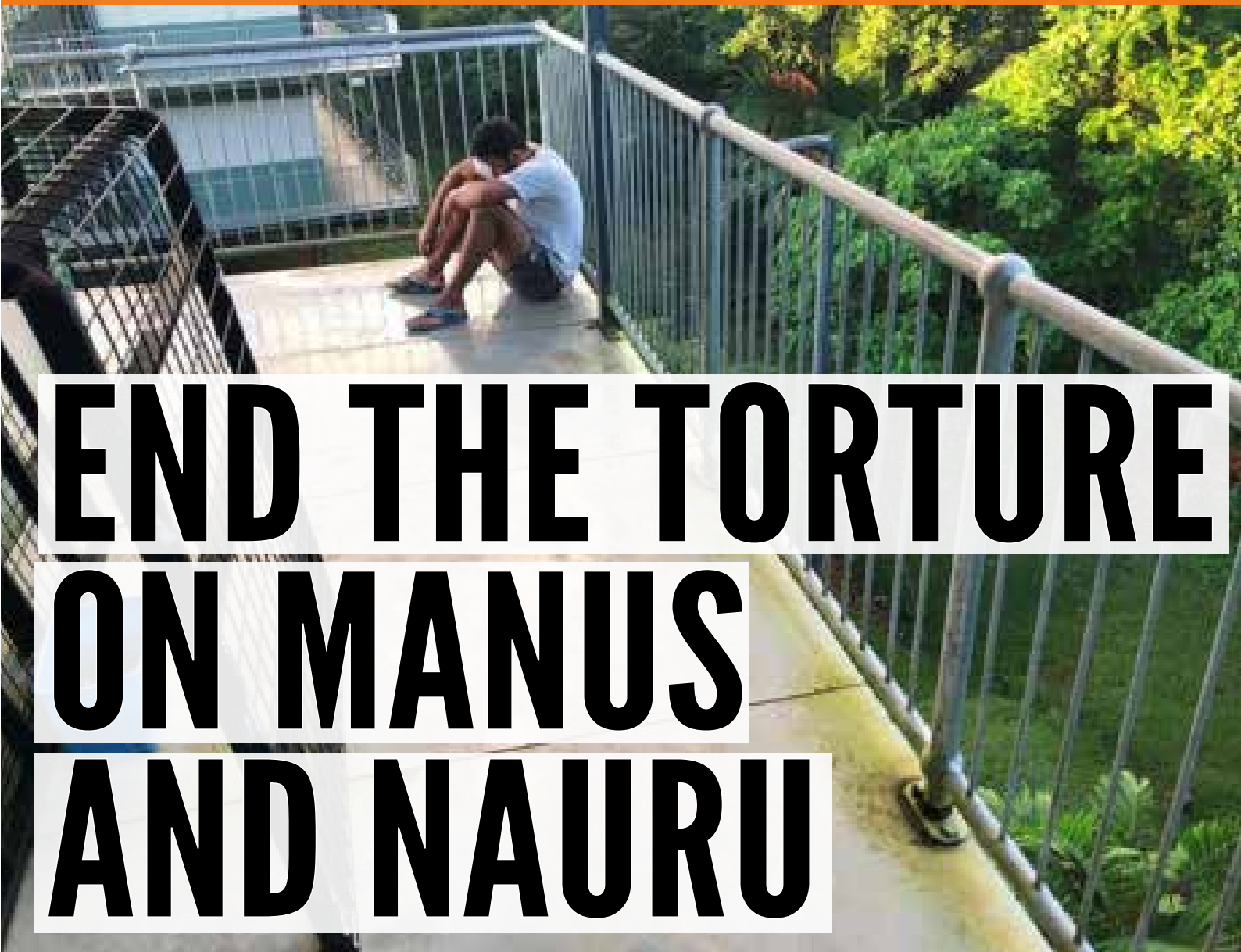


SAVE MEDEVAC BRING THEM HERE



REFUGEES

Save the
Medevac Law

CLIMATE

Lessons from the last
climate movement

INTERVIEW

Clinton Fernandes on
Australia's foreign policy



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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 for more information on what we stand for.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Things they say

What I'm saying, and I want your listeners to know, is that Australia, we live in a fantastic country.

Luke Howarth, Liberal federal homelessness minister, putting a "positive spin" (his words) on growing homelessness—rough sleepers in Australia rose from 6810 at the 2011 census to 8200 at the 2016 census, a 20.4 per cent increase

No-one in their right mind is suggesting that Australia join some sort of economic embargo on China to punish them for the way they are treating their Muslim population. Right wing radio journalist Tom Switzer on Q&A asked whether Australia should support human rights for the Uighurs

The truth is that all political parties will go to the next election in three years' time with new economic policies, new social policies, new environmental policy.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese just has no idea what his will be yet

We don't really believe this administration is going to become substantially more normal; less dysfunctional; less unpredictable; less faction driven; less diplomatically clumsy and inept.

British ambassador to the US Kim Darroch's leaked secret assessment of President Trump.

We are not big fans of that man and he has not served the UK well. I can say things about him but I won't bother

US President Donald Trump responds to the leaks

Our army manned the air, it rammed the ramparts, it took over airports Trump on US soldiers' prowess in the Revolutionary War with Britain in 1775—a little before airplanes were invented

I am not going to the fucking White House

US footballer Megan Rapinoe

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Antarctic ice now melting

SEA ICE in Antarctica crashed to the lowest level on record in 2017, new research by NASA scientists has revealed. This reverses a trend of increases in sea ice there since satellite records began 40 years ago. In just three years as much sea ice has melted as over the last 30 years in the Arctic.

Sea ice sits on top of the ocean, with a regular pattern of advance in winter and retreat in summer. Its melting does not raise global sea levels, but it does speed up the melting of ice sheets over the Antarctic landmass.

It is estimated that 25 per cent of the West Antarctic ice sheet is also beginning to melt. Some of its glaciers are especially vulnerable as they sit below sea level, where they meet warming ocean waters that will speed up their collapse. There is enough ice locked away in Antarctica's ice sheets to raise sea levels 58 metres if fully melted.

Shooting exposes racism against Ethiopian Israelis

ETHIOPIAN ISRAELIS blocked traffic across the country after an off-duty police officer shot and killed 19-year-old Solomon Tekah on 30 June. Thousands of protesters shut down intersections and overturned cars, chanting, "End the killing, end the racism". A dozen Ethiopian Israelis have been shot dead by police in the last five years.

Many came to Israel as a result of their Jewish identity in government assisted efforts in 1984 and 1991. They are 140,000 living there.

Their treatment has exposed Israel's racism. In 2015 there were mass protests after the release of a video showing two Israeli police officers beating an Ethiopian-Israeli soldier in an unprovoked racist attack.

Israel admitted in 2013 to giving Ethiopian Jewish migrants sterilisation injections, often without their knowledge or consent. Others were forced to take the injections as a condition for being allowed to migrate.

Medical failures caused festival deaths



MEDICAL CARE at a music festival where two people died last year was inadequate and overwhelmed, a NSW coronial inquest into drug-related deaths has heard.

It took an hour after a doctor's request before an ambulance arrived to take Joseph Pham, 23, to hospital. The festival, Defqon.1, had just two doctors on site for a crowd of 30,000 people. One, Dr Andrew Beshara, admitted he had "limited experience in providing critical care" and said "there should have been a lot more staff on". An experienced paramedic at the festival described medical facilities and co-ordination at the event as "completely abhorrent".

The two doctors were already dealing with two serious cases when Joseph Pham and Diana Nguyen, 21, arrived at about the same time. Both died later that night after taking MDMA. Another festival where Joshua Tam, 22, died in December employed just one doctor who said he was "not at all" capable of dealing with MDMA overdoses on his own.

Defqon.1 festival organiser Simon Coffey has criticised the heavy police presence and "tough on drugs" approach at events, where police use sniffer dogs and strip searches to try to track down those carrying drugs.

The NSW coronial inquiry has added to the calls for pill testing at festivals. Julie Tam, the mother of 22-year-old Joshua Tam, who died after taking MDMA at another festival on NSW's Central Coast in December has highlighted evidence from a pill testing trial at the Groovin' the Moo festival in Canberra this year. Seven people threw away drugs after pill testing found them to contain lethal substances.

"If Josh was one of those that threw it away, there's a life saved," Julie told the *Sydney Morning Herald*. "I'd like to say to [the Premier] that if her child was one of the seven that threw it away... she'd think 'maybe that's worth considering'."

Folau cries poor despite \$7 million in property

ISRAEL FOLAU put his hand out for \$3 million in donations to run his "religious freedom" court battle with Rugby Australia. He raised \$2.2 million after his initial effort was dumped from GoFundMe. Folau may have lost his \$1 million a year contract. But he has already amassed a \$7 million property portfolio of six houses. They include a \$2 million five-bedroom property in Kenthurst, Sydney where he lives with his wife and another worth at least \$1 million.

Send suggestions for INSIDE THE SYSTEM to solidarity@solidarity.net.au

ParentsNext targets woman caring for dead sister's kids

AN ABORIGINAL woman who took on the care of her dead sister's seven children was cut off all Centrelink payments under the ParentsNext program. The scheme requires parents who are judged "at risk" to undertake study or attend a compulsory children's activity, such as playgroup, in order to keep the payments. It is designed to get them ready for work by the time their children start school.

The woman, who had responsibility for eight children, received multiple Centrelink breaches as she was unable to attend appointments and was cut off parenting payments in January for failing to meet ParentsNext requirements.

Djirra chief executive Antoinette Braybrook, who exposed her case, said, "We can provide many examples of mothers having to live weeks without any income to feed their children or get them to school." One in five parents had their payments suspended in the first six months of the ParentsNext program from July last year. The government agreed to make administrative changes to the scheme to grant more temporary exemptions earlier this year. But around 70,000 people, overwhelmingly single mothers, remain on the scheme.

Another 44 workers face \$42,000 fines

FORTY FOUR workers are facing individual fines for taking industrial action over redundancy pay at construction sites on the Perth airport rail link. The Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) served court notices on the workers at their homes on the eve of the Easter break, in what ACTU Secretary Sally McManus described as "disgusting anti-worker, anti-family conduct".

It is also bringing charges against the CFMEU and three of its officials, including WA branch secretary Mick Buchan, over the dispute.

EDITORIAL

Strike back for jobs and climate as Morrison prepares new attacks

SCOTT MORRISON'S first move since the election has been to lock in massive tax cuts for the rich.

A few deals to secure the support of crossbench Senators were enough to see it go through.

The plan will eventually introduce a regressive flat tax system where everyone earning between \$45,000 and \$200,000 pays the same rate of tax. The Australia Institute found that the majority of the tax cuts (54 per cent) go to the top 20 per cent of income earners. It has called the changes a "radical attack on Australia's progressive tax system".

Those earning over \$180,000 will receive \$77 billion in tax cuts over ten years.

This will also mean cuts to government spending over time. The Grattan Institute estimates that it means \$40 billion a year less in spending by 2029-30.

Instead of exposing this as a handout for the rich and an attack on services, Labor focused its objections on saying the third stage was "unaffordable" and that it was "economically irresponsible" to lock them in so far into the future.

After its election defeat Labor continues to drift to the right, walking away from any attack on the rich. It was petrified of being blamed for denying anyone a tax cut.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese even went out of his way to say he didn't, "regard someone who's earning \$200,000 dollars a year as being from the top end of town".

After it was clear the tax cuts were going to pass anyway, Labor dropped its opposition and helped vote them through. Caving in has compromised Labor's credibility as a voice for workers and the poor.

The Coalition is now preparing further attacks. First up is its "Ensuring Integrity Bill", which would allow them to ban any union leader from their position, even for minor breaches of Fair Work Act around filing documents. Unions could also be deregistered or face serious interference in how they run.

These new powers are aimed at the CFMEU in particular and are an effort to undermine effective trade unionism and militancy.

Minister Christian Porter has also announced a review of industrial relations laws designed to lay the ground for more anti-union and anti-worker laws.



Above: The Liberals' "Ensuring integrity" bill is aimed squarely at the militant CFMEU

The bosses have set out a wish list of changes, including amending unfair dismissal laws to make it easier to sack people, and watering down the "better off overall test" for enterprise agreements that was used to strike down deals that removed penalty rates for casual workers at Coles and Woolworths.

Innes Wilcox from the Australian Industry Group and the mining association's Steve Knott have detailed a six point plan and called for a, "conversation about serious economic reform".

Hard right demands

The hard right inside the Coalition are still out campaigning for religious freedom legislation and more coal-fired power stations.

The suggestion from Indigenous Affairs Minister Ken Wyatt that some unspecified kind of Indigenous Voice might eventually be introduced led to howls of outrage across the Coalition.

Senators Keith Pitt and James McGrath want an inquiry into the use of nuclear power in Australia. They have been backed by Barnaby Joyce, who says it is the only way to get to zero emissions (while at the same time declaring concern about climate change is "barking mad").

Nuclear power is far too expensive and far too dangerous as a replacement for coal. But the debate is a way to distract attention from the massive expansion in renewable energy we need.

There is a growing rebellion for action on climate change. Extinction Rebellion groups have been launched across the country, inspired by the action that shut down central London.

But the major focus for action will be the next high school Strike for Climate on 20 September.

This time the students are calling on workers and unionists to walk out of work to join them. Already the NTEU at universities in Melbourne and Sydney have committed to joining the action.

The election was a wakeup call for the climate movement. Workers in coal mining areas in Queensland swung towards the Coalition because climate action was seen as a threat to jobs.

Supporting workers' demands and fighting for climate jobs can help to overcome this—and draw in the union power the climate movement needs to force change.

The support for workers at DP World from high school Climate Strikers is an important step in the right direction.

Members of the MUA at DP World port terminals are staging ongoing strike action against outsourcing and job cuts.

Everyone should support their struggle. We need the largest possible turnout of workers and students on the September climate strike.

And we need a fighting union movement prepared to stage strike action to defeat the Liberals' and the bosses' attacks.

.....
The hard right in the Coalition are campaigning for religious freedom legislation and more coal-fired power stations

NT government declares open season for gas fracking

By Tooba Anwar

FRACKING IS set to resume in the Northern Territory, with the Territory government finalising a Code of Practice for gas companies.

The NT Government went back on its 2016 election promise by lifting the ban on fracking in April 2018. It has now approved Origin Energy's plan for a test well and construction for seismic testing. An independent scientific inquiry that was launched to investigate the risks associated with hydraulic fracturing in the NT issued 137 recommendations to be implemented if fracking was to go ahead.

The move came after pressure from the federal government which threatened to cut GST revenue for states not "getting on and doing things". Then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull called on NT chief minister Michael Gunner to "pull the trigger... we need that gas", claiming the country's east coast faces a looming gas shortage.

Fracking involves pumping water and chemicals into the ground to force out gas. Fracking has been proven to be ecologically catastrophic with pipeline spills spreading chemicals everywhere. The Dakota pipeline in the US has produced a 200,000 gallon oil spill.

Already 51 per cent of the NT is covered in oil and gas licenses as a mineral resource hunt takes place.

Alawa grandmother and traditional owner for land under exploration by Origin said, "Our livelihood relies on lots of good country and clean fresh water, but all that is at risk if Origin forces fracking gas fields over the top of us". Community consultations showed that there was support for a territory-wide fracking ban.

Indigenous Youth climate network SEED has been on the ground contesting these developments; arguing that not only is fracking a threat to the environment but a threat to the communities living there linking the struggles between climate and inequality.

The NT government's scientific inquiry that found that opening up fracking in the NT would increase Australia's total emissions by 6.6 per cent. But we need to drastically reduce carbon emissions to net zero within 20 years.

Instead of expanding fossil fuel extraction we need a transition to renewable energy sources.

The NT has great potential to have



Above: A protest against fracking in the NT

Photo: Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network

for renewable energy. Beyond Zero Emissions's "Ten Gigawatt plan" argues that the NT could not just be an energy powerhouse for Australia, but export power into Asia. Investors are already discussing a plan to export

solar power to Singapore.

The NT could be another giant mine with limited job prospects or an oasis for employment, taking the urgent action we so badly need on climate change.

Adani activists discuss lessons from election

FOLLOWING THE election the Stop Adani campaign has held Stop Adani Assemblies across the country to discuss the result and what it means for the campaign.

The Coalition's campaign in support of the Adani mine, claiming it would provide jobs for Queensland, proved effective particularly in mining areas, delivering large swings against Labor and contributing to its election defeat.

Bob Brown's "Stop Adani convoy" provoked a hostile reaction as it travelled through Queensland, with many viewing it as city-based moralism that was going to cost jobs in regional areas. This helped the Coalition, even allowing them to hold their own "Start Adani" rallies.

Around 80 people attended the Stop Adani Assembly in Sydney at the end of June. The organisers recognised that many working class voters swung away from Labor due to their concerns over cost of living pressures, and Tipping Point's Moira Williams strongly emphasised the need for a just transition as a "positive solution" for the coal workers who were so hostile to them—with Bob Brown's convoy rightly seen as emboldening the Coalition.

A survey of Stop Adani activists

to reflect on the election loss also showed huge concern for this. In discussions after the presentation, it was clear that this resonated strongly with many in the crowd.

This was very promising, but it did not result in anything like the class analysis that we need. Instead, the official presentation blamed the Liberals' scare campaign, and the financial power of Clive Palmer and Murdoch, for the result.

The key take-home message was that people who voted for the Coalition were uneducated and swayed by relentless advertising, and that the climate movement must do more to "break out of the inner city bubble" and "connect" to these people who simply don't know what's best.

But this analysis simply absolves the Stop Adani campaign from any responsibility. But trying to "reach" these workers, who are rightly concerned about their jobs and futures, won't work unless the movement is serious about fighting for their interests. The climate movement must be explicitly pro-worker and take up the fight for jobs. Otherwise it will continue to open space for the Coalition to pose as the champions of workers' living standards instead.

Cooper Forsyth

The scientific inquiry that found that fracking in the NT would increase Australia's total emissions by 6.6 per cent

Building the Climate Strike among workers and unions

By Matilda Fay

UNIONISTS ARE gearing up to join the next Strike for Climate on 20 September. This time school student strikers are calling for adults to join the mobilisations too. Greta Thunberg, the Swedish student who initiated the global strike movement, announced in May that “to change everything, we need everyone. It is time for all of us to unleash mass resistance”.

Over 100 unionists, workers, and students met in Sydney on 10 July to discuss building workplace support. The meeting was hosted by the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Sydney branch with the support of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU). School striker Daisy Jeffrey told the meeting, “we really need adults now to join us”. The School Strike for Climate group has already put out a number of resources, including a “worker participation guide” detailing how to build support in workplaces.

The call from the students has already been taken up across a number of union branches, with motions passed in NTEU branches at UTS, Sydney University and UNSW calling for “the widest possible stoppage of work and study to attend demonstrations on this day”.

NTEU Sydney Uni Branch secretary Kurt Iveson told the meeting that the union’s NSW division, “has endorsed the action and called on all branches to hold member meetings over the next month where climate strikers would address our meetings and we would discuss what actions we were taking to build the strike”.

As Kurt put it, getting behind the action in March, “meant credibility for the union and built our power because there were people who participated who weren’t the usual suspects”.

In Victoria, the NTEU has also supported it at a state-wide level, with a motion passed by the Victorian Divisional Council. The MUA Sydney branch has passed a motion welcoming the call from school students, and similarly declaring the union’s intention to build for the, “widest possible stoppage of work”.

Under current Australian industrial law strikes around political issues are illegal. So the effort to strike for the climate also highlights our restrictive anti-strike laws and the need to win



Above: Unionists in Sydney meet to discuss building support for the Climate Strike

the right to strike.

But unions have defied the law in the past, and there are also other avenues for organising walk offs. Vice-Chancellors at both Sydney Uni and UTS were pushed into declaring that all staff and students were free to attend the last Climate Strike in March without penalty.

As Kurt explained, the situation at Sydney Uni meant, “There were lots of small conversations in corridors and in work units like ‘what does it mean if we walk off’ that were really important in politicising the event”.

The hope is to repeat this for an even large campus mobilisation this time. At the July meeting 25 NTEU members from across Sydney held a working group meeting to discuss plans, alongside groups for other unions.

Discussing transitions

Demanding fair jobs for workers in renewable industries is central to building the strike in workplaces.

Speaking about her experience meeting with unionists, school striker Daisy noted, “what we’ve really discovered and want to address is the concern for fossil fuel workers. We need this transition into renewable energy but it’s important we don’t leave these workers behind... For the climate activist community it’s one of the things that’s been dismissed in the past.”

MUA member Tommy-John Her-

bert spoke about working as a seafarer for fossil fuel projects and seeing climate devastation first hand:

“I wasn’t in that job because I enjoyed working with fossil fuels; I was in those jobs because of the conditions... that was all fought for by the MUA over many years... When it comes to talking about transition the moral argument is an easy one. We’ve got to fight to get solid union jobs and union conditions and back projects that are going to do that”.

In a significant step for building solidarity with maritime workers, School Strike for Climate put out a statement in support of workers at DP World on strike at container terminals across Australia, stating: “it is the same unjust rules driving the climate crisis which are also hurting workers and it’s time to turn them around.”

Support for the strike is growing in other areas too. Activists in the music industry have launched a “Sound Strike”, encouraging musicians to pledge to strike on the night of 20 September. Over 120 musicians have already signed on.

The last Sydney climate strike far exceeded expectations, and the next is forecast to bring out over 60,000 students. While anti-strike laws remain a serious roadblock, a mood of excitement in the campaign both here and overseas is brewing. For workers to use industrial power to stop climate change, not just in September but going forward, bad laws will need to be broken.

The call from the students has already been taken up across a number of union branches

Fast ferry workers strike against casualisation and low pay

By Miro Sandev

WORKERS AT Manly Fast Ferries in Sydney have staged a series of strikes fighting for better pay, secure jobs and safety.

But so far the owners, NRMA, are not budging from their insulting pay offer and refusal to immediately convert casuals to permanent positions.

The 80 workers, who are almost all casuals, have organised four successful strikes against the company. These have varied from one or two hour stoppages, up to full-day strikes.

Initially the company attempted to bring in scab labour to run the ferries during the strikes, but the Maritime Union of Australia organised the workers to successfully block the ships from docking at Circular Quay.

Since that action, NRMA has backed down and just cancelled services when the union called a strike. The latest full day strike saw the cancellation of all fast ferry services on the busy Manly-Circular Quay route, as well as tourist charters and regular services on five other routes on Sydney Harbour.

Manly Fast Ferries and the union have been negotiating for almost four years, since the company gained the government contract to run the service.

Eighteen months ago, NRMA took majority share in the company but the workers saw no change in their low pay, conditions and safety issues.

But with the help of the union, workers started to turn things around, MUA delegate Brock Mamo told Solidarity. "When the MUA stepped in on the vessels and brought the unsafe nature of the vessels to the company's face and the crew got to witness a lot of it, it really put a lot of their faith that the MUA is here to fight for its members," he said.

The company did not have a proper fatigue management policy which was making it dangerous, as boat captains would get sometimes only a few hours' sleep.

"However, there was a big problem if you spoke up," said Mamo.

"It was called death by roster: because you're casual they would cut your hours until you can no longer live and would have to find work elsewhere.

"We have changed that now, because we fought. Now if the company does not provide proper fatigue man-



Above: Rallying at Circular Quay during one of the Fast Ferry strikes

agement then they have to pay them double time for the entire next shift, which the company avoids."

Fighting for pay

Getting a win on safety helped boost union membership from around 40 per cent to almost 100 per cent and has given the workers confidence to fight on pay and secure jobs. The workers are being paid according to the tourism and charter boat award, instead of the award for commuter ferries like similar workers at Sydney Fast Ferries. This means they are drastically underpaid.

NRMA has offered a one-off increase of 10 per cent and 2.5 per year after that, but this is still well below the ferry award rate and industry standards. The MUA are asking for \$67,000 a year for deckhands, going up to \$94,000 for captains.

This is significantly lower than Sydney Ferries workers who are doing the same job. Their deckhands are on \$90,000 and \$130,000 for captains. Sydney Ferries workers also get ten weeks holidays, while Fast Ferry workers are only asking for four. But despite this disparity, NRMA are refusing to budge on their offer.

This bizarre situation is the result of privatisation—the Fast Ferries service was contracted out separately to the operation of the regular Sydney Ferries.

Casualisation is another major

sticking point. The workforce is 95 per cent casual and still doesn't have a guaranteed number of hours. NRMA have over-supplied the workforce and dropped some people's hours.

The union has been pushing for conversion to permanency for people who have worked consistently for over six months. But the threshold for this is a minimum of 32 hours weekly and the company has been cutting workers' hours in order to avoid giving full-time positions.

"They want to keep the workforce casualised," Mamo said. "And that's where we are standing strong because we can see what they're doing and we're not going to sign a deal which is going to allow them to continue doing this."

NRMA have said they are prepared to look at converting half the workers to permanent but with major caveats, including phasing this in over a two-year period. But by the time that happens, the government contract will only have six months left and there is no guarantee NRMA will retain it.

"We will continue to escalate with the option of rolling stoppages," said Mamo. "Last time around, when we did the rolling stoppages that's when they caved in. We're remaining optimistic that we won't have to get there, that NRMA will come to the table and put some good deals forward. However, if that doesn't happen we will need to escalate until we get action."

Getting a win on safety helped boost union membership from around 40 to almost 100 per cent

No Medevac repeal: Break the blockade, Bring them here

By Ian Rintoul

AS EXPECTED, in the first sitting of the new Parliament, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton moved to repeal the Medevac Bill.

Dutton's move has been temporarily stalled while the Bill is reviewed by a Senate committee that won't report until mid-October.

It is now likely to come to Parliament in the November sitting. But there can be no doubt that the government's intention is to overturn it and restrict medical transfers from offshore to Australia.

The medical need is clear. Since the Bill was introduced in March the government has agreed to transfer around 80 people under the provisions of the Act—mostly from Manus Island.

It is a pitifully small number, but before the Medevac Bill, Manus was a medical black hole, with the government refusing medical transfers and the Pacific International Hospital (PIH) obstructing the provision of medical records, making court action in Australia all but impossible.

The government wants to go back to the days when it had effectively total control and could deny medical treatment to refugees with impunity.

The government is also hiding behind the extraordinary efforts of the Nauru government to obstruct medical transfers. But after a scathing Federal court finding to that effect in one case, a week later, the government finally transferred the refugee from Nauru.

Typically, the government is using the language of national security to try and drive the repeal motion through Parliament. Dutton told the parliament, "As a nation it is imperative we are able to determine who enters Australia and whether they should remain in our borders permanently."

The 20 July rallies, marking six years of the Pacific Solution Mk II that began the present offshore regime, are an important part of building the campaign against the repeal. But it is also clear that the Medevac Bill is not going to get everyone off Manus and Nauru.

The government is also moving to re-introduce the Lifetime Ban bill that would prevent any refugee resettled in any third country (like the US or potentially New Zealand) from ever travelling to Australia. The Bill was passed by the House of Representa-



Above: Some medical transfers have finally started to take place from Manus—but nowhere near enough

tives in 2016, but was never put to the Senate as it was obvious that the Liberals did not have the numbers. Now the government is coming back for another go.

'Australian solution'

There is another reason to build the refugee campaign in Australia—Donald Trump and other racist politicians in Europe are openly using the "Australian solution" as an international model for inhuman refugee policies.

In June, Trump tweeted that "much can be learned from Australia's policies", along with posters from Operation Sovereign Borders threatening that refugees would never be resettled in Australia.

Trump's policies on the Mexican border resemble nothing as much as Australia's detention centres. While Trump declared that the detention centres were "beautifully run," and "clean", a reporter travelling the Vice President Mike Pence in July described the horrendous stench from one all-male detention centre that was "so crowded it would have been impossible for all of them to lie down".

The "Australian model" is also the inspiration for the Italian government's ban on refugee rescue boats docking in Italian ports. In August 2018, the far right Italian deputy Prime Minister, Matteo Salvini, bragged about introducing Australia's model of the Pacific Solution to Italy.

In late June this year, Carola Rackete, the German captain of the rescue ship, *Sea Watch 3* was arrested

after defying the Italian government's orders not to land 42 asylum seekers. The captain of a second ship, the Italian NGO vessel, *Mediterranea* is also "under investigation" for breaking the Italian government's ban on landing asylum seekers.

A third ship, *Alan Kurdi*, headed for Malta after being stranded in international waters off Lampedusa with 65 rescued asylum seekers on board. Some of them had been in detention centres in Libya for five years—sound familiar?

The Italian government's policy of denying entry to asylum boats and forcing rescue boats to return asylum seekers to Libya and Tunisia, follows the Australian government's Operation Sovereign Borders naval blockade that turns boats back to Indonesia and asylum seekers to Sri Lanka.

Thirty thousand people demonstrated across Germany (8000 in Berlin, 4000 in Hamburg) in solidarity with Carola Rackete, against Italy's refugee blockade.

As right-wing politicians across the globe look to the "Australian solution", protests in Australia to end offshore detention and boat turnbacks have taken on increased importance as a demonstration of domestic opposition and international solidarity.

Dutton even wants to turn back sick refugees to Manus and Nauru. We need to break the Morrison government's refugee blockade. The demand to open the borders and "bring them here" the refugees has never been more important.

Dutton wants to go back to the days when he had effectively total control and could deny medical treatment with impunity

Liberals put their surplus above jobs and the economy

By James Supple

SCOTT MORRISON went to the election boasting about the “strong economy” that six years of Liberal government had delivered. That claim has already unravelled.

Since July last year economic growth has sputtered out, with just 0.9 per cent growth over the three quarters to March.

On a per person basis the economy has been in recession since then. The only reason there is still growth at all is because of the increase in population, powered by immigration.

The Reserve Bank is seriously worried, cutting interest rates twice since the election to a record low of 1 per cent. This is well below where they went even during the global economic crisis in 2009.

It used the same trick in 2012 as the mining boom was ending. This provided cheap credit which underpinned a boom in housing construction and consumer spending. As a result housing prices soared and average household debt has climbed to a record level of 190 per cent of household income.

Now consumer spending has stalled, due to record low wage growth, debt and the drop in housing prices. This is a big problem because household spending is such a huge part of the economy.

Construction is also declining, with an oversupply of houses in many areas and investment properties not so attractive after falls of 15.9 per cent in Sydney and 10.9 per cent in Melbourne since prices peaked in 2017.

This just leaves government spending propping up the economy, with growth of 5.1 per cent in the last year. The only other bright spot is a surge in corporate earnings from high commodity prices and an increase in exports, mainly of iron ore and LNG. Iron ore prices have jumped due to supply disruptions from Brazil following a mine disaster that killed at least 248 people.

Stimulus

This fragile situation has led to calls for further government stimulus spending.

Reserve Bank Governor Philip Lowe pointedly declared in a speech in early July that, “we should not rely on monetary policy”—the cuts to interest rates—“alone”.

He went on to note that, “the



Above: The fall in house prices has had flow on effects in construction and consumer spending

Australian Government can borrow for 10 years at around 1.3 per cent, the lowest rate it has faced since Federation in 1901”.

In other words, it is a perfect opportunity to borrow and build much needed infrastructure. Our cities are desperate for increased public transport, and spending on renewable energy is urgent. But for all their talk of “congestion busting” projects during the election, the Coalition is reducing its efforts.

Greg Jericho wrote in the *Guardian* in late June that government infrastructure work, “has declined for four straight quarters and is now at its lowest level since 2016”, based on Bureau of Statistics engineering construction figures. Between January and March public infrastructure work fell by 15 per cent.

The Coalition is far too attached to its budget surplus to increase spending further. The fetish over budget surpluses is rotten neo-liberal economics. When the economy is weak it makes sense for government spending and debt to increase in order to create jobs.

The government is simply relying on income tax cuts, now passed in the Senate, in the hope they will be enough to get consumers spending. Many taxpayers will get up to \$1080 in this year’s tax return.

But they have also locked in two further stages of tax cuts out to 2024 that give billions to the rich.

The third stage of the package costs a gigantic \$95 billion, with \$29.7 billion flowing to people earning over \$180,000. Yet the government refuses to commit a cent to increasing Newstart, which leaves those on income support in poverty. ACOSS’s proposal to lift it by \$75 a week would cost just \$3.3 billion a year—spending which would help the economy because it would immediately be spent—unlike handouts to the rich.

If the economic situation worsens, the Liberals will try to make workers pay to restore corporate profits.

Locking in such enormous tax cuts now could force spending cuts in the coming years. Before the election the Grattan Institute estimated government spending would have to be cut \$40 billion a year from 2029-30.

There will be even more savage cuts if the economy sours. The government’s budget figures depend on projections of economic growth and wage rises well above what is likely.

Treasurer Josh Frydenburg is hedging his bets, saying that, “We’re not planning on any cuts”... just at the minute.

But the Coalition do want further attacks on workers’ rights. A review of industrial relations laws is already underway and the bosses are listing their demands for changes.

The Liberals want workers to pay to get the economy out of any crisis. We shouldn’t let them.

There is a perfect opportunity to borrow and build much needed infrastructure

Trump ratchets up US aggression against Iran

By Mark Gillespie

THE TRUMP administration and a coterie of allies—including Australia—are ratcheting up aggression against Iran and another disastrous war in the region shouldn't be ruled out.

In late June Trump ordered airstrikes on targets inside Iran only to withdraw them with ten minutes to spare, launching a cyber-attack instead. This was in retaliation for Iran shooting down a US surveillance drone they said was in Iranian airspace.

In May and June a number of oil tankers were bombed in the region and the US blamed Iran. These claims have not been verified and they conflict with the first-hand accounts of sailors on the ships. The US used this as an excuse to send thousands of troops, an aircraft carrier, nuclear-capable B-52 bombers, and advanced fighter jets to the region.

On 4 July British Royal Marines seized an Iranian oil tanker off Gibraltar, accusing it of breaking sanctions on Syria. Iran is now threatening to seize a British ship in the Straits of Hormuz.

The US's regional allies, Saudi Arabia and Israel, are championing at the bit for war while Trump, according to the recently resigned British ambassador, is surrounded by a "hawkish group of advisers".

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has warned the US will consider its "full range" of options. US National Security Advisor John Bolton, who has called for regime change in Iran, has warned it not to, "mistake US prudence and discretion for weakness".

While Trump was elected on a platform of ending the wars the US was bogged down in, a miscalculation cannot be ruled out resulting in a full blown conflagration.

Back to the table

The Western media and politicians blame Iran for the increasing tension. Scott Morrison supported the US claiming it aimed to, "get [Iran] back to the table".

But it was the US that walked away from the UN-endorsed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran Nuclear deal, and unilaterally imposed sanctions.

Under the deal, Iran was meant to scale back its nuclear program



Above: Donald Trump and his warmongering National Security Advisor John Bolton

and limit enrichment of uranium to 3.67 per cent—enough for its nuclear power stations but nowhere near the 90 per cent required for nuclear weapons. In exchange Iran would gain sanctions relief.

During the 2016 election campaign, however, Trump began attacking the deal—considered Obama's signature foreign policy achievement—saying it was "the worst ever". In May 2018 he walked away from it completely. Other signatories to the deal, France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia, all criticised Trump for, "reneging on our international obligations".

In spite of the US's aggression these countries are urging Iran to stick with the deal. France, Germany and Britain have even set up a transaction channel, INSTEX, to help facilitate trade with Iran. But this has been ineffective as the fear of secondary US sanctions has scared off major investors. Iran's economy has stagnated and inflation is approaching 40 per cent. Its oil exports fell from about 2.5 million barrels a day in April 2018 to just 300,000 barrels per day today.

Iran stuck with the enrichment limit until July when it announced it would begin enriching uranium to 5 per cent and warned it could go higher. It wants further efforts from the European powers to mitigate the effects of the US sanctions.

Imperialists out

Iran has good reason to distrust the West. There is a long history of

imperialist intervention against Iran. When oil was first discovered in 1913 the British owned Anglo Persian Oil Company (later BP) had exclusive rights and only paid 16 per cent of its profits to Iran.

In 1951 the nationalist Mossadegh government was elected and nationalised the oil. The US, Britain and the major oil companies organised sanctions and a coup that installed a brutal regime under the Shah.

In 1973 the US had 24,000 "military advisers" in Iran and Tehran hosted the CIA's regional headquarters.

The 1979 revolution overthrew the Shah and drove out the US. A new clerical regime eventually seized power. While it brutally repressed the workers' movement and the left it pursued its own national interests independent of the Western imperialist powers.

This has made it an enemy of the US. The US accuses Iran of promoting terrorism but in 1988 the US shot an Iranian passenger airline out of the sky killing 290 civilians including 66 children.

Ironically the US's disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have allowed Iran's influence to expand in the region. While the Islamic regime is far from desirable it's up to the Iranian people to deal with them.

Imperialist intervention, as the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria have shown, will only make matters worse. Socialists have to oppose all imperialist interventions.

It was the US that walked away from the UN-endorsed Iran Nuclear deal

Hong Kong rocked by millions-strong protest movement

By Lam Chi Leung,
Hong Kong socialist

ON 16 June over two million Hong Kong residents protested against the proposed amendments to the Fugitive Offenders' Ordinance—commonly known as the “extradition bill”.

This, and China's concerns about the effects of the political crisis on the US-China trade war, as well as its negative impact on pro-Beijing candidates in the presidential election in Taiwan next year, forced the Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam to suspend the proposed amendments.

This was done with the endorsement of the Chinese government.

Hong Kong's total population is estimated at around 7.5 million. So a quarter of the population has participated in the protests.

The anti-extradition demonstration was double the size of the city's 1989 protests after the Tiananmen Massacre.

This massive mobilisation has won a partial victory. But Carrie Lam's has refused to fully withdraw the proposed amendments. This suggests that there is a real possibility of the government pushing the bill again in the near future, with the aim of allowing Beijing to extradite its opponents to Mainland China for trial.

Hong Kong citizens have held a succession of protests.

First there was the one million-strong march on 9 June. Then came the blockade of the Legislative Council on 12 June which drew around 40,000—mostly young—people, and paralysed the operations of the legislature, preventing the second reading of the proposed amendments.

The Hong Kong police force responded to the 12 June protest with violence. As well as using a huge amount of tear gas and pepper spray, they fired rubber bullets and bean bag rounds without warning.

On the evening of 15 June Marco Leung, 35, killed himself by jumping from the roof of a major shopping mall near the Legislative Council. He had hung an “anti-extradition bill” banner on the mall, and a note left behind explained that his suicide was an act of protest against the government.

Grieved and enraged, two million people protested the very next day.

Leung's parents told journalists, “The government's indifferent pursuit of wealth has forced young people



Above: Protests of up to two million have hit the streets against the extradition bill

to serve the rich, to become slaves of their mortgages, and the working class and ordinary folks have no say over the government's policies.”

The workers and youth of Hong Kong did not see an improvement to their quality of life after Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997. On the contrary, collaboration between the Chinese Communist Party regime and local capitalists has meant that Hong Kong has continued to implement a system of laissez-faire capitalism.

In the past 20 years, Hong Kong has seen negligible growth in real wages. Up to 1.37 million people live in poverty—one in five of the population—and inequality has surpassed that of the US and Singapore.

Turning point

The “anti-extradition” movement is far from over, even as the government has suspended the proposed amendments. The numerous protests have, to an extent, overcome an important weakness of the Umbrella Movement and there is an awareness of the need to maintain broader societal support for the movement.

But on 1 July some protesters began to try and storm the Legislative Council (LegCo), Hong Kong's legislature.

There is reason to suspect that police inside were ordered to retreat with the intention of allowing protesters to storm the building. The government wanted to frame protesters as rioters, marring the entire movement.

The storming of the LegCo was not just aimless vandalism. Protesters did not destroy any historical artifacts and in fact put up signs to protect them. They even left money before taking soft drinks from the canteen.

But the month-long leaderless and self-initiated mass movement has also reached a limit. There are different views regarding the storming of the LegCo.

Some protesters support occupying it. They believe that only an escalation of the movement can force the government to concede.

In my opinion, in the current situation, it is an extremely dangerous and unwise strategy. Storming government buildings will give the Lam administration the perfect excuse to slander the entire movement, and carry out a violent crackdown.

Other activists continue to advocate the mobilisation of workers in order to instigate political strikes. Although the general strike and school boycott on 17 June were, for the most part, not a success, the potential and value of political strikes have been raised for further discussion.

Organising a coalition committee and employing a general strike and general walkout from schools would be a genuine escalation of the struggle.

We should unite with the workers and others who are defending their rights in China. Only then can we establish democracy for China and Hong Kong.

Socialist Worker UK

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The month-long leaderless and self-initiated mass movement has also reached a limit

Syriza's downfall in Greece is a crucial lesson for the left

By Nick Clark

GREECE'S ONCE-RADICAL left-wing party Syriza was booted out of government in elections in early July—after four years of enforcing austerity and racism.

Greece's Tory party New Democracy won with an outright majority.

The result should be a sobering lesson—and a dire warning—to left-wing parties that hoped to follow in its footsteps.

After conceding defeat, Syriza leader and former prime minister Alexis Tsipras said the party would, “protect the rights of working people with a responsible but dynamic opposition”.

“I wish and hope that the return of New Democracy to government will not lead to vengeance,” he added.

It was a long way from his victory speech of January 2015, which promised to end, “in an undisputed manner the memorandums of austerity and destruction”. He had also said the “Troika”—the European Union (EU), International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank were “a thing of the past.”

Syriza's defeat came about because all those promises were betrayed. It was elected after nearly five years of devastating austerity that made ordinary people pay for an economic crisis caused by bankers.

“Memorandums” agreed between Greek governments and the Troika “bailed out” the Greek banks to ensure they could keep paying their debts to other bankers. They also demanded cuts to public services, and workers' pay and pensions, and large-scale privatisation.

Resistance to that austerity involved mass protests, riots—and 32 general strikes since 2010.

Syriza was associated with that movement. But it said the best way to end austerity was by getting elected to government. That meant trying to work “tactically” within the system rather than challenging it.

Negotiate

And crucially it meant trying to negotiate a way out of austerity with the Troika.

As soon as Syriza was elected the Troika demanded that Greece accept a third bailout loan—complete with austerity conditions. It wanted to make an example of Syriza for daring to challenge austerity. It piled economic pressure on, including cutting off support for Greece's banks.



Above: Defeated Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras

Syriza held a referendum on the deal. Ordinary people rejected it with a big “No” vote in July 2015. But Syriza saw the vote as little more than a bargaining chip.

The government could have used this collective political strength to hit back at the Troika. It could have made the decision to exit the EU and refuse to pay. But faced with this decision, it chose to stay with the Troika and play by its rules. It ended up implementing an even worse austerity plan than the one voters had rejected.

Not only that, the Syriza government supported the US's war-mongering in the Middle East and Mediterranean. And it enforced the cruel EU border controls, locking up refugees in vast, squalid camps on Greek islands.

Syriza was transformed from a party that promised to challenge the

system into one that defended it.

Turnout in Sunday's election was just 57 per cent. It's a sign that after years of austerity many ordinary people feel there is no one to represent them in mainstream politics.

Yet the new Tory government won't find being back in office easy. New Tory prime minister, former banker Kyriakos Mitsotakis, had to promise “growth, jobs and security” in his victory speech.

Yet the Troika still demands harsh austerity from Greece until its debts are repaid—in 2060. Meanwhile, despite years of assault, workers in Greece continue to resist with strikes demanding better pay and more jobs.

And the election of a Tory government could open up space for a new wave of resistance on the streets and in the workplaces.

Socialist Worker UK

Golden Dawn Nazis crash and burn

THE NAZIS of the Golden Dawn party were finally booted out of the Greek parliament. Its first MPs were elected in 2012.

At its height Golden Dawn had 21 MPs and organised a terrifying street movement that carried out murderous attacks on migrants and the left.

Now it has none—and its leading figures face jail sentences over the murder of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas. But far right party Greek Solution, led by Kyriakos Velopoulos, entered parliament for the first time

with 10 seats.

The anti-fascist Keerfa organisation said Golden Dawn's defeat is, “a great victory for the massive, unified, persistent, long-lasting and systematic action of thousands of militants of the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement”.

“That led the neo-Nazis to complete isolation in the neighbourhoods all over the country,” it said. “But we have to stress that there can be no complacency because we are not done with the fascist threat. But we are confident that we can smash them with a mass movement.”

Syriza said the best way to end austerity was by getting elected to government

CLASS AND THE CARBON TAX LESSONS FROM THE LAST CLIMATE MOVEMENT

A large grassroots climate movement emerged from 2008—but the decision to defend the carbon tax sent it into decline, writes **Chris Breen**

THE GLOBAL student climate strikes have put climate change back on the agenda and seen a rebirth of the climate movement.

Climate change is already having an impact. If we pass crucial tipping points abrupt climate change will lead to severe agricultural disruption, political turmoil and potentially millions of climate refugees.

Urgent action is needed.

But the reborn climate movement must learn the lessons of the recent past if it is to avoid the mistakes that led to the movement's collapse in 2011-12. We need to harness sharp clear demands to social forces with the power to bring change.

In early 2008 the Climate Emergency Network was formed in Melbourne, based on some of the ideas in the book *Climate Code Red* by David Spratt and Phillip Sutton.

At its peak it was made up of 30 active local groups and had general meetings of up to 200 people. It called rallies of 5000, and promoted the Walk Against Warmings called by large environmental NGOs.

There were a series of national grassroots Climate Action Summits that drew between 300 and 500 activists.

But the movement was quickly confronted by the power of big business and the fossil fuel corporations to block serious action.

The first Walk Against Warming in November 2007 mobilised 50,000 people in Melbourne, and 100,000 nationally. The rally added to the momentum to elect the Rudd Labor government two weeks later, but it only demanded vague "Climate Action".

Rudd said that, "Climate Change is the great moral challenge of our generation". But his response, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), was designed to be acceptable to big business.

This meant adopting a market mechanism with a pathetic 5-15 per cent reduction target, free permits for polluters and unlimited offsets. Modelling showed it would actually increase emissions. The Greens rightly voted against it, condemning it as "worse than useless".

The climate movement campaigned for a stronger policy, only to see Kevin Rudd offer even greater handouts to polluting companies in the hope of securing Liberal Party and corporate support.

Then Labor abandoned the scheme, and any climate action policy with it. Rudd lost a million votes in a fortnight and was removed as leader shortly afterwards.

However the movement was far from clear on what kind of action was needed, and what demands to raise as an alternative.

Carbon tax

The carbon tax introduced by Labor and The Greens in 2011 was, tragically, supported by large sections of the movement, particularly by the big environmental NGOs, GetUp and The Greens, who organised "Say Yes" rallies in 2011.

It aimed to force companies and consumers to reduce emissions through putting a price on carbon emissions. Despite talk of making the polluters pay, the carbon tax was designed so that companies would pass the cost on through increasing electricity prices, as then Prime Minister Julia Gillard openly admitted.

This was a gift to Tony Abbott and the Liberals, who declared that the tax would raise power prices and damage workers' cost of living, promising to axe it.

Sections of the movement, like the Climate Emergency Network and Friends of the Earth, were sceptical about the tax, but remained isolated.

The carbon tax painted climate action as linked to lower living standards

As a result, by late 2011, the Climate Emergency Network and the climate movement around it had begun to decline.

As *Solidarity* wrote at the time, "A carbon tax was no way to win popular support for action on climate change. An Essential poll after the [2010] election found 47 per cent oppose it with only 39 per cent in support.

"Worse still, the carbon tax would never have substantially increased the use of renewable energy or reduced emissions. Treasury modelling released by the government showed Australia's emissions would continue to rise until 2030. Labor's claimed 'reduction target' of 5 per cent by 2020 was only met through buying overseas and domestic offsets, which were to make up at least half of the emissions 'cuts'."

The carbon tax painted climate action as linked to lower living standards. This meant the climate movement's support for the tax cut it off from wider layers of workers. The movement became even more restricted to middle class supporters unconcerned by the prospect of rising prices.

Enthusiasm for action on climate change dropped as a result. In 2006 the annual Lowy Poll showed 68 per cent viewed climate change as a "serious and pressing problem" requiring action. But this was down to just 40 per cent in 2013.

All the movement's efforts to build support for the carbon tax went nowhere.

Tony Abbott and the Coalition won the 2013 election in large part on a promise to scrap the carbon tax, and it was repealed in 2014.

Adani, coal and jobs

There are important lessons for the climate movement from the carbon tax debacle. Similar questions over win-

ning workers to the climate movement have surfaced around the politics of Adani, coal and jobs.

This was reinforced by May's federal election result. Labor equivocated on Adani, suggesting it might stop the mine, while failing to provide a credible plan for alternative jobs. It suffered at the polls in Queensland regions hit hard by unemployment and economic insecurity.

Coal workers and miners in Queensland and the Hunter Valley rightly fear being left behind should the industry close.

The question of jobs doesn't just affect those in coal regions, but is an obstacle to winning the active support of the wider union movement. One of the arguments run by Australian Education Union officials in Victoria against actively calling on teachers to join the last climate strike was that the CFMMEU did not support the demand to stop Adani.

A climate movement that actively fights for jobs could begin to turn this around. Former coal workers in South Australia fought for the Port Augusta Solar Tower project in the wake of the closure of the coal-fired power station there.

The project won a tender to supply electricity to the state, but collapsed in April due to lack of finance.

This was a perfect opportunity for the climate movement to step in and fight for government to build the project, which could have been a win for renewables and jobs. If a "just transition" is to be more than just a slogan it has to be fought for.

To win the active participation of workers, climate action must be linked to improved living standards. Winning those in the fossil fuel industry and beyond will require fighting for job guarantees with union conditions and pay.

The narrow focus of the climate movement on Adani, without any fight for jobs, is an obstacle to building this support.

Winning working class support is also vital to mobilising the power to force radical change.

To make the shift away from fossil fuels on the scale we need requires overcoming powerful business interests in an economy powered by fossil fuels. We need a mass movement powerful enough to impose its will on governments and corporations unwilling to act.

Workers are the only group in society with both the interest and the power to force such action on climate



Above: Most of the climate movement backed the carbon tax—with disastrous results

change—through strike action they can paralyse the entire economy and shut off corporate profits.

After losing his seat on election night, Tony Abbott said, "Where climate change is a moral issue, we Liberals do it tough, but where climate change is an economic issue, as the result tonight shows, we do very, very well."

To beat the Liberals over climate, the movement needs to win on the economics as well as the urgent need to act.

That means fighting against privatisation and market mechanisms. It means demanding that government directly fund the renewable and public transport transition we need, and directly employ the hundreds of thousands needed to do it, because the market cannot and will not do the job.

We don't need more market schemes or taxes. We know what needs to be done to decarbonise the economy and should demand it directly.

Demands

The 20 September climate strikes can be an important stepping up of climate action.

The demands of previous school strikes were: Stop the Adani coal mine; No new coal, oil and gas projects; 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030.

Demanding 100 per cent renewable energy is a stronger pro-jobs

demand than Stop Adani, and crucially focuses on the transition needed within the Australian economy rather than exports.

The only way to get 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030 is for government to directly fund and build it, like they once built all the coal-fired power stations in Australia. Demands for 100 per cent publicly owned renewables by 2030 and climate jobs could win wide support amongst workers.

Extinction Rebellion, which started in the UK and has come to Australia, is another positive development. It is demanding governments tell the truth about climate change, reduce emissions to net zero by 2025 and call a citizens' assembly.

This would postpone the decisions about how to cut emissions to a citizens' assembly.

But the climate movement can't avoid taking a position on government policies that are counter-productive or don't go far enough.

Canada for instance declared a Climate Emergency on 18 June this year and the very next day approved the expansion of a pipeline to carry 600,000 barrels of oil per day.

The climate movement must fight alongside unions for jobs, and reject market-based solutions like carbon trading or carbon taxes.

Any concession to the idea that climate action means attacks on working class living standards will only bring setbacks.

VIETNAM AND THE STUDENT REBELLION

The US student movement in the 1960s began by rejecting ideology and the ‘old left’, but was soon forced to grapple with the power of capitalism and the state, says **Daniel Cotton**

A NEW wave of climate activism has emerged largely outside the established left, from high school strikes to “extinction rebellion”. Many are making comparisons to the fight against the Vietnam War in the 1960s. This history contains important lessons about the danger of ignoring political ideology and the centrality of the working class.

Students played a central role in opposing the Vietnam War in the US. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) grew from a small organisation of less than 1000 members in the early 1960s to one encompassing as many as 100,000 members and over 300 branches by 1969.

But June this year marked 50 years since the organisation collapsed. From an organising centre able to bring together thousands of activists, SDS was defunct within the year.

SDSers saw themselves as breaking out of a historical Cold War impasse on the Left.

Their first statement of principles, the Port Huron statement, dismissed the “liberal and socialist preachments of the past”, including the supposedly obsolete concerns of the socialist left such as the working class and revolution.

As SDS leader Tom Hayden wrote in 1966, the, “traditional Left expectation of irreconcilable and clashing class interests has been defied. It appears that the American elite has discovered a long-term way to stabilize or cushion the contradictions of our society”.

Another leader described activists as, “staunchly anti-intellectual... In one sense they have no politics... They are morally outraged about the war, cops, racism, poverty, their parents, the middle class and authority in general”.

The Port Huron statement declared the SDS in favour of “participatory democracy” and non-violence. But these pleasant ideals came into increasing conflict with their experiences of

extreme state violence and the patent lack of democracy.

Anti-war activism grows

The campaign against the Vietnam War turned SDS into a national force. In the 1964 presidential election, they raised the slogan “Half the way with LBJ”—backing the Democratic Party’s Lyndon B. Johnson against Republican Barry Goldwater.

But four months after he rolled to victory, LBJ began the largest bombing campaign in the history of warfare. This escalation of the Vietnam War pushed students into an increasingly outraged anti-war movement.

Across the country over 100 colleges organised “teach-ins”. US government officials and anti-war activists debated the war on equal terms in front of tens of thousands of students—3000 attended the first teach-in at the University of Michigan. Anti-war ideas gained a mass audience.

Protest found a growing audience too. Observers were shocked when 20,000 attended the first national demonstration against the war in April 1965, called by SDS.

The year 1968 was a turning point. The Vietnamese Tet offensive in January demolished the idea that the US was winning the war. Civil rights leader Martin Luther King was murdered in April, provoking riots. Democratic Party presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy was assassinated in June.

And from Prague to Paris, student and worker uprisings were exploding worldwide.

State repression in Chicago

The protests at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Chicago in August transformed a generation of activists.

Dogged by an increasingly unpopular war, LBJ’s popularity had plummeted to 36 per cent, and he withdrew from the race. SDS called a demonstration outside the DNC, at

State repression made it clear that the establishment was determined to continue the war at any cost

which hopes were high that anti-war candidate Eugene McCarthy would win the Democratic nomination.

Students descended on the conference. Hundreds camped at Lincoln Park. At its height, the demonstration swelled to 10,000.

However, protesters were met with the full might of a Democratic Party machine determined to install Hubert Humphrey, the pro-war establishment candidate, by any means necessary. He had not even been a candidate in any of the primaries, which were won overwhelmingly by anti-war candidates.

Democratic Chicago Mayor Richard Daley mobilised 12,000 police, 5000 national guardsmen, and 7500 troops to drive protesters off the streets.

Demonstrators braved repression for two consecutive nights before staging a march through Chicago on the day of the convention vote. Images were beamed across the world of police carving up the stationary demonstration with tear gas and clubs and chasing down individuals. The violence was indiscriminate. Village Voice reported:

“Demonstrators, reporters, McCarthy workers, doctors, all began to stagger into the Hilton [hotel] lobby, blood streaming from face and head wounds... A few people began to direct the wounded to a makeshift hospital on the fifteenth floor, the McCarthy staff headquarters”.

This extended inside the conference, where delegates were leaving the floor to watch coverage of the protests outside. One reporter was punched in the jaw. A delegate was dragged from the room by cops after refusing to resume his seat. One senator decried the “Gestapo tactics”.

Humphrey was installed as the Democratic candidate—stunning those who had thought the party might end the war.

America’s rulers claimed to stand for freedom against the Communist dictatorships in Russia and Eastern

Europe, which were busily crushing the Prague Spring uprising in Czechoslovakia. But at the heart of American capitalism students found similar repression.

Activists drew the parallels: “Chicago is fast becoming the Prague of the midwest”.

Political radicalisation

The events of 1968 crystallised and accelerated the process of political radicalization. Independent Socialists Weinberg and Gerson wrote, “What began as a movement in many ways resembling a super-idealistic children’s crusade to save the world, was becoming increasingly grim and increasingly serious”.

Activists had previously dismissed ideology. But state repression was making it clear that the establishment was determined to continue the war at any cost, and was entirely prepared to crush the anti-war movement to do so.

The idea that the US was a democratic country whose institutions could be persuaded to end the war through non-violent protests could neither satisfyingly explain the repression nor suggest a way forward.

By the 1969 conference, every major faction within SDS had adopted some version of Marxism. One 1968 SDS leader described the turn, “We’d done everything we could think of in our liberal, radical, anarchist, socialist framework... but still it wasn’t enough”.

This reflected a general radicalisation amongst huge numbers of students. In 1968, over 350,000 students “strongly agreed” that some kind of “mass revolutionary party” was needed in the US, and a poll in 1969 found that over one million students considered themselves revolutionaries and socialists of some kind.

But the dominant form of Marxism that students in SDS turned to was Maoism. A group of Maoists, Progressive Labor (PL) had been active in the group since 1966, and were now gaining political influence.

Their model was the authoritarian party Mao built in China, which produced a thoroughly dogmatic and sectarian approach. PL denounced all nationalist movements (including the Vietnamese fighting the US and the Black Panthers) as counter-revolutionary.

The other SDS factions saw third-world and national liberation struggles, like the Vietnamese fighting the US army, as the only real hope for revolutionary change. US workers were seen as bought off, bound to



the system by “white skin privilege” and the higher wages they received compared to the third world.

The 1969 SDS conference was a farce. The SDS leadership invited Black Panther speakers to denounce PL as racists and counter-revolutionaries. PL denounced the Black Panthers for their appalling sexism. The SDS leadership expelled PL and split the organisation in two.

In aspiring to be “non-ideological”, SDS had refused to engage seriously with political theory and political strategy. But it was this ineptitude in politics that left the organisation so susceptible to rapid transformation into various dogmatic sects.

The working class

The students’ experience had shown that a minority of students and middle class radicals alone were unable to end the war in Vietnam.

The impasse in the movement saw some former SDS leaders eventually begin a terrorist bombing campaign through a group known as the Weathermen, in a futile and counter-productive effort to overthrow US imperialism.

The alternative was to broaden the movement and seek to win over the working class—with the power to grind the war machine to a halt through strike action at the point of production.

Mass working class resistance can stop wars. The workers’ movement stopped conscription in Australia during the First World War.

The armistice that ended the war in 1918 was declared two days into the Weimar Republic, set up after the

A march led by Students for a Democratic Society in Boston in 1969

Kaiser was toppled by revolution in Germany.

A minority of students organised in Independent Socialist Clubs within SDS argued for relating the anti-war struggle to the struggles of the working class.

A national strike by General Electric workers in 1969 had broken out against one of the largest defense contractors for the US military. A mass student solidarity campaign could have both provided an audience for anti-imperialist politics and begun to build a bridge between the radicalism of the students and the working class able to give it effect.

It was far from obvious to many students that the working class was an ally in the fight—some union leaders like George Meany were staunch supporters of the war. But it was also largely working class youth who were being conscripted into the army to die in Vietnam.

Mass opposition in the US eventually did bring an end to the war. In 1970 four million students and 350,000 faculty struck against the war. But a radicalisation that could have produced a powerful revolutionary socialist party in the US largely went to waste, consigning many to demoralisation.

Fighting for change requires not just energetic activism, but serious political analysis that combines an understanding of the capitalism system with a strategy to fight it.

And as with fighting imperialism, so with climate change or anti-racism, success requires putting the working class in the driving seat of change.

AN IMPERIALIST OUTPOST IN ASIA

Clinton Fernandes spoke to *Solidarity* about his new book on the history of Australian foreign policy, *Island off the coast of Asia*

Your book covers a broad sweep of Australian history from the beginning of European invasion. Can you briefly explain the aim of the book?

I wanted to investigate the elements of continuity and change across the 230-year span of modern Australian history.

Existing studies of Australia's external relations have focused on certain topics (ANZUS, Australia-Indonesia relations) or certain periods of time (the first three decades after Federation, the Vietnam era). I couldn't find an overall study of the field. Furthermore, there was a lot of unexplored material in the National Archives.

And since foreign policy is conducted with all the instruments of statecraft—economic, financial, military, espionage, science, law and others—I wanted to take a look at the way the system worked as a whole.

Studies that focus only on the Defence or Foreign Affairs sections of the cabinet papers often miss the underlying rationale for strategic policy. Histories written within policy silos are able to criticize government policies and expose blunders, but they cannot provide an overarching explanatory framework within which the policies are quite rational.

You talk about the pursuit of security as an aim of Australian foreign policy, what does this involve?

"Security" means much more than protection from invasion. It is an elastic concept that gives priority to economic interests, and to a political order that secures them. These economic interests expand to accommodate what a nation or a dominant group within it possesses or thinks it ought to possess.

Australia's security fears were once confined to Sydney Harbor. They expanded in line with the frontier. Later, Australian businesses sought security for new markets in Papua New Guinea and the Southwest Pacific.

Security fears would be assuaged by the creation of a political order that secures a permissive environment for their investments. This logic cannot be stated in such stark terms even to, or especially to, oneself. It is recast in terms of threats requiring "defensive" actions—which conveniently conform to the underlying economic interest.

Why is there a "bipartisan consensus" over a long period about Australia's foreign policy?

There are different ways to explain this. The most important, or first-order explanation, has to do with the economic considerations that set the parameters for policy choice.

The most important decisions in Australia are taken in the private sector: what is to be produced, where investment is to occur, and how the profits are to be shared. Foreign policy is designed to facilitate this decision-making pattern.

So is domestic policy, although that is slightly more contested because sections of the public have more visibility of it and feel they should have a say. By contrast, foreign policy is guided primarily by the objective of improving the climate for business operations.

In Australia, moreover, we are a first world country that nevertheless retains some of the economic structure of a third world country: our biggest exports are minerals, beef, wheat, and tourism (although tertiary education is an exception). And our biggest corporations have a high degree of foreign ownership. We are integrated quite closely into US investors' global investment portfolios.

The US Government speaks with a very loud voice here, and our policymakers take notice. They go along almost reflexively when the US government dials up the level of international tension to create a mood of crisis. That was a constant theme during the Cold War and it remains a theme today.

The second level of explanation



Clinton Fernandes

involves considerations of a less material nature—cognitive factors having to do with Australia's sense of its underlying norms and priorities; in short, its sense of identity. Although (for example) Howard and Rudd disagreed on a wide range of specific policy issues, they shared the same attitudes about what Australia is, how it is distinctive compared with other states, how its security interests rest with a strong alliance with the United States, and so on.

These cognitive factors motivated their policy choices towards ANZUS, "free" trade agreements, and other matters, even though the ideas and social conventions were not explicitly articulated. They are almost fully internalized, existing as no more than hidden, unquestioned assumptions.

Imperial history and settler-colonial history combine to ensure we see Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA as "family" despite the last few decades of diverse immigration. This is reinforced by what you see in the cultural and ideological institutions: what kinds of people appear on TV and in what contexts. This is based on "historical memories"—shared experiences of the past like Anzac Day that help to shape the way Australian policymakers and Australian media organizations interpret our present and future.

The explanation found most frequently in the media goes to the personal and professional histories of individual policymakers. And here there is indeed policy space—practical opportunity for choice. Exactly what any foreign minister will do about a particular initiative is not likely to be limited to a single policy option, and so human agency comes in here. There is intense debate about policies at this level—but within narrow parameters that have been set by the first two levels of explanation.

But the first-order explanations are the most important. And here we see that the foreign policy is virtually the

expression of the objectives of Australia's dominant economic groups. This is what the "national interest" means in practice.

How did being part of the British Empire shape early Australian foreign policy? Did Australia simply follow the wishes of Britain?

It gave us a sub-imperial geostrategic reflex—the default policy was to support imperial involvement in the affairs of the region. This wasn't Australian foreign policy, however. It was British policy carried out in Australia.

For at least the first 150 years, Australia lacked the diverse European populations that entered North America or other New World lands. There were no French, as in Canada, no Spanish, as in South America, no Portuguese, as in Brazil, no Dutch, as in South Africa. Western Europe's remoteness from Australia meant that it was cheaper to emigrate to North America than to Australia.

The Australian population was almost exclusively of British stock—understandably, since the high cost of travel meant that immigration had to be fully subsidized, and the British government naturally preferred to pay for British migrants only. This settlement pattern made Australia the second most English country in the world—a demographic fact that holds true even in the early years of the 21st century.

Britons who settled in Australia understood that they benefited from the strength of the Empire. They knew that the threat or use of British military force underpinned the international economic order.

Australia did follow Britain's wishes in most cases. The exception was the Southwest Pacific, where Australian investors had their own economic interests and ensured that Australian foreign policy displayed a striking independence.

Elsewhere, however, the conformity with British geostrategy remained. To take a little-known example—one that ought to be much better known—after Japan bombed Hawaii on December 7, 1941, the British Government requested the Australian Government to send troops to Portuguese Timor, saying that Portugal had agreed to the plan. The Australian Government had very limited resources at the time but agreed to Britain's request.

Today the myth persists that Australia sent troops to Portuguese Timor in order to expel Japanese forces. In fact Japan had no forces in Portuguese



Above: The Australian state still aims to dominate the immediate region in the southwest Pacific

Timor, as Australian policymakers knew at the time. What is more, Japan had no intention of deploying forces to Portuguese Timor, which was a colony of Portugal—a neutral power during World War II. Japan had refrained from violating this neutrality in the other Portuguese colony of Macau. It was only after Australian, Dutch and British troops had deployed that Japan decided to send its own forces there. The war resulted in the deaths of as many as 60,000 East Timorese.

It's often said that Australia doesn't have an independent foreign policy, how does its relationship with the US after the end of Second World War show a problem with this view?

Australia has a very strong interest in ensuring a permissive international environment for commerce. That requires the global dominance of states which uphold this international environment. Therefore, even when Australian investments are small or non-existent, Australian foreign policy supports the overall interests of states that uphold this system, known as the rules-based international order.

Unlike in the Southwest Pacific, where Australia enjoys enormous clout, in the Asian region it lacks significant political and military influence. It therefore enters into alliances with greater powers such as Britain and the United States.

Why do you argue international maritime boundary negotiations were a key foreign policy area for

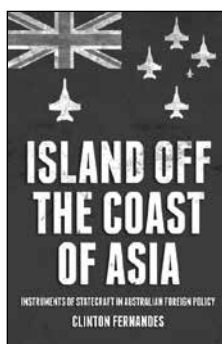
the Australian government?

It's the area into which the Department of Foreign Affairs put the most effort in the 1970s and 1980s. The principal beneficiaries were the shareholders of the corporations which received invaluable geoscientific intelligence for a pittance. Policy options that were not pursued then: (1) insist on the Commonwealth Government obtaining equity in the firms that benefited from the vital geoscience studies; (2) insist on the Commonwealth Government receiving royalty payments and other revenues contingent on the corporations' own revenues, similar to the way Australians who receive study loans from the government have to repay them based on their post-university incomes.

You also discuss the Australian state's use of what you call the economic instrument in foreign policy over trade negotiations. Why has this been particularly important since the 1980s?

In the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, the military instrument had been wielded successfully in Southeast Asia to overcome the threat of revolutionary social transformation there. It had suppressed Asian nationalism and channeled it into acceptable models of economic development.

The conditions had been created for a permissive environment for international financial institutions and business corporations. By the 1980s, the time was ripe for the economic instrument.



Island off the coast of Asia
By Clinton Fernandes
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TRUMP'S BARBARIC BORDER CAMPS SPARK OUTRAGE

By Nyk Carnsew and James Supple

DONALD TRUMP'S efforts to close the border to asylum seekers and migrants have produced appalling conditions in the US's migrant detention centres. Democratic socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has called them "concentration camps".

Children have been separated from their parents, and dumped in freezing cold rooms without access to toothbrushes, soap or showers.

Journalists and lawyers who have managed to gain access to the camps in recent weeks have been shocked by what they found.

In June, a team of lawyers tasked with monitoring the camps managed to interview children housed in a facility in Clint, Texas.

Warren Binford, a Law professor at Willamette University, described the squalid conditions to *The New Yorker*, "They [the children] were filthy dirty, there was mucus on their shirts... There was food on the shirts, and the pants as well. They told us that they were hungry".

They were locked up in cells in large groups with nobody taking care of them, she said, "so that basically the older children are trying to take care of the younger children... And sometimes we hear about the littlest children being alone by themselves on

the floor."

Trump's policies have seen overcrowding within these facilities drastically worsen, with the practice of using child separation as a deterrent against immigration. Seven children are known to have died in US custody since last year.

It is not just children kept in such conditions. US Vice President Mike Pence visited a detention centre in an effort to show facilities were acceptable in July. But he was shown a room with hundreds of caged men. Josh Dawsey of *The Washington Post* tweeted there were, "384 men sleeping inside fences, on concrete with no pillows or mats. They said they hadn't showered in weeks, wanted toothbrushes, food. Stench was overwhelming."

Democratic Party politicians across the board have voiced outrage. But these facilities existed under the Obama administration as well.

Australian model

The Australian government's own Pacific Solution, often harrowingly called the Australian Solution in the US, has helped inspire these abhorrent facilities.

The conditions in the camps are no accident. They are designed as "deterrence" against migrants and asylum seekers crossing the US border—just like Australia's camps on

Above: A border camp in Weslaco, Texas

Manus and Nauru.

Trump even tweeted recently that "Much can be learned" from Australia's policy.

Tens of thousands of asylum seekers from Central America arrive at the US border each year fleeing violence, criminal gangs and poverty.

The Trump administration has tried to close the border and force migrants and asylum seekers to wait in Mexico. It now wants to send many of them back to "third countries" they have travelled through. But this simply forces people to find more dangerous ways to cross the border. A shocking photo of a father and his young daughter who died trying to cross the Rio Grande into Texas has exposed the result.

But resistance is also growing across the US. There have been protests in hundreds of cities against the camps and against plans for mass deportations, many outside Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) offices.

Hundreds of workers at Mayfair, a furniture retailer in Boston, walked out of work in June in protest at the company's contract to deliver furniture to detention centres on the border.

Abysmal treatment of refugees fleeing poverty, disaster and war is an evil that exists across the developed world, and it's one that we must oppose wherever it rears its head.

Trump tweeted that 'Much can be learned' from Australia's policy

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