



“Imperialism and its agents must be destroyed”: Australian Workers and Anti-Colonialism in the twentieth century

The Australian working-class movement has a mixed history of internationalism and solidarity, to say the least. The Communist Party *Weekly Worker* declared it the responsibility of “workers and the colonial peoples” to “destroy...imperialism and its agents” in 1930, part of a proud anti-colonial legacy linking campaigns in solidarity with Chinese factory workers in the 1920s and ‘black bans’ of Dutch shipping during the struggle for Indonesian independence to campaigns in support of Indigenous Australians and in opposition to the Vietnam War. On the other hand, Trade Unions and the Labor Party were prominent advocates for the White Australia Policy, particularly the deportation of South Sea Island labourers in the 1900s, just one example of the fear and exclusion that is deeply woven into the movement’s fabric.

It is to this untidy mixture of legacies that our symposium returns. Since the publication of *Who are our enemies: Racism and the Australian Working Class* in 1978, there has been an explosion of work mapping the contours of this troubling relationship. The ‘transnational’ turn has offered new ways of understanding how Australian workers formed part of international networks of racial exclusion and control, as well as participating in global and regional alliances to undermine these. Work has focused on how unions and working-class political parties sought – often furtively or half-heartedly – to support Indigenous Australians, either as workers or, more rarely, political subjects in their own right.

Our symposium takes such work as a stepping off point, and invites papers on topics such as, but not limited to:

- Solidarity campaigns with, and connections between workers abroad, particularly in the Asia Pacific
- Relationships between ‘white’ workers and recent migrants
- The Australian working class and international organisations
- The far left and the politics of anti-colonialism
- Movements against wars of imperialism (from Boer War to Iraq)
- Colonial subjects organising in Australia

If you wish to participate in this symposium, tentatively slated for December 2021, please provide an abstract of 250 words to Jon Piccini (jon.piccini@acu.edu.au) by **15 August**.

Image: Builders Labourer’s Federation members promote the Moratorium for Black Rights, 1972.