

# Solidarity

Issue No. 118 / September 2018

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## TURNBULL'S GONE NOW DUMP THE LOT OF THEM



### UNIONS

Sydney stopwork  
march against Morrison

### RACISM

Warning from Germany  
as fascists march

### COUP CULTURE

Neo-liberal consensus  
behind political chaos



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# SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

Solidarity is a socialist group with branches across Australia. We are opposed to the madness of capitalism, which is plunging us into global recession and misery at the same time as wrecking the planet's future. We are taking the first steps towards building an organisation that can help lead the fight for an alternative system based on mass democratic planning, in the interests of human need not profit.

As a crucial part of this, we are committed to building social movements and the wider left, through throwing ourselves into struggles for social justice, against racism and to strengthen the confidence of rank and file unionists.

Solidarity is a member of the International Socialist Tendency. Visit our web site at [www.solidarity.net.au/about-us](http://www.solidarity.net.au/about-us) for more information on what we stand for.

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## Things they say

**The curtains have come down on that Muppet Show and an absolute new curtain has lifted up**

Scott Morrison tries to explain away the knifing of Malcolm Turnbull

**We all love Australia, of course we do. But do we all love Australians? ... We've got to. That's what brings a country together.**

Scott Morrison

**Obviously it's only the good Lord himself is going to be able to provide the rain to fix it**

Special Envoy for drought assistance Barnaby Joyce casts doubt on how much he is going to be able to achieve in his new role

**I would have thought we should all be celebrating that the department and the minister can make quick decisions rather than keeping someone in detention unnecessarily.**

Eric Abetz talking about—what else—au pairs

**For me, I only ever nominated because I believed I was a better person and a person of greater strength and integrity to lead the Liberal Party.**

Peter Dutton—still trying to lie his way to the top

**I say to the Australian people be careful because the focus will be so laser like that you won't know what's hit you.**

New Education Minister Dan Tehan, apparently threatening to shoot members of the general public with a laser beam

**Make sure that all of your people vote. You're one election away from losing everything you've got**

Donald Trump at a White House dinner for evangelical Christian ministers, talking about the mid-term US elections in November

**The weak crumble, are slaughtered and are erased from history while the strong, for good or ill, survive. The strong are respected, and alliances are made with the strong, and in the end peace is made with the strong**  
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu celebrates genocide

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# INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

## India strikes down colonial law in win for LGBTI rights

INDIA'S SUPREME Court has struck down a British colonial-era law to decriminalise gay sex, in a major win for LGBTI rights.

The 1861 law, section 377 of the Penal Code, was unanimously ruled unconstitutional, breaching India's guarantee of basic rights and freedoms. LGBTI people still faced arrest, harassment and blackmail as a result of the law.

Prior to British rule, there was a far more liberal attitude to same-sex desire across many parts of India. The imposition of Victorian era morality came as part of Britain's supposed "civilising mission".

Another 35 former British colonies still retain colonial laws that criminalise homosexuality.

Gay activist and writer Harish Iyer told *The Guardian*, "I'm elated. We have thrown out the British once again."

Activists have campaigned for 20 years for the ruling, and, as everywhere, the fight for LGBTI rights is far from fully won. But as Iyer put it, "This is the end of the beginning."

## Real estate boss says get a second job to buy a house

THE HEAD of the real estate peak body has told people who can't afford a house to move or get a second job.

Malcolm Gunning, President of the Real Estate Institute of Australia told ABC's 7.30, "I don't accept there's a rental affordability crisis... If you want to live on the fringe of the city, it's affordable."

Otherwise, his advice is: "Maybe even, God forbid, get two jobs... A lot of our migrants work a couple of jobs."

Gunning also runs his own real estate business with offices in Surry Hills and Hurstville. He says his organisation is a "strong advocate for the retention of negative gearing", which has pushed up property prices in the interests of rich investors. Yet Gunning describes young people locked out of the property market as "generation selfish", who, "simply won't do what is necessary to cut their lifestyle in order to save a deposit."

## More banking crimes exposed



THE BANKING Royal Commission has exposed more outrageous rip-offs, scams and dodgy marketing tactics in its latest hearings into insurance. Comminsure, the Commonwealth Bank's insurance arm, has admitted ignoring advice from its then chief medical officer to change its definition of a heart attack, in order to avoid pay-outs to clients. It only relented when this was exposed in the media in 2016. That same year it used a similar trick to deny a pay-out to a woman who had been through breast cancer treatment.

Another insurer, ClearView, may have committed as many as 303,000 criminal offences by coaching its telemarketers on ways to get around customer protections in anti-hawking laws and sign people up. Freedom insurance was caught out selling accidental injury insurance to a 26-year-old man with Down syndrome who had no idea what he'd signed up for. They would also hang up on people trying to cancel policies.

In late August lawyers for the Royal Commission recommended criminal charges against Commonwealth Bank and NAB over the fees-for-no-service superannuation scandal. The Commonwealth has admitted to 13,000 breaches of superannuation law. It failed to move customers into low fee, no commission accounts as required by law.

NAB has been forced to pay back \$90 million to 300,000 superannuation customers. According to ASIC the total bill for the big banks could be over \$1 billion.

New Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who labelled the push for a Royal Commission a "populist whinge", has now been forced to express regret for opposing it.

## Refugee sacked for complaints on 91-hour week

A REFUGEE working as a trolley collector at Woolworths was sacked, allegedly after complaining about working a 91-hour week. The man was employed by a subcontractor at a supermarket in Broome, full-time 8am to 7.30pm, seven days a week until March. His boss then forced him to work 8am to 9pm after the store extended its opening hours. His unfair dismissal case is being heard in the Fair Work Commission.

He says he was forced to work the extra hours with no increase in pay, then summarily sacked when he complained. His employer then evicted him from his accommodation. The refugee from Somalia was working in Broome on a Safe Haven visa, which requires refugees to work in a regional area.

Send suggestions for INSIDE THE SYSTEM to [solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

## Billionaire cancels workers' lunch

ANTHONY PRATT'S workers at Visy have made him the wealthiest person in Australia with \$13 billion to his name. But Pratt's corporate greed is still not satisfied. Workers at his Broadmeadows plant are facing a nasty penny pinching effort to close the on-site canteen.

According to AMWU organiser Mick Bull, "for decades, Visy workers have been able to get a cheap cuppa to get them through those cold mornings".

The canteen sold subsidised rolls, sandwiches, burgers, pies and drinks at a cost to the company of \$150,000 a year. This was included in the workers' enterprise bargaining agreement. Visy wants to replace it with more expensive options so it can pocket the money.

The Fair Work Commission sided with the union in the first instance, but is now considering whether the food service contract is an allowable matter in an enterprise agreement under the mis-named Fair Work Act.

As Bull added, "Australia's richest man is stifling these workers over a cup of coffee. It's corporate greed gone mad."

## Sydney Uni Chancellor's new \$20 million digs

UNIVERSITY OF Sydney Chancellor Belinda Hutchinson is the new owner of exclusive Sydney suburb Point Piper's most expensive apartment. The property sold for an obscene \$20 million to Hutchinson and her former mining executive husband, according to *Domain*.

Hutchinson's CV reads like a who's who of corporate Australia, spanning directorships at AGL energy, Coles Myer, Telstra, Macquarie, and Citibank. She's just one example of the kind of people now running our universities.



# EDITORIAL

## Weak, divided and heading for defeat—Finish the Liberals off

THE KNIFING of Malcolm Turnbull has only further damaged and destabilised the Coalition. Their defeat at the election now looks almost certain.

Installing Scott Morrison as Prime Minister has only seen the government's support drop even further. They now trail Labor by a humiliating 44 to 56 per cent in Newspoll.

Even Morrison can't explain why his party dumped Malcolm Turnbull, describing it as "confusing and bewildering".

A backlash in Wentworth at the by-election caused by Malcolm Turnbull's resignation could see the Liberals lose the seat. This would strip them of a majority in parliament—causing more headaches for Morrison.

The leadership change has done nothing to stop the internal divisions, with the Liberals now being consumed by recriminations about bullying and sexism during the spill.

Supporters of both Turnbull and failed challenger Peter Dutton are seeking revenge by leaking against each other.

Dutton has suffered the most damage. The au pair scandal has exposed him as willing to do favours for those with the right connections.

The hypocrisy is appalling. The Minister who declared there couldn't be one single act of compassion towards refugees has been caught out bending the rules for his mates.

He personally intervened to grant a visa within hours to an au pair for police officer Russell Keag, who worked with Dutton in the Queensland cops. And it took him just 24 hours to overturn a visa cancellation for another au pair, after a call on behalf of AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan. The young woman involved worked for McLachlan's cousin, a grazer whose father has donated \$150,000 to the Liberals since 1999.

Then former Border Force chief Roman Quaedvlieg came forward to say he'd received a call from Dutton's chief of staff asking him to help "the boss's mate in Brisbane" over a visa cancellation. Fairfax has revealed that Dutton also asked him to meet two Queensland policemen, one a good friend of the Minister, to help them get jobs in his department.

Dutton, the candidate of the right of the Liberals, lost the leadership ballot by just five votes. But Scott Morrison is no better. He has already made concessions to the right by dumping the National Energy Guarantee and



**Above: Thousands of CFMMEU and MUA members took stopwork action in September against the Liberals' agenda**

any effort to meet Australia's Paris climate targets.

Within his first weeks he has promised new "religious freedom" laws to allow further discrimination against LGBTI people, attacked "gender whisperers" in schools and blustered about deregistering the construction union.

And we shouldn't forget Morrison's time as Immigration Minister, spreading xenophobia by labelling asylum seekers "illegals", masterminding the military operation to turn back boats and presiding over two deaths on Manus Island.

### Drive them out

We need to step up the demonstrations and campaigning to drive the Coalition out.

In Sydney thousands of construction workers, port workers and other unionists took stopwork action to rally against the ABCC and the Coalition's attacks on workers on 6 September.

This was a great start. But most unions are simply focused on electoral campaigning in marginal seats, with only a handful of unions bringing members to the Sydney protest.

We need mobilisations from across the union movement, like the Your Rights at Work rallies that helped drive John Howard from power.

Unions in Melbourne have called a mass delegates meeting on 24 September and a stopwork protest for 23 October, one month before the Victorian state election. They are set to be joined by another construction union rally in Sydney on the same day.

Every union should mobilise for

these protests. Rank-and-file unionists need to push for their union to have members attend.

A Labor government after the next election seems almost inevitable. But we can't rely on Bill Shorten to really Change the Rules at work.

Labor has committed to changes on industrial relations including scrapping the ABCC, stopping employers from terminating expired enterprise bargaining agreements and reversing the cuts to penalty rates. But they have so far promised nothing in terms of the right to strike.

Labor Deputy Leader Tanya Plibersek even told the ABC that the CFMEU, "should face the full force of the law"—that is the anti-union laws that make strikes illegal in most circumstances and impose huge fines on the unions. She added, "I'm sure those fines are very effective in making people think twice".

Union leaders should demand that Labor scraps all the anti-union laws. Stepping up the stopwork rallies can build that demand, and build the unions' strength to fight a Labor government if it fails to deliver after the election.

Labor also opposes the only solution that can get the refugees and asylum seekers off Manus and Nauru—to bring them to Australia. Meanwhile Nauru is in meltdown, with dozens of children coming off the island for mental health treatment and medical care.

The Liberals are on their way out. We need to step up the level of struggle to make sure we get real change.

**Stepping up the stopwork rallies will put pressure on Labor to scrap all the anti-union laws**

## Thousands join Sydney stopwork against Morrison's anti-worker laws

By Erima Dall

FIVE THOUSAND striking workers took over the streets of Sydney's CBD on Thursday 6 September, demanding fairer laws for workers, the abolition of anti-union bodies, and the right to strike.

Hundreds of construction sites were shut down as thousands of workers walked off the job in illegal strike action. They were opposing the Australian Building Construction Commission (ABCC), a union watchdog which persecutes the construction union.

The rally happened on the same day as another horrific workplace accident left a construction worker dead and two others injured in Victoria.

One CFMMEU worker told Solidarity, "The big companies use the ABCC to prevent the union from coming on site and informing the workers about whether they're being treated fairly and being paid the right money."

Wharfies from the three terminals at Port Botany shut down the port with a four-hour stoppage. The ETU, the plumbers' union and the AMWU had strong contingents.

The rally put the heat on the Coalition government, at a time they are weak and divided. New Prime Minister Scott Morrison has threatened to deregister the CFMMEU. Darren Greenfield, NSW secretary of the CFMMEU construction division told a cheering crowd they should, "deregister the banks, deregister the Liberal party." He said, "This government cannot stand organised labour in this country. [But] they're on their knees, you can see the rabble they are now. We just have to push 'em out, and hold the other side to account."

ACTU President Michele O'Neil argued that: "We are fighting because the system is broken. We have had 30 years of economic growth in Australia, but workers' wages are going backwards."

"We need new bargaining rights, where we can bargain across sectors, across supply chains and industries. We need new rights, where workers can actually stick together...and take industrial action."

This is the fourth time in two years construction workers have walked off the job in Sydney, often joined by the MUA. They are sending a message to the Labor opposition that the CFMMEU expects them to honour their



**Above: Unionists on the march against Morrison in Sydney**

promise to abolish the ABCC when in power.

One construction worker at the rally said, "I'm not confident in any politician at the moment. Marches like this go a long way to keeping them accountable."

We need more strikes like this, with more unions involved. Another stopwork rally has already been called for 23 October in Sydney, joining unions in Melbourne who will rally on the same day.

### Labor

But with the Liberals' loss at the next election likely, there needs to be more pressure on the Labor party to meet the union movement's demands.

At the ACTU congress in July, National Construction Secretary Dave Noonan distributed a leaflet reminding delegates of the damage inflicted by the previous Labor government: "The Rudd/Gillard government, which the CFMEU construction division helped get elected, gave us IR laws that resulted in million of dollars in fines and our officials and members persecuted for doing their jobs. We as a trade union movement must ensure this never happens again."

This shows why we need to build pressure on Labor to really Change the Rules at work. Labor has committed to some significant changes but has not indicated it will do anything to reduce restrictions on the right to

strike. Yet so far the bulk of the union movement has restricted the Change the Rules campaign to electoral campaigning in marginal seats, simply designed to elect a Labor government.

### Right to Strike

Maritime Workers took stopwork action under the demand "the right to strike". The demand was also popular with construction and other workers. The right to strike campaign collected 350 signatures on a petition to scrap the anti-strike provisions from the Fair Work Act in favour of the unrestricted right to strike. The petition also called for the ACTU to organise national stopwork rallies.

Speakers at the rally highlighted the GWC Cranes and Boom cranes strikes, which have been suspended on the basis they are "pattern bargaining" – the union is using a template agreement across multiple sites. So it should! This again highlights just how far the anti-strike laws have gone. We need a clear union-wide campaign against the laws, and to openly defy them.

Between now and the next rally in October delegates across the union movement should pass motions calling on their union to bring people out on stopwork action, or at the least to mobilise large contingents. We need to bring down this government and show Labor we are ready to keep up the fight.

**Right to Strike public meeting**  
3pm Sunday  
22 September,  
MUA offices 365  
Sussex St, Sydney  
Speakers include  
AMWU delegate  
Troy Carter  
from the Esso  
dispute—where  
workers have  
been picketing for  
over 440 days

# Scott Morrison moves to keep the hard right happy

By James Supple

SCOTT MORRISON has lost no time reminding everyone of his conservative credentials.

One of the reasons he sends his children to a private religious school is because discussions about teenage sexuality make his “skin curl”, Morrison, an evangelical Christian, told shock-jock Alan Jones.

He followed this up by denouncing “gender whisperers”, backing the conspiracy theory that doctors are attempting to encourage school children to change their gender.

Morrison has also pledged to introduce new “religious freedom” laws to reassure the churches that they can still discriminate against LGBTI people.

The right wing of the Liberals did well in his new ministerial line up.

Peter Dutton remains in Home Affairs, despite his efforts to tear the party apart. He loses only part of the portfolio, with Immigration shifted to David Coleman. Dutton’s best friend in parliament, Mathias Cormann, also held onto a Cabinet position.

While he wasn’t willing to bring Tony Abbott back into the ministry, as some columnists at *The Australian* were demanding, Abbott has been given a job as special envoy for Indigenous Affairs.

Barnaby Joyce, who joined the right-wing insurgency after resigning as Deputy Prime Minister, also got a job, as special envoy for drought assistance.

The right has also won control over climate change and energy policy.

The new Energy Minister is Angus Taylor, described by the *Financial Review* as “a champion of the Coalition’s anti-renewable energy right”. Taylor insists he does not question the science of climate change yet has referred to it as, “the new climate religion”, telling parliament it, “has little basis in fact and everything to do with blind faith.”

In 2013 he appeared as a speaker at the “National wind power fraud rally” chaired by shock-jock Alan Jones.

Melissa Price, a former mining company lawyer, has taken over as Environment Minister.

Scott Morrison himself has just appointed a new chief of staff, John Kunkel, who was Deputy CEO of the



**Above: Scott Morrison was in charge of setting up the Liberals’ operation to “stop the boats”**

Minerals Council, the mining industry’s chief lobby group, for over six years, before moving to Rio Tinto as its head of “government affairs”.

## Track record

Some people were relieved when Peter Dutton narrowly lost his bid to become Prime Minister. But Morrison has shown his willingness to be every bit as racist and authoritarian.

In 2011 journalist Peter Hartcher labelled him “the greatest grub in the federal Parliament” when, as Opposition Immigration Spokesperson, he attacked the Labor government for meeting the cost of flights so families of the Christmas Island boat tragedy could attend their relatives’ funerals. They included a nine-year-old boy who lost both parents in the disaster.

Morrison established Operation Sovereign Borders, taking charge of the Liberals’ efforts to “stop the boats”. Among his first moves as Im-

migration Minister was to instruct the department to refer to asylum seekers arriving by boat as “illegal” arrivals. He went out of his way to avoid media scrutiny, refusing to release information about “on water matters” concerning boat turnbacks.

In 2014 he sent a notorious personal video message to asylum seekers imprisoned on Manus Island warning, “If you choose not to go home then you will spend a very, very long time here”.

He presided over the death of Reza Barati on Manus, attempting to blame him for his own death by claiming he had been part of a breakout from the detention centre. This was exposed as a lie within days.

Last year he endorsed Donald Trump’s Muslim ban, commenting, “the rest of the world is catching up to Australia”. Let’s hope it’s not long before public disgust catches up with Scott Morrison.

## Aboriginal leaders denounce Abbott’s paternalism

THE APPOINTMENT of Tony Abbott as an envoy in Aboriginal Affairs has been greeted with widespread disgust. As Prime Minister, Abbott denouncing living in a remote Aboriginal community as a “lifestyle choice”, backing plans to close 150 Aboriginal communities in WA. He cut \$534 million in his 2014 budget from Indigenous health and language programs, on top of cuts to Aboriginal legal aid.

In the new role Abbott says school attendance and achievement will be his focus. This means more

punishment and paternalism, like extending the use of the BasicsCard to quarantine welfare payments.

Jackie Huggins, the co-chair of the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, condemned the decision, asking, “Haven’t we been punished enough in Indigenous affairs? How long can we put up with a paternalistic government who does not choose to engage or to talk to us?”

“Tony Abbott has a track record in terms of denying Aboriginal people their rights to social justice, but also to self-determination.”

**Morrison has pledged new “religious freedom” laws to reassure the churches that they can still discriminate against LGBTI people**

# Alcoa workers out on indefinite strike for job security

By Peter Burrell-Sander

OVER 1600 workers at Alcoa in WA are continuing an indefinite strike after five weeks.

The strike, which began on 8 August, comes as Alcoa's request to terminate the existing enterprise agreement altogether is set to be heard by the Fair Work Commission on 17 September.

Alcoa employs 1600 workers in its alumina refineries and bauxite mines across the state, in Kwinana, Pinjarra, Wagerup, Huntley and Willowdale as well as at Bunbury Port.

Despite offering some concessions, Alcoa refuses to budge on the core issue which strikers are concerned about, job security. It wants to remove conditions in the existing agreement that guarantee no forced redundancies except in the event of mine closures. And in return it is offering just a one-off \$3000 bonus and then pay rises of 1 per cent a year.

"Many of us are long-term employees who have never caused them any grief but they won't provide assurances about not casualising employment, outsourcing contractors or agreements on manning hours," Andy Hacking, a refinery worker and Australian Workers Union (AWU) West Australian Branch president said.

Like other bosses at Port Kembla Coal Terminal, Murdoch University and the Oaky North coal mine, Alcoa is trying to use the threat of terminating the existing EBA, forcing workers back onto far lower Award conditions, to get them to accept a sub-standard deal.

But a ballot on Alcoa's latest offer ended on 6 September with an overwhelming 80 per cent of members rejecting the EBA proposal. Now a new proposal from Alcoa is awaited.

Despite denying claims that they seek to casualise the workforce and eradicate security, that is the clear objective of the proposed EBA, which Alcoa told *Workplace Express* would allow it to, "manage our operations efficiently and productively, and [give] us the ability to respond to changing market and operating conditions".

Alcoa has admitted that the strike has reduced alumina production by around 15,000 tonnes in August, but claims to have contingency plans in place. But the workers have pledged to keep striking for as long as it takes to get a decent agreement. They deserve everyone's solidarity.



Above: On the picket line at Alcoa

**Alcoa refuses to budge on the core issue which strikers are concerned about, job security**

## Strong showing for the left in NTEU elections

LEFT ACTIVISTS have won a strong presence in the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) at Sydney University, alongside an upset defeat for the incumbent state secretary of the union in Victoria.

NTEU branch and national elections concluded in August. At Sydney Uni the left activist network Union Action (UA) led a grassroots campaign and contested the two Vice President positions, Branch Secretary and positions on Branch Committee.

The election saw a significant growth in participation—with 170 extra votes compared to previous elections, a 45 per cent increase. Union Action candidates won the VP (General Staff) and five of 11 Branch Committee positions. Additionally, some other elected candidates are not firmly aligned and are sympathetic to the Union Action platform. The left activist voice will be very well placed in the official branch leadership in the next two years at Sydney Uni.

UA came together from activists who believed the campaign for a better enterprise agreement was wound up far too early last year. We ran on a platform of confronting the top-down corporate model of university governance, for a campaign against casualisation, greater member involvement in branch decision making and action in solidarity with the wider union movement.

The incumbent president and vice presidents formed their own ticket, and called for a vote for non-UA affiliated candidates for branch committee. On campus, UA conducted a heavy poster and leafletting campaign and held two public forums. Our

goal in addition to simply winning positions was to increase participation and debate in the branch. None of our campaigns and direction for the branch has any chance without a strong and active membership.

NTEU elections were also taking place across the country. The Victorian NTEU has a new leadership after RMIT Branch Secretary Melissa Slee defeated the incumbent State Secretary Colin Long. Slee campaigned on a platform that included defending basic conditions and refusing to accept trade-offs. Unfortunately UTS Branch President Vince Caughley lost the National Assistant Secretary position to WA's Gabe Gooding.

Union Action will continue organising at Sydney Uni. At the moment, management is pushing a change in ICT (as well as finance and HR) that will mean higher workloads, redundancies and deskilling of specialised staff. This shows that in this post-bargaining period we must maintain and build up the level of action on campus.

Union Action members are pushing for a strong public campaign across the university, beginning with a petition and walk-throughs in the affected areas. The current approach of the branch is to conduct negotiations behind closed doors and to pursue a legalistic implementation of the EA.

We need to build up our capacity to mobilise and take industrial action—all the way to confronting the anti-strike laws—to win. Sydney Uni staff and students are encouraged to get involved in the campaign as it escalates in coming weeks.

**James Harding**



By Lucy Honan

# We need a total NAPLAN ban

THE RELEASE of the 2018 NAPLAN results should be the death knell of the national testing regime. Teachers, psychologists, principals, academics, unionists and even Liberal Party politicians have condemned the test as a curriculum-distorting educational disaster.

But to further discredit the regime, in August the testing authority ACARA admitted it was applying an unpublished scaling system to online test results.

This was designed to blend the results of two different tests (NAPLAN Online, which 20 per cent of the students sat, and the paper based tests which everyone else sat) together in its national report.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has condemned the 2018 results as almost useless and called for ACARA to discard them. The Victorian AEU State Council called for school sub-branches to pass resolutions against NAPLAN online, “expressing their strong view that schools should not be undertaking the preparation work and delivering the next stage of NAPLAN online rollout.”

But it’s all of NAPLAN that needs to go, not just online NAPLAN. Of course students who sat two different tests shouldn’t be compared to each other.

But it’s even more unfair to compare the results of students in the most over-funded schools in the country, like Knox Grammar in NSW, to students in funding starved schools in poorer areas, and pretend as though the difference in results is the fault of the schools and teachers, not systemic inequality.

The Gillard Labor government designed NAPLAN for exactly this victim-blaming purpose.

ACARA publishes the results and the socio-economic mix of students at every school in the country on the MySchool website so that parents can compare, and avoid enrolling their children in the schools getting the worst results.

Over the last ten years, this has increased inequality between schools, as parents rush to enrol in “magnets” and avoid “sinks”.

It has been the smokescreen behind which governments shovel ever-greater proportions of public funding into private schools.

NAPLAN is totally discredited, but Labor and Liberal governments



**Above: Students sit the NAPLAN test**

will not dismantle it until they have another testing tool to replace it with.

Now is the time for education unionists to prepare a ban on the test in 2019. If our union leaders will not

call for a total ban, we need to find school sub-branches, and groups of schools and teachers who will lead the action in refusing to participate in any NAPLAN test preparation and delivery in 2019.

## NSW crane drivers' strike banned

CRANE DRIVERS in NSW at WGC Cranes and Boom Logistics have been banned from striking by the Fair Work Commission.

The Commission ruled that the union was “pattern bargaining” at WGC, because it was negotiating based on a template agreement it has drawn up for the industry. This would fix the same pay rates and conditions across different companies. The decision came despite the fact that industrial action was not being organised across the industry, but only company-by-company.

It objected in particular to the CFMMEU’s desire for a short-term agreement to expire at the end of January next year, in order to take advantage of Labor’s promise to scrap the Building Industry Code if it wins government.

After workers at Boom Logistics began an indefinite strike, the company obtained interim Fair Work orders within hours to declare it unprotected action.

The CFMMEU is pushing for an increase on the casual loading from 25 per cent to 35 per cent, rising to

80 per cent if casuals continue working after six weeks, as well as a pay rise.

WGC and Boom are two of the biggest companies in the mobile crane industry in the state.

WGC Cranes is based in Wollongong while Boom has three yards at Port Kembla, Newcastle and Singleton.

CFMMEU Construction National Secretary Dave Noonan told the stopwork rally in Sydney in early September, “WGC are owned by a bloke worth \$130 billion, Warren Buffett, one of the richest people in the world. And he can’t give Australian crane drivers a decent pay rise.”

It’s another example showing why we need the right to strike—and to get rid of the Fair Work Act.

The ACTU is calling for the right to bargain across an industry. But Labor is not about to overturn the ban on pattern bargaining.

Unions will need to defy the laws banning industrial action if we’re ever going to win the right to strike.

**NAPLAN is discredited, but governments will not dismantle it until they have another testing tool to replace it**

# Corbyn under pressure, but opposing Israel is not anti-semitic

By Ruby Wawn

OPPONENTS OF Britain's left-wing Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn have mounted a major campaign accusing supporters of the Palestinians, and Corbyn himself, of anti-semitism.

Corbyn has spent his life campaigning against racism in all its forms. But his anti-imperialism and left-wing principles mean he is hated by the right wing of his own party, as well as the conservatives and the mainstream media.

The British Labour Party has now succumbed to right-wing pressure and adopted the full International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-semitism, which lists describing the state of Israel as a "racist endeavour" as anti-semitic. Labour Party members may now face disciplinary action for calling Israel racist, supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement or for talking about the plight of the Palestinian people. This is a serious setback for anti-racists and supporters of Palestinian rights.

Accusations of anti-Semitism are a common tool used to silence criticism of Israel.

Defenders of Israel sometimes try to conflate support for the Israeli state with Jewish identity. Yet there are many prominent Jewish opponents of Israel. In July, 36 Jewish organisations from around the world released a statement opposing the IHRA definition and its equation of anti-semitism with criticisms of Israel. Opposition to the Israeli state is not the same thing as opposition to the Jewish people.

## Zionism

Corbyn's critics have attacked anti-Zionism in particular—that is opposition to the formation of the state of Israel and the view that it is a racist and pro-imperialist project. But there is considerable evidence for this.

The modern Zionist movement was established at the beginning of the 20th century. Jews in both Europe and Russia faced growing anti-semitism as local rulers used them as scapegoats for poverty and economic crisis.

Anti-Semitism was seen by the architect of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, as an inevitable experience for modern day Jews in Europe. While Herzl wasn't particularly religious, he recognised the power of biblical myths in creating a nationalistic Jewish identity



**Above: Jeremy Corbyn has been a life-long supporter of Palestinian rights and opponent of imperialism**

to form the foundation for a Jewish state in Palestine.

From early on, Zionism looked to the imperialist powers for sponsorship. Following the First World War Britain took control of Palestine and in 1917 announced in the Balfour Declaration its support for Zionist settlement by promising a "national home for Jewish people".

It was in Britain's interest to support European Jewish settlement as a defence against local Arab uprisings, to ensure access to India and other colonies via the Suez Canal and to maintain their interests in the Middle Eastern oil reserves.

In 1917 there were only 56,000 Jews in Palestine. But with the backing of the imperialist powers, Jewish immigration rapidly increased. In a 1919 confidential memorandum, Lord Balfour stated: "In Palestine, we do not propose to even go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants... the Four Powers are committed to Zionism".

But the area the Zionists chose to colonise was already inhabited by hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. In order to establish the state of Israel in 1948, at least 700,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed in order to seize the land for Jewish settlement.

Israel was designed as a Jewish state, where the remaining Palestinian minority faces discrimination.

This was affirmed in the Jewish Nation State Bill passed earlier this year, which defines the right to exercise national self-determination in

Israel as unique to the Jewish people, enshrining racial discrimination in Israel's basic law.

Israeli law denies Palestinians any right of return to the lands they were driven from in 1948, while Jews born anywhere around the world can receive automatic Israeli citizenship.

Israel has consistently defied international law by expanding its settlements in the West Bank, stealing water reserves and occupying Palestinian land. Since 2000, at least 9733 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli defence personnel, including at least 2197 children.

Israel is rightly described as a racist, apartheid state where Palestinians remain second class citizens.

Today Israel acts as the US's "watchdog", and continues to receive the backing of US imperialism through massive economic and military assistance, having received more US aid than any other country in the period since 1945.

Smearing opponents of Israel as anti-semitic also obscures the real threat of anti-semitism today—the rise of fascism and the far right.

Across Europe far right parties are winning sizeable votes in elections and in the US Donald Trump, a strong supporter of Israel's government, is encouraging the growth of white supremacist groups who are virulently anti-semitic.

Support for Palestinian freedom is not anti-semitic—it is the responsibility of every genuine anti-racist and opponent of imperialism.

**Accusations of anti-Semitism are a common tool used to silence criticism of Israel**

# Nazi rampage in Chemnitz a warning from Germany

By Adam Adelpour

ON SUNDAY 26 August news agencies around the world broadcast shocking footage of thousands of Nazis rampaging through the streets of Chemnitz in Eastern Germany hunting for “foreigners”.

There were further fascist protests thousands strong the next day. Nazis raised the Hitler salute, attacked left-wing counter protestors and journalists and chanted “Germany for the Germans—foreigners out.”

Anti-racists mobilised 1500 that day for a counter-protest, but were outnumbered by the right. The following week much larger anti-racist mobilisations showed the Nazis can be pushed back.

The horror scenario was unleashed after the far right took advantage of a fatal dispute. At the end of the Chemnitz City Festival a fight broke out between two groups of people, resulting in one death and two injuries.

A police investigation was launched, targeting two suspects: an Iraqi man and a Syrian. The details of the case were then leaked to far right groups, likely by a police or judicial source.

Gabi Engelhardt from Aufstehen Gegen Rassismus (Stand Against Racism) Chemnitz described the way the death was used to launch a racist rampage:

“The far right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party and other right wingers immediately suggested that the victim was trying to protect a woman.

“They related the crime to refugees and sexual assaults on women—despite the police denying it was about sexual assault.”

The protests were a serious and orchestrated mobilisation by far right organisations that have been growing in size and confidence. According to Engelhardt:

“The whole far right scene in the state of Saxony, which has a population of over four million, mobilised.

“At first the AfD called for a ‘demonstration against violence’ for the Sunday of the bank holiday weekend. The right-wing CFC football club ultras from Kaotic Chemnitz also called their supporters onto the streets.

“The march on Monday was announced by a group called Pro Chemnitz, but other far right parties and networks shared the call.”



**Above: One of the thousands-strong far right protests in Chemnitz**

While not everyone who joined the marches was a Nazi, hardened fascists were at the core of it. For example, Martin Kohlmann, a leading figure of “Pro-Chemnitz”, is linked to the “Kamaradschaft” fascist street-fighting groups.

AfD MP Markus Frohnmaier cheered on the fascist rampage, tweeting, “If the state can no longer protect citizens, people go out on the street and protect themselves. Today it is a civic duty to stop deadly migration!”

## Mainstream racism feeds the fascists

Chemnitz has delivered a warning about the danger of a far right on the rise in Germany. The AfD won 12.5 per cent of the vote in national parliamentary elections last November. This was the first time a far right party had entered the German parliament since 1945. It now has 92 MPs—around half of them are Nazis or linked to Nazi groups.

The racism of the mainstream German parties has opened the door to the far right. German Chancellor Angela Merkel promised to listen to the “concerns and anxieties” of AfD voters in the lead up to the election last year. In July she agreed to seal the border and set up prison camps for migrants.

Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) is the major component of the current ruling coalition, which also includes the Labor-type Social Democratic Party (SPD). As part of this “Grand Coalition” the SPD has helped the CDU push through free

market reforms and attacks on working people. This has made it far easier for the AfD to posture as the voice of the marginalised and channel discontent in a racist direction.

## Resistance

Anti-fascist and anti-racist mobilisation can beat back the Nazis and the far right. The week after the initial far right protests, the AfD and the Pegida street movement called another racist demonstration.

As socialist and Left Party MP Christine Buchholz explained, “Bjorn Hocke came—he’s one of the key fascist figures in the AfD.”

This time the anti-racist counter-demonstration was much larger: “Around 4-5,000 people demonstrated against them. They blocked the route. The Nazis could only walk a quarter of it.

“This was a broad counter mobilisation supported by Aufstehen Gegen Rassismus (Stand Against Racism), Die Linke, the Labour-type SPD, the Green Party and others, including refugees, migrants and Muslims,” said Christine.

“70, 000 people also attended an anti-racist and anti-fascist concert in Chemnitz following the Nazi marches. There was wide support from a range of bands including anti-racist punk band Die Toten Hosen.”

Buchholz underlined how important it is the fight continues: “The fascists and racists want to take to the streets to spread fear and hatred—it’s crucial we do not let them.”

.....  
**The protests were an orchestrated mobilisation by far-right organisations that have been growing in confidence**

# China cracks down on student labour activism at Jasic factory

By James Supple

IN LATE August Chinese police raided an apartment, arresting 50 student activists supporting workers attempting to unionise their factory.

Workers' efforts to set up an independent union and protest working conditions at the Jasic Technology factory in Shenzhen have attracted significant support.

In May workers at the factory, which employs 1000 people producing welding equipment, began trying to organise a union after saying management was treating them like "slaves".

According to the China Labour Bulletin, "Management had robbed them of hundreds of yuan each month by arbitrarily changing their schedules and under-paid their social insurance and housing fund contributions among other abuses."

Huang Lanfeng, a former worker at the factory, told Reuters, "Sometimes we would work for one month straight without any time off. They wouldn't let us freely quit and they even watched us go to the toilet."

The workers attempted to register a union through the official government process. The Chinese government only allows unions registered as part of the official state-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions. This works to head off disputes and manage discontent, rather than lead strikes or work to improve conditions.

But when they attempted to organise the union at the factory, Jasic management appears to have taken control and installed hand-picked union committee members.

When workers continued to push their demands, seven worker activists at the factory were beaten up and sacked. "When they tried to enter the plant on 20 July," the China Labour Bureau reported, "they were stopped at the gates by security guards and after an altercation erupted, police intervened and a few workers were detained."

Weeks of protests followed outside the factory that led to police arresting 29 people. The workers then demonstrated outside the local police station demanding their co-workers' release.

These actions began to attract attention from student activists across the country.

According to academic Jenny Chan, students and recent graduates from more than a dozen universities



**Above: Chinese student activists near the Jasic factory before their arrest**

circulated online petitions and staged actions in support of the workers, posting videos to social media. "They wore T-shirts with the slogan 'unity is power' printed in bold red," she wrote. Students also travelled to the factory to support the workers, with some trying to get jobs there to assist them.

## Maoism

Shen Mengyu, a university graduate and labour activist, was kidnapped by police and held under house arrest in August, after she helped publish an open letter in the workers' support and began leading protests near the factory. She is a well-known Maoist activist who took a job at a car parts factory in Guangzhou after graduating from university in 2015 in an effort to support worker activism.

The dispute has also attracted the attention of older Maoist activists. According to the *South China Morning Post*, a number of them also travelled to the factory in early August when, "More than 40 Communist Party members and retired cadres, who are part of the country's leading Maoist internet forum, Utopia, joined the rally."

Maoism is experiencing a revival in China as a way to express opposition to the government from within the official ideology, based on nostalgia about Mao's period of rule. But what is needed is a Marxism that is clear about the revolutionary potential of workers' struggle as the force that can introduce genuine socialism.

China's economic growth has

produced extreme inequality, with more than 800 billionaires in US dollar terms, 40 per cent more than in the US. One third of the country's wealth is held by the top 1 per cent of households, according to a 2016 Peking University study.

Yet workers continue to suffer extreme working hours, months of unpaid wages, and exposure to dangerous chemicals.

According to the China Labour Bulletin, which tracks workers' action, "strikes and collective protests are widespread and commonplace across all industries and across the whole of China".

Strikes at individual factories are fairly common, but most are resolved quickly. The central government has made efforts to ensure disputes do not spread beyond individual workplaces through banning independent trade unions, a crackdown on labour activism and attempting to introduce basic conditions. Simon Gilbert in *Socialist Review* explains this has involved, "a series of labour laws that, among other things, stipulate mandatory contracts, put limits on the working day and provide for social benefits." But these are often not enforced.

Nonetheless China's rapid industrialisation has created a huge working class with immense potential power. As the experience of countries like Egypt, South Korea and Brazil have shown, or even China's own revolt around Tiananmen Square in 1989, in the right circumstances this can explode into a challenge to authoritarianism.

**Students and graduates from more than a dozen universities staged actions in support of the workers**



# Spike Lee's *BlacKkKlansman* film is a call to arms for anti-racists

**BlacKkKlansman**  
Directed by Spike Lee  
In cinemas now

**BLACKKKLANSMAN**, THE new Spike Lee film, couldn't come at a better time. It is a powerful anti-racist roar to action against the rise of the far right.

The film is hilarious from start to finish.

But it also cuts to the heart of racism in the early 1970s while drawing parallels with Donald Trump's administration.

The basis of the film is the true story of Ron Stallworth, Colorado Spring's first black police officer.

He goes undercover alongside Flip Zimmerman, a Jewish officer, to foil the plans of the local Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

The film starts with a KKK promo video before moving to Ron's first assignment, where he goes undercover at a Black Power rally. He's there to monitor Kwame Ture, also known as Stokely Carmichael.

This dramatic start sets the tone for the rest of the film. We're shown the malice of the far right juxtaposed with the revolutionary rhetoric and solidarity of Black Power. Unfortunately, the revolutionary voice is regularly shown to be just rhetoric.

The film overall is very welcome, but there are many problems. Patrice Dumas is a black student union president and love interest to Ron.

She regularly challenges the role of the police, and especially Ron's role as a black man in the department. However, her arguments are often undermined and made to seem naïve or reflecting a lack of understanding beyond her own politics.

The police in the film are criticised at times, but overall they come off quite well. Only one



police officer is shown to be racist while Ron is supported by the rest of the department and the FBI.

## Apples

It is a shame that Lee would try to gloss over institutional racism and make it seem like there are simply a few bad apples.

Boots Riley, musician

and director of *Sorry To Bother You*, has rightly criticised Lee over this.

KKK supporters are vilified brilliantly and their fascist beliefs are exposed, as they should be. But Lee falls into the pitfall of making it seem like they are all stupid, even grand wizard David Duke.

While this adds to the

comedy, it also adds to an idea that we don't need to take them seriously. Underestimating the fascists is very dangerous.

Ron's position in the film is consistently that of the intelligent moderate.

He stays calm and is able to control every situation while arguing to work within the system to make

change.

Left wingers and right wingers are on either side of him. But this feeds a false idea that the left is as bad as the right.

Whatever misgivings there were during the film, the ending redeemed it. It has an incredibly powerful tribute to murdered anti-fascist Heather Heyer.

And footage from fascist and anti-fascist demonstrations compares the rise of the far right today with the KKK back then. It shows Trump defending Nazis and is sympathetic to anti-racists. In the packed cinema you could hear a pin drop and I left with an overwhelming feeling of anger and a need to do something.

*BlacKkKlansman* really is a call to arms for everyone to make a stand against the rise of the far right. People will leave angry and wanting to take action.

**Antony Hamilton**  
Socialist Worker UK

## Workers and the history of the modern factory system

**Behemoth: a History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World**  
By Joshua Freeman  
W.W. Norton, \$27.95

THE NUMBER of suicides and attempted suicides at Foxconn's various massive factory complexes over recent years has become something of an international scandal with even the likes of the late Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, describing the situation as "very troubling", although not troubling enough to take his business elsewhere. Foxconn made every iPad for Apple at this time.

Foxconn serves as a salutary corrective for those who consider the industrial working class finished, of no account in

a world that has moved on. As Joshua Freeman points out, while only 8 per cent of US workers are employed in manufacturing today, globally "we are in a heyday of manufacturing". In 2015 "Forty three percent of Chinese workers were employed in manufacturing."

Indeed, "the biggest factories in history are operating right now, making products like smartphones, laptops and brand-name sneakers". Foxconn's Longhua Science and Technology Park complex in Shenzhen was, in 2016, "the largest factory, in number of employees, in history". It employed over 300,000 workers. Another Foxconn complex, also in Shenzhen, employed over 130,000. Globally, the Taiwanese-

owned company employed 1.4 million workers in over 30 countries.

And it is not just high-tech consumer goods that are being produced. In Dongguan, China, the Yue Yuen shoe factory employs 110,000 workers, making it "the largest shoe factory in history", producing "nearly a million pairs of shoes a month for international brands like Nike".

Freeman's *Behemoth* is an account of how we reached this point in history, starting out from the opening of the first "modern" factory in Derbyshire in 1721. The book's great strength is that it is a wholly unashamed class struggle history that chronicles the struggles of the workers incarcerated

in the factories that transformed the world in succeeding years. It confronts us with the harsh reality that the British children working 12 or 13 hour shifts, only kept awake by being hit with straps, fists and "even wooden poles", in the mills at the end of the 18th century have their equivalent today, children of the same age subjected to the same conditions or worse.

Inevitably his focus is limited, starting out with Britain and then shifting to the United States. The weakest part of the book is his account of Stalinist industrialisation, but regardless of that *Behemoth* is to be wholeheartedly welcomed.

**John Newsinger**  
Socialist Review UK

# COUP CULTURE WHY IS MAINSTREAM POLITICS SO UNSTABLE?

Malcolm Turnbull has become the latest Prime Minister dumped by his own party. **Miro Sandev** looks at how the neo-liberal 'reform agenda' has brought political instability

IN THE 58 years between Menzies' 1949 election win and Howard's 2007 departure, only two prime ministers were deposed by party room revolts. In the past 11 years, four sitting Prime Ministers have been deposed by their own party's MPs.

Many commentators have tried to explain this instability by focussing on the emergence of social media or the 24-hour news cycle.

But the causes of it are much deeper. There has been a long process of the major political parties becoming increasingly detached from their traditional supporters, which has driven their primary vote down.

This process has been underpinned by the crisis of profitability in capitalism that began in the 1970s and remains unresolved, with its most recent outburst in the 2007 global financial crisis.

In order to deal with the crisis and boost profits, both Labor and the Liberals have embraced neo-liberalism, hacking away at workers' rights and the welfare state through privatisation, financial deregulation and austerity.

## Neo-liberal consensus

After the Second World War there was a broad consensus on the need for state intervention in the economy and expanding welfare services. The Whitlam government elected in 1972 was the high point of this. But after the 1973 oil crisis the post-war boom fell apart.

To defend the bosses' profits, Whitlam moved to make workers pay for the crisis and began implementing cuts. This helped demoralise Labor's working class supporters. After Whitlam's sacking in 1975, Labor's primary vote dipped to a low of 40 per cent.

After a few years of Malcolm Fraser, Labor's primary vote went to 50 per cent when Bob Hawke was elected

in 1983. But that was its peak. Hawke and Keating set about implementing neo-liberal policies, deregulating the financial sector and privatising state-owned companies in telecommunications, banking and airlines.

They were able to co-opt the trade union leadership into collaboration through the Prices and Incomes Accord, which promised improvements in the "social wage" (welfare benefits and government services) in return for unions accepting low wage increases and restricting strikes.

The Accord was a disaster for the working class. Real wages for factory workers dropped by around \$100 per week between 1983 and 1996. After 13 years of Labor's neo-liberalism, a section of the working class deserted the party in 1996 and voted for John Howard.

Despite his 11 years of electoral success, public opinion on many issues was to the left of Howard. In 1996, 57 per cent preferred personal tax cuts compared to 17 per cent who wanted an increase in social spending. By 2005 that had changed to 47 per cent support for more spending as opposed to 34 per cent support for tax cuts.

But Howard kept on winning elections for 11 years because Labor was so badly damaged by their record in the 1980s and 1990s, and the party remained wedded to neo-liberalism. Yet when Howard over-reached with his massive attack on workers through WorkChoices, the unions stirred into action with the Your Rights at Work campaign that drove Howard out of office.

## Detachment

The Labor Party was established by the trade union leaders in the 1890s, and union members have always been a key base of support for the party.

But Labor's Accord with the

**Both Labor and the Liberals have embraced neo-liberalism, hacking away at workers' rights and the welfare state**

unions in the 1980s undermined rank-and-file militancy. To enforce the Accord, the Hawke government ruthlessly smashed unions, like the Builders Labourers Federation and the pilots' union that sought improved wages or conditions outside it. Workers were alienated from the Labor Party and union membership fell from historic highs of over 60 per cent to below 15 per cent today.

This has contributed to the decline in rusted-on Labor voters. Its primary vote has declined from an average of just under 50 per cent, to mostly hover around 35 per cent now.

The LNP primary vote has also fallen in that period, but not as dramatically. But its membership has halved since the 1950s.

The Liberal Party has always been the party of big capitalists in Australia and ruled in their interests. But it also depends on a wider base in order to win elections. Even among Liberal voters neo-liberalism is deeply unpopular. For example 40 per cent of Liberal voters in WA opposed Colin Barnett's planned power privatisation, costing him the state election.

Academic Peter Mair has called these general trends "the hollowing out of democracy", pointing to a process that is going on across the developed world.

It is marked by a decline in engagement in official politics; a decline in party identification and affiliation; declining voter turnout and rising electoral volatility; and the fact that major parties have converged in terms of policies.

This is borne out in the trends in Australian political survey data. In 1967, 72 per cent of people claimed to always vote for the same party. By 2016, this was down to 40 per cent. Only one-quarter to one-third of voters believe there is "a good deal of difference" between the ALP and the

Coalition. That sums up the crisis of social democracy and political representation—workers can't see a party that represents their class interests.

As parties are more and more detached from a base in the real world, parliamentary parties are more consumed with opinion polls and the opinions of focus groups as they chase swinging voters. It is this that accounts for the high turnover of party leaders in the hope of improving their electoral chances.

Meanwhile the vote for minor parties, The Greens on the left, and parties like One Nation on the right, has been growing and is approaching a third of the electorate.

Because of the nature of the Australian electoral system, support for minor parties is mainly expressed in the Senate. This has increased the difficulty of passing legislation, which also contributes to the view that the ruling party can't control parliament.

In Europe, where the economic crisis has been much deeper, the ruling class has required much deeper cuts in government spending, and traditional Labor-type parties have done their bidding.

This has led to further political polarisation that had fed the growth of the far right, but also the rise of radical left reformist parties like Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and Melenchon in France.

In Britain, this dissatisfaction has found expression in the Labour party with the rise of left-wing leader, Jeremy Corbyn. In ten days in 2016, 100,000 new members join the party, as membership surged past 500,000.

### Unpopular policies

The Rudd-Gillard-Rudd and the Abbott and Turnbull governments have all governed in the interests of big business.

Kevin Rudd was elected in 2007 on the back of the unions' Your Rights at Work campaign. Initially he distanced himself from Howard's policies, particularly on climate change, refugees and indigenous people, sending his popularity through the roof.

But there was a huge contradiction between his rhetoric and what he was willing to deliver. Rudd did not break with the neo-liberalism of Howard or Hawke and Keating and proudly boasted that he was a fiscal conservative. He kept most of the anti-worker laws previous governments had introduced, further alienating the working class vote.

When he dropped his emissions trading scheme, he totally lost cred-



**Above: Sad times for Malcolm Turnbull, now former Prime Minister**

ibility—and a million voters in a fortnight. He had spent a year and a half promoting the policy and the need to take action on climate change. But he was not prepared to do anything that might upset business profits, so he first designed a useless scheme, then completely dropped it.

Tony Abbott won the 2013 election in a landslide. In his first budget however, he went all guns blazing, with cuts right across the board and attacks on workers' rights. This was rightly seen as a class war budget and sparked demonstrations up to 30,000 strong. It was massively unpopular, and Abbott was unable to pass much of it through the Senate. The Liberals never recovered.

The ruling class despaired at his failure to push through their hated "reform agenda". Facing electoral defeat, Abbott was knifed by his party.

Malcolm Turnbull promoted himself on the basis that he could communicate better and sell the Coalition's policies to the public.

But Turnbull was quickly seen as Abbott-lite as he willingly appeased the right of the Liberal Party and the Nationals.

Despite once being an advocate of reducing emissions, he did nothing on climate change. Similarly, he delayed any decision on equal marriage as long as possible, before embracing Peter Dutton's push for a plebiscite.

Like Abbott, Turnbull kept losing the opinion polls to Labor. Meanwhile, marriage equality won the support of 61.6 per cent of the population. And

an Australia Institute poll this month found growing concern about climate change, with 67 per cent wanting coal power phased out within 20 years.

Turnbull's very narrow election win in 2016 further weakened his authority. His signature policy of corporate tax cuts was hugely unpopular. His defence of the big banks also isolated him.

Eventually the right-wing of the Liberals moved against him. But the Liberals' commitment to anti-union laws and cuts to public spending won't change. The first poll after Morrison became Prime Minister had Labor even further in front.

The next government is likely to be Labor. Bill Shorten has tacked to the left in an effort to tap into the disgust with the Liberals. But Labor remains committed to the neo-liberal policies that the capitalist system needs to keep profits flowing.

The crisis in political representation is set to continue. That means there's likely to be more instability in the political system in the period ahead. The danger is that Labor's failure will again create the disaffection that allows racism to grow and opinions to be pulled to the right.

Two things are needed in the period ahead. The first is struggle to build the fight against the Liberals, and to rebuild the industrial strength and militancy of the unions. The second is socialist organisation that can begin to really represent the interests of the working class and link every struggle into a fight against the capitalist system.

# STALIN'S IMPERIALISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

Those who side with Russia against the US today are making the same mistake some on the left did during the Cold War, writes **Lachlan Marshall**

THE FALL of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union saw the US become the undisputed global superpower.

Since then China has emerged as a rising power and Vladimir Putin now leads a more assertive Russia. But the US still retains military superiority.

This has led some on the left to support opponents of the US like Russia and Assad as a counter-weight to US power, and even to apologise for their slaughter in Syria.

However opposing America isn't the same as opposing imperialism.

This echoes the way many opponents of US imperialism lined up behind Russia in the Cold War as a counterweight to US global domination.

Many on the left also supported the Stalinist regime in Russia because they saw it as socialist. Yet Russia itself was a ruthless imperialist power.

## State capitalism

The Russian Revolution of 1917 saw the working class take power. However, the failure of the revolution to spread, coupled with the devastation of the Russian economy following years of foreign intervention and war, led to a counter-revolution.

The system of grassroots democracy embodied in the workers' councils, or soviets, disappeared.

Under Stalin, a form of capitalism developed where the state directed all economic activity. But just as in market economies, there was no democratic control over the economy.

Russia underwent rapid industrialisation in order to compete economically and militarily against the West. Brutal five year plans, based on the exploitation of workers, peasants and slave labour, killed millions.

This intense exploitation meant that on the eve of the Second World War Russia had more tanks, planes and artillery than Germany.

Russia's new ruling class renounced the original Bolshevik aim of world revolution and joined in the sys-

tem of state competition: imperialism.

## Foreign policy

Stalin's supporters like to present him as an opponent of fascism. But it was the disastrous policies he imposed on the German Communist Party, in the form of the "Third Period", that allowed Hitler to take power in the first place.

Introduced in 1929, the new line described the social democratic parties as the main enemy of the working class, as "social fascists." This meant the Communist Party refused to join forces with the Social Democratic Party at precisely the time when unity was vital to defeat the Nazis. Tragically, this allowed Hitler to take power in 1933, and to murder and imprison communist and social democratic workers alike.

The ascent of Hitler spooked Stalin into a volte face and the adoption of the Popular Front policy. But rather than seeing the revolutionary struggles of the international working class as the antidote to fascism, Stalin joined the great power game and sought alliances with the UK and France.

In order to appease Britain and France's rulers, Stalin sabotaged the Spanish revolution, diverting it from a revolutionary war into a conventional military conflict. Communist policy, along with the failure of anarchist leaders to take power, led to the defeat of the Spanish working class and triumph of the Franco dictatorship.

Some see the Second World War as the Soviet Union's greatest hour. Hitler's defeat by Russia was indeed a turning point in the war and a blow from which the Nazi regime never recovered.

However Stalin's attitude to Nazism was anything but principled. Only a week before Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Stalin signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler partitioning Poland. Hitler took western Poland while Stalin took the rest of Poland along with the Baltic States and Romania.

## Russia's new ruling class joined in the system of state competition: imperialism

On the first anniversary of this Hitler-Stalin Pact the official Soviet newspaper, Pravda, acknowledged, "this pact has made things easier for us; it has also been of great advantage to Germany, since she can be completely confident of peace on her Eastern borders."

It was only in 1941, after Germany itself attacked Russia, that Stalin declared war on Germany.

Hitler's invasion took Russian forces by surprise. In its first day Nazi forces reached 60 kilometres into Russian territory and destroyed 1200 Soviet aircraft.

Stalin countered German chauvinism with Russian chauvinism. Now began the "fatherland war." He disbanded the Communist International in May 1943, a measure designed to appease Britain and the US, and fostered a close relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Stalinist regime was so hated that the initial popular response to the German invasion was muted. However German brutality, along with Russian state propaganda, eventually stirred patriotic sentiment.

Ordinary people took up arms to defend themselves. But, according to one veteran interviewed by the Russian writer Elena Joly, "We were not defending Stalin, but our homes and families." Another explained how, "We did not win the war thanks to Stalin, but despite him!"

In all the areas under German occupation, there were both collaborators and resistance fighters. Some among Russia's national minorities collaborated with the Nazis, preferring to fight the empire that had trampled on their rights for centuries.

Russia collectively punished entire communities for this. A 1944 decree from Moscow read: "Evict all Tatars from the Crimea and place them permanently as special settlers in areas of Uzbekistan." Around 200,000 Tatars were evicted, including many who fought in the Red Army. A similar fate befell the Chechens.



But Stalin was just as suspicious of the resistance. During an uprising against the Germans in Warsaw in 1944 Stalin refused to allow Allied help to the insurgents and condemned them to defeat.

### Dividing the spoils

The Nazi loss at the Battle of Stalingrad in early 1943 sealed their defeat. By 1944 the Red Army was sweeping west, through Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Hungary and into the Baltic States.

With Germany in retreat, the Allies negotiated over the division of conquered territory.

At the Tehran Conference of late 1943 Stalin divided up Europe with US President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. They agreed that Russian territory would expand into Poland along the Curzon Line—the same arbitrary line that Hitler and Stalin used in their non-aggression pact of 1939.

Soviet diplomats scoured the secret treaties between the Allies and Tsarist Russia signed during the First World War, looking for precedents on which to base their claims to territory.

In the end Churchill and Stalin agreed that oil-rich Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary went to Russia, Greece was Britain's, and Yugoslavia was to be shared 50-50.

They decided that, "if the British found it necessary to take military action to quell internal disorders in Greece, the Soviets would not interfere. In return, the British would recognise the right of the Soviets to take the lead in maintaining order in Rumania."

When British forces arrived in Greece the country was in the control of communist-led partisans. Churchill prepared to support the monarchists against the left, and when civil war broke out in December 1944 there was not a peep from the Soviet press or government.

As Red Army tanks rolled across Eastern Europe in 1945, the Soviets looted its industry, with entire factories transferred to Russia.

### Cold War

But "peace," such as it was, was short lived. After victory over Germany and the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Stalin concentrated resources into developing his own nuclear weapons. Again, Russian workers were forced to sacrifice their living standards as the ruling class poured capital into weapons of mass destruction, to match those of the west.



**Above: Russian tanks roll into Hungary to crush the workers' uprising in 1956**

The Cold War conflict between the American and Russian ruling classes is often portrayed as an ideological struggle between capitalism and communism. But like all imperialist wars, it was based on competition between rival ruling classes.

The penetration of American influence into Western Europe through Marshall Plan aid, begun in 1948, prompted Stalin to tighten his grip on Eastern Europe.

The establishment of NATO followed in 1949, uniting Western Europe under Washington's leadership. Moscow's response was the Warsaw Pact, established in 1955 to coordinate the military resources of Russia's satellite states.

Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, the US and USSR occupied Korea. Despite popular support for a united Korea, the two superpowers divided the peninsula and installed dictatorships in their spheres of influence.

After securing support from Stalin and Mao, North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung invaded the South in June 1950, sparking the Korean War. US troops poured into Korea to back up the dictatorship in the south. The war lasted three years and killed millions of civilians.

Stalin's death in 1953 brought a softening of some of the wilder excesses his dictatorship in the 1930s and 1940s. But there was to be no scaling back of Russian imperial power.

The USSR ruled its conquered ter-

ritories with the same brutality as US imperialism.

When the working class rose up in revolution in Hungary in 1956, creating real soviets, or workers' councils, Russian tanks put down the resistance, murdering thousands of Hungarian workers.

In 1962 US President Kennedy and Russian leader Krushchev brought the world the closest it has been to nuclear annihilation during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The Prague Spring of 1968 again saw students and workers inside the Eastern Bloc take to the streets to demand sweeping change, just as their brothers and sisters in the West did that year. Again, the Red Army and other Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia to crush them.

By the late 1980s, the Stalinist regimes were teetering on the edge of economic collapse. Workers' resentment, repressed for so many decades, finally found an outlet.

In 1989 Eastern Europe rose up in revolt, and within two years the USSR was no more.

Russia was just as much an imperialist power as the US. It was wrong to take its side in the Cold War, in the mistaken belief that "my enemy's enemy is my friend." And it remains wrong to adopt the same approach today.

The only genuine alternative to imperialism is the struggles of the working class and oppressed against their rulers, whoever those rulers might be.

# LENIN'S THEORY OF THE PARTY

Lenin's view on the need for a revolutionary party was a product of the experience of the greatest wave of struggles against capitalism so far in history, writes **James Supple**

LENIN WAS the key leader of the October revolution in Russia in 1917. This was the first and so far the only time that capitalism has been overthrown in a major country.

And in the 1920s he helped lead the Third International, grouping together newly-formed Communist parties around world. This movement represented the most serious challenge to capitalism on a global scale so far in history.

Lenin's most important legacy are his ideas and experience on the question of organisation. For this the Marxist philosopher Georg Lukacs described him as the greater thinker in the revolutionary socialist tradition since Marx.

Without the Bolshevik Party, which he helped build, the revolution in Russia would never have succeeded.

Before Lenin the accepted view on the left was that a broad party was needed that included both reformists and revolutionaries, aiming to unite essentially the whole working class.

This was expressed in the construction of mass socialist parties in major European countries like Germany and France.

But this model was shattered by the outbreak of the First World War, when almost without exception the broad socialist parties capitulated and supported the war effort in their respective nations.

This exposed that they had become thoroughly reformist, committed above all else to winning influence and eventually government through parliament.

Only the Bolshevik party that Lenin had built in Russia was willing to oppose the war, and capable of leading a revolutionary movement to bring it to an end.

Lenin's party was based on clear revolutionary socialist politics. This meant socialists forming a party of their own separate from the reformist parties that aim to take power through

**The Bolshevik Party was built as a party of the minority in the working class committed to revolutionary socialism**

parliament.

His organisation, the Bolshevik Party, was built as a party of the minority in the working class committed to revolutionary socialism. It was built around a commitment to change from below through mass struggle, and arguing to win support for socialist politics inside the working class.

A broader organisation is forced to come up with compromise positions tailored to bridge fundamental differences of principle over how to change society.

This means a distinct revolutionary socialist organisation can be more effective within social movements and the trade unions because its arguments and activity can be sharper and clearer.

## Different models

Lenin's argument on the need for a separate party of revolutionaries remains controversial.

Across Europe and the US, new left-wing parties and leaders have emerged in recent years to challenge the political mainstream. They range from figures within established parties like Jeremy Corbyn in the British Labour Party and Bernie Sanders within the US Democratic Party to new parties like Podemos in Spain, Jean-Luc Mélenchon's party in France and Syriza in Greece.

What they have in common is the effort to build a broad party of the left, similar to the accepted model of the party before Lenin.

The Greens in Australia work in a similar way. Particularly in NSW, the party combines people who describe themselves as socialists and anarchists, activists who are mainly concerned about the environment and others who simply want a more left-wing alternative to the Labor Party.

It is often argued that parties like this can combine social movement activism with running successful election campaigns.

But in practice they all prioritise

electoral work and the effort to change society through parliament.

Their time, money, resources and efforts to mobilise their members are all focused around elections.

But the aim of forming a left-wing government through parliament always ends in disappointment. With it comes a pull towards accommodation with the mainstream parties and the political elite to cut deals and "deliver outcomes".

We saw this when The Greens went into an Alliance with the Gillard Labor government from 2010, and in current leader Richard Di Natale's willingness to consider supporting the Coalition's Gonski 2.0 school funding plan.

This is because forming government through the existing parliamentary system means agreeing to manage capitalism. The ultimate recent demonstration of how a parliamentary strategy fails is the experience of Syriza in Greece. It went from promising a left government in 2015 that would tear up the austerity deal with the European Union to implementing even more savage austerity cuts once in power, within an astoundingly short period.

Faced with the experience of parliamentary parties—both the mainstream and more radical examples—others argue against forming a political party altogether.

One extreme example is the 15M movement in Spain that emerged as a response to the economic crisis in 2011. It banned participation by political parties completely, with the flags and publications of even revolutionary socialist organisations kept out of its events.

The problem with this is that any real social movement contains people with a mix of political ideas and views. This means there will be political debates about what to do and how to respond to new challenges.

The 15M movement itself is a telling example. Although it tried to

exclude politics and political parties, the movement around it was eventually channelled into forming Podemos, a party that aimed to form government through running in elections.

### Broad movements

Social movements and trade unions both draw their strength from uniting broad layers of people.

Most social movements are coalitions, ranging from supporters of different left-wing parties to religious groups. Trade unions need to involve as large a section of the workplace as possible in order to stage effective strike action.

The radical sections of the movement need to organise within them to be best placed to win debates over the way forward. This is why a separate revolutionary socialist organisation is needed.

The refugee movement for instance encompasses a wide range of groups from professional activist organisations like Getup and the Refugee Council, to grassroots activist groups like Mums for Refugees, Grandmothers against Detention and the Refugee Action Collectives.

Some of these groups put significant effort into lobbying, in the hope that putting information in front of MPs and appealing to their consciences can produce change.

Sometimes refugee supporters also argue that individual cases can be dealt with through the court system or private approaches to politicians.

Socialists within the campaign argue for mass mobilisations to build political pressure on the government for change. Key to this is building support within the unions, with the aim of mobilising the power of workers through industrial action.

We insist that there are political interests at stake, based in the efforts of the ruling class to defend their wealth and power.

The different approaches within social movements reflect the division between reform and revolution—whether to work through the “right channels” and rely on the institutions of society to bring change or whether to try to mobilise mass pressure against them.

### Mixed ideas

The need for a separate socialist organisation also flows from an understanding that the dominant ideas in society are the ideas of ruling class. In our society a tiny minority of people, the top 1 per cent of billionaires, CEOs and shareholders, control



**Above: Lenin makes a speech in 1920 in Sverdlov Square to troops leaving for Polish front during the civil war**

enormous wealth and power. This class controls most of the mainstream media. It also has its own political parties, think tanks, and friendly academics who pump out ideas to justify the way society is run.

The result is that the working class majority is mixed and uneven in terms of its ideas.

Some people accept practically all of the right-wing and pro-capitalist ideas: from sexism to racist nonsense that refugees and immigration are a threat to jobs or “our way of life”, or the idea that inequality reflects natural talent and hard work.

This is reflected in the fact that a section of the working class votes for the Liberals.

But within the working class there are also dedicated trade unionists, willing to stand up to management to defend their workmates, and people who reject sexism, racism and homophobia.

The aim of a revolutionary socialist organisation is to group together the most left-wing workers, students and activists, those committed to a vision of a socialist alternative, so we can be most effective in winning support for anti-capitalist ideas.

It must be a party of leaders, whose activists are capable of winning arguments within their own workplace, unions or community struggles.

Such an organisation provides a space for revolutionary activists to share experiences, debate how to operate and map out a strategy to take the wider movement forward.

The importance of a revolutionary socialist organisation becomes even clearer during periods of mass social upheaval. Lenin’s party was able to argue and shape the direction of the revolution in Russia because it had tens of thousands of members capable of giving a lead to workers across Russia.

At key points it was the decisive intervention of the party that was able to both unite the working class movement against the threat of a military coup, as well as prevent an attempt at a disastrous premature seizure of power in July 1917.

The lack of such a party has seen countless waves of struggle, and numerous revolutionary opportunities, end in defeat.

The most recent example is the fate of the Egyptian revolution. This saw Hosni Mubarak’s dictatorship overthrown through mass protests in 2011. But in 2013 another wave of protests erupted against the Muslim Brotherhood government in the face of anger over its failure to improve living standards, a surge in fuel prices and the repression of strikes.

The lack of a mass revolutionary socialist party allowed the military to take the political initiative, and divert popular anger into support for reinstalling military rule.

Lenin’s ideas on party organisation remain a vital guide both to building the more modest struggles of today, and preparing for the upheavals capitalism is certain to produce in the future.

# MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS ENGULFS NAURU

By Daniel Cotton

NAURU IS in meltdown with an epidemic of mental illness and medical problems among children. Yet Peter Dutton has revealed his hypocrisy in granting visas to two au pairs, while forcing critically ill children to languish on Nauru without medical help.

Onshore, the suicide of 22-year-old Sarwan Aljhelie in Yongah Hill detention centre in Western Australia prompted a fire and riot there, from those outraged at the government's abject failure of duty of care. Meanwhile, a Melbourne protest has demanded an end to the deportation of Tamil asylum seekers and Biloela residents marched on Peter Dutton's Brisbane office to demand Priya, Nades and their children be allowed to stay.

There has been a shocking rise in self-harm in children on Nauru. One 12-year-old doused herself in petrol, and a 10-year-old attempted to swallow metal wire. A rare condition called "traumatic withdrawal syndrome" or "resignation syndrome" has seen a number of children starving themselves nearly to death. They have been withdrawing from life, some entering a catatonic state in which they stop eating, talking, responding to pain or interacting with people at all.

Legal action in the Federal Court has managed to get over 30 children, sometimes with their families (as well as a small number of single adults) off Nauru and to medical care Australia in the last few months. Doctors have issued recommendations for around half of the 100 or so children left on Nauru to be moved off the island.

Yet Border Force continues to stall on moving them. By mid-September, doctors had issued half a dozen warnings that a 12-year-old refugee who had made numerous suicide attempts was at grave risk, yet Border Force has kept her on Nauru.

Conditions on the island are spiralling down, with every single child on Nauru suffering some form of mental distress.

Nauruan authorities worked hard



**Above: Children inside one of the camps on Nauru**

to make sure human rights abuses were covered up during the Pacific Islands Forum in early September. Tents that had housed refugees for five years were dismantled, ABC journalists were banned, while Canstruct and HOST staff were locked down in the RPC1 administration compound to prevent contact with any media. The most senior IHMS doctor on the island also had his visa revoked and was deported before the Forum began.

One New Zealand journalist was detained for hours after attempting to speak to refugees. But the truth continues to leak out. Healthcare workers spoke out on ABC's 7.30 about children in crisis and women denied abortion rights. Even Former Australian Border Force Commissioner Roman Quaedvlieg has joined those condemning the conditions on Nauru.

## **No resolution**

More children and families are set to get court orders to come to Australia, as the government's refusal to bring the refugees to Australia has left the government with no way out of the crisis it has created.

Every court order deepens the crisis for the government and renders

offshore processing more unsustainable.

The failure of third country resettlement is clear. With Trump halving the refugee intake this year, and implementing racist travel bans, progress on the US resettlement deal is glacial. And nearly half of the refugees on Nauru are banned from the US due to their nationality. This failure, particularly the rejections of Iranians, has worsened the despair on Nauru, with refugees feeling this glimmer of hope has been crushed.

Human rights groups are backing World Vision's #KidsOffNauru campaign, demanding all children be removed from the island by 20 November. A recent poll found that 67 per cent believe the Australian government should do so.

The Coalition government is unravelling. But Bill Shorten and Labor still refuse to evacuate Nauru and Manus Island by bringing the refugees and asylum seekers to Australia. The urgency is growing for action in workplaces, universities, and on the streets. The outrage about offshore detention needs to be channelled into a mass movement that is powerful enough to demand everyone be removed from Australia's gulags and brought to safety in Australia.

**Legal action has managed to get over 30 children, sometimes with off Nauru**

# Solidarity