

# PARTISAN!

Issue #7 | March 2025 | By donation

Womanhood  
and other  
misfortunes  
revisited

**In this issue:**

Statements & Letters of the CC  
**RCO-CC**

Party first, split the class later

**Anthony Furia**

Newcastle trans rights rally

**Max J**

Is Australia a colony?

**Declan F. G.**

Capital, gender, suburbs

**Luca Fraillon**

Women's suffrage and class struggle

**Rosa Luxemburg**

On Sexuality as Work

**Silvia Federici**

On the Status of Women

**RCO Program**

On the Women's Question

**RCO-CC**

Why did Adelaide's communists split?

**Anthony Furia**

Letters

**Various**

**Page 3**

**Page 5**

**Page 7**

**Page 9**

**Page 13**

**Page 15**

**Page 21**

**Page 25**

**Page 27**

**Page 29**

**Page 32**

**Cover:** Futurist artwork depicting F. T. Marinetti with a maid.

**Back:** Ed Hopper, *Automat*.

**Subscriptions:**

**Print:** \$10 per month

**Solidarity:** \$20 per month

See below for info.

**Reprints:**

Rosa Luxemburg, 1913

Silvia Federici, 1975

**Submissions**

Partisan accepts and encourages unsolicited submissions from left-wing radicals and militants of all backgrounds. Articles range from 800-1,000 words, essays run at a max 2,000. Word count is looser for letters, reports, etc, but we would encourage you to keep them concise.

Please proof-read etc prior to submitting. Our staff will also sub-edit as necessary. We publish monthly, so aim to submit before the 25th of the month at the absolute latest (15th-20th is ideal). Simultaneous submissions accepted on a case-by-case basis.

We are primarily interested in topics such as Marxist political economy, political strategy/tactics, engagement with Communists pasts and futures, critiques of Liberalism/Capitalism/etc, interviews, and features. Please include your name, a summary of the article, and any other relevant information (such as photos/images plus sourcing) in an email (see publishing contact).

**Staff:**

Max J  
Mila Volkova  
Luca Fraillon  
Jason Brenner  
Edith Fischer  
V.

**Contributors:**

Anthony Furia  
Max J  
Declan F. G.  
Luca Fraillon

**About Partisan:**

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia – that section of the left which views the formation of a mass workers party as its primary task.

Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states.

**Contacts:****Publishing:**

partisanmagazine@proton.me

**RCO:**

revcomorg@protonmail.com

**Website:**

partisanmagazine.org

**Instagram:** @partisanmagazine**Twitter/X:** @PartisanRCO**Subscribe online:** patreon.com/partisanmagazine

# Women's liberation still ongoing

Communists and Marxists have attempted to 'resolve' the women's question for quite some time, going as far back as Marx and Engels. What is the women's question? Are women a question to be answered? It is antiquated wording for the 'problem' of women's role in modernity (and you can blame 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers for coming up with the label).

The 'problem' of course being their participation in modern society, removed from their 'traditional' roles in the household as the property of men. While women won suffrage (the vote), along with other positive reforms (economic independence, employment, some level of reproductive rights), they remained shackled in the household.

The participation of women in industrial labor throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century rapidly advanced the women's question. No longer could bourgeois society relegate women to the sidelines - both world wars showed the unviability of keeping women in their traditional roles (seen and not heard).

Today in Australia we live in what appears to be a society where the women's question is solved. Women are no longer bonded to their husbands (or so we think), women can have bank accounts and jobs, they can wear skirts and high heels, they can be prime minister (but only once). But beneath the veneer of gender equality lies the dark heart of Australian society: domestic violence remains an unspoken reality for many families along with ruthless gendered violence (as of writing, twelve women have been killed in gendered attacks).

This issue of Partisan is focused on the women's question, in particular the socialist 'answer'. Included are reprints of two excellent articles: *Women's suffrage and class struggle* by Rosa Luxemburg and *Sexuality as Work* by Silvia Federici. Both give historical contexts to past attempts at 'solving' the women's question, as well as how socialists (in the case of Luxemburg's article) attempted to do so in the past.

Federici's article is an excellent piece on how sexuality is another form of domestic bondage for women, a kind of labour women have to do for their husbands alongside other duties

(employment and domestic labour).

Attacks against women are also attacks against transgender women and other non-men. State attacks against bodily autonomy, the ability of people to decide for themselves what they do to their body, inevitably wind up being levied against everybody if permitted against one group. For example, conservatives have long attacked abortion and aimed to restrict the rights of women to access abortions, an open attack on their bodily autonomy. But now that conservatives and liberals attack access to transgender healthcare, something not immediately seen as a woman's issue, it has been allowed to fly mostly under the radar (in mainstream circles).

What is our 'answer' to the women's question? We believe that women's oppression is intimately linked to capitalism and class society. Therefore, we believe that women can only be emancipated through revolution - the overthrow of capitalist society and the establishment of an emancipated one that has abolished oppression. While liberals may attempt to jab at patriarchy every once and a while, only communists have a serious solution to it. This is because patriarchy is core to class society, and so to abolish patriarchy, we must abolish class and capital.

We therefore support organising women workers into mass organisations, as well as establishing women oriented factions within unions and other workers organisations. This issue also contains the Revolutionary Communist Organisation's feminist demands as part of its program for communism. Only a genuine unity of the working class, being workers of all ages, genders, religions, nations, can establish an emancipated society.

"The emancipation of women is a core plank in the communist program. As such, communists support the involvement and leadership of women in all proletarian struggles, and support the emergence of organisations and movements that focus specifically on women's issues—in both cases, we advocate for communist, proletarian politics to take the helm."

# For a Socialist Electoral Front in Queensland

We address this letter to all socialists and communists in Queensland, including the Queensland-based branches of Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance, and the Communist Party of Australia.

Just over two months ago, the LNP returned to power in Queensland. This result was entirely unsurprising. This victory was won on the back of a racist, anti-youth campaign that ultimately reflected a worldwide rightward political shift and intensification of working-class oppression. Like most electoral contests in Australia, the hope for this election was to simply keep the right out of power.

What was notably absent in this state election was a socialist electoral ticket; not a single socialist candidate was run anywhere in Queensland. This was a missed opportunity to propagandise against the unfettered killing inflicted by capitalism, and for the necessity of workers' power.

If we want to fight back against the lies and chauvinism of the bourgeois parties, whilst outlining the way towards a future built by the workers, we need to do so on the highest stage possible.

In its most successful form, this front would be a de-facto electoral alliance between the Revolutionary Communist Organisation, Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance, the Communist Party of Australia, and willing independent socialists.

Such a front must be internally democratic, and follow a system of "one member, one vote". The front should adopt an unashamedly communist minimum-maximum program, and call for the establishment of a democratic republic through revolution.

The immediate aim of such a front will be to use the focus put onto politics by election campaigns to propagandise, agitate, and raise the class consciousness of workers. Party propaganda will be focused around highlighting the need for workers organisation and revolution. We do not intend to limit ourselves to being a spoiler option on the ballot; we fully intend to get as many hardened

cadres into Parliament as possible. The role of these elected socialists will be to continue this agitation onto the bully pulpit.

We have no illusions of winning seats in the first election we contest, however, we will have made a start in agitating for socialism as one socialist organisation. In formal talks on the matter with other sects, we have already found grounds for agreement on such a front.

The Brisbane section of the RCO has resolved that building this front will be a central focus of its work over the next few years. Getting this front to function will be a major step towards re-grouping the Australian left into a single, mass communist party.

We invite the Queensland sections of all socialist and communist organisations to join us in establishing a united, socialist electoral front in advance of the 2028 Queensland state election. We call for a party program to be drafted and ratified by the first all-membership meeting of such a front.

We eagerly anticipate the response of our comrades in Queensland.

## Leave trans kids alone, let trans kids decide!

Minister Tim Nicholls, a member of the ruling Liberal-National Party government, announced that trans people under the age of 18 would be unable to access hormones or puberty blockers at state-run clinics.

Alongside the "Making Queensland Safer Act 2024", which dramatically expanded the state's ability to convict and imprison children as young as 10, we are seeing a ruthless expansion of state and family authority over children in Queensland. To calm this trend, the

federal Labor government has recently announced an “inquiry” into the use of hormones and puberty blockers for transgender children. Socialists must oppose all of this! After a similar ban was introduced in the United Kingdom last year, the Spartacist League published the following in their publication *Workers’ Hammer*:

“The whole weight of this rotten system is felt on youth’s shoulders like a ton of bricks. Kids’ rebellious spirit and creativity are crushed at school and at home so that they be obedient robots with no future. “Responsible” adults (most of whom can’t get their own lives together) are the ones ordering them on how they should live their lives: “You can’t vape, you can’t drink, you can’t dress as you want, you can’t do this or that; sex is a dangerous and monstrous thing, and if you question your gender, we’ll send you to a shrink because you are sick.” This is what destroys young people. This is what traumatises them and pushes them to suicide. Yes, kids must be helped. They must be informed. But for god’s sake, leave the kids alone! Let them choose!”

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation echoes this statement here in Australia. At protests, many have criticised the “trans ban” for negatively impacting children’s health or imposing too much state authority on what should be a family decision. We should reject this narrative! Access to hormones is not a medical matter, it is about bodily autonomy and expression. Children should be empowered to make decisions over their own bodies and lives, not doctors, parents, or the state!

Why must socialists defend children’s bodily autonomy, including access to hormones? Because winning socialism includes the abolition of the family. This does not mean the abolition of parents or love; it means breaking the obligations placed on parents (primarily mothers) to care for the household without pay.

The family system contradicts the reality of modern life. Children are not just raised by their relatives, we are each fed by millions of workers across the planet. Our toys, clothes, stationary, and schooling are the sum efforts of billions more. Children are already raised socially, but we let the capitalists privatise, control, and profit off all this. Instead, all of society must take over responsibility for the development of free and healthy people.

Homophobia and transphobia, including this ban announced in Queensland, are all efforts to enforce the patriarchal family model on which modern capitalism relies. It relies on the out-sourcing of the costs of creating and raising children, caring for workers, and supporting the elderly. It relies on the ownership of children by their parents, who teach them how to be compliant workers.

In our program, we raise the following minimum demands and call on all socialists in Australia to echo them:

- Free 24-hour childcare run by the state, and state-run canteens, laundromats, and health clinics in every neighbourhood.
- Wages and independent housing for students, paid for by the state.
- Free schooling, including free meals and medical care in every school and university.
- Full provision of healthcare and community control over gender clinics.
- The expansion of youth gender clinics and easy access to hormones, advice, and medical care to the entire population, including regional areas.
- All clinics to provide hormones to adults and children under the “informed consent” model.

If we wish to abolish the family, socialists must build a new society which empowers the free self-expression of all. Everywhere, capitalism enforces conformity to male-female heterosexuality, cruelly punishing all who step outside its rigid assumptions. We must fight against this rotting and backwards system!



# Party first, then split the class

*The Spartacist League of Australia has published a critique of the RCO's strategy in Issue #2 of Red Battler. Anthony Furia argues in defence of the RCO's strategy of communist regroupment before heading straight to the class.*

In the January edition of 'Red Battler', the publication of the Spartacist League in Australia, two articles mention and mount a critique of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). The first (titled "Abolish the monarchy! For a workers republic!") is a reproduction of a speech given by one comrade C. Bourchier at a speak-out organised by the RCO against the king's visit in October, which criticises the RCO for supposedly "falling in behind the ALP" due to our Queensland election statement, and alleged refusal to fight for the leadership of the working class. The second article (titled "CFMEU takeover: "What the f\*\*k happened?"") is a critique of the RCO's 'intervention' into the Defend the CFMEU movement, based on a misunderstanding of our aims when engaging with such a movement. Both articles illuminate a stark distinction between the strategy of the RCO and the Spartacist League. A distinction that, in responding to these critiques, can be illustrated clearly and directly, instead of being danced around haphazardly.

C. Bourchier in their speech on the need for a republic alleges that the RCO falls short of establishing the need for revolutionary republicanism due to our failure to recognise the main enemy as the 'current leadership of the working-class movement'. Supposedly, this is illustrated in our Queensland election statement, where the RCO encourages communists to preference Labor and the Greens above the LNP in areas where there are no socialist candidates running.

This should not be a controversial position to hold - the Spartacists themselves have consistently accused the RCO of 'revolutionary phrase-mongering', so why the fuss when we offer a concrete approach to the election? Because it interferes with the current project of the Spartacists: entryism into Labor and the ACTU to force a split. Regardless of whether directing our 30-odd Queensland members to

preference Labor ahead of the LNP is significant in bolstering the power of Labor over the working-class movement (it isn't), what is betrayed here is the Spartacist strategy. That is, their belief that, in going directly to the (organised) masses in terms of the unions and 'working class movement' of Labor, presenting them with the sacrosanct 'correct line' and program, they can build themselves a communist party by splitting the working class from Labor.

This, in addition to being wholly typical of a Trotskyist sect, is putting the cart far before the horse. With what cohered communist forces will the Spartacist League intervene into Labor? With what mass base of organised cadres and workers? None. The Spartacist League, an organisation of at most 50 or so active members (this is a generous guess), aims to split the leviathan Labor Party through intervention with a 'correct theoretical program'. When first approached with an offer by the Spartacist League to conduct joint work on this project of Labor interventionism, we were, to say the least, perplexed. The Australian communist left is a fragmented, disorganised mess. Yet we were supposed to break the working class from Labor, from a bourgeois workers party with immense capital and bureaucratic control, before cleaning up our own backyard? This seemed not only tactically impossible but strategically unwise.

It is entirely possible that the Spartacist League will gain, or perhaps even already has gained, members and fellow travelers thanks to this intervention. There is no doubt that there are communists and workers within and around Labor who desire organisation and direction, and there should be a coherent response to this from the communist left in Australia. The RCO should indeed be seeking, when it can, to organise cells within Labor and around it - in unions controlled by it, and branches with communists in them. But this cannot be the central basis of our strategy when we are wholly devoid of a unified communist party; of a communist left capable of cohering itself and preparing for a break with Laborism.

This same common organisational error of emphasising a particular tactic (intervention into Labor) and elevating it to a strategic level (splitting the Labor party) is repeated in the second critique elevated against the RCO. Based on our 'intervention' into the CFMEU struggle, the first paragraph of this critique (not the first paragraph of the article) is

semantic. Such a paragraph argues that the RCO was wrong to identify the obvious, well-documented connections between CFMEU leadership, fascist sympathisers, and organised crime. For a group so intent on splitting the working class from its bureaucratic leadership, it is fascinating to see the Spartacists so keen on defending such a leadership from the most levelheaded and reasonable of criticisms. These affiliations are statements of fact and contributed to Labor's justification to place the CFMEU into administration. The notion that communists must demonstrate they have 'something to offer' the union struggle by uncritically backing the class-collaborationist leadership of the CFMEU is absurd, particularly given the RCO's clear call for an immediate defence of the CFMEU from the threat of administration.

The next three paragraphs of criticism leveled against the RCO reveal, once more, the central claim that the RCO failed to propose a "strategy to break the working class from their left Laborite misleaders." As luck would have it, the Spartacists themselves do propose such a strategy! How convenient for the communist left.

The truly problematic content here comes in the penultimate paragraph, in which the Spartacists (in troublingly vague terms) highlight how their "concrete path of action... struck a chord among broad layers of construction militants at different times because, while always guided by the final socialist goal, it was grounded at all times in a materialist appraisal of the shifting balance of contending class forces."

Ignoring the somewhat crude use of 'materialist' to simply describe 'understanding current events', it is only fair to ask; why did the Spartacists fail to prevent the administration of the CFMEU? If their program was so perfectly centred on breaking workers from "the death grip of their Laborite misleaders" what happened? Could it perhaps be that the Spartacists are not of an adequate size to effect immense, mass-political change? Could it perhaps be that for any intervention into something such as the Defend the CFMEU campaign beyond one aimed at recruiting sympathetic layers to be successful, it would have to be waged by a mass-mobilised,

cohered left?

Yet if this were the case, it would endanger the entirety of the Spartacists' strategy - it would mean a shifting of tasks; a reorientation. If one believed that the crucial task was the formation of a communist party partly precisely in order to break the workers from Laborism, then perhaps one would be focused on the conscious construction of such a party. On the construction of such a party instead of say, on intervention as a singular sect in a sea of sects on a 'program' that really exemplifies a fetishised tactic into a movement far beyond the scope or ability of any such a sect. The work of the RCO is precisely this reunification of the communist left on a revolutionary program - the reconstruction of a communist party. Yes, Labor is one of the most significant roadblocks to workers power in Australia - yet some roadblocks are further along the road to power than others.

Attempts to go 'directly to the masses' - to organise a party on the basis of a single sect intervening into the class and the class alone, have failed historically and continue to fail every moment that Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance, Solidarity, the Spartacist League, Red Ant, Red Spark, the CPA, the ACP, and the RCO (to name but a few) continue to exist. We cannot hope to split workers en masse without a communist party, without organising ourselves first, without clarifying our positions, priorities, and orientation through debate and discussion, and unifying based on a revolutionary program.



**For a workers republic!** article which references the RCO.  
Photo: Red Battler No. 2 Summer 2024/2025.

the British and Australian ruling classes who had by then handed their wagons to American Capitalism's ferrymen. As a result, the American CIA and the British MI5 connived with the monarchy to throw Whiteman out. This was met with rapture from the Australian capitalists. At a most critical moment, the ruling class relied on the Queen's death, the trade-union bureaucrats of the British TUC, including the "left" "heroes" of the so-called summer of discontent, criminally cancelled strikes and an entire generation of workers disempowered by an encounter with republicans—not in the form of protest but rather a prostrating prime minister and premier

to this pattern, silently hiding in a corner, refusing to even attempt to smash Abbott's plan for social cohesion.

This is not unique to Australia. Upon the Queen's death, the trade-union bureaucrats of the British TUC, including the "left" "heroes" of the so-called summer of discontent, criminally cancelled strikes and an entire generation of workers proclaiming their deepest sorrows at such a "loss." Against such bootlicking prostrating, our comrades in Britain organised



# Newcastle trans rights rally is great - but we need more

**Max J** reports on a trans rights rally held on February 8th, and argues that communists need to do a great deal more to engage with the trans rights movement, and connect it to the broader workers movement.

February 8<sup>th</sup> saw massive protests for trans rights held across the country. In Newcastle, a large (by Newcastle standards) rally of over a hundred was held at Civic Park. It was positive to see a large impromptu mobilisation of people to support trans rights. Speakers included Paige Johnson, the first openly transgender councillor elected to Newcastle council (from the Labor Party, interestingly enough). Unfortunately, while the speakers were encouraging, the rhetoric left a lot to be desired.

None of the speakers made any mention of bodily autonomy for trans kids and youth. The main argument in support of trans healthcare access for under 18s seems only to be that the doctors agree it is good. A reliance on the “the science” is good for as long as “the science” agrees with you – history has shown that

Paige Johnson (left) holds up one end of a banner at the Newcastle trans rights rally. Photo: Max J. doctors are no less prone to discriminatory practices than politicians are. In fact, medical discrimination is far more pernicious.

In our support for trans healthcare for under 18s, which we support for the same reasons we support abortion (the state should have no say in what you do to your body), we need to emphasise that it's bodily autonomy that matters, not “the evidence” saying that it's good. Trans kids, like anyone else, deserve the ability to make their own decisions: on what they wear, who they socialise with, how they identify, and so on. A very clear demand emerges from this: let trans kids choose for themselves!

Neither did the speakers point out the double standard inherent to the state's attacks on trans healthcare – no other field of medicine would be scuttled by the government for “regret rates” or “specialist misconduct”. Plenty of people regret plastic surgeries, and despite an uncountable number of dodgy plastic surgeons, no one would accept the state scuttling plastic surgery. So why do they accept scuttling trans healthcare, especially for under 18s?

It's a paternalistic scheme by the state to reassert the control of the government and the family over rebellious transgender kids and youth. While we have made strides for LGBTQ+ acceptance over the decades (as pointed out by one of the speakers at the Newcastle rally), there is still continuous push

back from religious, political, and social organisations. This fuels ongoing bigotry and discrimination in various fields: from sporting, to bathrooms, to schools and workplaces. It is suddenly acceptable to be openly and viciously transphobic both in Australia and in the US.

In the US, South Carolina Congresswoman Nancy Mace had shouted a vicious transgender slur numerous times in a house meeting. It is pandemonium. The slide into overt bigotry hit Australia when *The Australian* published a disgusting article referring to Palestinians as "black hearted Arabs" and calling them the "gorillas of Gaza".

Contrary to the transphobic and paternalistic nagging of liberals and conservatives, restrictions on trans identity for under 18s does not "help kids" (nor do they aim to, really). In reality, what it does is harm children. It restricts their ability to live the way they want to, forces them to conform to an anti-social worldview mandated by the state, and it causes further harm by driving these children toward self-harm and suicide (which is perhaps the aim all along).

The dominance of the Greens at the Newcastle rally is unsurprising, though Labor had a small presence (as did Socialist Alliance). Into the future, communists need to make a greater effort at attending these, as much as rallies are a drain and a time sink. Their benefit is that our attendance shows people that communists exist and support trans rights, and gives communists a chance to talk to people before and after the rally. Communist participation is necessary to push back against the 'silent popular front' developing this year, promoted by all sorts of forces, from liberal catastrophists in the Greens to Socialist Alternative.

Communists are clear on what we support: unrestricted healthcare access for trans people (both children and adult), abolition of legal gender, the right to change your name or identity as necessary, banning conversion therapy, and so on. But what we need to be more clear on is what we propose in strategic terms.

Trans rights activists need to disconnect from the not-for-profit NGO complex and



**Protesters march for trans rights in Newcastle**  
Photo: Max J.

connect their struggles with those of the workers movement as a whole. Dominant narratives in the 'trans movement' speak of trans people as if they are a special separate class of their own. They obviously aren't. Trans peoples' issues connect as much to those of the broader working class as those of any other minority. For example, trans workers would benefit from transition leave, the same way women would benefit from maternity leave, or workers in general from parental leave.

We're also clear on what we oppose, strategically speaking. We don't support funneling people into charities or NGOs, even if those organisations are beneficial in the short term, nor do we want to fully invest in "mutual aid projects" (stochastic charity). We don't want to set up soap boxes from which to whinge, moan, and complain. Trans workers in Australia deserve better than more talking-shop shenanigans – they get enough of that from the government. We also don't water down our politics or hide them behind euphemisms, we avoid the 'dumbness of dumbing down'. Trans workers aren't benefited by wordy tirades on this and that sect position, but they also aren't benefited by communists treating them like idiots who can't understand the world around them.

There is clearly energy being directed toward defending against attacks on trans people by the state and other institutions, but more energy is needed in the right direction for trans oppression to be overcome for good.



# Is Australia a colony?

*Originally published online via What is to be done? (hosted on substack), Partisan republishes this article with permission from the author.*

**Declan Furber Gillick** is an Aboriginal writer, unionist and socialist involved in the Victorian Socialists, as well as the Socialist Workers Caucus of VS.

The Aboriginal working class and lumpenproletariat suffer disproportionately high levels of preventable disease, poverty and incarceration. We are, per-capita, the most incarcerated people on earth. We suffer from disproportionately high suicide rates and homelessness. We face systematic harassment, brutality and murder from police, as well as racist attitudes across broader society and within institutions of capitalist government. We have lower life expectancy, lower standards of education and literacy, and are at higher risk of addiction and of state intervention in kinship relationships, and Aboriginal women are at disproportionately high risk of domestic and family violence.

## Unionists march for Aboriginal rights

Indigenous liberation is, fundamentally, the complete and permanent alleviation of these scourges, in both their class and racialised character, through the abolition of the social relations that give rise to them. It is, further to this, the actualisation and exercise of cultural autonomy and the actualisation and exercise of direct democratic political power in the determination of our lives and political futures as a part of the international working class or proletariat.

## Decolonisation as revolutionary theory

Some theorists assert that Indigenous liberation can only be won through a concrete process of 'decolonisation' or anti-colonial revolution. While the social and cultural impacts of colonisation persist and echo throughout Aboriginal life, in national symbolism, and in the Australian national consciousness, it is absurd to conceive of present-day Australia as a colony.

Australia has been federated under a form of independent national, state and territory governance for approximately 120 years. The British empire no longer exists and while Britain's imperialist ruling class is closely allied with Australia's ruling class, Britain is simply not Australia's colonial administrator. The colonisation of the Australian continent, the

brutal frontier wars and systematic genocide of Indigenous people laid the material basis for colonies which were originally politically and economically beholden to the motherland, Great Britain. Land and labour being the two sources of wealth, Indigenous inhabitants of the continent posed a challenge to the invading British ruling class intent on establishing penal colonies and the capitalist mode of production. Thus, enforceable claims to land by Indigenous people needed to be neutralised, and by-and-large they were, by way of a process that was ideologically justified by the infamous genocidal doctrine *terra nullius* and that continued across the continent for some 120 years.

Notwithstanding that Indigenous claims to land continue to call into question the foundation of private ownership of industry and the historical and present-day exploitation of natural resources (and thus the legitimacy of the Australian state), once the capitalist mode of production was established throughout the continent, and the colonies were federated into a nation with its own bourgeoisie and domestic economy, Australia was no longer a colony but an independent nation state. Present-day Australia is now one of the most advanced capitalist nation states on earth, sharing and negotiating power as part of inter-imperialist blocs like AUKUS and the Quad Alliance.

The Australian working masses, both Aboriginal and not, are subject to the exploitation inherent to working life, the demands of our bosses and the crises of the national and global capitalist market. It is true that many thousands of Aboriginal people, including many of my own family in Central Australia, do not constitute a part of the proletariat proper, but are dependent for survival on substandard service provisions from government, semi-corporate or community-controlled institutions, the provision of quarantined welfare payments, and internal familial cash circulation from family members who receive a wage.

There is no doubt that there is a racial quality to the subjugation and oppression of the Aboriginal working class and lumpenproletariat. And it is tragic and unacceptable that Aboriginal language, culture, lives and prospects are continually lost and denigrated by a system that cannot provide meaningful, prosperous lives for them. Many lumpenproletarian Aboriginal people live in disgraceful conditions of desperate inter-

generational poverty and social marginalisation, and suffer from the social dysfunction, poor health, addiction, low life-expectancy and all round reduced prospects that accompany such a marginalised existence.

But none of this means that Aboriginal people are living in a colony. The institutions that fail Aboriginal people time and again, or that prop up an existence of dependency are institutions of advanced neoliberal capitalism. Attempting to locate, in the terrain of Indigenous oppression, an ongoing colonial process, and then somehow intervene to reverse or counter it is a futile, abstract, frustrating political deadend.

## Settlers?

Settler colonial theorists also assert that all non-Aboriginal people living in Australia are settlers who are complicit in, and who benefit from, ongoing colonisation. I will call this the 'settler-native binary' or the 'colonised-coloniser binary'. The binary has as its foundation the assertion that a group or individual's subjective political and historical standpoint, economic interests, capacity for solidarity, and moral culpability is determined solely by their real or imagined relationship to land.

Thus, in the eyes of decolonial revolutionary theorists, simply by surviving on this continent and not being Indigenous, one is inescapably culpable as an oppressor of Aboriginal people. The logical corollary of this binary is that simply by being Indigenous to this continent and having an ancestral and/or present day cultural relationship to land, an individual or group of Aboriginal people, as an immutably oppressed and colonised subject, has the exclusive right and power to lead political struggle.

Central to the problem is that, politically, the term 'settler' is not some all-encompassing term for anyone and everyone who is non-Indigenous. It is a term for a definite social category with a definite historical function. Settlers are a non-state social layer who are compelled to seize, occupy and cultivate land from an Indigenous population through forcible means. The function of a settler-colony politically is to make way for a state's territorial expansion and to free up resources for capitalist accumulation.

Settlers opened up the frontier in the United



Protesters march down Elizabeth St during Sydney's Invasion Day march, 1988.

States, decimating the Indigenous population and destroying their means of subsistence. Today, Israeli settlers seize homes and farmlands in the West Bank and East Jerusalem with impunity because they are serving the interests of Israel's territorial expansion.

Settlers and British State actors like the police and colonial governors massacred, systematically starved, institutionalised, raped and otherwise oppressed Aboriginal people here during the expansion of the frontiers. Australia is a country founded on Indigenous dispossession and the decimation of pre-capitalist modes of production. Racism is baked into the logic of its establishment and systemic and interpersonal racism persist to this day.

But the settlement of Australia is not ongoing. And Australian workers and migrants do not benefit from Indigenous dispossession or oppression. In fact, they have an interest in fighting against it, as the class that *does* benefit from Indigenous oppression is the same class that drives down wages, drives up house prices, rents and the cost of living, locks up migrants and refugees, and over-polices Indigenous communities: the Australian bourgeoisie.

### Class Relations

Australia has a multicultural working class that includes a large and growing urban and suburban Aboriginal proletariat. But how are we to understand these dynamics of solidarity

and of capitalist production in relation to contemporary 'colonial' Australia? By the logic of the settler-native binary, Gina Rinehart must be understood, first and foremost, as a settler. Her status as a settler determines her political subjectivity and her wealth. All of her many thousands of employees out of whom she squeezes the mega profits that make her one of the wealthiest people to have ever lived, they are all settlers too; except her Aboriginal workers, who must be understood first and foremost not as workers but as natives who have opposing interests to

their fellow non-Aboriginal workers.

However, the heads of an Aboriginal land council that negotiate a mining lease with Rinehart, that handle the many millions of dollars paid in royalties, and invest and manage them through trusts that are not put towards meaningful social programs and political development for the masses of Aboriginal people, these people are understood under the settler-native binary primarily as oppressed colonised subjects.

The Vietnamese owner-operator of a pizza shop in Sunshine is also a settler. A South Sudanese mother of four, who lives in a housing commission tower that is about to be torn down, and who works 50 hours a week in that pizza shop, is also a settler.

The colonised/coloniser binary collapses the reality of class relations, obscuring any meaningful explanation of capitalist exploitation and an understanding of workers' power. It undermines the possibility for meaningful solidarity amongst layers of the working class, and leads to absurd, backwards and destructive formulations of political subjectivity that undermine political struggle.

The non-Aboriginal working masses of Australia today, migrants and Australian-born, are not settlers; they are workers, who have no choice but to sell their labour for a wage. And as workers, as the daily producers of society, they are, as a class, exploited by capitalists by definition.



Protestors with flag during Sydney's Invasion Day march, 1988.

### Solidarity and the Fight for Liberation

The history of solidarity between Aboriginal struggle and the socialist, communist and trade union movements is not well known. In fact, for much of the 20th century, up until the late 1970s, Aboriginal struggle and the workers' movement were closely linked with non-Aboriginal workers supporting Aboriginal workers in major fights and campaigns, Aboriginal workers active in the Australian Communist Party and workers' movement, radicalising and politicising struggle. Indeed, Aboriginal people were often known to be some of the best trade unionists and union leaders, as well as being leading communists and socialists.

Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal workers alike have a historically unique dual social character as part of the working class: we are oppressed and exploited as workers, *objectified* by capital; but we are simultaneously the *subjects* of history with a unique political power: the power to stop and start economic activity through the withdrawal of our labour. This social position gives us the power to attack capitalist profit and pose a real economic threat to the ruling class. This power is the engine of social progress and ultimately the key weapon of revolutionary struggle; but it can only be wielded collectively by an organised proletariat.

Anyone who is serious about Indigenous liberation has a duty to politically clarify these class relations and to do away with, as soon as possible, the mystifying and moralistic

categorisation of Australian workers as settlers who are irredeemably racist and politically backward beneficiaries of Indigenous oppression, purely because they do not have an ancestral or spiritual relationship to land.

For socialists, what is of primary importance in the fight for Indigenous liberation is the presence and level of organisation of a cohered revolutionary force such as a socialist party or organisation, that can intervene in struggle, provide political direction to take the struggle forward, convince activists of revolutionary politics and win them to the project of socialist revolution. Indigenous oppression and anti-Aboriginal racism in Australia today are rooted in the institutions of capitalism, from the prisons in which disproportionately high numbers of criminalised Aboriginal people (including children) languish, mostly for crimes of poverty and oppression, to the racism of the job market and employers, to the financialisation of companies and organisations established to manage resources on behalf of Aboriginal communities, to the paternalistic and top-down policy of government in the management of Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who seek to transform society as a whole and dismantle the mode of production that gives rise to exploitative class relations, racism and Indigenous oppression, must decisively abandon settler-colonial analysis of Australian capitalism and orient their organisational energy towards revolutionary party-building and the fight for an Aboriginal movement and a workers' movement that struggle side by side against our common enemy: the Australian ruling class.

# Capital, gender, suburbs

*The so-called ‘Australian dream’, ripped from the U.S consciousness, is a dream of untapped consumerism for men, and suburban drudgery for women. Luca Fraillon explains why communists need to push against this idea in order to put forward a revolutionary, feminist program.*

What is the Australian Dream? A large family home, grass mowed in the back garden, a labrador or maybe a golden retriever; two kids - a boy and a girl - an SUV, a tidy nature strip on a quiet cul-de-sac. This mythologised aspiration does not arise from some deep-rooted human desire for privacy, property, or family. Instead, it is borne out of the fundamentally individualising drive of an economic system threatened only by mass collective action, and by the role of the nuclear family in maintaining this.

Marx asserted that “ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships”, and it is suburbia that is the ideal expression of domesticity in a capitalist mode of production. As such, gender is constituted and reproduced spatially, the urban/suburban dichotomy serving to maintain patriarchy as the dominant relation of sexes. This is the Australian Dream, which can be re-cast as an Australian Hegemony – the dominant Australian ideology, arising as a mythologised form of the ideal relations of production.

Understanding the relationship between the suburbs, capital, and gender requires an understanding of two important concepts – productive and reproductive labour. Productive labour is that labour which produces capital – what we would generally consider as “work”. Reproductive labour is the

labour necessary to maintain a person’s productive capacity – for example, cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry, things which must happen in order for someone to get up and go to work the next morning.

This labour is generally unpaid and the brunt of it is almost always borne by women. In Australia, 70% of women spend time on housework, compared to only 42% of men. Labour involved in raising children is another key aspect of reproductive labour, as is reproduction itself, providing a continuing stable workforce for the future – once again, women shoulder the vast majority of this responsibility, spending more time raising children and being the birthing partner in almost all relationships.

Why must reproductive and productive labour be split? Why along gendered lines? The answer here is simply one of efficiency. Reproductive labour is essential to productive labour, however performing it takes time that could be going instead towards producing capital. In separating the male worker’s productive labour from domestic reproduction, more time and energy could historically be spent in the factory/fields/office.

As workforce numbers equalise and women take place in productive labour, reproductive labour still remains a feminine domain – women don’t replace housework with work, but instead work what Silvia Federici calls a “Double Day”. To break down the gendered boundaries of reproductive labour would highlight the fact that unpaid labour is required to perform paid labour. It would also require men, who occupy positions of power precisely because of this dichotomy, to consent in overturning it. There is, of course, a class division here as well; bourgeois families instead hire cleaners, cooks, and maids to perform the tasks of reproductive labour.

The suburbs have long been recognised as sites by which patriarchal relations are reproduced. Psychologist Susan Saegert described “feminine suburbs and masculine cities” in 1980, noting that increasing the physical separation of home and work served to reify the division between reproductive and productive labour. Saegert and other feminist geographers have consistently observed that the split between the city and the suburbs hides within it a split between reproductive and productive labour; in physically defining the city as a space of “work” and the suburb as a



**A busy Sydney highway, 1980s**

space to “live”, suburbia spatially reinforces the gendered divide between productive and reproductive labour.

The great success of the ‘suburban experiment’ has been its ability to create unity without community; the suburbs serve to simultaneously reproduce capitalist individualism and prevent individual expression. Suburbia exists within this duality and contradiction. It functions, firstly, as an isolating agent, promoting the virtues of owning your own, self-contained home, your own car, caring for your own lawn and backyard. The distance and density of the suburbs prevents the formation of community, with interactions generally limited to immediate neighbours. Property in the suburbs becomes essential to identity. “Your house”, “your land”, separated from the public realm physically by tall fences and legally by subdivision boundaries, the ownership of it as such now fundamentally integral to you as a person. It is in this sense that the suburbs seek to prevent the formation of community, and why they are, in many ways, the epitome of neo-liberal individualism.

Care of the house becomes tantamount to maintaining an acceptable public façade. For housework to be done, however, someone has to be inside the house – something that becomes much more difficult when travelling large distances between home and work. Suburbia, in differentiating physically the house as a feminine domain of reproduction and work as a masculine one, ties suburban life

tied inexorably to the ideal of the “stay-at-home Mother”, a caretaker for property.

It can not be denied that there is unity within the suburbs; the style of house, the style of car, those tidy nature strips on quiet cul-de-sacs. While there is no sense of community, there is a monotony that prevents the establishment of unique identity; the formation of a genuine individuality is

prevented, while individualism is held as paramount. Suburbia, as a result, is characterised a tightly controlled set of individuals prevented from forming any collective identity. That is, any collective identity except for that of the nuclear family. The family is seen itself as an individual unit, and one intrinsically tied to property – committed relationships and the arrival of children are two of the largest motivating factors behind home ownership in Australia. The nuclear family is essential in privatising labour, both productive and reproductive, with the aim of providing for your family superseding that of the community, to the point of virtually wiping it out. The prospect of ‘passing down’ inheritance is seen as paramount to living a successful life – just look at reactions to any mention of a “death tax”, no matter whether or not such a policy is even proposed.

What do we really want when we dream of a home in the suburbs? This ideal shows itself to be no more than the ideal conditions for capital accumulation. Suburbia physically weds us to the idea of the nuclear family, spatially separates reproductive and productive labour, and rails at every turn against the synthesis of our “personal” and “work” lives. Fundamentally, it maintains the systems of gendered oppression that best serve the production of capital. This is why the Australian Dream is the Suburban Dream is the Capitalist Dream. Perhaps it is more of a nightmare.

Communists, tear down your fences. You have nothing to lose but your lawns.



## Women's suffrage and class struggle (1912)

*From a speech given by **Rosa Luxemburg** at the Second Social Democratic Women's Rally in Stuttgart, 1912.*

"Why are there no organizations for working women in Germany? Why do we hear so little about the working women's movement?" With these questions, Emma Ihrer, one of the founders of the proletarian women's movement of Germany, introduced her 1898 essay, *Working Women in the Class Struggle*. Hardly fourteen years have passed since, but they have seen a great expansion of the proletarian women's movement. More than a hundred fifty thousand women are organized in unions and are among the most active troops in the economic struggle of the proletariat. Many thousands of politically organized women have rallied to the banner of Social Democracy: the Social Democratic women's paper [Die Gleichheit, edited by Clara Zetkin] has more than one hundred thousand subscribers; women's suffrage is one of the vital issues on the platform of Social Democracy.

Exactly these facts might lead you to underrate the importance of the fight for women's suffrage. You might think: even without equal political rights for women we have made enormous progress in educating and organizing women. Hence, women's suffrage is not urgently necessary. If you think so, you are deceived. The political and syndical awakening of the masses of the female proletariat during the last fifteen years has been magnificent. But it has been possible only

because working women took a lively interest in the political and parliamentary struggles of their class in spite of being deprived of their rights. So far, proletarian women are sustained by male suffrage, which they indeed take part in, though only indirectly. Large masses of both men and women of the working class already consider the election campaigns a cause they share in common. In all Social Democratic electoral meetings, women make up a large segment, sometimes the majority. They are always interested and passionately involved. In all districts where there is a firm Social Democratic organization, women help with the campaign. And it is women who have done invaluable work distributing leaflets and getting subscribers to the Social Democratic press, this most important weapon in the campaign.

The capitalist state has not been able to keep women from taking on all these duties and efforts of political life. Step by step, the state has indeed been forced to grant and guarantee them this possibility by allowing them union and assembly rights. Only the last political right is denied women: the right to vote, to decide directly on the people's representatives in legislature and administration, to be an elected member of these bodies. But here, as in all other areas of society, the motto is: "Don't let things get started!" But things have been started. The present state gave in to the women of the proletariat when it admitted them to public assemblies, to political associations.

And the state did not grant this voluntarily, but out of necessity, under the irresistible pressure of the rising working class. It was not least the passionate pushing ahead of the proletarian women themselves which forced the Prusso-German police state to give up the famous "women's section" [A] in gatherings of political associations and to open wide the doors of political organizations to women. This really set the ball rolling. The irresistible progress of the proletarian class struggle has swept working women right into the whirlpool of political life. Using their right of union and assembly, proletarian women have taken a most active part in parliamentary life and in election campaigns. It is only the inevitable consequence, only the logical result of the movement that today millions of proletarian women call defiantly and with self-confidence: Let us have suffrage!

Once upon a time, in the beautiful era of pre-1848 absolutism, the whole working class was said not to be "mature enough" to exercise political rights. This cannot be said about proletarian women today, because they have demonstrated their political maturity. Everybody knows that without them, without the enthusiastic help of proletarian women, the Social Democratic Party would not have won the glorious victory of January 12, [1912], would not have obtained four and a quarter million votes. At any rate, the working class has always had to prove its maturity for political freedom by a successful revolutionary uprising of the masses. Only when Divine Right on the throne and the best and noblest men of the nation actually felt the calloused fist of the proletariat on their eyes and its knee on their chests, only then did they feel confidence in the political "maturity" of the people, and felt it with the speed of lightning. Today, it is the proletarian woman's turn to make the capitalist state conscious of her maturity. This is done through a constant, powerful mass movement which has to use all the means of proletarian struggle and pressure.

Women's suffrage is the goal. But the mass movement to bring it about is not a job for women alone, but is a common class concern for women and men of the proletariat. Germany's present lack of rights for women is only one link in the chain of the reaction that shackles the people's lives. And it is closely connected with the other pillar of the reaction: the monarchy. In advanced capitalist, highly industrialized, twentieth-century Germany, in the age of electricity and airplanes, the absence

of women's political rights is as much a reactionary remnant of the 'dead past as the reign by Divine Right on the throne. Both phenomena—the instrument of heaven as the leading political power, and woman, demure by the fireside, unconcerned with the storms of public life, with politics and class struggle—both phenomena have their roots in the rotten circumstances of the past, in the times of serfdom in the country and guilds in the towns. In those times, they were justifiable and necessary. But both monarchy and women's lack of rights have been uprooted by the development of modern capitalism, have become ridiculous caricatures. They continue to exist in our modern society, not just because people forgot to abolish them, not just because of the persistence and inertia of circumstances. No, they still exist because both—monarchy as well as women without rights—have become powerful tools of interests inimical to the people. The worst and most brutal advocates of the exploitation and enslavement of the proletariat are entrenched behind throne and altar as well as behind the political enslavement of women. Monarchy and women's lack of rights have become the most important tools of the ruling capitalist class.

In truth, our state is interested in keeping the vote from working women and from them alone. It rightly fears they will threaten the traditional institutions of class rule, for instance militarism (of which no thinking proletarian woman can help being a deadly enemy), monarchy, the systematic robbery of duties and taxes on groceries, etc. Women's suffrage is a horror and abomination for the present capitalist state because behind it stand millions of women who would strengthen the enemy within, i.e., revolutionary Social Democracy. If it were a matter of bourgeois ladies voting, the capitalist state could expect nothing but effective support for the reaction. Most of those bourgeois women who act like lionesses in the struggle against "male prerogatives" would trot like docile lambs in the camp of conservative and clerical reaction if they had suffrage. Indeed, they would certainly be a good deal more reactionary than the male part of their class. Aside from the few who have jobs or professions, the women of the bourgeoisie do not take part in social production. They are nothing but co-consumers of the surplus value their men extort from the proletariat. They are parasites of the parasites of the social body. And consumers are usually even more rabid and cruel in defending their "right" to a parasite's

**THERE WILL BE NO  
WOMENS LIBERATION  
WITHOUT  
REVOLUTION**



**THERE WILL BE NO  
REVOLUTION  
WITHOUT  
WOMENS LIBERATION**

**FIGHT FOR  
REVOLUTION**

**BUILD WOMEN'S  
POWER**

**revcom.org.info**



life than the direct agents of class rule and exploitation. The history of all great revolutionary struggles confirms this in a horrible way. Take the great French Revolution. After the fall of the Jacobins, when Robespierre was driven in chains to the place of execution the naked whores of the victory-drunk bourgeoisie danced in the streets, danced a shameless dance of joy around the fallen hero of the Revolution. And in 1871, in Paris, when the heroic workers' Commune was defeated by machine guns, the raving bourgeois females surpassed even their bestial men in their bloody revenge against the suppressed proletariat. The women of the property-owning classes will always fanatically defend the exploitation and enslavement of the working people by which they indirectly receive the means for their socially useless existence.

Economically and socially, the women of the exploiting classes are not an independent segment of the population. Their only social

function is to be tools of the natural propagation of the ruling classes. By contrast, the women of the proletariat are economically independent. They are productive for society like the men. By this I do not mean their bringing up children or their housework which helps men support their families on scanty wages. This kind of work is not productive in the sense of the present capitalist economy no matter how enormous an achievement the sacrifices and energy spent, the thousand little efforts add up to. This is but the private affair of the worker, his happiness and blessing, and for this reason nonexistent for our present society. As long as capitalism and the wage system rule, only that kind of work is considered productive which produces surplus value, which creates capitalist profit. From this point of view, the music-hall dancer whose legs sweep profit into her employer's pocket is a productive worker, whereas all the toil of the proletarian women and mothers in the four walls of their homes is considered unproductive. This sounds brutal and insane, but corresponds exactly to the brutality and insanity of our present capitalist economy. And seeing this brutal reality clearly and sharply is the proletarian woman's first task.

For, exactly from this point of view, the proletarian women's claim to equal political rights is anchored in firm economic ground. Today, millions of proletarian women create capitalist profit like men in factories, workshops, on farms, in home industry, offices, stores. They are therefore productive in the strictest scientific sense of our present society. Every day enlarges the hosts of women exploited by capitalism. Every new progress in industry or technology creates new places for women in the machinery of capitalist profiteering. And thus, every day and every step of industrial progress adds a new stone to the firm foundation of women's equal political rights. Female education and intelligence have become necessary for the economic mechanism itself. The narrow, secluded woman of the patriarchal "family circle" answers the needs of industry and commerce as little as those of politics. It is true, the capitalist state has neglected its duty even in this respect. So far, it is the unions and the Social Democratic organizations that have done most to awaken

the minds and moral sense of women. Even decades ago, the Social Democrats were known as the most capable and intelligent German workers. Likewise, unions and Social Democracy have today lifted the women of the proletariat out of their stuffy, narrow existence, out of the miserable and petty mindlessness of household managing. The proletarian class struggle has widened their horizons, made their minds flexible, developed their thinking, shown them great goals for their efforts. Socialism has brought about the mental rebirth of the mass of proletarian women—and thereby has no doubt also made them capable productive workers for capital.

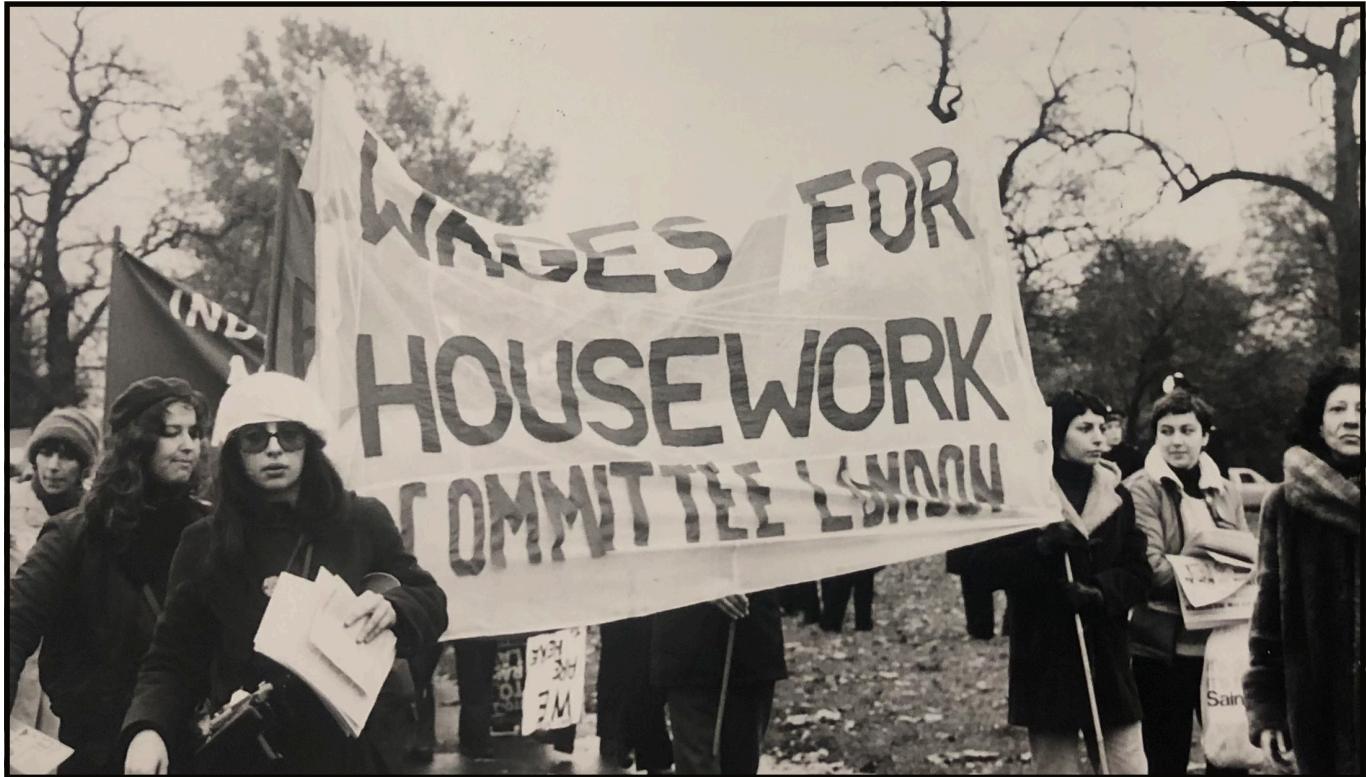
Considering all this, the proletarian woman's lack of political rights is a vile injustice, and the more so for being by now at least half a lie. After all, masses of women take an active part in political life. However, Social Democracy does not use the argument of "injustice." This is the basic difference between us and the earlier sentimental, utopian socialism. We do not depend on the justice of the ruling classes, but solely on the revolutionary power of the working masses and on the course of social development which prepares the ground for this power. Thus, injustice by itself is certainly not an argument with which to overthrow reactionary institutions. If, however, there is a feeling of injustice in large segments of society — says Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of scientific socialism — it is always a sure sign that the

economic bases of the society have shifted considerably, that the present conditions contradict the march of development. The present forceful movement of millions of proletarian women who consider their lack of political rights a crying wrong is such an infallible sign, a sign that the social bases of the reigning system are rotten and that its days are numbered.

A hundred years ago, the Frenchman Charles Fourier, one of the first great prophets of socialist ideals, wrote these memorable words: In any society, the degree of female emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation.[B] This is completely true for our present society. The current mass struggle for women's political rights is only an expression and a part of the proletariat's general struggle for liberation. In this lies its strength and its future. Because of the female proletariat, general, equal, direct suffrage for women would immensely advance and intensify the proletarian class struggle. This is why bourgeois society abhors and fears women's suffrage. And this is why we want and will achieve it. Fighting for women's suffrage, we will also hasten the coming of the hour when the present society falls in ruins under the hammer strokes of the revolutionary proletariat.

Clara Zetkin in Russia, 1921





# On sexuality as work

*A 1975 article by **Silvia Federici** explaining how sexuality, especially for women, is another form of domestic labour.*

Sexuality is the release we are given from the discipline of the work process. It is the necessary complement to the routine, regimentation of the work-week. It is a license to 'go mad,' to 'let go,' so that we can return more refreshed on Monday to our jobs.

'Saturday' is the irruption of the 'spontaneous,' the irrational in the rationality of the capitalist disciplining of our life. It is supposed to be the compensation for work and is ideologically sold as the 'other' from work, a field of freedom in which we can presumably be our true selves, have the possibility for intimate contacts in a universe of social relations where we are constantly forced to repress, defer, postpone, hide, even from ourselves, what we desire.

This being the promise, what we actually get is far from our expectations. As we cannot go back to nature by simply taking off our clothes, so cannot become 'ourselves' simply because it is love-making time. Little spontaneity is possible when the timing, conditions and the amount of energy available

## Wages for Housework committee, 1970s London

for love are out of our control. Not only after a week of work our bodies and feelings are numb and we cannot turn them on like a machine. But what comes out when we 'let go' is more often our repressed violence and frustration than our hidden self ready to be reborn in bed.

Among other things, we are always aware of the falseness of this spontaneity. No matter how much we scream, sigh, and how many erotic exercises we make in bed, we know that it is a parenthesis and that tomorrow we both will be back in our civilized clothes – we will have coffee together preparing to go to work. The more we know that it is a parenthesis which the rest of the day or the week will deny, the more difficult it becomes for us to turn into 'savages' at the socially sanctioned sex-time and forget everything else. We cannot avoid feeling ill at ease.

It is the same embarrassment we experience when we undress knowing that we will be making love, the embarrassment of the morning after, when we are already busy re-establishing distances; the embarrassment (finally) of pretending to be completely different from what we are during the rest of the day.

This transition is particularly painful for women; men seem to be experts at it, possibly because they have been subjected to a more strict regimentation in their work. Women have always wondered how it was possible that,

after a nightly display of passion, he could get up already in a different world, so distant at times that it would be difficult for her to re-establish even a physical contact with him. In any case, it is always women who suffer most from the schizophrenic character of sexual relations, not only because we arrive at the end of the day with more work and more worries on our shoulders, but because we also have the responsibility of making the sexual experience pleasurable for the man. This is why women are usually less sexually responsive than men. Sex is work for us, it is a duty. The duty to please is so built into our sexuality that we have learned to get pleasure out of giving pleasure, out of getting men excited.

Since we are expected to provide a release, we inevitably become the object on which men discharge their repressed violence. We are raped, both in our beds and in the streets, precisely because we have been set up to be the providers of sexual satisfaction, the safety valves for everything that goes wrong, and men have always been allowed to turn their anger against us, if we do not measure up to the role, particularly when we refuse to perform.

Compartmentalization is only one aspect of the mutilation of our sexuality. The subordination of our sexuality to the reproduction of labor power has meant that heterosexuality has been imposed on us as the only acceptable sexual behavior. In reality, every genuine communication has a sexual component, for our bodies and emotions are indivisible and we communicate at all levels all the time. Sexual contact with women is forbidden because in bourgeois morality anything that is unproductive is obscene, unnatural, perverted.

This has meant the imposition of a schizophrenic condition on us, as early in our lives we must learn to draw a line between the people we can love and the people we just talk to, those to whom we can open our body and those to whom we can only open our 'souls,' our friends and our lovers. The result is that we are bodiless souls for our female friends and soulless flesh for our male lovers. And this division separates us not only from other women but from ourselves as well, in the sense of what we do or do not accept in our bodies and feelings – the 'clean' parts that are there for open display, and the 'dirty,' 'secret' parts that can only be disclosed in the conjugal bed, at the point of production.

The same concern for production has demanded that sexuality, especially in women,

be confined to certain periods of our lives. Sexuality is repressed in children and adolescent as well as in older women. Thus, the years in which we are allowed to be sexually active are the years in which we are most burdened with work, so that enjoying our sexual encounters becomes a feat. But the main reason why we cannot enjoy sex is that for women sex is work; giving pleasure is part of what is expected of every woman. Sexual freedom does not help.

Certainly it is important not to be stoned to death if we are 'unfaithful' or if it is found that we are not virgins. But sexual freedom means more work. In the past we were just expected to raise children. Now we are expected to have a waged job, still clean the house and have children and, at the end of a double work-day, be ready to hop in bed and be sexually enticing. And we must enjoy it as well, something which is not expected of most jobs for a bored performance would be an insult to male virility, which is why there have been so many investigations in recent years concerning which parts of our body – whether the vagina or the clitoris – are more sexually productive.

But whether in its liberalized or more repressive form, our sexuality is still under control. The law, medicine and our economic dependence on men all guarantee that, although the rules are loosened, spontaneity is still impossible in our sexual life. Sexual repression in the family is a function of that control. In this sense fathers, brothers, husbands, pimps all act as agents of the state, supervising our sexual work, ensuring that we provide sexual services according to the established, socially sanctioned productivity norms.

Economic dependence is the ultimate means of control over our sexuality. This is why sexual work is still one of the main occupations for women and prostitution underlines every sexual encounter. Under these circumstances, there cannot be any spontaneity in sex for us nor can sexual pleasure be more than an ephemeral thing for us. Because of the exchange involved and the duty to give pleasure to men, sexuality for women is always accompanied by anxiety and it is the part of housework most responsible for self-hatred. In addition, the commercialization of the female body makes it impossible for us to feel comfortable with our body regardless of its shape or form.

Few women can happily undress in front of a man knowing that they will be ranked



according to highly publicized standards of beauty that everyone, male or female, is well aware of, as they are splashed all around us on every wall in our cities, and on every magazine or TV screen. Knowing that our looks we will be judged and that in some way we are selling ourselves has destroyed our confidence and our pleasure in our bodies. This is why, whether we are skinny or plump, long or short nosed, tall or small, we all hate our body. We hate it because we are accustomed to look at it from the outside, with the eyes of the men we meet, and with the bodies-market in mind. We hate it because we are used to think of it as something to sell, something that has become almost independent of us and that is always on a counter. We hate it because we know that so much depends on it. Depending on it, we can get a good or bad job (in marriage or work outside the home), we can gain a certain amount of social power, some company to escape the loneliness that awaits us in this society. And our body can turn against us, we may get fat, get wrinkles, age fast, make people indifferent to us, loose our right to intimacy, loose our chance to be touched or hugged.

In sum, we are too busy performing, too busy pleasing, too afraid of failing, to enjoy making love. The sense of our value is at stake in every sexual relation. It is always a great pleasure if a man says that we are good in bed, whether we have liked it or not; it boosts our sense of power, even if we know that afterwards we still have to do the dishes.

We are never allowed to forget the exchange involved, because we never transcend the value-relation in our love relation with a man. 'How much?' is the question that governs our experience of sexuality. Most of our sexual encounters are spent in calculations. We sigh, sob, gasp, pant, jump and down in bed, but in the meantime our mind keeps calculating 'how much': how much of ourselves we can give before we loose or undersell ourselves, how much will we get in return. If it is our first date, it is how much can we allow him to get: can he go up our skirt, open our blouse, put his fingers under our brassier? At what point should we tell him to stop, how strongly should we refuse? How much can we tell him that we like him before he starts thinking that we are 'cheap'? Keep the price up, that's the rule, at least the one we are taught.

If we are already in bed the calculations become even more complicated, because we also have to calculate our chances of getting pregnant, so that, through the sighing and gasping and other shows of passion, we have to quickly run down the schedule of our period. Faking pleasure in the sexual act, in the absence of an orgasm, is extra work and a hard one, because when you are faking it you never know how far you should go, and you always end up doing more for fear of not doing enough. It has taken a lot of struggle and a leap in our collective social power to finally be able to admit that nothing was happening.



**WOMEN'S**

**LIBERATION**

# From the RCO's Program: on the status of women

The oppression of women, and their economic, social, and political marginalisation (a social arrangement commonly known as patriarchy) is intimately linked with the capitalist mode of production. The reproduction of the labour force, both daily and across generations, requires a certain amount of socially necessary labour in the sphere of social reproduction and domestic work.

This work is done overwhelmingly by women, and it is not directly remunerated by the state or capital. This condition of domestic servility produces women as a subject within capitalist society, reduced to carers, cooks, cleaners, sexual objects—objects of male power and domination, objects at the disposal of capital.

The modern liberal state promised women equality, but the promise is unfulfilled. Wages are on average only 70 per cent of men's and often much less. Women still bear the double burden of childcare, care of the elderly, and managing the individual household, alongside their jobs. This vast economic burden is not directly remunerated, placing women at the mercy of their husbands under a patriarchy of the wage. Rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence are rife. Reproductive rights are restricted and under constant attack.

Even when women do enter the workforce, they do so on the basis of a profound inequality. funnelled into lower paid sectors that reflect their social role in the home, women find themselves shackled with a second shift—working in the market and in the home, often doing similar jobs.

In the global south, patriarchal relations in the countryside and religious prejudices magnify these inequalities. Women are denied the right to control their own bodies, to decide if they wish to have children and, if so, when and how many. Domestic violence, family rape, even murder (so-called 'honour' killings) often go unpunished.

In every country, this oppression is rooted in the family structure of class society. Yet, over the last decades, millions of women have been drawn into mass production, especially in manufacturing in the cities of South and East Asia and Latin America. During crises in the textile, electronic and service industries, where women make up some 80 per cent of the workforce, they have often been the first to be sacked, with employers leaving wages unpaid, breaking legal obligations to give notice and with governments and courts turning a blind eye. Most cruelly exploited are the huge numbers of migrant women workers whose families back home will starve without their remittances.

Unlike liberal feminists, communists understand that only breaking the power of capital and abolishing the patriarchal family and communal system can bring forth the emancipation of women. We are fervently opposed to all class collaborationist and separatist tendencies in the women's movement—as only genuine unity of the class on the basis of a struggle against women's oppression can bring about women's liberation.

The emancipation of women is a core plank in the communist program. As such, communists support the involvement and leadership of women in all proletarian struggles, and support the emergence of organisations and movements that focus specifically on women's issues—in both cases, we advocate for communist, proletarian politics to take the helm.

## Communists say:

- Fight for mass women's organisations, defence groups, social collectives, and union fractions.
- Turn formal freedom into genuine freedom. Socially, economically, politically, and culturally, there must be substantial freedom for women.
- End all limitations on the right to divorce.
- Wages for Housework, paid by the state. For the unionisation of all domestic workers, be they paid by the state (including in the home) or work in the private sector.

- Against all forms of legal discrimination against women. Equal rights and responsibilities for women, to vote, to work, to education, to participate in all public and social activity.
- Equal pay for women in all sectors, enforced by the organised labour movement.
- Help women to escape concentration in the informal and family business sector. For public works programs to provide full-time job opportunities with decent wages for women.
- Open free, 24-hour crèches and kindergartens to facilitate full participation in social life outside the home. Society must take collective responsibility for the rearing of children.
- Open high-quality canteens with cheap prices on every street and in every neighbourhood. For the expansion of canteens and free meals at schools and large workplaces. Establish laundry and house-cleaning services undertaken by local authorities and the state. This to be the first step in the socialisation of housework. We would encourage a balance of male and female workers to be employed in these facilities.
- Fight sexual violence in all forms. Full support for women fleeing violence within the home. Expansion of domestic violence and assault support shelters under democratic control. Self-defence against sexist violence, backed by the workers' and women's movement.
- No to laws which either oblige women to wear, or not to wear, religious clothing. Women should have the legal right to dress as they please.
- For the systematic elimination of arranged marriages, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and polygamy.
- Fully paid maternity leave of 12 months, which the mother can choose to take from up to three months before giving birth. The partner to be provided with twelve months' fully paid parental leave—three months of which should be compulsory—to encourage equality and bonding with the child.
- Free abortion and contraception on demand. For universal sexual education that promotes sexual freedom, dignity, responsibility, and sexual health.
- Provision for either parent, or main carer, to be allowed paid leave to look after sick children.
- A maximum six-hour working day for all nursing parents.

# Demand Freedom for all Political Prisoners

As Russia continues to wage an imperialist war against Ukraine, Communists of all stripes have fallen under the boot of state repression (both in Russia and Ukraine). Oppose the Moscow and Kyiv gangsters, demand the release of all political prisoners. Russian Marxist Boris Kagarlitsky was imprisoned by the Russian state under phony “anti-terrorism” charges in 2023. As of February 2024, he has been sentenced to five years in a prison colony (Meduza).

Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service on April 25th 2024. As of writing, he is being held in Nikolaev in deplorable conditions. He is being falsely charged with being a Russian state operative and a propagandist for Moscow's imperialist invasion. If found guilty, he faces a life sentence (WSWS).

Many more communists, trade unionists, and anti-war protesters are being incarcerated arbitrarily by the Russian and Ukrainian governments. We must support them all, and demand their immediate release.

In addition, the Partisan calls for the freedom of all political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier who still languish in the prisons of the American imperialists. In Britain, the Filton 10 now face years in prison for their actions against the war profiteers at Elbit Systems. One of these comrades, Zoë Rogers, has just spent her 21st Birthday behind bars.

In Australia, activists from Blockade Australia, Fireproof Australia and other groups are held in detention, or under surveillance by state intelligence. With a ceasefire in Gaza, we must not forget the tens of thousands of Palestinians who languish in Israeli prisons and detention centres. We encourage communists and militants of all kinds of agitate for the release of all political prisoners, be they communists, militants, activists or other kinds of radicals.



# On the women's question

*A resolution of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation's Central Committee on the struggle for women's liberation and communism.*

In every society today there persists a patriarchal kernel to social life. Patriarchy, being a social system in which women are systematically exploited and oppressed by men, has served as the organisational substrate for social reproduction and domestic exploitation for millennia. It is only in modernity that this social form has been systematically and cogently challenged: both by the development of commodity society, and by the movements for the liberation of women.

Patriarchal society is characterised chiefly by a social division of labour which saddles women with the work of social reproduction: performing a host of domestic, child rearing, and sexual labour which is exploited by men and reinforces the entire social order. This exploitation is mediated by all manner of social institutions: the family being the first amongst them, but also the community, the church, the sex and service industries, industrial and agricultural capital, and the state itself. It is from this central exploitative relation that all manner of social horrors blossom: rape, domestic violence, the trafficking in women and girls, forced pregnancy, mistreatment of children, and a sexual hegemony of the ruling class.

Patriarchal society is a form of class society, a form of class society which has developed in combination with various modes of production. Communists are opposed to all forms of exploitation, be they serfdom, slavery, wage labour, or domestic servitude.

The development of capitalism has seen the reorganisation of patriarchy through the generalisation of the nuclear family as the primary institution of social reproduction. The demands of the market economy for individual consumptive units, and the intensified need to reproduce labour power to meet the demands of the market has atomised, alienated, and isolated women. At the same time, the demand for labour has drawn women into the workforce, stripping them of communal and religious ties and throwing them at the service of capital as free proletarians. This combined and uneven liquidation of the patriarchal community has laid the foundations of women's liberation.

The advent of capitalist modernity has both intensified the oppression and exploitation of women, and laid the foundations for women's liberation. This has led to the development of a women's movement, which has drawn women from all social strata into the struggle to overturn patriarchal oppression. This movement was in turn combined and uneven, internally stratified by social class. The political manifestation of this movement, feminism,

was plagued by the same divisions expressed at the level of theory.

In the wake of the Second World War, the workers movement in the core imperialist states was systematically integrated into the Keynesian-Social Democratic-Laborist mode of regulation. This mode of regulation, which coincided with the generalisation of the Fordist mode of accumulation, was based in part upon the stabilisation of social reproduction through the generalisation of the nuclear family amongst the working class. A patriarchal-chauvinist compromise predominated the workers movement: a compromise that was overthrown by a wave of social struggles beginning in the 1960s.

The destabilisation of the post-war mode of regulation, and the emergence of Neoliberalism as a mode for the regulation of capitalist society, was in part based on a massive reorganisation of social reproduction. Women were drawn into the workforce in vast numbers, with the growth in childcare, domestic services, and sex work offsetting the destabilisation of the family as the chief unit of reproduction. This reorganisation has seen the institutionalisation of a bourgeois, liberal wing of the women's movement. This wing, which has historically represented women of the bourgeois class - seeks equality for their social strata within the broader system of capitalist patriarchy. The ascent of these women into the ranks of capitalists is based upon an intensification of exploitation, mainly of women workers both in the core and in the global periphery. At the same time, sections of the women's movement have retreated into obscurity. Some have become little more than a reactionary cult of womanhood, insisting upon an essential female identity which is the basis for their politics. Others have become little more than appendages of the bourgeois academy, churning out safe ideological fancies in the form of academic feminist discourses.

With the integration of liberal feminism into the state apparatus and its internalisation by bourgeois society generally, communists must today play a central role in arguing for an approach to women's liberation based on explicit class politics. Communists must hold to a revolutionary feminist line in both the women's movement and in the workers movement, reject all forms of chauvinism and opportunism, and expound the fundamental orientation of the communists: the formation of a revolutionary party, the generalisation of

class struggle, the formation of a communist women's movement, and the establishment of a feminist dictatorship over capital and patriarchy.

Male chauvinism permeates the working class. This is a reflection of the real, material benefits patriarchy awards working men, however undermined these benefits are by the accelerationist tendency of capitalist development. However, it is also true that working class men have a real, material interest in the overthrow of capitalist patriarchy and the establishment of a communist society. It is the task of revolutionary organisation and class struggle to relentlessly struggle against male chauvinism, and to win working men to a feminist program of social revolution. Not a single inch can be given to male chauvinism.

The division of the women's movement, the general defeat of the class and its institutions, and the weakening of the communist left during the contemporary reactionary period has allowed for the proliferation of many forms of political defeatism: be they separatist, lifestylist, or liberal-moralist in nature. While these tendencies must be combatted, they are symptomatic of a generalised decline, and their adherents amongst the feminist camp will likely be won to a revolutionary feminist program when it is given reality by class struggle.

Communism is the material basis for the liberation of women. Only communism can socialise social reproduction and organise it on the basis of general need and the emancipation of labour. Only communism can institute the dictatorship of working women, which in fact is a feminist, communist dictatorship over reactionary patriarchal society and the patriarchal family. Only communism can end the generalised exploitation of labour, systematic exploitation and degradation of working women, and the general immiseration of the proletariat.

The task ahead for communist feminists is the organisation of a proletarian front in the women's movement, and the agitation for a feminist program amongst workers more broadly. The women's movement must be put on a fighting basis, with serious organisations and revolutionary demands. This development must go hand-in-hand with the reconstitution of a genuine communist mass party, a party that must have revolutionary communist feminism as its political basis.

# Why did Adelaide's communists split?

*The end of January 2025 saw a split in Adelaide's communists: the Adelaide cell of the Australian Communist Party (ACP) has split to form the 'Adelaide Communist Collective'. What caused this? What's going on in the ACP? **Anthony Furia** investigates.*

On the 31st of January, the Adelaide Cell of the Australian Communist Party (ACP) released a statement announcing their disaffiliation from the ACP and Community Union Defence League (CUDL, the ACP's front organisation). The newly renamed Adelaide Communist Collective (ACC) named three (very vague) tensions with central leadership as the cause for this split; "an irreparable culture of liberal egoism", "an institutional lack of accountability" and "lack of ideological clarity and direction."

There has been no public response from the ACP, and they have not responded to Partisan's request for comment as of writing. However, Casey McEwan, current General Secretary of the ACC and founding member of the ACP (as well as a former member of the ACP's Central Committee from late 2023 to January 2025) was willing to discuss the issue of the split with Partisan. Together, we reconstructed the basis for the split on the three reasons listed in the ACC's statement, to arrive at a picture remarkably similar to the events behind the split between Red Ant and Red Spark - albeit with crucial differences, and a particularly Marxist-Leninist (Stalinist) undertone.

For a significant period of time before the split, members of the (bizarrely secretive) national leadership had demonstrated a pattern of behaviour that the ACC alleges epitomised a toxic, emotional response to challenges to varying political proposals, or indeed to political proposals opposed to their personal perspective on the direction the ACP should be taking. Seniority was leveled against

alternative proposals, and members were, according to Casey, "bullied and brow beaten" into submission.

These sections of the leadership of the secretive central committee (members Casey would not name, and whose names are not public knowledge, nor even common knowledge within the organisation!) were often protected from critique by other members of leadership, ultimately further cementing an unhealthy, undemocratic organisational culture enforced by the ACP's own clearly apparent lack of democratic structure.

This calcified leadership of seniority and personality would, as is always inevitably the case, reach its tipping point in an extended debate surrounding tactical concerns. Tactical concerns that were, certainly, emblematic of broader political differences, but nevertheless tactical concerns. Indeed, the debate that would ultimately shatter the ACP and destroy the confidence of Adelaide membership in the organisation is almost comical in its unoriginality; should the ACP change its name?

This question was presented (and then answered in the affirmative) by those sections of leadership that Casey highlights. The specifics are wholly unimportant, but for the sake of transparency, they centered around the removal of certain 'negatively connoted language' from the name (such as 'communist'). Casey was opposed to this change and stated as much in an article published in the ACP's internal publication (only active in the lead-up to congress, though our requests to read the article and the publication were rejected by the ACC). In response, two comrades would publish articles allegedly aggressively criticising Casey, and defending the proposal to change the name. At the 2023 congress (held at the end of the year), the proposal was, allegedly, soundly rejected. Despite this, the same elements in the central committee pushed the proposal again towards the end of 2024, and, according to Casey, went so far as to attempt to stack sittings of the nine-person central committee to push through a proposal to reconsider the change of name.

This bureaucratic game of rigging meeting attendance and pushing behind the scenes for a name change culminated in the melodramatic false resignation of one of the 'toxic personalities' behind this push - in a desperate and embarrassing attempt to personally guilt the central committee into

## Disaffiliation from ACP/CUDL

Members of the Adelaide Cell have voted to disaffiliate from the Australian Communist Party and by extension the Community Union Defence League.

Our street kitchen in Whitmore Square will remain operational, and the political work of the former cell will continue within a newly formed organisation.

Please feel free to contact us through our page or email.

[theadelaidecollective2025@gmail.com](mailto:theadelaidecollective2025@gmail.com)

## Why?

Within the central leadership, we experienced:

- An irreparable culture of liberal egoism
- An institutional lack of accountability
- Lack of ideological clarity and direction

This decision was made after all attempts to address the above criticisms had been exhausted.

[theadelaidecollective2025@gmail.com](mailto:theadelaidecollective2025@gmail.com)

### ACC's statement made public shortly after they split. From [@adelaidecommunistcollective \(IG/FB\)](#)

supporting the proposal. When comrades attempted to craft a resolution to ensure that false resignations could not be used as an unprincipled political shock tactic into the future, they were accused by the grouping within the central committee of perhaps the single worst crime a Stalinist can be accused of; factionalism. The basis for such a damning accusation was a document containing the proposal that was, according to meta-data, created by Casey six months ago. Even if Casey had openly and actively created the motion with another comrade on the central committee, this should not be considered some sort of unholy crime or act of total treason. To do so is bureaucratic-centralist absurdity; and the very fact that 'factionalism' as an accusation holds such weight within the ACP reflects a decaying, anti-democratic centralist political core.

Regardless, Casey was immediately cut off from central committee communications and placed 'under investigation' by the ACP's 'control commission'. The member who presented the actual motion resigned on the spot, sharing a resignation letter calling out the history of unprincipled behaviour and personality politics within the central committee epitomised in this very incident. The central committee attempted to suppress the distribution of this letter, deleting it from communications channels whilst the 'general secretary' of the ACP Bob Briton blocked meeting procedures when it was due to be discussed. Yet such a letter was read and discussed by the comrades in Adelaide regardless, just as those associated with Casey

were also placed 'under investigation' for factionalism.

As a result, the control commission joined the next meeting of the Adelaide cell remotely and immediately suspended cell leadership, deriding membership for reading the letter and leaving the Adelaide cell in total limbo with no leadership (typically appointed directly by the central committee) and multiple central members under fictitious, absurd investigation for factionalism.

Left in such a state, isolated from an already mysterious national leadership and with little to no contact with other cells across the country, the cell determined a singular course of possible action; split and continue the practical political work as they had done before an artificial catastrophe. Thus, bringing us to the current moment.

The events that took place in the ACP/ACC are events which have taken place numerous times before. An overly bureaucratic, entrenched leadership cultivated a toxic culture of personality politics in the face of absolutely no structural opposition and ultimately came into conflict with its own membership over a self-fulfilling paranoia surrounding splits, factions, and simple debate within the organisation.

The ACP is, over its short history, one of the most notoriously anti-democratic contemporary sects of the Australian left. The nine-person central committee is elected on a slate system, is responsible for appointing local



ACC street kitchen, 2025

positions, and minimises communications to broader membership. Cells rarely if ever communicate inter-state, and other than the representative to the central committee in one's respective state (and Bob Briton) the membership of the committee remains largely unknown even by members.

Some will readily decry this as simply a result of "Stalinist anti-democratic organisational culture" - indeed, the history of Marxist-Leninist parties and their respective organisational cultures are certainly partially responsible for the ACP's aversion to public debate, disagreement, and particularly 'factions'. Yet this is not a purely cultural phenomenon (and certainly not one that 'Trotskyist' sects are free from, their endless history of splits is built upon bureaucratic centralism). The very structure of the ACP made a split of this sort a matter of time, irrespective of the particular ideological basis of its politics.

The structure of the ACP is certainly not one that other sects on the communist left can claim to be wholly free of. Socialist Alternative, for example, still runs national elections on a slate system. Its central leadership is unclear, and it keeps most of its events controlled in debate and disagreement. As is similarly the case with Solidarity, or the CPA, or the Spartacist League. If nothing else, the aversion to factions (either principally or in practice) remains a unifying tenant of a bureaucratic centralist organisational structure, one

modeled on the rigid theoretical agreement of a sect or anti-democratic communist party, not on the programmatic unity of any democratic mass communist party.

This is not to wholly equate the structures of other sects to the ACP's, a notoriously bad case in a sea of bad cases, but rather to point out that the events and issues that split the ACP should not be dismissed. The ACP did not split because it chose the wrong sacred historical legacy to worship at the altar of (Stalinism over Cliffite Trotskyism, over Council Communism, over Cannonite Trotskyism, over 'Leninism', whatever that may entail). The ACP split because of a concrete crisis of structure, one exacerbated by an exceptionally bureaucratic system, yet one with a core similarity in almost all sects of the Australian communist left to date; dogmatic theoretical unity over democratic programmatic unity.

Sooner or later, a tipping point is reached. A sect reaches a certain size, and can no longer ideologically reproduce itself, perhaps a project/front it begins stretches out of control and subsumes its politics, or leadership calcifies and pushes members to the edge politically and personally. Whatever the reason, members split or peel away, or the sect itself loses its communist political identity and becomes some other monstrosity altogether. The project is weakened or lost, and others begin the construction of their perfect alternative as a result. Such is the history of the sect form, and its present. There is no future for it, for a strict theoretical unity, that is also a future with a communist party. With a mass working class party. With a successful revolutionary struggle.

Comrades on the communist left, within the RCO and outside it, are encouraged to reflect on the experience of the ACP not solely as the result of exceptional circumstance but as a cautionary tale of the sect form. A form that reduces the political to the personal, isolates leadership from membership, and humiliates and embarrasses itself and those involved in its maintenance.

# Letters

## Where did Black Flag Sydney go?

PORCO, ONLINE

Anarchists are not immune from sectarian breakups. Often, if their organisation is informal, this will take the shape of an interpersonal dispute. For Black Flag Sydney, questions over priorities, commitments and political goals recently led the organisation to dissolve. Some wanted to focus more on “trade unionism” and merge with the proposed “Anarchist Federation” [See: “Australia’s Anarchists host conference and unity talks”]. This move apparently required ending their newspaper project ‘Mutiny’.

Black Flag Sydney formed out of an Anarchist-Communist reading group that started around 2019. Since then they have published 14 issues of ‘Mutiny’. A Black Flag member told me that the organisation was a joy to organise within around 2022. So what happened?

Well it’s hard to totally figure that out. The website has been dropped from the internet. Someone clearly stopped paying for the domain name as soon as they had their meeting. There hasn’t been a public statement about the organisation’s dissolution, either.

From what I can gather, certain members wanted to work on more “labour” focused politics rather than “social” politics. They almost posed this distinction to the collective as an accusation that “Black Flag Sydney” had been tarnished by a history of student politics, LGBT rights and climate activism. But this still doesn’t completely explain the liquidation of Black Flag, and their newspaper into an anarchist federation...

When it comes down to it, it sounds like nobody organising with Black Flag had the time or the energy to continue on. Their recruitment was waning and morale seemed low. I attended a reading group a few months ago that consisted of only 3 members, two of whom were relatively new. Where were the rest?

In the end, a large enough section of the collective was able to dispose of the project in

favour of this “Anarchist Federation”. A concept which more veteran anarchists will point out to you is floated every five years or so. Other anarchist groups around Australia are contributing to this federation without liquidating (such as the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group, MACG).

What is the purpose of these groups if they can only last a few years? What is being built? As previous articles in the Partisan paper have shown, this is not a unique Anarchist problem. It actually seems that the sect form and the all too common breakup is accelerating and affecting many sides of the socialist left. If a sect doesn’t break down, it calcifies into an efficient membership machine, who’s only purpose is to maintain its due paying membership enough to tread water above the suffocating pull of splits and depoliticisation. The RCO should be wary of falling into the same fate.

## Tongan democrats don’t have the guts

MAX J, NEWCASTLE

A debate has taken place on the web pages of Talanoa ‘o Tonga, a Tongan-based news website. This debate took place over the last week, between Senituli Penitani (a US-based, Tongan-American evangelist and reactionary), 'Ikani Taliai (President of the Tongan Victoria Association), and Melino Maka (a 'Tongan-Kiwi community leader). The debate was prompted by Penitani's Feb 22nd article, The danger of extremism in Tonga's democratic reforms. Reforms which, mind you, had been demanded by the workers and toilers of Tonga for years (they did not burn down half of Nuku'alofa in 2006 for a quick laugh). In this article, he denounces Phil Uipi (a Tongan-American lawyer) as an 'extremist' for advocating for Tongan MPs to use their constitutional rights to stand against the king. What moron thinks telling people to use constitutional rights is extremism? As a reactionary evangelist, Penitani more or less believes that the King is sovereign and put in charge by God. He is strongly against any attempt to remove executive powers from the King - though he correctly states that the King would resist all attempts to do so.

Taliai, on the other hand, has a more liberal orientation. A supporter of the monarchy (monarchist liberals - don't tell Robespierre!), he nonetheless believes that Tonga must develop into a modern, democratic state. Such a state requires the King to take a ceremonial,



### Tonga's St George Palace.

institutional role, as opposed to having direct executive power. While preferable to Penitani's yammerings about faith and the notion, Talaiāi's position maintains the status quo. The power of the kings and chiefs is not threatened, but coaxed into submission by a democratic, liberal government. If only!

Maka takes stock of previous Tongan democrat leaders such as Akilisi Pōhiva and Pōhiva Tu'ionetoa. These were politicians emerging out of Tonga's Human Rights and Democracy Movement (there is no socialist party in Tonga, nor a socialist movement, as far as I can tell), eventually becoming Prime Minister through the Democratic Party. Akilisi Pōhiva, while mostly a liberal, nonetheless resisted the king politically, but his government was held back by bureaucratic strain. Maka ends a rather weak critique of the previous leaders with a very loose 'the voters will decide'. Will they, Maka? It is hard to imagine that the 'voters will decide' anything substantial in a state where the king still holds executive power, and uses it to trample over basic democratic and constitutional rights.

The situation in Tonga proves a few things. Mainly, that the Maoist-Stalinist thesis of the "progressive national bourgeois" is hocus pocus. Such a class, if it indeed exists in Tonga, is bound to the King and the chiefs. It is clear that the only force capable of carrying out a

'democratic revolution' (which in truth is a socialist revolution) is the workers and toilers. What little working class Tonga has must unite with the toilers and oppressed to form a mass movement capable of overthrowing the monarchy wholesale, and establishing a democratic republic. This is not impossible: such forces came together in 2006 to smash up the capital in a violent fury to demand change, which they soon got (with little thanks to the meddling of AU-NZ imperialists). See also the 2005 Public Servants strike.

Much of this debate took place between Tongans living outside of Tonga. It is clear that political forces in Tonga critical of the monarchy must rely on the relative security of living outside of Tonga to organise and coordinate. There is a vast immigration population of Tongans living in the US, in NZ, and in Australia. While Tongan communities are dominated by antique, patriarchal churches, it is the role of communists to nonetheless organise workers and smash these institutions. Tongan democrats don't have the guts to see their own project - the path to democracy - forward. So it is up to communists to organise a movement to see a better project - the path to an emancipated society (communism) - all the way to the end.

## Write us a letter!

Writing us a letter is easy, and is a good alternative to writing a full article or essay. Letters are submitted like normal articles are, through our email.

A letter could be any kind of statement or observation, in around 500 words or less. The shorter the better. In a letter, you should give your opinion or statement on something, then finish off with your name and city (any name works - many of our writers use pseudonyms).

In particular, we encourage letters written as a reply to other articles. Of course, you are also free to write a full article in reply to another article, but sometimes it may be better to simply write a letter in. Letters may also be replies to other letters, and of course, an article can also be a reply to a letter.

You could also write one directed to the editorial team at Partisan, and if you do, we will submit a reply in the following issue. We aim to build a lively letters section as part of our overall goal to establish Partisan as a platform of open debate and polemic between and amongst the organised Left.

Letters should be sent to [partisanmagazine@proton.me](mailto:partisanmagazine@proton.me) and contain the subject "Letter: [heading]". The content of your letter can be sent within the body of the email as opposed to a document attached to the email.

## Journalism matters

Many might turn their nose at journalism - and given the state of journalism currently, you'd be right to do it. But we live in the 'information age', where information is key, which is precisely why journalism matters.

The mainstream press doesn't report on many strikes, protests, rallies, and it definitely doesn't report on what the Left is doing (why would it?). This is why communists need to be journalists, especially for the working class.

The Left is a confusing mess on the best of days. How are working people supposed to figure out what the Left is doing when the Left seems to do everything in its power to make it seem more obtuse?

This is why projects like Partisan matter, because we aim to report on the Left, and provide a platform for radicals and militants in the struggle.

For this reason, Partisan matters. It is unique insofar as no other project blending quality independent journalism with communist political theory exists on the Australian Left. Or if it does, we haven't heard of it yet.

# Subscribe to Partisan!

Have Partisan delivered to your door for \$10\* a month.

[patreon.com/partisanmagazine](https://patreon.com/partisanmagazine)



\*the platform applies all relevant sales tax which may add up to more than \$10

