

## **Speech by Ark Tribe to the ACTU Congress 2009, 2 June 2009**

"I've worked in the building and construction industry for most of the last 23 years.

"I'm a rigger in South Australia for a structural steel company. I'm not a union official, organiser, delegate, shop steward whatever.

"I'm just a rank and file union member as I have been for most of my working life.

"I'd like to ask a question or two.

"Why? Why am I here?

"Why am I up here in front of all of you people in this alien environment for me.

"Why is it that in seven days time I could be imprisoned for six months.

"Why can't I, like any other Australian taxpayer, not be able to protest against working in an unsafe environment without fear of retribution.

"Why is it that I, unlike any other Australian taxpayer, can be ordered to attend a secret interrogation during which no legal counsel can be consulted?

"Why do I face the threat of imprisonment because I refuse to dob in my workmates?

"Why can't I, like any other Australian, have the right to remain silent?

"Why, after inquiries into the corruption and standover tactics of the Australian building and construction industry is it that the federal government can set up its own crew of intimidating standover men?

"Why has the present government promised to change these unfair laws against Australian construction workers, and yet they still exist?

"So once again, I ask why? Why am I here?

"I'll tell you why I'm here. I'm here because like any other proud Australian, I believe that when injustice becomes law, then resistance becomes duty."

"I'd just like to say thanks to all my brothers and sisters in the Australian union movement, especially the CFMEU. Cheers."