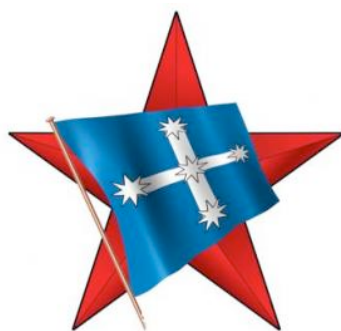


Comments In The Lead Up To The 2023 Referendum



Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)

August 2023

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To members of the Party from the Central Committee

Comrades,

The Central Committee has been discussing the Voice referendum for some time now. Where it has been possible to do so, a draft statement has been shown to other members of the Party and their views and feedback have been collated and taken into consideration.

The views of First Peoples on both sides of the Referendum fence have also been taken into consideration.

The views of members, and of the Central Committee, were not unanimous. Some supported a Yes vote, others recommended abstention. In the end we have been guided by the advice of the Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Council who recommended to Darebin Council that “no endorsement should be made for any campaign, to respect the diverse views of the Aboriginal community of Darebin.” This was endorsed by the Black Peoples Union on its Facebook page.

To that end, the draft statement has been incorporated into five separate articles, each of which analyses issues raised by the referendum. These will be published on successive Mondays from August 21.

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The day after the Referendum, struggle will continue.

Published 21 August 2023

Once again decisions about First Peoples' lives will be made by others.

Despite some First Peoples' input in the lead up, the 97 percent of non-Indigenous Australians will decide the Referendum.

As Murrawarri man Fred Hooper says, the Australian Electoral Commission could have organised a plebiscite or referendum of First Peoples to decide what they want.

For those willing to listen, this year has been full like never before of the lives, experiences and views of First Peoples, no matter where they stand on the Referendum.

Throughout the whole constitutional recognition process, well before the current Referendum proposal, we have helped promote the views of those demanding treaties and fundamental change. That remains our preferred position, but we have no right to impose it on First Peoples.

At the National Community Legal Centre Conference held in March 2023, Palawa leader Michael Mansell said the Voice would marginalise not empower Aboriginal Peoples, that as an advisory body it would be ineffective, that its underlying ideology is assimilationist and that it was used by the prime minister to block Treaty.

He said its powerful proponents – the PM, media and big business – portrayed those questioning the Voice as racist or unthinking, instead of answering questions raised. Speaking in March, before increasing public action by First Peoples' opponents increasingly broke through, he criticised one-sided media coverage.

He voted for the Statement of the Heart, but at the meeting delegates had no right to separate the four key elements, sovereignty, truth telling, treaty and voice.

They had to vote for all or none.

The government allocated \$66 million for the Voice, but just \$5 million for Treaty.

Mansell's full speech is essential listening, and is available here -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7U0qrjJLMJ0>

State Voice and other voices

South Australia created a Voice to the state parliament by legislation. It was the first State to do so. It placed First Nations in the State into six geographical groups, each to have two elected representatives serving on the State Voice.

It was widely welcomed as a great step forward by many – but not all – First Peoples in SA.

Goreng Bibullman (Nyoongar) man Keith Thomas, editor of the SA Native Title Services paper *Aboriginal Way*, writes that SA will now have "two voices: A Voice that is funded by the government, and provides advice to the government, and a Voice by the people, for the people, to maintain lore and custom for Aboriginal people at the grassroots level."

"SA Native Title Services (SANTS)," he said, "has been vocal about the concerns of the native title holders we represent across the state. While we do support the principle of a Voice to SA Parliament, our major concern is that the State Voice will become a separate entity with the potential to erode and undermine existing First Nations leadership and cultural authority...Only Traditional Owners have the responsibility and right to speak for issues impacting them, their

Country, their community and their culture... no-one else should be given the authority (especially by the Crown) to perform functions or make decisions about issues over that Country."

These concerns have also been raised by long-time activist for Blak rights, Gumbaynggirr man Gary Foley at this year's Invasion Day rallies. He spoke of land rights, culture and true self-determination.

Lidia Thorpe speaks of the invaders' "assimilation project". When she speaks of Treaty, she means long-term mass struggle strong enough to provide a just peace from the ceaseless 235-year war crushing First Peoples.

Others like Gumbaynggirr woman Elizabeth Jarrett who supports a left No vote are sceptical about type of treaties capitalism will offer. Some like Fighting in Solidarity Towards Treaties-activist Wiradjuri, Badu Island leader Linda June Coe and Michael Mansell want parliamentary representatives directly elected by First Peoples to arise from treaty processes.

High profile grassroots activists campaigning for a Yes vote include Bunuba elder and Human Rights Commissioner June Oscar, who helped lead the successful battle in Fitzroy Crossing for Bunuba to control alcohol distribution and consumption; Barbara Shaw, who stood firm against the NT Intervention across the country and led practical responses to protect First Peoples from its devastation on the ground in Mparntwe; native title barrister Tony McAvoy, who has always stood for treaties and whose people are the Wangan and Jagalingou opposing Adani.

There are many more.

Tony McAvoy says that just as the 1967 Referendum did not cede or extinguish First Peoples' sovereignty, neither will the upcoming Referendum or the Voice.

Michael Mansell pointed out the Northern Territory Treaty Framework designed by Tony McAvoy, provides for land without the native title process, including for those in cities, autonomous law-making providing hunting and fishing rights, health, education, land use and adequate cash.

"It delivers a bundle of rights, binding states, police, courts, business and the public," Mansell stated.

First Peoples' lives are not a Yes-No proposition

It is important to distinguish between racist opposition to the Voice and the legitimate criticisms of the Yes vote coming from First Peoples.

There is undeniably a danger that the Voice to Parliament will control and defuse the voices of grassroots First Peoples, and channel their concerns into parliament making them ineffective.

But all people learn primarily from their own experiences. Whatever the Referendum result, there will be both positive and negative effects to be built on or countered.

First Peoples want and demand more than survival. Australia is built on their lands. For 200 years they have fought for unity, for land rights, for culture including language, for Aboriginal control of Aboriginal lives. We continue to support those struggles.

The day after, whatever the Referendum result, First Peoples' struggle for fundamental change will continue. Their lives are not a Yes-No proposition.

Divide and conquer, the oldest trick in the book.

Published 28 August 2023

As the Voice referendum approaches, First Peoples have never been more divided. Competing factions within the capitalist ruling class have caused those divisions. The factions agree on fundamentals – that First Peoples' lands and waters will continue to be exploited for oil, mineral and gas, for real estate profits, for corporate farming, for waste dumps or military bases.

They disagree on tactics. One side prefers soft tactics with some concessions to the struggles led by First Peoples, the other wants to completely crush resistance. In the ruling class-controlled parliament they are represented by their respective servants, Albanese and Dutton.

Over years both factions gutted land rights and replaced them with native title which excluded the vast majority of First Peoples. They pitted traditional custodians against lands councils from which custodians are often excluded. They condoned world-leading incarceration rates, demonised and tortured children as young as ten, and stole others from families, hounded families on Centrelink. They evicted them from public housing. They sat on their hands as children suicided. They still do.

Witness the labelling of traumatised Aboriginal children at the Banksia Park detention centre as "terrorists" by the WA Labor Premier.

They prepared the Northern Territory for deeper exploitation through 15 years of the brutal Intervention: \$100 million spent on police centres; forcing the young out of communities and off Country into towns; humiliating elders with allegations and the rest with basics cards; banishing language

instruction in schools till late after-noons; dumping community run councils, businesses and employment programs. And so much more. How has it come to this?

How has it come to this?

In 1988, First Peoples struck a tremendous and united blow against 200 years of colonialism and imperialism. They said to the ruling class, you have thrown every weapon you possess against us but we have survived! It was an extraordinary moment of growing First Peoples' unity, power and defiance, built upon two centuries of resistance. It struck fear into the heartless, inhuman, profit-driven core of the ruling class.

The Business Council of Australia, set up to unify the largest corporations in the country, knew its outright suppression of First Peoples had failed. It began planning. By the year 2000, it set its vast economic, human, political, legal and cultural resources into an offensive on a wide range of fronts to systematically drive disunity into First People's communities. It promoted the identity of corporate and First People's aspirations, although in reality these are diametrically opposed.

In 2017, our comrade Lindy Nolan first documented the process in [Driving Disunity: The Business Council Against Aboriginal Community](#). One focus was constitutional recognition.

Without grassroots processes of development, what became the well-funded Uluru process was outlined by Noel Pearson at Garma Festival 2016 on a platform shared with the BCA's Michael Rose. Noel Pearson's proposal incorporated and praised 'Australia's British Institutions'. Garma was full of Business Council of Australia members, 21 from Westpac alone. CEO Jennifer Westacott co-chaired another key forum of three BCA speakers.

Corporations like Rio Tinto and other US-controlled mining giants support the Voice, but it's nothing more than self-interest. They want to blackwash their image. Whether the referendum is won or lost, it's nothing to them. Driving division was their true aim.

Peter Dutton calls the Voice divisive. But it's precisely what the ruling class intended.

The far right organises

The commanding heights of the Australian economy are in US hands. Despite Australian faces in parliament, the USA holds state power. The biggest, most powerful US corporations organised as the ruling class have again and again shown their willingness to overthrow governments that no longer serve their needs, and institute open dictatorships. This happened in South Korea, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, across Central and South America, in the Middle East, in Africa.

Because Labor and Coalition unswervingly support US imperialism, there is no current danger of a coup.

The particular danger which has to be more widely understood, opposed and eventually prepared for is the gradual removal of swathes of hard-won democratic rights, the personal attacks on opponents of US domination, brutal isolation and suppression of individuals who expose injustice to discipline the rest.

First Peoples will not be the beneficiaries of what we loosely term fascism, but which really means the open and direct rule of the capitalist class, in Australia's case, US imperialism.

Marx pointed out parliamentary "democracy" is the ruling classes' preferred option. It builds the far right, holding it in reserve for the time when so-called democracy no longer serves its purposes. More and more people see through Australia's so-called democracy. Most

politicians are rightly disrespected, because again and again the big end of town is the beneficiary of their decisions. But the majority still see no alternative to parliament.

With massive one-sided publicity that ignored the progressive First Peoples' No sentiments and the undemocratic way it was set up, the 2017 Statement from the Heart won overwhelming support from non-Indigenous people. Yet it demanded more than some far right corporations wanted. Successive Coalition politicians stomped on change, delaying it while they organised. As proposals were watered down and negotiations dragged on, bit by bit they became more aggressive.

Now far right voices are roaring. Its leadership is mainstreamed under Peter Dutton and Tony Abbott. It's no longer a few crazies targeting Muslims with roast pig festivals and burka banning.

For decades they systematically created fear and division among everyday people over 'Islamic terrorism', abortion, voluntary assisted dying, Covid lockdowns and vaccines, with one section of the population after another drawn into their influence and organisation. This included some militant workers, First Peoples and left activists rightly suspicious of Big Pharma and discriminatory applications of lockdowns. Now, alongside attacking easy targets, like "woke" media personalities and trans sportspeople, they use ignorance to discredit the Voice. They don't want even an advisory body to mitigate their total control when elected, even though as Michael Mansell points out, they could simply stop funding it. The Constitution's Section 101 states, "There shall be an Interstate Commission." It hasn't existed since 1950.

The key for the far right is building a mass organisational base.

So, it lies and distorts. Even the official, publicly funded and distributed referendum

material about the No “information” is full of lies.

Compelled to lie

Racism is a tool of the ruling class to create division, often internalised and passed on generationally. Its Vote No campaign is motivated by centuries of the most vicious embedded racism. Although a “gentlemanly agreement” was proposed by PM Albanese under which the Voice debate would not see opponents labelled as “racists”, racism is at the heart of Dutton’s No campaign.

Racism is a festering sore. Just look at social media support for cops who have killed First Peoples, the hounding of Indigenous sports people by racist trolls, the hounding of Wiradjuri man and media personality Stan Grant by the same racists, and the everyday lived experiences of so many First Peoples.

The far right have to lie and distort because Australians have never been more supportive of justice for First Peoples. They know if they told the truth – that they want to completely and utterly crush First Peoples’ lives and hopes – it would not be tens of thousands on the streets. It would be millions.

This faction moans about the Voice causing division, of giving First Peoples privileges and power, so powerfully ridiculed decades back in Paul Kelly’s [Special Treatment](#). Alongside this they cry about the terrible conditions facing First Peoples, despite their own role in generations of ongoing attacks and deliberate neglect.

But they have more cynical and dangerous ploys. Guardian Australia’s Josh Butler and Nick Evershed documented Tony Abbott-led Advance Australia’s use of [multiple social media platforms aimed specific groups](#), with different messages aimed at women and older people. For young people influenced by the left No campaign, Advance Australia’s ‘Not Enough’ Facebook page says people should

vote No because the Voice won’t have enough power. They try to draw people into their organisational tentacles.

Peter Dutton even abuses its factional rival Westpac for funding the Yes campaign. What a hypocrite! Where was this ex-Queensland copper when the last government tried to stop the royal commission into corruption by banks like Westpac? Dutton, Morrison and Co created the shortest royal commission in history in the lead up to Christmas, so it would fade in holiday celebrations. Where was he when Westpac created a template empowering NSW lands councils to claim and sell swathes of “Crown” lands, while excluding traditional custodians?

Their leaders are happy to shift their targets to increase their reach. For example, many Muslims were against vaccines and lockdowns. Now, like other religious groups, they are being mobilised against so-called threats to children – safety programs supporting transgender and non-binary young people in schools.

But their true target has always been the conscious and organised left which increasingly understands Australia capitalism as a wing of US imperialism and organises against it.

In its march to war, in [Garramilla Darwin and Mparntwe Alice Springs, First Peoples are on the front line yet again](#). Both parliamentary ruling class factions are complicit in this.

We need to know our enemies, not just broadly, but in detail. If the No vote wins, as seems likely, Dutton’s group will claim responsibility. Sky’s wealthy Indigenous mouthpiece will be louder. The Coalition’s spokeswoman will continue to promote the cause of Northern Territory style interventions.

Yes supporters will be deeply wounded.

Progressive No supporters must be organised and ready. They must be stronger. They must be armed with the knowledge that it is the masses who make history.

When the time is right, they must respectfully and gently reach out to Yes supporters to show all is not lost.

Together, we have a world to win.

Two referendums and a battle: lessons from history.

Published 4 September 2023

As we face the coming referendum, the past gifts us experience. On January 26 this year we pointed out, "The 1967 referendum shifted focus to constitutional change. First Peoples saw it as a turning point. The Australian masses had turned towards them. Racism still existed, but 91 per cent had voted for them to be counted in the census and to transfer control from vicious state governments to the federal parliament. First Peoples were more free to travel and organise.

"Struggle everywhere ramped up. Federal funding for Aboriginal services followed.

"Dialectics teach us to look below the surface to understand something, and that a thing may become its opposite, positive become negative, in certain circumstances.

"The 1971 Census exposed for the first time the horror of living conditions for First Peoples, life expectancy, blindness and ill health, arrest, imprisonment and infant mortality rates. TV cameras brought vision into suburban lounge rooms.

"Capitalism did not change its spots. Today, the same shameful lived statistics for the

majority of First Peoples, with the addition of substance abuse and child suicides.

"The Gurindji waited seven more years to be 'given' a piece of their own land. An Australian government had to negotiate with the invader's Vestey Group! Who actually ruled?

"And in 2007, John Howard with ALP opposition support used Section 51(xxvi), the Constitution's "race powers" introduced in 1967, to impose the 15-year genocidal NT 'Emergency' Intervention, for the benefit of resource giants," we stated.

Howard had already relied on Section 51(xxvi), to extinguish native title claims of Ngarrindjerri women against SA's Hindmarsh Bridge on a sacred site. With Justice Kirby dissenting, the High Court ruled [Section 51\(xxvi\) could work to the detriment of First Peoples.](#)

Waves of struggle

The Whitlam Government came to power on waves of peoples' struggles. It began the process which returned Gurindji land, later finalised by Liberal PM Malcolm Fraser. It outraged US imperialism mired in and soon losing the Vietnam War, when its little buddy Australia took some steps to greater independence.

US corporations faced a government trying to "buy back the farm" from US economic control, and even worse, with a loan from the rival Moscow Narodny Bank through an Arab intermediary. The government blocked sales of uranium to US Westinghouse Corporation which was sued for its inability to fill nuclear power station contracts. There was a lot more for the US to hate about Whitlam's Government. It all came from the strength of the people.

The US appointed coup master Marshall Green as its ambassador to Australia.

Protesters pointed out the coup death toll of his time in Indonesia – between 500,000 and 2,000,000.

After a long period of undermining the government, the CIA overthrew the Whitlam Government using the British queen's governor general.

Two decades later, John Howard took on the growing republican movement. There were similarities to the gathering near Uluru, but the Constitutional Convention was entirely handpicked by Howard, completely omitting the working class and those who led struggle. It chose a referendum question doomed to fail specifying the president would be chosen by parliament. A true politicians' referendum, so long chanted against by Dutton recently with so little truth. 60 percent voted no.

In 2000, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation made three recommendations to the Howard government. All three were rejected in 2002, including the proposal for a referendum to change the preamble to the constitution to recognise Indigenous people as the first peoples of Australia.

Howard and his ideological liars immediately began rewriting history for the ruling class. Australians opposed a republic, Howard said, while massively funding and speaking of our 'British heritage', 'our flag that flew over battlefields' and - often helped by state Labor governments – demanding the removal of Peoples' history of resistance and struggle that kids thrived on from school curriculums. Instead, Federation, lists of prime ministers and favoured sports people and World War One battles made students turn their backs on our shared history.

Many First Peoples point out Australia can never be a republic until just settlement is made.

How we deal with defeats is as important as how we deal with victories

Thirty years after Whitlam's sacking, two giant waves of mass struggle arose, the waterfront dispute and later Iraq war protests. Unlike the lead-up to Whitlam's rise, when the Vietnam Moratoriums saw workers 'Stop Work to Stop the War', the working class was not nationally organisationally mobilised before the Iraq invasion.

It was a lost opportunity.

How we deal with defeats is as important as how we deal with victories.

One of the failures of the anti-Iraq war movement was that we didn't go beyond the Stop the War demand and organisations which left the movement with nowhere to go once the war started. The call for an independent foreign policy and opposing imperialist wars was not raised sufficiently by us or anyone at that time, which would have offered political direction and incentive to continue the struggle. Those of us who led those protests were not farsighted enough to make preparations for when war was declared, against over 94 percent opposition from the Australian people. Nationally, the working class was not systematically organised against it. There could have been major uplift in struggle, major disruption of capitalist profits.

Why didn't our lead-up publicity or protest speeches and banners make preparations for immediate action and protracted struggle following any declaration of war?

Far more people marched before the Iraq War than during the Moratoriums. We felt our immense collective power. Yet it created pessimism. 'We failed', was the lesson learned.

There's always both negative and positives in any situation. Muslim people knew they were part of a world-wide and Australian mass movement. We all understood who our enemies were. We could have built on that.

First Peoples are already looking beyond the coming referendum. Whatever the result, we all have to hit the ground running.

What's wrong with the Constitution? Everything.

Published 11 September 2023

'Surely one of the biggest truths we need to be told in the first place is how the Constitution came to be and why it was deliberately written to exclude us. And given this, is the answer really our inclusion, or is it coming to the table as equals, sitting down and nutting out, as sovereign peoples, treaties that could ensure a better, more inclusive, way forward?' Arrernte woman Celeste Liddle

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) acknowledges that it is not our place to advise First Peoples how to vote in the forthcoming referendum.

The Statement from the Heart organisers worked within Constitutional Convention, guaranteeing a decision on the Voice through Constitutional change would be decided by all adult Australians in a referendum. That immediately established an obstacle to a process which should have been one for self-determination by First Peoples themselves. It empowers the divide and rule structures of the original colonies, now called states.

Other divisions were deliberately fostered by the Business Council of Australia which interfered in the process from the beginning, using its enormous resources.

First Peoples are right to be suspicious of the process that has led to the Referendum on a Voice to Parliament. The Statement from the Heart, as a first step, diverted First Peoples' aspirations to parliament, ahead of demands for Treaties (including unifying ones between various First Peoples' clans) which many of those present saw as a more important first

step. Some who walked out of the meeting rejected the parliamentary approach altogether, others because of attempts to silence dissent, particularly against DjabWurrung Gunnai Gunditjmarra woman Lidia Thorpe.

The Constitution thrown out and a new one written

Some First Peoples hope fundamental change will come through parliament listening to a constitutionally enshrined First Peoples Voice.

We believe that focussing on the Constitution was problematic from the start. It was unfit for purpose even before the ink of its signatories had dried. It tried to affect a compromise between the British Crown as "owner" of the Australian colonies, the local elites which had their own political and economic base in a particular colony, and that section of the capitalist class that needed a national framework for its development. The result was a weak three-way compromise in which each of these competing elements tried to grab power from the others. All, however, accepted the correctness of the colonial seizure of First Peoples' lands and consequently refused to even acknowledge First Peoples as citizens of the newly emerging nation.

The Constitution legally recognised the nationwide character developed in industry and transport. Australia-wide working class industrial action and political struggle against plunder of the people and country by British Imperialists and their local collaborators reflected national development in the economic base. Mass maritime', shearers', and miners' strikes in the 1890s, including acts of sabotage and armed camps of strikers, forced the hands of British and local elites. Federation saw Britain legally establish the nation, but hold onto separation into states. The unity alongside division sought to secure a legal form of apparent independence while ensuring continuing real imperialist dominance.

To add to the confusion of the Constitutional referendum, at the time of its adoption in 1901, the Northern Territory was part of South Australia. In 1911, the NT was excised from South Australia; at the same time, the ACT was excised from NSW. Both remained as Territories whose laws were made by the Commonwealth. In 1978 they were granted responsible government but not Statehood. The Constitution requires a referendum to be carried by a majority of electors and by a majority of the six States. Voters in the two Territories are included in the nation-wide result, but are disenfranchised from the tally of the States. This particularly disenfranchises First Peoples in the Northern Territory and the ACT from one of the two tallies that determine the result of the Referendum. The injustice of this can be seen in that the State with the largest number of First Peoples is NSW. First Peoples in NSW make up 3.55% of the NSW population. By contrast, First Peoples in the NT comprise 30.34% of its population, but they are excluded from the decision-making process enjoyed by people in the States.

We believe that to change this Constitution to recognise First Peoples by way of a Voice to parliament is window-dressing. Yet, despite that, the desire for a Voice that they hope can't be dissolved or fragmented is supported by many First Peoples who have fought alongside their communities for land rights, for First Peoples' control of their own affairs, for justice against corporations.

We say this Constitution enshrines violence and attempted genocide, that the sovereignty of First Peoples was never ceded to the colonialists, and remains in force alongside, and as the foundation of, any true sovereignty that the Australian people aspire to. As Lidia Thorpe so powerfully pointed out, Australian politicians swear allegiance to a foreign power.

We work for the day when united struggle of all Peoples is strong enough for the Constitution to be destroyed and a new one written, beginning with the truth-telling – already understood by all – that the Australian nation was created by the unseemly of, and theft from, the sovereign First Peoples, whose dispossession was everywhere attempted by the force and violence, or threat of force and violence, employed by the un settlers and their police and troopers, that every land was defended in warfare.

We struggle for just settlement that creates enduring peace between our Peoples.

From there we can begin again.

We are always stronger when we stand together.

Published 18 September 2023

Palawa lawyer and activist Michael Mansell recently called for the referendum to be abandoned, labelling it divisive.

Michael Mansell has a long and militant history. As a young man his existence as a Tasmanian Aboriginal person was denied and he was demonised above all other First Peoples' leaders. His lived experience makes his words today particularly potent.

He was present and voted for the Statement from the Heart. But his repeated and powerfully argued preference is for Treaty over Voice if – as Anthony Albanese made clear – only one is on offer in this parliamentary term. Michael Mansell says to non-Indigenous people, "You have every right" to vote Yes or No without fear of being attacked.

A cry for justice

Younger activists are rightly impatient for justice because lives are at stake.

Before January 26, [Tom Tanuki a white YouTube activist](#) and satirist publicised the voices of strong Blak opponents of the Yes campaign like Amy McQuire and Linda-June Coe, and encouraged people to attend Invasion Day rallies. But, instead of attacking the ruling class, he repeatedly ridiculed those allies who actively support the Yes vote as “Age-reading, white Australian, leftie brothers and sisters.”

Many of them are older women, unionists and workers with long history in struggle. While some think a No vote will be a victory for racism, most now understand the view of First Peoples who oppose the Voice because it is not enough. Overwhelmingly, like many First Peoples, they see no alternative to the current system, including parliament. Hardly surprising given the sea of sophisticated and all-encompassing propaganda against alternatives, particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union and 1989 events and rise of capitalist corporations in China.

Those whom Tanuki targets are not stupid. They have generations of experience.

Underlying Tanuki’s concern, but not mentioned, is the huge job done by the Business Council of Australia to hide First Peoples’ suffering from non-Indigenous people, to mesmerise them with vibrant culture and successful individuals, voting Yes to convince themselves that real change is afoot. There may be some who fit this description. But while 9 network’s ‘Age’ may be one-sidedly pro-Yes, many articulate No activists have now appeared on NITV and the ABC this year, because they are so numerous and active their voices can no longer be effectively suppressed.

Tanuki’s negative mantra mimics “the latte-sipping inner-city lefties” so mocked by the right before they discovered “woke”. It’s not helpful. But his anger as he sees the carnage wrought on First Peoples is a cry for justice.

While growing numbers of non-Indigenous No voters are influenced by First Peoples’ concerns, those influenced by Sky, Advance Australia and official Government Referendum No propaganda know far less about First Peoples lives than Yes voters.

Far right No propagandists ridicule and belittle Yes advocates, including First Peoples, as they ridiculed and demonised Lidia Thorpe when she used parliament to consistently expose tax avoiding multinational corporations. Even worse when she showed just who parliamentarians swear allegiance to, “the colonising queen” of England.

We have not lived the lives of First Peoples. We cannot speak for them. We cannot act for them.

First Peoples often remind us they are only 3 percent of the population. They need allies to stand alongside them if they are to win this centuries’ long war.

Our comrades have consistently amplified First Peoples’ voices silenced by capitalist media as the twin constitutional recognition and reconciliation juggernauts rolled forward.

We were far from the only ones, and others did far more. Many, many non-Indigenous groups and individuals dedicate their lives to First Peoples and make sure quieter voices were heard and supported.

But we have not lived the lives of First Peoples. We cannot speak for them. We cannot act for them.

Like others we shared the stories of Grandmothers Against Forced Removals who

said, "Sorry means you won't do it again", as state-sanctioned theft of First Peoples children skyrocketed.

Together we reported from coroner's courts and protests years before Black Lives Matters erupted.

Together we spread the words of women and men, young and old, from all over the lands, speaking for Treaty and unifying inter-clan treaties.

Whether our joint enemies were mining, fracking, damming or poisoning lands and waters, denying the frontier wars, crushing culture, raiding communities, torturing children in prison, within and beyond the even greater myriad of First Peoples struggles over decades, we all tried to listen, learn, share and act.

The non-Indigenous people the far right targets to vote No are undermined by ignorance and motivated by fear. They didn't create the lies, but they believe them. As we build our own forces, Non-Indigenous people who support First Peoples need to gradually drive wedges into the far right's support, just as it does to us.

People learn from their own experiences

One key leader of the Yes campaign, a former Trotsky-aligned firebrand, later saw the terrible carnage all governments ignored as she worked in depths of the Deaths in Custody royal commission. Soon after, she became a vocal advocate of the "opportunities" provided by mining corporations. She now bitterly condemns the industry.

Her own experience showed the truth, even before Rio Tinto destroyed the cave at Juukan Gorge. Her anger is also a cry for justice.

Awabakal man Terry Mason says the Voice will undoubtedly disappoint most who have faith in it, if against the current odds, it is

implemented. But we believe they'll learn from its failure in practice.

Sixty years ago, our party said the ALP was a capitalist party and said parliament is part of the deceptive apparatus of the ruling capitalist class. That didn't mean parliament, the ALP or even Liberals like Malcolm Fraser did nothing of benefit to the people, especially when waves of struggle forced their hands.

Other left parties condemned us as sectarian. Experience has accumulated since then. Now every left party looks askance at Labor. Out of office it makes all sorts of claims. In office it never delivers on fundamentals. Capitalism still runs the show, even when Labor prosecutes things like Robodebt that widely expose capitalist cruelty, but don't threaten profits.

How is it that so many people now see through the Labor Party? Is it because we condemned it? Or is it because their own experience convinced them the Labor Party would never bring about the change that is necessary in this country? Could the same be true of the Yes vote? We know it could deliver nothing fundamental. We know it could overpower the voices of others.

Yet, the struggles surrounding the referendum process have seen the voices of those demanding fundamental change grow louder.

Collectively and individually, especially in struggle, people learn from their own experiences.

The masses make history. First Peoples and non-Indigenous people have different lives, different priorities, different battles. But we have the same enemies.

We are always stronger when we stand together.