly would have appreciated a warning or call out.

In opposition to calling out, accountability processes are sometimes presented as the 'ideal' way to respond to sexual violence. Accountability processes involve a "group that mediates between an individual and the person calling them out, or separate groups supporting each person and facilitating communication between them. These processes usually involve setting out conditions or 'demands' for the person who's been called out as a means of restoring safety or trust and preventing the harm from happening again, and some method for following up to ensure that these demands are met" - *Accounting For Ourselves*.

Accountability processes are *one* (important) way we can attempt to respond to sexual violence in our communities, and

some survivors have found this approach to be really useful. But we need to avoid presenting accountability processes as the best or only just way to respond to sexual violence. In practice, the sort of public calling out that some people seem to find most confronting often happens after the failure of accountability processes, or other less public ways of responding to sexual violence. Calling out a perpetrator of sexual violence in a public setting is typically a response to being unheard elsewhere.

It's worth remembering that accountability processes carry their own risks and limitations. For instance, a rapist's friends will often support them and respond to a survivor talking about their experience of violence by banding together to attempt to discredit the survivor. Accountability processes may not be possible in the context of this level of contempt. Multiple people I know have pursued accountability processes, but found that they provided the people who assaulted them with more opportunities to continue emotional and other forms of abuse. One survivor was assaulted a second time while undergoing an accountability process.

Accountability processes can end up being used as a way of trying to deny the damage that has been done. If they are not directed by the wishes of the survivor, they can become a way for people to attempt to bring a perpetrator back

into a space or community with a minimum of fuss, with no real attempt to respond to the survivor's needs.

Sometimes it is suggested that we should be 'calling in' perpetrators of sexual violence, rather than calling them out. In an influential article, Ngoc Loan Tran argues that we need to "let go of treating each other like not knowing, making mistakes, and saying the wrong thing make it impossible for us to ever do the right things." They suggest that we need to develop an ethic of calling in – the "practice of loving each other enough to allow each other to make mistakes." This idea has immense value when thinking about how to build a diverse collective politics against intersecting forms of oppression and exploitation. But the idea of calling in was never put forward as a way of addressing issues of sexual violence. In fact, it was presented with the explicit disclaimer that calling in is not meant to provide justification for a "fuckery free-for-all." Instead, it is meant to refer to building community with people who you can trust and find common ground with. But in many cases this basic level of trust is broken when people choose to perpetrate sexual violence. Trust can't always be repaired, especially given the lack of resources we have to spend the years that might be required to convince a hostile perpetrator that what they did was wrong. We need to remember that most cases of sexual violence are not a mistake

***“The realisation that some people are unlikely to change or understand the damage they have done to others is a bitter one, but ignoring this can also be dangerous.”***

or due to a misunderstanding, but happen because of a perpetrator’s intentional or reckless disregard of another person’s right to control their own body and sexuality.

I believe that people can change for the better, in general. But there’s a big difference between thinking that people can change, in a general sense, and thinking that particular perpetrators are likely to change in the foreseeable future, or that I should put my energy towards trying to get them to change.

The realisation that some people are unlikely to change or understand the damage they have done to others is a bitter one, but ignoring this can also be dangerous. The person who assaulted me went through a cycles of apologising for his actions and then trying to assault someone else (which I only found out after he raped me). I don’t think I will ever trust that an apology from him is genuine. I don’t trust that he will change given his pattern of sexual aggression towards women. And I don’t think that this is because I lack compassion. Some people are too invested in sexual violence as a form of control for genuine change to be a believable prospect. Acknowledging this should not be seen as a failure of a survivor’s character.

None of this means that ac-

countability processes aren’t worth pursuing, if that is what a survivor wants. It is important for us to put energy towards facilitating these processes for survivors who do want to try them. But it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of accountability processes and understand that it’s not a lack of compassion that can make survivors decide not to take part in them. We need to support survivors in the variety of different (limited) ways people have found to cope with sexual violence, and this is going to include calling out and exclusion as well as accountability processes.

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# DAVE KERIN ON WORKERS' COOPERATIVES AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY



**D**ave Kerin is a co-founder of the Earthworker Cooperative in Morwell, Victoria, which is building a network of democratically owned and managed cooperatives throughout Australia to manufacture clean energy technology. Sam spoke with him at Trades Hall.

## **What is the Earthworker Cooperative?**

The Earthworker Cooperative facilitates and enables the establishment of other workers' cooperatives in Australia, with a focus on manufacturing new green technologies for supply locally. Eureka's Future is one of the enterprises within that, manufacturing solar products. It started with manufacturing the BOLT-ON

solar heat pump, which renters can bolt-on and bolt-off when they leave. It used to be made in China but we won the rights to make it here, along with stainless steel tanks, which are entirely made here by us. There are other products, an evacuator tube solar system, solar ventilators and so on, which we also won the rights to make here.

The point of Eureka's Future is to control the spaces where we work and where we live. All workers make decisions democratically and own the enterprise collectively. The Australian service sector is now eighty percent of the economy. In Greece it was at sixty percent before its collapse. We've allowed capitalism to build our lives on exploitation and on sand. It will wash away at the first

sign of real crisis. We have to put those jobs back in place. Capitalism is saying we can't do it, the state is not going to do it, so that leaves us with one class: that's us, the working class. Earthworker is one aspect of that. Regardless of a person's worldview, how they define themselves, they can join Earthworker if they support the outcomes we're trying to achieve.

### **How do the workers who are involved react to being in control of their workplace and democratically managing their own work?**

Well, at Eureka's Future we're just getting started, so it's a scary time. October-November is when we mutualise Everlast, which was the private company. And the workforce are only just coming over to the cooperative structure. At this point, we begin a process of them not only becoming worker-owners, but also a process of education, that Borderlands Cooperative is assisting us with. Where we as a group of workers learn what it is to run our workplace. We learn about group dynamics and group decision-making, conflict resolution at work, how do we deal with power. Other things: how do we deal with hazards, toxicity, and so on. The Earthworker Cooperative has been a success, but also a lot of hard work.

### **What have been the major challenges in building the cooperative and what challenges might**

### **new worker cooperatives face more generally?**

I guess the biggest challenge has been the cultural shift in the organised labour movement and the green movement over the past two decades. Workers are encouraged to be individualised, to reject trade unions and anything to do with cooperation. Meanwhile, due to a variety of factors, the labour movement has been separated from the environmental movement. We're trying to reverse that shift by talking about jobs and the environment, not jobs versus the environment. The latter strategy has been tried and it failed miserably. Not only workers, but it has failed the planet. So we're taking a class approach to the climate.

We emphasise that capitalism is causing the climate emergency. To march in the streets asking capitalism to get a heart transplant and get out of the Big Four -- fossil fuel, petrochemical, plastics and the military -- is impossible, when capitalism is totally and utterly dependent on those industries. I mean, the military is the largest industry in the world, by half, and the largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions. Capitalism is bound to it.

If you look at the Middle East, it is about controlling oil and resources as they decline, but it's also about directly serving the military-industrial complex. That's how much of a systemic crisis we're facing. So unless we want

## ***“It’s about us as a class democratically controlling where we live and where we work.”***

to get good at yoga and learn how to bend over and kiss our asses goodbye, we’d better get these cooperatives and other forms that allow workers to make decisions in place, to meet our needs together.

### **How then do worker cooperatives differ from capitalist enterprise in their relationship to the environment?**

Well, the first and obvious difference is worker ownership. No one paints the house they rent, you’ve got to own it, then you might protect it from the weather. Same with the economy. We’re allowing all manner of awful things to happen to the planet within our economies because we don’t own them. The second difference is popular control. We can’t deal with climate unless we have engaged communities, and that can’t just be in an abstract political sense, it has to be in an economic sense. Power is in the economy. If we don’t control the places where we work and where we live, we don’t control anything. Marching and demonstrating against war and climate change aren’t forms of control.

It can’t just be about ownership. I mean, we as working people now provide the capital base for private investment via our

superannuation. Seventy-five percent of capital investment in Australia is our own superannuation. If you own seventy-five percent of your house, you own it already! So in many ways we’ve passed capitalism. Since the Second World War it has devolved into this monster. I mean the military, a giant monolith of destruction, is the largest industry now. Constant production, constant profit, and all it takes is a few dead bodies.

Workers’ cooperatives demonstrate the power of positive example. They show that workers can run industry, they can make decisions about the economy, and that that’s a good thing. If you have a strong social sector in the economy, people will participate regardless of how they vote, their religious background or anything else. It’s about us as a class democratically controlling where we live and where we work.

### **During the 2001 economic crisis in Argentina and in other examples workers have taken over formerly capitalist enterprises as a means of economic recovery and transformation. Do you see that as a possibility in Australia?**

I think it has to be a possibility. As I say, capitalism is in systemic crisis. The climate is acting as a new imperative. The

climate emergency is unfolding at a rate that even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is unable to fully comprehend, as they say. The effect is going to be enormous. So more and more we are going to be thrown back onto our own resources. The choice is to evolve or devolve. There might always be a private sector, fine, but we need a strong, democratic social sector, because without popular engagement we're not going to deal with all the minutiae and complexities of building a new and sustainable economics.

People ask why the Big Four banks can't simply shift their investments over into renewables. They can't! Why would they shift out of industries so enormously profitable into industries that are not? That's capitalism. A dollar is only useful to a capitalist. Even under government-ownership things were different. When the coal was publicly owned by the Electricity Commission, they already had solar power on the grid, because under state ownership renewables and fossil fuels did not compete, they were just different ways of producing power. But the minute you introduce private ownership then anything outside that modality is a competitor, so you kill it. We don't have time anymore to work within ownership models that are outdated, and I think in future there will be more immediate and spontaneous responses from workers.

**Eureka's Future is aiming to secure markets for solar technology by having trade unions include them in their collective agreements. You are also a former member of the Builders' Laborers Federation, which actively intervened in environmental issues through its famous Green Bans campaigns. What role do you see for trade unions in their relationship to cooperatives?**

I think it is about developing a new economic space, where groups of people determine what their needs are and organise to meet those needs. At the heart of it is democratic ownership. Trade unions are a form of workers' power that exists currently, and they will be important to growing the power of people and workers in the future.

Our experience is that the vast majority of people want to see changes in this direction, but we can't satisfy our needs through individuals going to a shop and individually purchasing something, so trade unions offer a collective basis for that to happen.

Trade unions have enormous potential. That's why the Fraser Government criminalised secondary boycotts (black bans) in 1977, to stop unions striking in solidarity with each other. And why they introduced casualisation, which came in under Labor in the 1980s I might add. Federal and state politicians promised trade unions that it would only be used

for relief staff in the public sector. Now we have 44 percent of young people on casual contracts. Jobs with no rights, and union density at an all-time low. And look at the world! Capitalism has a more unequal concentration of wealth than you had under feudalism. Eight thousand individuals own around ninety percent of the world's wealth. That's a greater intensity than under the kings, queens and aristocrats of feudal Europe. And what's more, combine that with the military-industrial complex and you have the basis for the growth of a real fascism. If we want to get out of this mess, we've got to start relying on each other, trusting each other, and putting the forms in place that allow us to do that economically, and trade unions are important to that.

**There is a tendency on the far left to view cooperatives as a limited strategy in that they are forced to operate within capitalism, they are subject to market forces and so on. One example is the Mondragon cooperative, which grew to multi-national proportions and employs wage labour. Is there any merit to those criticisms?**

Sure. There's truth in that critique. Look at the impact of the Global Financial Crisis. Mondragon was hit really hard and pretty much went under. But look at what happened: workers continued to be paid at the same rate for

two years. They were retrained. And yes, one result is that large numbers of people are now employed by Mondragon, not as worker-owners. Cooperatives exist now in so many forms, and not all of them offer prospects for the future. Here in Australia you have large agribusiness cooperatives where workers are not allowed to be members. That's just calling something a cooperative when it is behaving like a corporation

But sure, the critiques are real. The point is this: no one is saying that the development of workers' cooperatives will eradicate the problems that exist under capitalism. It is simply saying that we will finally own those problems, and therefore be able to do something about them. The growth of workers' cooperatives is a process, not a final act. But the real work starts with the cooperative

Everyone agrees we need to change the world, whether you vote Tory or Liberal or you don't vote, whatever. Are politicians capable of making these changes? No, look at the world! Look how far they've got us. The world does not revolve around parliaments, it revolves around economies, how we meet our needs. We need to get in there.

The Earthworker Cooperative requires skills and support. To become involved, visit [earthwork-cooperative.com.au](http://earthwork-cooperative.com.au) for more information.

# THE POLITICS OF WAR GRAVES

By Kieran Bennett



**T**he way in which the dead are remembered is a political act - the commemoration of war is never neutral. Australia has commenced an orgy of official remembrance; the ANZAC commemoration industry is expected to consume the larger part of a billion dollars of public and private money over the next two years (1). The reformist left is already bemoaning the crass commercialism of it all, and the more critical amongst them point out that ANZAC and Gallipoli were mere side shows to the “countless

white crosses” that in “mute witness stand” in the muddy fields of Belgium and France (2).

But there is no such thing as an apolitical commemoration. The endless white crosses served their imperial masters in the aftermath of four years of slaughter, just as the ANZAC industry serves the Australian state today.

Mass slaughter shakes a society to its core. This can (and should) undermine the legitimacy and control of the ruling class that unleashes it. In May 1917 the British government established the Imperial War Graves Commission. This was a response to the unprecedented scale of slaughter, a slaughter wrought across the British working class; and across the colonies and dominions of the British Empire. 1917 had already seen revolution in Russia and mutiny in France (3); it was clear to the British ruling class that slaughter could shake the legitimacy of the class at home the image of unassailable power that the Empire depended on abroad. In wars past, a powerful leader or heroic figure might be remembered with an official statue, patriotic poem or day of mourning. But the scale of death in the First World War

required a more comprehensive response, steps had to be taken to control and subvert the process of mourning that might all fall too easily morph into recrimination against and indictment of the rulers who had caused it. The Imperial War Graves commission responded to this situation by conscripting the dead. (4)

In wars past the arrangements made for human remains were ad-hoc. Many might be buried on the site of battles, but families with the means and inclination would often recover the bodies of loved ones to be reinterred "at home". The bodies of the wealthy and powerful were routinely repatriated. The arrangements made reflected inequalities of wealth and power, but the key point is that previously the state never claimed to own the bodies of its dead soldiers. Whether they could access them or not, in principle the body of a dead soldier belonged to the family.

The War Graves Commission had other ideas. It became British government policy that bodies were not to be repatriated. Even after the war ended, families were to be prevented from recovering the remains of their loved ones. The British state still had use for them. After November 1918, across battlefields like those of Ieper (Ypres), the Imperial War Graves Commission exhumed tens of thousands of adhoc graves and cemeteries. Grand monuments to sacrifice were planned, to be con-

secrated with the human remains of the working class of the British Empire.

Winston Churchill famously sought to dedicate the entire town of Ieper in Belgium to the British Empire. Entirely destroyed by the war, its ruins were to stand as an eternal monument to British sacrifice, even if the Belgians had to be prevented from ever returning to their homes. Ieper was eventually rebuilt, but not without significant concession. Monumental graveyards litter its landscape. The Menin gate stands over the entrance to the town, the worlds "PRO PATRIA" and "PRO REGE" stare down from above, whilst its walls record the names of fifty thousand soldiers of empire "to whom the fortunes of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death"(5).

At a place called Tyne Cot, eleven thousand nine hundred and fifty four marble headstones stand in careful rows. As you enter, the cemetery rises in front of you on a gentle slope. The horizon is capped with a neoclassical monument in marble. The cemetery centres on a "cross of sacrifice", mounted on marble stairs and bearing an iron sword.

These cemeteries were designed for a purpose and to convey a message. That purpose is stark and apparent when you contrast the glorious dead of Tyne Cot with those entombed at the nearby German cemetery at

***“The dead are sanctified in the name of king and country, the class butchery is obscured under a false equality, and the crime of militarism is rescued for future use by the ruling class and the state.”***

Langemark. At the centre of the cemetery at Langemark is a small garden, perhaps ten metres by ten metres. It marks the spot where the exhumed remains of twenty four thousand German soldiers were dumped.

Unadorned, the piles of the dead are an indictment. You cannot look upon the mass grave at Langemark and not despise those responsible for the commission of so monstrous a crime. The famous British war graves of Menin Gate and Tyne Cot are no mere memorials; they serve a clear and reactionary political purpose in the context of the immediate post-war period. These monuments serve to recast the nature of the crime they record. On the walls of the Menin Gate, the dead are not working class conscripts, callously butchered in the name of a lie. Instead they have become heroic figures, united under the cross of sacrifice, who nobly struggled for the cause. The dead are sanctified in the name of king and country, the class butchery is obscured under a false equality, and the crime of militarism is rescued for future use by the ruling class and the state. The remains of twenty four thousand German soldiers can be dumped in a pit and forgotten, but to this day the British and Austra-

lian ruling classes still need the remains and memories of those butchered in the monumental lie that was the First World War.

It is now one hundred years since tens of thousands of Australians died for the British Empire in Europe and the Middle East. Those people died and killed countless others because the Australian ruling class had a vital interest in the maintenance of the British Empire, that empire allowed the Australian ruling class to project power and obtain resources in this region well beyond its own means. (6)

One hundred years later the Australian ruling class eagerly supports and encourages the military adventures of the United States, the threat of US protection facilitates the Australian ruling class's disproportionate power in relation to its immediate neighbours, and the Australian state is spending more than anyone else on "commemorating" a minor battle of the First World War.

For references, see [www.anarchistaffinity.org](http://www.anarchistaffinity.org)

# THE FORGOTTEN WAR

By Kieran Bennett



**T**he First World War is the war the Australian ruling class wants us to remember. They are spending hundreds of millions over the next two years making sure we never forget. It's the war they would have us believe created Australia. And Australia was created in a war. But it was another war. A war our rulers would rather pretend never occurred.

Australia began with an invasion. In 1788 nearly eight hundred convicted criminals and nearly four hundred military personnel landed in Sydney. They began construction of an advance base of operations, and kicked off a war of conquest that would span 140 years.

When the invasion commenced there were at approxi-

mately 750,000 people living in 350 distinct nations on the Australian landmass. By 1900, only 93,200 first Australians survived. At least twenty thousand Aboriginal people were killed or murdered in untold battles and massacres from Hobart to the Kimberley. Approximately two and half thousand white invaders were killed as Aboriginal people resisted extermination.

The heroes of Aboriginal armed resistance are not remembered. The Australian War Memorial refuses to acknowledge their struggle as a "war". In legislation, the Australian War Memorial is established to commemorate "wars and war-like operations in which Australians have been on active service" which includes "any military force of the ground raised in

Australia". Presumably, then, the following people do not exist.

### **Windradyne**

In January 1824 the Wirudjuri people under the leadership of Windradyne embarked on an ambitious guerrilla war to roll back the expanding white settlement of Bathurst. Over eleven months the Wirudjuri burnt out stations, dispersed sheep and cattle and killed settlers. By August the Sydney Gazette stated that the Wirudjuri had exposed "the strength and wealth of the Colony... to destruction"(2). New South Wales Governor Thomas Brisbane declared martial law in the Bathurst area, regular soldiers were dispatched from Sydney, and by December a series of massacres had claimed the lives of over one thousand Wirudjuri men, women and children.

### **Yagan**

In 1829 white invaders established a colony at Swan River in what is now Western Australia. Noongar people first attempted to isolate and avoid these settlers, but a series of murders by white settlers in December 1831 eventually led to an armed response by Noongar warriors. Initially warriors under the leadership of Yagan and Midgegooroo responded to the depredations with acts of traditional retribution (spearing), however as white violence escalated Yagan in particular pursued

an armed campaign against the settlement. Crops and buildings were burned, livestock was scattered, and an ambitious series of robberies was conducted. Yagan's interactions with white settlers were not always hostile, and he was eventually killed by two shepherds he had befriended. They shot him, and cut off his head to claim a reward offered by the colonial government. Yagan's head was pickled and taken to England to be publically displayed.

### **Jandamarra**

By 1890 white settlers were colonising the Kimberley region. Jundamurra was a Bunuba man employed as a tracker in the service of the white Police. In 1894 he was deployed against his own people. Jundamurra rebelled. He killed liberated prisoners, seized weapons, and commenced a three year guerrilla war against white settlers, soldiers and police. Eventually his band was tracked down, and Jundamurra was captured and killed. Like many other black resistance fighters, he was beheaded and his remains were put on public display in England.

Jandamarra, Yagan and Windradyne are but three of the names that have (barely) survived a deliberate campaign of forgetting and denial. The vast majority of black resistance fighters were simply murdered and forgotten, with their actions dismissively explained

***“Far from surrendering or fading away in the mists of time, Aboriginal peoples fought tooth and nail to defend their lands, laws and people.”***

away.

The Australian ruling class wish to minimise, and forget black resistance and white atrocities because remembering has important political consequences.

The acts and history of resistance demonstrate the reality that this continent’s original peoples never ceded their right to self-determination. Far from surrendering or fading away in the mists of time, Aboriginal peoples fought tooth and nail to defend their lands, laws and people.

This war of conquest and resistance was economic as well as genocidal. Cattle and sheep were crucial to the first capitalist accumulation and extraction on this continent, and Aboriginal resistance often focused on economic warfare against these interests – the dispersal or spearing of herds and the burning of farms and crops. The white response to economic warfare was genocide, with the burning or a crop or death of a single white settler met with wholesale massacres. It is no coincidence that massacres follow the cattle from Gippsland and the mass murder of Gunai in the 1840s to Coniston and the massacres of the Warlpiri, Anmatyerre and Kaytetye peoples in 1929.

To recognise this is to recognise something about the system

of land ownership in White Australia. Every plot of land, every house, factory and cattle farm, is built upon the murder and destruction of Aboriginal peoples. There are reasons the Australian ruling class would rather forget the frontier wars and remember Gallipoli, but no matter what they might say, it was the war of conquest unleashed in 1788 is the war that created Australia.

The invasion and conquest of this continent created the Australian state, as colonial administrations were erected and then consolidated. The invasion and conquest laid the basis for the first cycle of capitalist accumulation to occur in Australia, as agriculture and mining extracted wealth from stolen lands. And it is the invasion and conquest that created the Australian working class, as hundreds of thousands were transported or enticed with the promise of stolen land.

### **Recommended reading**

David Lowe (1994), *Forgotten Rebels: Black Australians Who Fought Back*, available in full at [www.kooriweb.org](http://www.kooriweb.org).

# RACISM AND LABOUR ORGANISING IN AUSTRALIA

*By Tom Cameron*

**A**ustralia is a country with an undeniable history of racism. It is a history of outstanding colonial cruelty. The Australian state is built on genocide and colonialism, and this legacy seeps through into all aspects of our political and social lives. The current issue of 457 visas harkens back to times such as in 1878, where Australian sailors unions held strikes to fight the use of Chinese and Pacific Islander labour, claiming they had no right to work in Australia, and were taking what was 'rightfully' the white man's. This is a dangerous repetition of history, as strikes were common in this same era to try and block immigration, and helped start the White Australia policy.

While it is indisputable that racism infects the white Australian working class, some sections of the working class have a powerful history of combating racial divides – despite the divisive attitudes of the Australian media, bosses, and politicians who would seek to exploit it. The Eureka stockade – a defining moment of Australian labour history – was a historical moment of multicultural resistance, where workers of many nations, races

and creeds rebelled against colonial authorities. Nor is this the only example; Freedom Rides, and the Builders Labourers 'Black Bans', among others, give us a hint of the potential for working class Australians to take part in the struggle against racism from above and amongst their own.

The 457 visa issue is one of the most recent battles around jobs defined by national boundaries. 457 visas allow the bosses to exploit the weaker labour laws, lower wages and conditions that exist in other nations, and provide them with an opportunity to pit workers against one another. The visa allows foreign skilled workers to be 'sponsored' by an Australian business to work in the country for the duration of the contract. Bosses can pay 457 visa workers less than the minimum wage, which allows them to undercut the wages of workers in Australia. However, rather than seeing that foreign workers are being exploited by such visas, the media and some leaders of the union bureaucracy claim that the bosses are helping these workers, and that these workers are 'taking our jobs.'

It is reprehensible to play the

## ***“Marginalised peoples will fight for their own rights and white and privileged workers need to be prepared act in solidarity”***

‘stolen jobs’ card, when our movement should be calling out all forms of exploitation. But not only is this blatant fear-mongering, it is completely disingenuous too. The right-wing faction of some unions claim overseas workers are taking jobs in the industrial-labouring sectors, but of the 160,000 on 457 contracts, about 70% of them are highly paid managers in the private industries. This is hardly foreign workers ‘stealing’ the jobs of blue collar labourers we are presented with. None the less, the 30% of workers on these contracts deserve our support, not the condemnation and dismissal of our union leaders.

Exploited workers in Australia on any kind of temporary working visas should be assisted by the unions. If these workers are organised to fight for their rights and treated as equal to the Australian working class by the unions, then the labour movement can help stop exploitation both overseas and at home, and help eliminate the unjust division created by the bosses. Top politicians or business leaders may claim to have the interests of “Australia” at heart, but they are only considering what serves their interests – they use immigration as a political tool to win the vote of the working class. It is a card they can play to maintain

political power, by exploiting fear and insecurity.

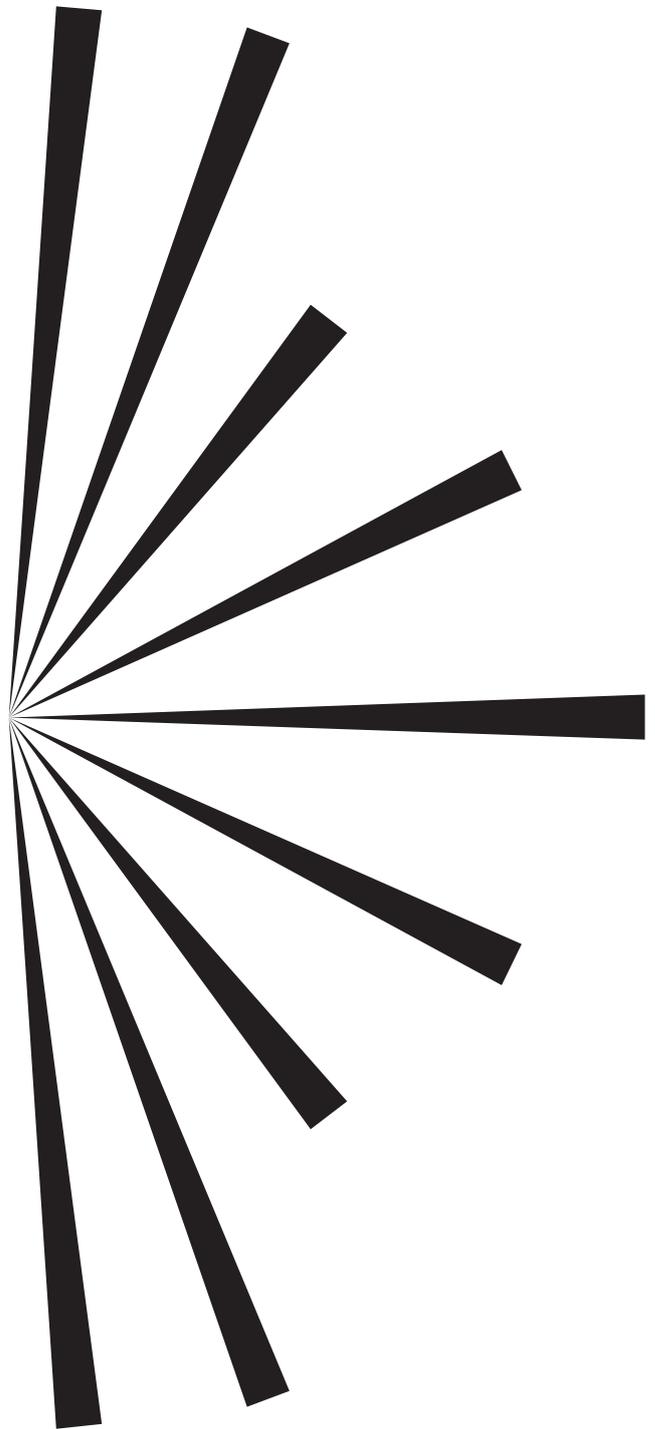
But it is not a card that is always successful, and Australian labour history provides important examples of when Australian labour has organised to fight racism. A famous example is the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the early twentieth century, through to its defeat by the government in the 1920’s, which had one of the nation’s most militant legacies of labour organising. The IWW organised in solidarity with workers of all colours, and of any legal status. They were famous for defending the rights of workers who the traditional unions (namely the Australia Workers Union) would not touch. As then and now, to challenge this exploitation of racist fears by bosses, the fight against racism needs to come from below. Marginalised peoples will fight for their own rights and white and privileged workers need to be prepared act in solidarity, and encourage anti-racist attitudes amongst one another.

The 1946 Pilbara workers strike provides a brilliant example of indigenous resistance to class exploitation, and how white workers can support these struggles. In Pilbara, Western Australia, exploited Aboriginal workers organised a mass strike demanding basic human rights, equal wages, and

native title, which would turn out to be one of the longest strikes in Australian history. This was during a period when the Australian courts did not consider Aboriginal people to be as 'evolved' as white men. But workers do not always believe the lies of the bosses, nor do they always consider the courts to be the sole arbiter of what is right and wrong. The strike was supported by the Communist Party and several unions, who organised rallies and raised funds in support, as well as using their press to disseminate information combating the racist lies of the state and the bosses.

Examples like this show that the possibility for successful working class anti-racist political action always exists. But to make these actions a reality, we need to think more about what genuine solidarity looks like and how we can support the leadership of people of colour in our organising. Every time we decry racism, every time we organise labour across national lines paying no heed to 'legal' or 'illegal' migration status as granted by the state, every time we stop fascist organising, every time a refugee is freed, we are battling the will of the bosses and politicians and reactionary elements of our own class, while strengthening our communities and movements. We need to create autonomy for labour, provide real equality, and construct a movement as strong as it is diverse. Only when this is realised can workers unite to stop their

exploitation at the hands of bosses and politicians.





# 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 pursuing 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). Workers are paid the minimum the capital-

ist can get away with in a given situation, and the capitalist steals the rest. The private property owned by capitalists is the wealth stolen from past generations of workers. Capitalism denies the vast majority their economic and social inheritance through recourse to violence and coercion. Any incursion into private property is punished by the state. This system, capitalism, the state and the oppressive ideologies that support it, must be abolished in their entirety.

5. The state is a centralised structure in which a small number of people, through their control of the police, military and courts (a monopoly on ‘legitimate’ violence), impose decisions on the vast majority. The state is not simply a “body of armed men” in service of the dominant class, it is also an institution that develops its own interest and that seeks to perpetuate its existence and expand its power. As anarchists we wholly reject the state, and instead we aim for “the most complete realisation of democracy—democracy in the fields, factories, and neighbourhoods.”

6. Capitalism reaches across the entire globe. Military and economic imperialism (so-called globalisation) continue to subordinate most of the globe to the capitalist system, securing access to resources, labour and markets for the capitalist core. As capitalism is global, the struggle against capitalism must also be global, and we must

act in solidarity and support for the struggles of oppressed people wherever they occur.

7. Capitalism has wrought upon our planet a global ecological crisis that now threatens the basis of existence for the majority of humanity. Capitalist entities grow or perish, whenever capital is not growing it is in crisis. Capitalism, as the effective cause the present environmental crisis, cannot effectively solve or even lessen the extent of environmental degradation. Capitalism's demand for continued growth on our finite planet is at odds with human survival as a species, and therefore as a matter of necessity, and not just desirability, it must be abolished.

8. The role of anarchists is to build the capacity of oppressed peoples as a whole to struggle for our collective emancipation. It is only when the collective and conscious social force of the mass of oppressed people exceeds the power of capitalism and the state, that a revolution with truly libertarian socialist potential be possible.

9. We believe that revolutionary unionism, or syndicalism, is an essential strategy to build the collective power of the working class. We seek to build rank and file organisations that unite workers across existing unions, and advocate for directly democratic structures and militant strategy.

10. We unite as a specific anarchist organisation on the basis of theoretical unity, tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism. By theoretical unity we mean developing and organising around a shared understanding of anarchism, capitalism and the context in which we operate. By tactical unity we mean developing and collectively implementing a common strategy for achieving our goals. By collective responsibility we mean agreeing to act collectively – rather than individually in the pursuit of our common strategy. By federalism we mean organising on a directly democratic “grass roots up” basis, rejecting any “top down” command structure.

## FOOTNOTES

1. *Michael Schmidt & Lucien van der Walt, Black Flame: The revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism, p. 70.*

# **To Arms!**

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**Capitalists, Parsons. Politicians,  
Landlords, Newspaper Editors and  
Other Stay-At-Home Patriots.**

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**your country needs  
YOU  
in the trenches!!**

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**WORKERS**

**Follow your Masters**

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This poster was created in 1915 by Tom Barker of the Australian Industrial Workers of the World, who was jailed for 12 months in response. The IWW were fierce critics of the war and conscription efforts.