

DON'T LOOK TO THE ALP, LIBERALS OR GREENS – RELY ON MASS STRUGGLE BACKED BY TRADE UNION POWER STOP THE RACIST “INTERVENTION” INTO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

The following leaflet was distributed at a July 6-9 gathering in Yirara College, Alice Springs against the federal government’s “Intervention” into Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. The “Intervention” has forcibly placed 50% of Aboriginal people’s income under government “Income Management”, further increased heavy handed policing of Aboriginal communities and taken away even the minimal Aboriginal control over their own communities that previously existed.

6 July 2010 - Warmest greetings to fellow participants at this gathering. This event takes place at a crucial time. A time when the fascistic police tyranny associated with the Intervention gets more vicious every day. A time when the WA prosecutor has outrageously deemed that no charges will be laid on the two security guards responsible for the barbaric death of Aboriginal elder Mr Ward – giving yet another green light for racist screws and cops to kill black people in custody.

Yet the fact that people from all over the country have converged here at this gathering shows just how much will there is to stand against all the racist laws and injustice. There is so much to learn at this gathering from listening to the grassroots accounts of the suffering caused by the Intervention. We in the communist group, Trotskyist Platform, would here like to humbly outline some of our ideas as a contribution to the discussions about strategy that will take place.

When we look at the reasons why Howard and then Rudd/Gillard have been conducting this Intervention we see just how many people it is indirectly aimed against – and therefore how big the forces are that we can potentially mobilise against it. So why did they launch this Intervention? Firstly, their Intervention was **designed** to insult Aboriginal people. They wanted to spread the filthy lie that Aboriginal men are child molesters. They wanted to portray Aboriginal people as a people incapable of looking after their own affairs or even their own money. But why such insults? Because the ruling class of this country wants to justify its historic and continued dispossession of Aboriginal people and the denial of their rights. This racist propaganda is meant partly for overseas consumption. In Asia, Africa and elsewhere many people **know** about the oppression of Aboriginal people. So when the ambitious Australian rulers start attacking other countries under the guise of “human rights”, when they send their militaries to invade other lands under the pretext of bringing “freedom”, people overseas say “hang on what about what

you are doing to Aboriginal people in your own country.” The wealthy Australian elite, therefore, want to use strategies such as the Intervention to be able to respond with: “Look, we did commit some crimes in the past but as you see with the Intervention these people need to be controlled for their own good and that is what we always tried to do.” The blatant lies used to justify the Intervention are also tagged for use within Australia. For here too there are many people who know what has been perpetrated against Aboriginal people by the Australian state. Such people naturally then feel queasy about supporting the Australian state in its interventions abroad. The propaganda surrounding the NT Intervention is meant to make such people feel more “comfortable” about the White Australia capitalist state so that they will support its predatory agenda abroad. That is why the many people in this country who have been active in struggles against Australia’s invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have a real interest in fighting against the Intervention.

Secondly, the Intervention aims to make it easier for mining bosses to plunder Aboriginal peoples lands while giving virtually nothing back in return. Yet as we have seen so clearly in the last few weeks, these billionaire mining tycoons like Andrew Forrest and Clive Palmer don’t want to share even a small fraction of their wealth with the rest of the population either! Working class people, both black and white, have an interest in standing together against the mining bosses. We need to eventually bring the whole mining industry into the collective hands of all the people so that mining is controlled to ensure that it does not end up destroying people’s lives and Aboriginal cultural treasures and so that the wealth it generates goes to ordinary people.

Thirdly, the government’s stigmatisation of Aboriginal people is aimed at diverting poorer white people from seeing who the real cause of their difficulties are – that is, the greedy ruling class. Such racist scapegoating is also whipped up against refugees. That the ruling class has no qualms about scapegoating this country’s first peoples shows not only how racist they are but also how worried they are about people’s anger over the lack of affordable housing and secure jobs.



July 9, Alice Springs: Over 200 Aboriginal people and young anti-racists from throughout Australia march against the federal government’s racist “Intervention” into NT Aboriginal communities.

Fourthly and most importantly, the measures first unleashed against Aboriginal people were always intended to be also used against all poor people as well. The greedy capitalist rulers used racism to first target Aboriginal

people with "Income Management" so that they could establish a precedent to introduce it everywhere. And that is what they are doing now. Non-Aboriginal poor people must



Townsville, July 19: Lex Wotton and his wife Cecilia on the day of his release from prison after serving 19 months of a 6 year jail sentence for the role he played in the heroic Palm Island resistance of November 2004. Draconian parole conditions have been imposed upon Lex in an attempt to gag him and restrict his role as a prominent leader of the Aboriginal community and as an inspiration to antiracists everywhere.

join together with Aboriginal people in a common struggle to abolish both "Income Management" and the Intervention.

"Income Management" and other measures to make life unbearable for welfare recipients serves to make those lucky enough to have jobs even more fearful of getting sacked and therefore less likely to stand up to greedy bosses. That is why it is in the interests of the trade union movement to be involved in the struggle against the Intervention. Moreover, only if the union movement stands up to racism can it unite its own multiethnic members sufficiently enough to take on the bosses.

It is good that some unions like the CFMEU and the MUA have joined the campaign against the Intervention. This stance must be broadened and importantly turned into industrial action. When the profits of the ruling class are hit by strike action then finally they do take notice. The 7 November 2007 stopwork by the MUA Sydney Branch in defence of Palm Island's Lex Wotton no doubt contributed to making the racist authorities realise that they could not give this resistance hero the severity of sentence that they had wanted to (of course he should never have spent even a day in jail.)

Right now the level of opposition from the workers movement and the left to the Intervention and to deaths in custody is nowhere near what it should be. Many Aboriginal people are standing strong but too many in the broader working class are under the sway of Laborite ideology which teaches workers to look in a very narrow way after only their own, **short-term** economic interests. It is the duty of the more politically aware elements to win these workers to the understanding that they can only have a decent future if they take a stand against racist tyranny. Yet these "educators" themselves must be clear on how to go forward.

Importantly, we must learn the lesson from what happened in the lead up to the last federal election. It was then that the unions, the anti-racist movement and most of the

left campaigned for the ALP and/or the Greens. But the ALP government has proved to be little different from the racist Liberals. Worse still, because many activists had been misled into thinking that we could pressure an ALP government into taking anti-racist and pro-working class positions, they became totally demoralised when this did not happen and dropped out of the resistance movement altogether.

Of course, Tony Abbott is a disgusting, right-wing racist that everyone here would hate to see as prime minister. However, we should not support the ALP either. If we tell people to vote Labor as a "lesser evil" that is telling people that we are so powerless that we have to endorse someone just because they may kick us in the guts instead of in the head. No, let us not demoralise people and sell ourselves so short. Aboriginal people, the non-Aboriginal poor and the union movement together actually have a lot of power to fight back.

Many people are now looking to the Greens. They see that the Greens are at least critical of the Intervention and have some progressive policies like opposing the worst anti-union laws. The problem with the Greens, however, is that they do not see mass struggle as the means to achieve justice and instead seek to work within the system. So much so that their official policy D6 on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues endorses the call for more policing: "[The Australian Greens will] ensure that there is effective policing in remote communities negotiated with community elders, including infrastructure to ensure a live-in police presence..." (Greens website) This would mean a greater presence for the very cops that terrorise black people and that would be used to suppress any staunch struggle and actions against injustice.

Many Greens may be sincere, middle-class do gooders but, nevertheless, we still should not tell people to vote for them. For that would be misleading people into believing that justice can be achieved by the Greens program of working harmoniously within the oppressor's system. No, the best thing we can do is to clarify for all that any justice will be won in struggle **against** the oppressors and their system - a system that only serves the small layer of mining tycoons, bankers, big property developers and factory bosses who really call the shots in this country. The best thing we can do in the lead up to the federal elections is to tell people that they should not support any of the parties bidding to run this corrupt and racist capitalist order. The more working class and Aboriginal people that understand that they can only trust their own power, the better placed we will be to mobilise action to resist the attacks of whichever gang wins government.

Of course, the working class and Aboriginal people do indeed need a party. But this will be a party that will organise the mass struggle. A party that will unite Aboriginal people with the power of the union movement - and with non-white "ethnic" people who are also coping racism - in a common fight against racist tyranny and the oppression of the poor.