

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

BULLETIN · ISSUE 7

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this edition contains images and voices of people who have died.

Most workers will have a public holiday on January 26 to mark “Australia Day”. For many this day symbolizes the commencement of genocide and dispossession. We support our comrades that have reclaimed this day as Invasion Day. This edition looks at struggles led by First Nations People and calls for solidarity from the workers movement.

We are also introducing a new regular feature in the Bulletin - OHS Matters. As always we welcome your feedback at

we.are.workers.solidarity@gmail.com



Poster from Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance

WORKERS IN STRUGGLE

As catastrophic fires have raged across Australia, smoke has blanketed both cities and regional areas. With air quality index levels reaching hazardous levels, unions have been advising workers to move to indoors work, to issue Provisional Improvement Notices, or request protective masks from employers. There have been reports of workers downing tools, and worryingly a number of cases of paramedics attending building sites to care for workers experiencing breathing difficulties. Workers are members of the largely volunteer fire authorities and services; union members were involved in the evacuation and supply drops to Mallacoota; and ETU member linesman have been working in hot and smoky conditions to reconnect power supplies to fire affected communities. Health and community workers, construction workers, and local government workers will help communities to heal and rebuild. Climate change is an industrial issue. Workers must be involved in the fight for climate justice.

ETU - Australian Paper, Maryvale

There has been an ongoing dispute at Australian Paper since at least September. The ETU advised via social media that there was another stoppage from 24th December - 2nd January.

RTBU - Yarra Trams

RTBU members at Yarra Trams will be taking another 2 four-hour stoppages on January 28 & 30. The RTBU has been pushing for a payrise and to protect conditions since March last year. The union suspended industrial action over the busy summer period, but will strategically resume its stoppages during the Australian Open.

WIN: CFMEU - Boggabri Mine (Idemitsu)

Following 5 months of industrial action including rolling stoppages, strikes and mass meetings, workers at the Boggabri Coal Mine have a new agreement. The long campaign included workers

being locked out for 6 days by Idemitsu. The dispute centred on pay, claiming that workers at other Idemitsu mines earned far more than those at Boggabri. The new agreement, supported by 86% of workers contains 27 new conditions including all leave being paid at salary rate (not base rate); 12% pay rise over the course of the agreement; a \$4000 sign-on bonus; and the bonus system guaranteed and paid as an allowance. According to CFMEU Vice-President Jeff Drayton "these workers have now closed the gap in conditions with the Hunter Valley and they have gone a long way towards closing the gap in pay."

MUA - DP World

On 13 January, 200 wharfies at DP World container terminal in Fremantle stopped work for 24 hours. The action was reported to kick-off ongoing work bans and one-hour stoppages at other DP World terminals in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane - as well as continuing action in Fremantle. This latest round of industrial action comes after more than 15 months of negotiations between the MUA and DP World. The MUA accuses DP World of not negotiating in good faith. Christy Cain, MUA WA Branch Secretary said "Dubai Ports needs to understand that Australian wharfies will not be bullied into handing over hard-won rights and conditions, and we are prepared to fight to ensure we receive our fair share of the productivity gains we have delivered on the waterfront."

India - General Strike

The largest strike in world history took place on 8 January in India. An estimated 200 million workers participated in the strike which comes as protests against the Modi government have escalated in recent months. The strike, and protests more widely, have surged partly in response to the government's citizenship laws which disproportionately target the minority Muslim community. But more broadly, workers are angry about the management of the economy, unemployment, privatisation and hostile labour laws and are demanding an increase to minimum wage and secure jobs. As with many recent protests, women have played a key part in the organisation of this strike. 10 central trade unions called for the strike, and were supported by dozens of federations and unions. 175 farmer and agricultural organisations called for a simultaneous rural strike. With students joining the strike as well, every industry area in the country was affected, if not shut down by the strike.

BACKBONE OF OUR MOVEMENT



Tarneen Onus Williams, ASU

How long have you been a union member?

2 years.

Why did you join the union?

I joined a union because of struggle in my workplace but also because my mum was the first Aboriginal organiser at Trades Hall in the early 90s (around the time she was pregnant with me). She told me stories about getting award wages for Aboriginal people and us mob struggle as it is and she was getting Aboriginal Organisation to raise their wages of mob. She faced a lot of criticism because of her work but she saw that our people were living in poverty and wanted to do something about it and I'm really proud of her for that considering most Aboriginal people work in Aboriginal organisations.

I think its important for Aboriginal people to be part of unions because we need collective insurance to fight the discrimination that our people face from corporations. Corporations in this settler society are inherently anti-Indigenous because of the long standing legacy of colonialism and we need to fight them at every angle to ensure our lands and people aren't being more and more exploited.

What's your best memory/story about being in the union movement?

As a member of Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance the union movement has supported our actions and I love seeing the movement work within different disciplines. Seeing community getting looked after in actions because of the work particularly Workers Solidarity do is incredible and really important as we see more policing and violence at actions and teaching people defense and reducing harm with community responses makes me feel proud that there is a long way to go about in terms of pushing back on police in actions and being more brave.

Another story would be about Djab Wurrung trees, where all the unions voted on supporting a stop works at Djab Wurrung trees and this has been so vital to this action to save our sacred country. Getting support from the unions was incredible and this is the perfect way that unions can centre our sovereignty in committing to looking after our land.

What's the most important issue facing the union movement today?

In settler colonial society justice for anyone without Aboriginal sovereignty isn't achievable. The union movement needs to centre the Aboriginal sovereignty when they seek justice or there is no justice for workers, queers, trans folk, disabled people, women, sex workers and refugees. Unions have a long way to go in supporting Aboriginal sovereignty and unions can do that by not trusting police or supporting the expansion of police, not supporting more prisons being built and the healthcare system that kills Aboriginal people and ensuring unions are assisting at conveying that this is a real issue Aboriginal people are facing and this means nurses and doctors need to be accountable for the lack of care they show on Black bodies.

Why should people join their union?

As we increasingly see our rights to protest being threatened by way of threats to ban climate change rallies, we need a strong collective base in all different areas of social justice. It is important that we fight against the settler colonial capitalist state and fight for our rights more now as there is extreme violence happening around the world to Kurdish people, Chileans, Hong Kong and Lebanon. We need to be organised and share skills with each other when the time comes for us we won't be ready so join your unions and get organised.



Stop Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

"All of my treatment was based on what I thought was an accurate history provided by a police officer. I actually felt sorry for Ms Day. She had been kept in a dirty, foul-smelling concrete cell for four hours," the treating paramedic told the Coronial Inquiry as she apologised for her treatment of Ms Day in the lead up to her death.

ANALYSIS Tanya Day was 55-year-old Yorta Yorta grandmother who died on 22 December 2017, after being taken into custody at Castle-maine. From the V-Line conductor who woke her to the time she died, Ms Day came into contact with lots workers, many of whom would have been trade unionists.

Unionists have an important role to play in questioning procedures and demanding adequate training and staffing levels to provide quality care to a diverse community. At the Corners' hearing, Ambulance Victoria apologised for the disrespectful care provided to Ms Day, a step welcomed by her grieving family. Not all are prepared to reflect and learn.

Case Study of Systemic Racism

Tanya Day was on a train from Echuca to Melbourne on 5 December, when she fell asleep. She was approached by a train conductor, who tried to check her ticket. In the space of about two minutes, the police were called, because she was disoriented and assumed to be drunk. She wasn't rowdy, she wasn't causing offence. She was asleep.

The fact that Tanya Day ended up in custody rather than in the care of her family or those who could provide immediate healthcare highlights the systemic racism experienced by Indigenous Australians. The conductor on the train and the attending police behaved as though they were seeking to punish, rather than offer assistance.

The impact of deaths in custody on First Nations people is devastating. The fight to end these preventable deaths has been a key goal of the Aboriginal movement for many decades and families who have lost a loved one are the backbone of the movement.

In the mid-80s the Committee to Defend Black Rights organised a national speaking tour of members of these families. This helped build the ground swell which led to the calling of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

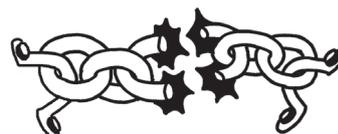
It's almost three decades since the Royal Commission released its 339 recommendations. At the heart of its findings was the need to address the factors that led to First Nations people being massively over-represented in the prison system. Recommendation 92 is that imprisonment should be used only as a sanction of last resort.

Another recommendation is that laws criminalising public drunkenness be repealed and replaced with measures treating this as a health issue. The purpose of this recommendation is to place those in need of healthcare services in direct contact with healthcare workers in an appropriate setting.

Aboriginal people are fighting to end these deaths in custody, and as workers we must stand with them.

Maureen Mandijarra was a talented artist from Balgo, a community on the edge of the Tanami Desert. In 2012, she'd been drinking with friends in a park in Broome when she was arrested for erratic behaviour and locked up to "sleep it off." Police claimed they were "too busy" to do welfare checks – six hours later, Ms Mandijarra was dead. Amongst the Coroner's recommendations was that police be stripped of their powers to arrest and detain individuals found drinking in public. The WA government finally acted on this recommendation which they'd sat on for more than two decades!

The failure to implement this recommendation in Victoria was clearly a factor in the death of Tanya Day. On 22 August, the eve of the Coroner's enquiry into her death, the Victorian government finally announced that it too would move to a health-based response to public drunkenness. A massive public campaign, led by her children, demanded this change.



Health Care and Housing, Not Prison

The Royal Commission highlighted that imprisonment is regularly used as a response to both poverty and health issues. Each year, this situation worsens. The prison population continues to soar and Aboriginal over-representation is growing.

While the Royal Commission might be almost 30 years old, the deaths continue. In 2019, amongst those killed by police or in custody were Joyce Clarke and Kumanjayi Walker.

Last September, 29 year old Ms Clarke was killed in Geraldton. The young mother was just a few days out of prison, broke and with no health supports when she began behaving erratically. Her worried family called for help – eight cops arrived, and one fatally shot her in the stomach.

Then in November, 19 year-old Walpari man, Kumanjayi Walker, was fatally shot by police in Yuendumu. There had been a funeral earlier that day and tensions in the community were high. All medical staff had been ordered out of the community. The community is asking why this young man was arrested for breach of parole on this day and are demanding justice for Walker.

Fighting Racism is Union Business

This year has begun tragically with the death of Ms Nelson Walker on 2 January. The Yorta Yorta woman was arrested for shoplifting, was then refused bail, remanded at the Dame Phyllis Frost centre, a maximum security prison, denied the health care she needed before being found dead in her cell.

The failings of the prison system to provide healthcare to those who need it is not new

and is sadly a common feature in Aboriginal deaths in custody. But the fact remains – the prison system has a duty of care. Everyone is entitled to quality healthcare, provided by trained health professionals.

There have been over 400 deaths of First Nations people in custody since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. These killings have to stop!

Aboriginal people are fighting to end these deaths in custody, and as workers we must stand with them.

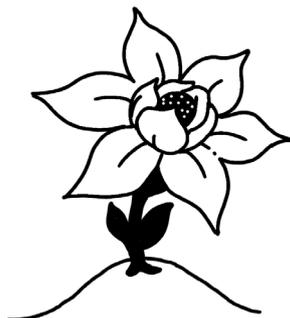
The role of unionists in calling out bad policy, inadequate training, and racist practices is also crucial. Additionally, your union can support deaths in custody families and also back the work of the movement.

Alison Thorne

workplace delegate with the Community and Public Sector Union and a founding member of the Indigenous Social Justice Association – Melbourne.

Follow ISJA on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/ISJA.Melbourne/>

ISJA meets at 6:30 pm on the first Thursday of every month Solidarity Salon, 580 Sydney Road Brunswick.



**REST IN POWER
SAM WATSON**



It is with great sadness that Solidarity comrades have learned that comrade Sam Watson has passed away, in Brisbane, on 27 November.

Sam has been a giant on the Brisbane and national left his whole political life. From the 1967 referendum, to the Black Panthers in Queensland, to the struggles against black deaths in custody, the protest over the deaths of Daniel Yok in Brisbane and Mulrinji Doomadgee in Palm Island, his steadfast solidarity with Lex Wotton unjustly jailed for the Palm Island uprising, and raging against the NT Intervention and the hypocrisy of Labor's Sorry statement, Sam was a proud Wangerriburra and Birri Gubba man and fighter for his people.

Sam was also a committed socialist, centrally involved in protesting against apartheid in South Africa, marching for democratic rights against Joh Bjelke-Petersen, in anti-war marches from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan, defending the MUA, and most recently at as many protests for refugee rights and against mandatory detention and offshore processing, as he could get to.

Sam argued for the Aboriginal rights movement and the trade union movement to “unite in solidarity with each other.” He was an untiring and enduring link between Brisbane’s Murri community, and the Indigenous struggle more widely, and the political Left.

We were fortunate indeed to live and fight alongside him. He will be sorely missed in the struggle for a better world that he was committed to.

Our thoughts are with his partner Cathy, his children Nicole and Sam Jr, with all his family, his people, and all comrades who mourn his loss.

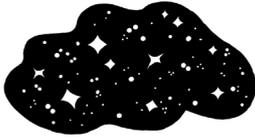
Ian Rintoul

for Solidarity

You can find this obituary online at:

<https://www.solidarity.net.au/highlights/vale-sam-watson-warrior-socialist-comrade/>

OHS MATTERS



Last year's release of *The Final Quarter*, a film made by Shark Island Productions highlighting the final two years of Sydney Swans champion Adam Goodes' playing career and the so-called "booing saga", has been praised by many as a documentation of the struggles a prominent Aboriginal man faced when he dared to speak out against racism. The film itself was constructed entirely using archival footage in chronological order, from him calling out the initial slur which started the pile-on, until his final game. To many, *The Final Quarter* was a bit of a wake-up call regarding how slow Australia can be to recognise racism and the impacts it can have on a person.

The film was much more than this though. At its core, *The Final Quarter* is actually a film about toxic workplaces and how racism and discrimination are Occupational Health and Safety issues which impact the ability for many- but in this case, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people- to undertake their work in safe and healthy environments. The football oval was the workplace of Adam Goodes, and the treatment he received had a serious mental and emotional impact not just on him but on other Aboriginal players.

I often hear society state that the cure to racism is education - that if everyone were a bit more educated on Indigenous issues, things would get better. The NTEU over the space of 8 years has undertaken two member surveys on the topics of racism, discrimination, cultural respect and lateral violence on campus and the results of these surveys unfortunately state that even the most educated in our society can precipitate working environments for Aborigi-

nal and Torres Strait Islander people that are unsafe. In the initial report, entitled *I'm Not a Racist, but...*, which was published in 2011, members reported that:

93.1% had experienced racial discrimination in their daily lives

79.5% had been treated less respectfully in the workplace as a result of others' perceptions of their culture and/or cultural obligations

71.5% had experienced racial discrimination in the workplace

60.6% had experienced lateral violence in the workplace

The follow-up report in 2018, entitled *I'm still not a racist, but...* showed that things had gotten worse in the workplace with 75% of respondents stating they had experienced racial discrimination in the workplace, there was less cultural respect shown by their colleagues and their superiors, and that lateral violence on campus had additionally increased.

Racism has very real impacts in the workplace. It can increase absenteeism, impact the ability for those marginalised by it to feel they can positively contribute to their workplace, it can cause serious health issues such as psychological injuries requiring ongoing external care, and it can lead to a type of sideways bullying (aka "lateral violence") as workers struggle against each other to survive in a hostile environment.

It is imperative that understandings of OHS better encompass issues of racism in the workplace and how these can be approached with regards to existing legal frameworks.

Celeste Liddle
NTEU A&TSI Organiser



Striking stockmen at Wave Hill, 1966

People took control of their own lives. Everyone looked after each other, no-one went hungry. If we learnt anything from that time, it's that we have to do it again – and again and again.

Remembering the Gurindji Strike

I was working two jobs in London in 1973, one for the rent and the other for the bills, when I saw a Granada TV documentary, *The Unlucky Australians*. Frank Hardy, a Communist Party member, had written the book on which it was based. I worked three nights a week in a south London pub. The men I pulled beer for worked at the local meat works. They had also watched the program and talked at the bar about what they had seen: people, whose land originally had been occupied by the British government, were slaves for rations at Wave Hill cattle sta-

tion in the Northern Territory of Australia. They were working for lord Vestey, a British aristocrat who ran cattle on their land.

I say “British aristocrat”, but he got his title because of money and business dealings, not his DNA. Vestey started out with a butcher shop in Liverpool. It was a family business that had expanded dramatically. Not only was it now a chain of shops throughout Britain (Dewhurst), but it had gone global. He owned stations and cattle all over the world – Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Guatemala, Australia. He owned the slaughterhouses, the big freezers, the ships carrying the meat and the meat works wherever the produce was loaded and unloaded. And he owned the meat works in London.

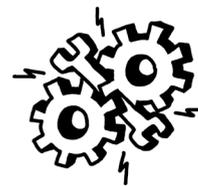
So the men in the pub had the same boss as the men and women in the film. The documentary told the story of a strike that started in 1966. They'd walked out for pay, then equal pay. And the strikers were holding out, seven years later, in a strike camp occupying one square mile of what was, according to the paper law,

lord Vestey's land. He paid rent to the government – 55 cents a year for one square mile on one part, 5 cents for one square mile for one year for the rest of it. An agreement let him do that for 99 years. I think Vestey occupied land in the area covering more than 13,000 square miles at that time, roughly the size of Belgium.

By the time the cost of the rations was taken out, they were told that they were in debt to the company. Living conditions were terrible, huts and dirt floors, so that was it: strike!

The demand of the station workers now was for the return of the land and their right to control it. That night, the men in the pub, 12,000 miles away, decided to call a one-day strike in solidarity. Every worker gave a day's wages and sent the money to the workers in Australia to support them in their fight. Why do I tell that story? Because sometimes the big picture comes easy. People, kept down and exploited, making money for the boss – the same boss – saw that big picture: 12,000 miles? Nothing! Different language? Nothing! Different colour? Nothing! No such thing as race. And the same boss! They're hurting Vestey! Let's give them a hand! Solidarity, strength, united we stand, revolution around the next corner. Sounds easy! But how easy was it – or should I say, is it? We stood and raised our glasses to the – the who? – the Gurindji? "To the Gurindji!"

I had no idea that, not long after, in 1974, I would end up in Australia. A week after my son was born (and about a year after serving drinks to the London meat workers), I was living at Daguragu, in the strike camp, on Vestey's lease. Here, too, began my education about Australia – history first-hand from a mob of people who wouldn't give in. They are known as the Gurindji, but that was so the white fellas wouldn't get confused. We had a reputation of not being good with lots of languages, different groups and complicated social organisation. We were socially inadequate, you might say. If they'd called it the Bilinarra-Nginin-Gurindji-Ngaliwuru-Mudbura-Malngin strike, it would have confused us simple folk.



Organising the Strike

After more than 50 years of massacre, rape, slavery, corporal punishment and misuse of their knowledge, they had planned a strike. And it was a big thing! The demand, at first, was wages. Vestey stations had an annual race meeting and rodeo close to the Western Australian border – the Negri races. Everybody went, including the workers and their families. It was the only time they were allowed to get together from the different stations, not just Vestey's. It goes without saying they could not have organising meetings at their workplace, even out in the bush. The boss would know they were up to something.

Under cover of the races, in 1962, they'd got together a list of demands for wages, conditions, housing, water and services, and took them back to their station bosses. The next year, they had a report back. Nothing much had been gained. So they did it again – upped the ante a bit. Can you imagine being able to have an organising meeting only once a year? Over this time, they started getting wages, a few dollars. But they never saw them. Their pittance went to the company store. By the time the cost of the rations was taken out, they were told that they were in debt to the company. Living conditions were terrible, huts and dirt floors, so that was it: strike!



Gurindji Stockmen

Those who walked off Wave Hill in 1966 first sat down in the Victoria River bed. Brian Manning from the Waterside Workers Federation brought supplies. Dexter Daniels, the north Australian Workers' Union organiser, had been travelling all over the Territory checking wages and living conditions. But the union leadership couldn't really face the battle if a strike from all the stations had been officially called. In fact, as we knew from Newcastle Waters, workers at other stations had already walked off.

When the wet came and the Victoria River flowed, the people moved to a patch of land behind the welfare officer's house. It was on crown land, kept by the government for a police station, a nurses' station and the welfare officer. They served everyone on the cattle stations scattered across that bit of the Territory. The government welfare officer at this place actually helped the people. He gave them supplies and material for fencing when they took some land back. He later got the sack - for looking after people's welfare, I suppose.

At this spot behind the welfare officer's place, the decision was made to leave the settlement and build a village next to the water hole, Daguragu, on Wattie Creek, on Vestey's lease, and start the campaign to get the land back. The work of Dexter Daniels and some of the unions had resulted in a few 'gains' already. The Conciliation and Arbitration Commission had been looking at the situation of unpaid, ration-paid and less paid station workers in the lead-up to the '66 strike. Equal pay was promised in 1965, but became law only in 1968 - to give the station owners time to "adjust".

As the station owners had promised, warned at the hearing, the result of the ruling was that thousands of jobs were lost. Men, women and, yes, children, were sacked. Helicopter mustering was cheaper than using people, they discovered. Families who had worked enslaved for decades, while living on their own country, were now evicted from 'station property'. They were not workers now, but trespassers. As most of the area was covered by pastoral leases, they became refugees on the edges of towns, like Elliott. Some of them had come to the Daguragu strike camp because it was holding on.

When I got there, I'd heard about Daniels and Manning, and how the Waterside Workers Federation and Actors Equity had paid for a speaking tour down south for Dexter, Captain Major Lupngiari, Vincent Lingiari and actor Robert Tudawali. Lupngiari told me stories of working alongside Black Americans on the Stuart Highway during the war - they got the same wage as a white soldier. Why then should the people here be getting less than whites?

They had more than 60 meetings down south. A movement grew in solidarity with the Gurindji. It sparked some of the first big land rights

ABORIGINE LAND GIVEN TO FOREIGN COMPANIES

Since 1967 the Gurindji Aborigines in the N. Territory have been living on, and demanding the return of their ancient tribal lands - 500 sq. mls. at Wattie Creek.

This land is part of the 32,000 sq. mls. of Australia leased by the Government to the English Vestey family (who control a huge international industrial empire worth hundreds of millions of dollars) for a yearly rent of 55¢ per sq. ml.

Despite the money that Vestey's have made out of their use of this cheap black land (and cheap black labour) they have refused to give back to the Gurindjis a mere 500 sq. mls. of their land.

GOVERNMENT REJECTS ABORIGINE RIGHTS

The Gurindji's claims could have been granted by the Government, who have been petitioned again and again by the Gurindji's themselves and their supporters. Instead Government policy has been to continue support for a foreign company's rights whilst totally denying the land rights of the Aborigines. This is a direct violation of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

ABORIGINES SURVIVAL IN DANGER

If the Aborigines land rights claims fail the result can only be the hastening social, if not actual extinction of the Aboriginal people. You can help to ensure that this doesn't happen. You can.....

- (1) BOYCOTT Vestey's products - see list overleaf.
- (2) Support the SAVE THE GURINDJI CAMPAIGN - for more info about activities write to address below.
- (3) Donate money to the Campaign's \$50,000 fund to pay for building and fencing materials to establish a permanent settlement at Wattie Creek. Donations to Save the Gurindji Campaign - address below.

SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY - SUPPORT THE GURINDJI

*Authorised by D. Austin for the Save the Gurindji Campaign,
33 Bondi Rd., Bondi Junction. Phone 385883*

marches. I learned about the one in Sydney from Redfern to Vestey's headquarters, with 47 arrests the first time it happened. I heard about the supermarket action where people walked into Woolies, each choosing a particular checkout. They loaded trolleys with tins of Vestey's "Hamper" bully beef until there was none left on the shelf. After getting the bill, they suddenly realised the tins came from Lord Vestey's company, changed their mind, shouted, "Vestey sucks Black blood!" and left the tins piled up at the till. Vestey's brands were quickly moved off the shelves. The store managers couldn't have that kind of time wasting.

**Since 1788, it's been
about all the same things:
theft of land, theft of
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the smashing of people's
social organisation.**

support aboriginal land rights

SUPPORT the GURINDJI

boycott vesteys goods



DON'T buy

Villawool KNITTING WOOLS AND YARNS

Donald Cook TINNED FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Imperial TINNED MEAT AND MUSHROOMS

**Hamper
Trim**) TINNED MEATS

AND **don't** SHOP AT **Dewhurst** BUTCHERS



Dream Deferred

Then came August 16, 1975. The land was going to be given back to the people by Gough Whitlam, the prime minister, in person, at Daguragu. The handful of sand given to Vincent Lingiari represented a 30-year pastoral lease for 1,250 sq miles. In Colonial law, Vestey still controlled about 5,500 sq miles, but did give a gift of 500 cattle.

In the years that followed, the Muramulla Gurindji cattle company was accused by the Cattleman's Association of harbouring tuberculosis and brucellosis in their new company-branded cattle. They had to build a very expensive fence around their 1,250 sq miles and shoot all the cattle.

Frank Hardy's fears were being confirmed. Even before I left Daguragu in 1977, the government had imposed a white station manager from a South Australian pastoral consultancy.

Whitlam's successor, Liberal prime minister Malcolm Fraser, passed the Land Rights Act in 1976. But now it applied only to the Northern Territory, and crucial parts were deleted. And the people had to go in front of the land commissioner and prove their ownership to the capitalist legal system. Even then, only those first people defined in Australian law as "traditional owners" could claim the title - with the help of anthropologists, of course!

It was 1986 before the strikers got inalienable freehold title "in perpetuity", and they were in trouble. Inalienable freehold title to land means you can't buy or sell it. Fair enough, but in the capitalist system, that means the land is worthless. And if it is worth nothing, then you can't use it as collateral to get a loan from a bank to start anything. That's why it ended up leased to a white grazier.

No Justice – Just Us!

The invasion continues. Since 1788, it's been about all the same things: theft of land, theft of children, theft of labour, theft of language and the smashing of people's social organisation. Everything was done on the assumption that the people were inadequate, incapable of making decisions, incapable of looking after themselves - a blatant, cruel lie. And it continues today. Kooris, Murris, Nanga, Nungar, Yulgnu, Ngumpin - people all over this country are still having their kids, their work, their land and their very lives stolen.

In 2007, the invasion of the NT was, as it was in 1788, legalised and intensified. It was called "the intervention" and involved soldiers on the ground in some places. For the first time in history, a government official set

up an office at Daguragu. It's gone now, but it was a demountable surrounded by a high fence. She used to drive in, lock the gate and go inside. At the end of the day, she'd drive out, lock up and leave. She never spoke to anyone and nobody spoke to her. The people didn't even know her name.

At the end of 2011, police drove into Daguragu and kept mothers and grandmothers away while welfare authorities took a little boy. Months later, we found out it was because he was "malnourished". Doesn't that mean he needed good food? Try buying enough to eat at the store on a "basics card" - a ration card. Even milk costs around \$5 a litre! The child removals happen all over, but this was the first time at Daguragu since the village was established by the strikers and the land was won. Women, mothers and grandmothers, trying to block the car carrying the child, were pulled and held by police.

And we've seen the battles, not only Kulaluk in Darwin, but at the town camps in Alice Springs. These were all gained during the land rights legislation time. Redfern has to fight again for Redfern. We now know from the remote - "remote"? - places where people live in Western Australia that they're pulling down houses and smashing them and forcing people off their country, saying they have to live on the edges of a town. And, of course, we all know what's happening with resources and mining companies.

The Struggle Continues

Workers have organised against the ration card. People have rallied all over the country against forced community closures, deaths in police and prison custody, the torture of children inside Don Dale prison, the exploitation by mining companies and the forced removal of children from families and communities. The demand for a treaty on land never ceded is growing stronger.

The anniversary of the cattle station workers' strike and walk-off at Vestey's Wave Hill station is called "Freedom Day". The celebration happens mostly at Kalkarinji - the Wave Hill settlement, so-called crown land. Politicians and government officials who are responsible for the smashing of communities attend it, celebrating "freedom". On that day in 2011, the people carried banners protesting the intervention. In 2016, the banner and T-shirts said, "No justice, just us", and people turned their backs and stood in silent protest when the minister for indigenous affairs, Nigel Scullion, spoke. Meanwhile, the "basics" ration card system is rolling out for everyone, as did the work-for-the-dole system.

The companies, the military, the governments

who arrived in 1788 have, for 231 years, killed, poisoned and imprisoned the people and stolen and destroyed the land. It continues today. The whole world is watching this land burn.

The strike village at Daguragu in the '70s was an amazing place to live. People took control of their own lives. Everyone looked after each other, no-one went hungry. If we learnt anything from that time, it's that we have to do it again - and again and again. As for self-determination, it's no "white man's dreaming imposed on black people", as someone once said. It's everyone's aim, it's our plan! The mining companies and the big businessmen and government people better watch out. We all want to get together, look after each other, work for each other, educate each other, control our own affairs and look after the planet.

Self-determination is what I want, and it's obvious I won't get it until everybody gets it. And if they get away with what they are doing to the people in this country, there will be no justice or equality for any of us. Like the men in the pub in London - "One Struggle, One Fight!" - we are all brothers and sisters.

Sovereignty Never Ceded!

Tanya McConvell

This is an abridged version of an article that appeared in Red Flag:

<https://redflag.org.au/gurindji/>



Demonstrators in front of the NT parliament

WHAT'S ON

Tools down - Friday Arvo Unionist Drinks

Cheap drinks for union members
16:00 - 19:00, every Friday
Common Rooms Bar
Victorian Trades Hall.

Tunnerminnerwait & Maulboyheener Commemoration 2020 Aboriginal Freedom Fighters

Monday, 20 January, 12:00-14:00
Corner Bowen street & Franklin street
Melbourne. Also broadcast live on 3CR
radio + digital.

Open Meeting: Get Involved in Workers for Climate Action

Tuesday, 21 January, 18:00
Kathleen Syme Library, Carlton.

No War on Iran - Global Day of Protests

Saturday 25 January
Demonstrations in 7+ Aus cities.
Search Facebook for details.

Invasion Day Dawn Service

Sunday 26th January from 5:30am
Kings Domain Resting Place, Melbourne.

Melbourne Invasion Day 2020 #AbolishAustraliaDay

Sunday, 26 January 2020
Nation-wide protests across
so-called australia
Search Facebook for more details.

Climate Emergency Rally

Mass protest to mark
Parliament's first sitting day.
Tuesday 4th February
Federation Mall, Parliament House, Canberra

Climate Crisis: National Day of Action

Saturday, 22 February 2020
Search Facebook for more details.



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