

BLACK DEATHS IN CUSTODY

DON'T JUST WATCH — DO SOMETHING

John Pat, Eddy Murray, Dixon Green, Robert Walker, Tony King. There is an ever growing list of Black people killed in custody. A sixth Black person was found this week dead in a Cairns police cell. What has been discovered by the committee to Defend Black Rights is the tip of the iceberg. Every day Black people face consistent state harassment from the imperialist police force. This includes bashings and murders, not just in custody. Australia was established as an outpost of British imperialism by the brutal suppression of the Black people. Almost 200 years later the war against the Black people still continues. They have been allocated land but not when it threatens imperialist mining interests. The Hawke government, as did the Fraser government before it, has given multinationals open slather to mine at the expense of Black people.

For the Communist Left, the suppression of Black people is both a national question and a class question. A national question because there is the material feasibility for the establishment of a Black nation in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. However Black people are also the most oppressed and exploited section of the working class, getting the lowest pay, ignored by white trade unions, have a massive infant mortality rate, the highest rate of unemployment and are under consistent State attack. Today it is respectable to morally oppose apartheid in South Africa — even Malcolm Fraser does it. Yet Australia, in its relationship to the Black people is akin to apartheid, except Black people are a minority. Of course we should take a stand in solidarity with Azania but the struggle against imperialist repression begins at home.

Black Deaths by the racist police force must be stopped. The only way to do this is physically. As long as Australia remains an imperialist state, Black deaths will continue. It is useless and in fact dangerous to have a perspective of demanding or persuading the police force to reform. The cops who kill Black people are not just bad apples but part of a repressive system. It is the whole system that is rotten, not just individual cops. Therefore the whole system must be smashed. This can only be done by mobilising the working class. For decades the Australian working class has accepted imperialism and exploitation in exchange for minor benefits. However it has done so at its own peril. The ruling class is intent on smashing unionism in Australia. The new Right and Joh Bjelke Petersen want to do this blatantly. Bob Hawke is an accomplice to the anti-union drive. Labour governments have been instrumental in attacking the BLF and the Food Preservers. Labour is paving the way for the extreme right to take over when the ruling class sees fit. The working class is coming under attack more and more from the capitalist state. By accepting or even supporting state repression against Blacks the working class cannot successfully defend its own organisations. That is why we argue that working people must stand up with Black people against the State. Black people must not remain isolated. Workers defence must be organised now. The working class must be physically present when Blacks are threatened. Strikes and black bans must be organised. If racist cops get the message that whenever they attack, working class people will be in solidarity and will retaliate, they will be more reticent to act. By organising the working class into a strong enough force we can defeat 'them'.

Unfortunately, this is not the perspective of the Committee to Defend Black Rights. This group, with the support of the CPA, SWP and SPA, has been arguing for a Royal Commission and an enquiry into police brutality. What do they hope to achieve? Even if a few of the more brutal cops are exposed and jailed, they will only be replaced by more racist cops. The Committee to Defend Black Rights is

trying to show that Black deaths are merely a blot on the copy book of what is a fundamentally acceptable system. It is trying to whitewash the system and not fight it. Of course by having a reforming perspective it will get money from the government and more support from respectable people. But the condition of this support is no overt opposition to the police force. Therefore the Committee to Defend Black Rights accepts the cops and only hopes to influence the way they operate. This is a sell out. The ruling class will not listen to moral pleas. Building workers' defence may be more difficult than lobbying politicians but it is the only real defence Black people have and must be organised without delay.

— SELF DETERMINATION FOR BLACK PEOPLE

— SMASH THE IMPERIALIST STATE AND FIGHT FOR A WORKERS AND SMALL FARMERS GOVERNMENT.

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