

MORRISON PUSHES COAL WHILE THE PLANET BURNS

STRIKE FOR THE CLIMATE SEPTEMBER 20



REFUGEES

Manus asylum seekers
thrown in Bomania

NUCLEAR POWER

Revisiting the disaster
at Chernobyl

UNION BUSTING

How deregistration
broke the BLF



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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.

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Things they say

I'm just saying these circumstances have made me more vastly attuned... it's just a great exercise in humility going from deputy prime minister to watching every dollar you get.

Barnaby Joyce, who still has a salary of around \$280,000 a year including allowances plus 15.4 per cent superannuation, on his financial situation.

My view is that a further pick-up in wages growth is both affordable and desirable.

Governor of the Reserve Bank Australia, Philip Lowe

The place has a lot more to it than just being a 'detention centre' for Aussie immigration. Thanks to the diversity, you get treated to the best ethnic food along with a tourist-free island experience. Oceania travel brochure highlights Nauru's positive features

Australia's position on coal is we won't have a communique where coal and coal-fired generation, or phasing it out now, is a realistic proposition. Scott Morrison's Minister for the Pacific, Alex Hawke

The planet will survive. Many species may not...However the global response does not yet match the severity of the threat.

Andrew Mackenzie chief executive of BHP—but his company is not quitting the coal industry

I do think we have bigger problems than plastic straws. It's interesting about plastic straws. You have a little straw. What about the plates, the wrappers and everything else that are much bigger and they're made of the same material? So the straws are interesting. Everybody focuses on the straws. There is a lot of other things to focus on. Donald Trump doesn't worry about the little things

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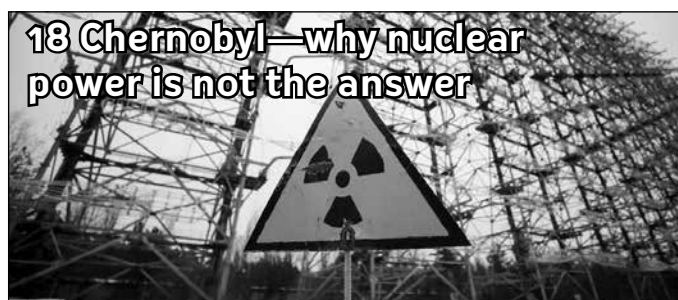
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INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

Adelaide nightclub bars Indigenous and Africans

A POPULAR Adelaide nightclub has tried to refuse entry to Indigenous people and member of the Sudanese community. A former bouncer at the club, The Signature Lounge, released private messages from management instructing staff to refuse entry.

One read, “my concern with both Sudanese and the Indigenous [sic] should really be implemented... You just have to be strict and say ‘Sorry Guys but Not Tonight’ or whatever excuses you can...”

The former staff member told NITV he once had to convince management to allow Port Adelaide players Jake Neade and Paddy Ryder into the club, after they told him to refuse entry.

A Zimbabwean man, Luckson Guvamatanga, said he was refused entry along with two friends because he is African.

He told NITV news he was “quite shocked”, after he was told by security that, “people like you tend to cause trouble”. A group of white men behind him in line were admitted despite “acting quite drunk”, he added.

One in five cut off welfare deserved exemption

OVER 120,000 welfare recipients were wrongly cut off benefits in the last financial year, according to information published in *The Guardian*.

In total one in five people who were cut off had a legitimate reason for failing to meet job search requirements, according to their job agency providers.

Job agencies are now forced to cut off anyone who fails a “mutual obligation” measure automatically, with no room for exemptions. This has led to a 70 per cent increase in suspensions in the last year.

The Coalition has tried to use figures on suspensions of income support to distract attention from the growing campaign to increase the level of Newstart payments.

Australia refuses to return Timor oil money



THE AUSTRALIAN government has pocketed \$5 million a month from Timor-Leste’s oil reserves due to a delay in ratifying a treaty.

The treaty, which divides oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea between Australian and Timor-Leste, was finalised 16 months ago. Australia conceded under the treaty that the entire proceeds of the Bayu Undan oil and gas field belonged to Timor-Leste. But the delay in ratifying allowed Australia to keep taking 10 per cent of it.

The Australian government has refused to return the money.

The larger Greater Sunrise field, as yet untapped, will be split 80 per cent to 20 per cent in favour of Timor-Leste, or 70 to 30 per cent if it is piped and processed in Timor-Leste. The final treaty reversed the Australian government’s earlier attempt to steal half the revenue from Greater Sunrise. Timorese human rights group L’ao Hamutuk estimates the Australian government took a total of \$2.4 billion in revenue from gas fields in the Timor Sea before the treaty was signed last year.

Timor-Leste is one of the world’s poorest countries with 40 per cent of the population living below the poverty line.

Morrison wants to deport more migrants

SCOTT MORRISON has revived changes that would allow Immigration to ramp up deportations of migrants, particularly New Zealand citizens. Migration law experts say it could lead to a five-fold increase in deportations.

The new laws it wants to push through parliament would expand the Minister’s ability to cancel visas to any case of a criminal conviction where a maximum available penalty of two years or more applies.

This means people can be deported in cases where they do not even receive a prison sentence, for offences like assault or breaching an AVO.

Previous changes to the “character test”, section 501 of the Migration Act, in 2014 have already seen a dramatic increase in visa cancellations. They made cancellation mandatory for any criminal sentence of 12 months or more. In total 3700 visas have been cancelled since 2014, leading to the deportation of 1600 New Zealanders. Some have lived most of their lives in Australia since arriving as young children.

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

Crisis in WA youth detention

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN in WA are being flown on chartered jets and held in prison for weeks, only to be released without charge.

Children from places like Broome and Port Hedland are being flown to Perth at a cost of \$11,000 and \$9100 each to be held in prison.

Documents obtained by WA-today show 183 children were involved in the process in 2017. The result is that up to \$60,000 is being spent per person in an unnecessary, punitive system.

The arrangements are the result of the state having only one youth prison, Banksia Hill, in Perth.

Strict bail laws also prevent children being released who cannot identify a responsible adult, and the efforts to keep them for as little time as possible in the local lock-up.

A report on Banksia Hill in 2017-18 showed one in every four children held there received no education, an assault occurred once every ten days and a child self-harmed there every two days. More than two-thirds of the children held there were Aboriginal.

Dutton spends \$5 million on one page report

A \$4.9 million review of the Home Affairs department failed to complete a “consolidated review”, according to the government.

Instead it produced just a one-page response to a Senate request to release the report produced by the review, claiming one did not exist.

The review was designed to examine the merger that created the super-department, incorporating Immigration, national security and multicultural affairs.

EDITORIAL

Scott Morrison locks in low wages and climate crisis

THE WORLD economy is facing a renewed crisis, as the prospect of an escalating trade war between the US and China sends stockmarkets sliding.

The Morrison government is feeding the global turmoil, agreeing to consider joining the US's naval operation against Iran in the Strait of Hormuz and backing the US's "step-up" in the Pacific to confront China.

Australia's economy is also facing trouble, with stagnant wages, a retail recession and slowing growth. The Reserve Bank has cut interest rates to 1 per cent, and suggested it could not only go lower but begin "extreme unconventional" measures like quantitative easing, a form of printing money.

The Reserve Bank's Philip Lowe told the government that action is needed to boost wages, even suggesting they dump the public sector pay caps that limit wage rises federally and in most states to 2 or 2.5 per cent.

He argued that, "the wage caps in the public sector are cementing low wage norms across the country", affecting the level of wages rises in other industries as, "a third of the workforce work directly or indirectly for the public sector".

But the Coalition government immediately ruled this out.

Scott Morrison also made it clear he won't increase Newstart payments, despite business groups, the community sector and even some of his own MPs like Barnaby Joyce calling for it. "Are we increasing Newstart?" Well the answer is 'No, we are not', he bluntly told Seven news.

Instead the Liberals are continuing their anti-union crusade, further restricting the right to strike and making it even harder for unions to fight for pay rises. They would rather give free rein to the corporate bosses who are responsible for holding down wages.

Their Ensuring Integrity Bill would allow unions to be deregistered and officials banned from office if they defy the laws that make most forms of strike action illegal.

This is a serious threat to some of the most industrially militant and effective unions like the CFMMEU. The Liberals try to justify it with claims of union "thuggery", pointing to John Setka, who pleaded guilty to harassment of his wife. But the laws are aimed at attacking legitimate trade unionism.

The Senate will vote on the Ensuring Integrity bill in November. The union movement can't afford to repeat



Above: Morrison's "Ensuring Integrity" Bill is an attack on the right to strike and the CFMMEU in particular

the Change the Rules campaign's mistake of failing to fight the government's attacks, in the hope of voting them out at the next election.

Sadly it seems the ACTU has not learnt any lessons. Its review of Change the Rules concluded it had been "ambitious and necessary" and had, "made incredible progress in the last two years"! The same electoral approach looks set to continue.

Meanwhile Labor is still reeling from its election loss, with new leader Anthony Albanese moving away from many of the policies Labor took to the election and showing no sign of working out what the party should stand for.

Labor will oppose the Ensuring Integrity Bill. But there needs to be a serious campaign of protests and industrial action against it to make the Liberals think twice about using it.

If the bill comes into law without a fight, the Liberals and the bosses will simply grow in confidence to step up their attacks.

Business is already demanding more, with the Business Council of Australia's Jennifer Westacott calling for the scrapping of the "better off overall" test for agreements. She labelled it a "productivity killer" that "prevents trade-offs". In other words, it stops business squeezing people harder to boost their profits.

Strike for Climate

The Morrison government is also continuing to expand the use of fossil fuels, even as extreme weather events and warnings about the urgent need

for climate action grow.

It celebrated the disastrous announcement that NSW's Liddell coal power station will remain running for an extra year, with a closure date of April 2023. And Energy Minister Angus Taylor has announced a taskforce to look at whether it could be kept running even longer, or replaced, using taxpayers' money.

High school students have called for everyone, and particularly unions, to join the global Climate Strike on Friday 20 September. Scott Morrison claims he represents the "quiet Australians". A massive protest can prove him wrong.

In mining areas, the Coalition won some working class votes over the issue of mining jobs. So it is vital the unions and working class people are part of the mobilisations for climate action—and that the movement takes up demands for jobs and workers' living standards.

It is an important step forward that the Student Strike for Climate group has amended its demands to take workers' demands on board. And a number of unions are now also supporting the Climate Strike, pledging to attend.

We need a huge turnout on 20 September to take the fight to the coal-loving Morrison. But climate change is built into capitalism. To stop climate change we have to end the system that causes it. That means doing everything we can to turn the student strike into workers' strike action and build a movement with real power to fight for the social change we need.

If the Ensuring Integrity bill comes into law without a fight, the Liberals will simply grow in confidence to step up their attacks

DP World strike action forces company to lift job cuts threat

By James Supple

DP WORLD'S threat to cut 200 jobs was, "corporate bullying and intimidation using the livelihoods of wharfies in an attempt to intimidate the workforce into accepting anything the company wants," according to Warren Smith, Maritime Union of Australia Assistant National Secretary.

In July workers staged two weeks of industrial action across the country, striking for 48 hours from 8 July in Brisbane, Sydney and Fremantle and for four days in Melbourne. The following week workers in Sydney held another 48 hour strike, another 24 hour strike in Fremantle and a series of one-hour stoppages in Brisbane.

Enterprise bargaining talks have dragged on for over ten months, with the company demanding major cuts to workers' conditions as the price of a new agreement. The port operator employs 1800 workers across its operations in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Fremantle.

DP World claimed that job cuts and more "flexibility" were necessary due to loss of market share and competition from other port operators. Yet it is part of a highly profitable global giant that made a profit last year of \$1.3 billion, an increase of 10 per cent. The multinational has admitted that it paid no tax in Australia last year.

Its plan for job cuts would have allowed it to replace permanent jobs with casual staff. It also flagged outsourcing cargo care (the monitoring of refrigerated containers) as well as maintenance and refuelling, to allow cut-price non-union operators in these areas.

Such outsourcing is a risk to safety standards, as DP World's use of an outsourcing company during one of the strikes shows. Wire ropes on a crane used to unload shipping containers "catastrophically slipped", according to the union, most likely as a result of the company, which had never worked on the cranes before, incorrectly replacing the ropes.

DP World has also raised the prospect of automation, telling the *Financial Review* "we have that option" if the union refuses to agree to cost cutting. The MUA is asking either for job security clauses in their new agreement that would protect workers in the event of automation, or an undertaking from DP World that it will not take place during the life of the agreement.



Above: Rallying in Melbourne during the 96 hour DP World strike there

"We won't stand by while outsourcing and automation are used to axe quality jobs from the Australian waterfront," Smith responded.

For now, there is a stalemate. Strike action has forced DP World to lift the threat of job cuts in return for the union ending all industrial action.

Enterprise bargaining discussions are back at square one.

But there is no need to wait for months' more negotiations. Bans and strike action have shown how to stand up to the company's attacks and win workers' demands for conditions, safety and job security.

NSW set to decriminalise abortion

A BILL to decriminalise abortion in NSW passed the lower house of state parliament on 8 August, overturning an archaic law written 119 years ago. NSW is the last state where abortion remained a crime following decriminalisation in Queensland last year.

The Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill, introduced by independent MP Alex Greenwich, repeals all existing offences relating to abortion in the NSW Crimes Act. The bill allows terminations up to 22 weeks to be carried out by a doctor on request, with later abortions needing the approval of two doctors. The bill passed 59 votes to 31 in the lower house and will be debated in the upper house from 20 August, where it is expected to pass with a slim majority.

There is overwhelming public support for a woman's right to choose. But only 19 out of 35 Liberal MPs voted for the bill, revealing the deep divisions within the party. In an attempt to placate the bigots, Premier Gladys Berejiklian has now signalled her support for an amendment banning abortions based on "gender selection". This was despite the state's chief obstetrician saying that gender selection did not take

place in NSW. Labor is also considering the amendment.

But the decision over whether to have an abortion should be between a woman and her doctor, whatever her reasons for doing so. The amendment is a simply an attempt to stigmatise abortion. It must be opposed by all pro-choice advocates.

While a clear majority of Labor MPs supported the bill, disgracefully, the party did not bind its members and instead allowed a conscience vote.

The decriminalisation of abortion in NSW would be an important step forwards in the fight for reproductive rights in Australia. The bill will allow NSW Health to fund services, including Family Planning NSW, to provide outpatient and day procedure services, including in regional areas.

Currently, while abortions are one of the most common medical procedures for women, the vast majority are done by private providers and are expensive. Women living in regional areas often have to travel hours to get to a clinic.

The fight for publicly provided, accessible abortion services will have to continue after the bill has passed.

Caidin Doyle

DP World claimed that job cuts were necessary due to loss of market share and competition

Morrison's new attack on CFMMEU and the right to strike

By Miro Sandev

THE MORRISON government has launched a fresh attack on trade unions with a new bill that would even further hamper their ability to organise.

Emboldened by the federal election victory, Morrison is resurrecting the Ensuring Integrity Bill that was previously rejected by the Senate.

Morrison is opportunistically using the highly publicised case of Victorian construction union leader John Setka to paint the union as a whole as thuggish, using this as a battering ram for the new laws. Setka recently pleaded guilty to harassing his wife during a domestic dispute.

Morrison is purposely confusing Setka's inexcusable harassment with the entirely legitimate industrial action he has helped organise. The CFMMEU must be defended against this assault.

Australia has some of most extreme restrictions on the right to strike in the developed world, criminalising entirely legitimate industrial action. It is only through illegal strike action that construction workers have been able to win yearly pay rises above 5 per cent, secure conditions and maintain safety in a very dangerous industry.

It is this militancy by the Victorian CFMMEU branch in particular that Morrison and the construction bosses want to break.

While Labor is opposed to the bill, Anthony Albanese has made Morrison's job of passing it easier by condemning Setka's behaviour over many years and moving to expel him from the Labor Party.

The bill imposes harsher regulations on unions than those on any other organisation, including corporations. It also allows employers and the government of the day to interfere in the democratic operation of unions.

The Federal Court could disqualify officials for breaking industrial laws or failing to stop their organisation from breaking the law.

This could include something as minor as a technical breach of the Fair Work Act, such as filing financial or membership records a day late. It could also include "contravening a bargaining order"—for example when the Fair Work Commission orders a union to end a strike and they refuse.



Above: The Ensuring Integrity Bill is aimed at preventing legitimate union activity in defiance of anti-strike laws

The bill would give the minister for industrial relations, as well as the politicised Registered Organisations Commission, the power to apply to the Federal Court to deregister a union. This power is also extended to anyone with "sufficient interest", which is particularly concerning as this could include bosses.

Unions could also be forced to exclude certain members, have their funds and property restricted and controlled and be banned from representing members in bargaining or enforcing awards.

Targeting militancy

While Morrison claims that this bill is about "ending lawlessness" in the construction industry, it is clear that he is not concerned about the lawbreaking committed by the bosses.

Bosses regularly underpay workers and commit safety breaches but the draconian Australian Building and Construction Commission almost never investigates them and focuses on harassing workers that go on strike.

Currently the ABCC is pursuing construction workers in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley with fines of \$42,000 for taking one day of illegal strike action over safety concerns. The Ensuring Integrity Bill would make actions like these grounds for deregistering a union.

Deregistering the Victorian branch of the CFMMEU would be an inflam-

matory move, and could lead to chaos on construction sites. Construction bosses would not welcome this when the industry is still going strong and profits are flowing freely.

More likely, if the bill passes, Morrison will go after Setka and try to remove him as union secretary.

Setka should have stepped down from his leadership position when he knew he would be pleading guilty to harassing his wife. By staying on, he has made Morrison's job of attacking the CFMMEU easier.

But Setka's industrial militancy should be defended against the attacks from the Liberals and the bosses.

Union members should have the right to decide their elected representatives on the job and it is union members who need to deal with the question of Setka's harassment.

If the Liberals get away with removing Setka, they will gain confidence to move against other officials and unions too.

The Ensuring Integrity Bill is an attack on the right to strike and the union movement as a whole.

The possible sanctions for defying the law will further scare union officials away from staging effective strike action.

We need a mass campaign of protests and stopwork action against it. Only by spreading the best of the militant industrial tactics of the CFMMEU can we rebuild a fighting union movement.

The Ensuring Integrity Bill is an attack on the right to strike and the union movement as a whole

‘Six years is too long without my family’: Refugees protest visa limbo

FRUSTRATED AND desperate after six years in Australia, refugees on temporary visas have gathered to protest the denial of rights due to the government’s removal of permanent protection visas.

Around 1000 refugees and asylum seekers from around Australia travelled to Canberra on 5 August, with several hundred staging another protest in Sydney the following week.

The most any of the 30,000 refugees who arrived by boat after 13 August 2012 can get is a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) or a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV). This means they are denied the right to bring partners or children to join them, and must re-apply after three or four years when their visa expires. If they cannot prove they still require protection as a refugee, they face being sent back.

“When I left from Bangladesh I left my daughter who was five years old and I left my wife. Six years is too long without my family, many of us have this problem,” one told the rally.

The re-election of the Coalition government means they face at least another three years before any will receive permanent residency and be able to apply for family reunion. Labor remains committed to abolishing TPVs and SHEVs.

The protests are the largest refugee-organised demonstrations in years, uniting refugees and asylum seekers from across the Iraqi, Afghan, Sudanese, Bangladeshi, Rohingya and many other communities.

Life on a temporary visa means refugees live with continuing uncertainty. And the “Fast Track” changes the Liberals introduced in 2014 also means more and more asylum seekers have been refused refugee status.

“People who got rejected through this unfair process, they have to leave Australia. They are victims as well of this unfair policy,” Kaib, an Iraqi refugee, said. Rusul, who grew up in Iraq, explained that, “I’m married to an Iraqi refugee who has been here for six years now and was found to be a genuine refugee and is on a SHEV visa. We have a baby daughter, but I don’t know how to plan for our future because we don’t know if he’s going to be staying her permanently.

“Some of the refugees haven’t seen their families for eight years. I really hope the government listens and grants everyone permanent residency. They’ve suffered enough.”

James Supple



Above: Refugees outside the Immigration Department during the protest in Sydney

Immigration dirty tricks open Bomana

IN EARLY July, all the asylum seekers in Hillside Compound on Manus Island received a notice, saying that they would have to temporarily re-located to Port Moresby while Hillside underwent repairs.

The notice indicated that they even had some freedom to look around Port Moresby; an offer that, after six years on Manus Island, seemed too good to refuse.

The notice said the Hillside repairs were expected to be finished by 7 August. But there were no repairs to the compound.

Instead, in the early hours of 12 August, 52 asylum seekers were rounded up by PNG immigration and police and taken to the new detention centre annexed to the Bomana Prison on the outskirts of Port Moresby.

The transfer had been an elaborate ruse to lure the asylum seekers—all deemed to be failed refugees—to Port Moresby. The newly completed detention centre has been built by Australia for \$20 million. It will be guarded by “Controlled Outcomes” another shady security company that is a joint venture between Australian security firm C5 Management Solutions and PNG company Tactical Solutions International. C5’s owner is the former Australian federal police agent Ty Clark, and the company’s lobbyist is Greg Rudd, brother of former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Enough said.

Bomana detention is the latest twist in a six year-long torturous saga.

The new PNG Prime Minister and other politicians have called on the Australian government to commit to a timeline to end offshore detention on Manus. But the use of Bomana detention shows how much the PNG government remains captured by the machinations of the Australian government.

The so-called negatives are supposedly being held pending removal from Papua New Guinea, but most are from Iran and Pakistan, who will not accept forced removals.

Worse, around half of those now in Bomana have never applied for refugee status in PNG. Others have not told their full story because of fears their safety would be compromised if they were resettled in PNG.

Meanwhile, despite Coalition government cries for the Medevac legislation to be repealed, the medical crisis on Manus and Nauru is no better. Well over 100 have been accepted, and around 80 have already been transferred to Australia under the legislation.

The on-going detention of those already in Australia for medical treatment—some have been held in closed detention for nine months—is looming as another urgent issue for the refugee movement.

The repeal legislation has been referred to a Senate committee and is due to come back to the Parliament in November. Demonstrations have been called to oppose the repeal of the Medevac legislation and to finally close Manus and Nauru.

Ian Rintoul

As climate crisis accelerates, movement plans to strike back

By Paddy Gibson

THE CLIMATE crisis is rapidly accelerating. July was the hottest month since records began. Unprecedented fires rage across the Arctic, with a cloud of smoke bigger than the European Union covering Siberia as Solidarity went to press. The Greenland ice sheet is melting faster than ever, losing 12.5 billion tons of ice in a single day.

A newly released IPCC report details the enormous pressure that corporate livestock production, agriculture and forestry are placing on the climate system and the capacity of land to produce food. Half a billion people already live in places turning into desert, soil is being lost between ten and 100 times faster than it is forming and the potential for large-scale crop failures is increasing.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights Philip Alston said, many people will have to choose between starvation and migration: “We risk a ‘climate apartheid’ scenario where the wealthy pay to escape overheating, hunger, and conflict while the rest of the world is left to suffer.”

Leading scientists now say that the IPCC’s 2018 report on avoiding a temperature rise of more than 1.5 degrees underestimated how quickly the world is heating. Antarctic ice is being lost far more rapidly than predicted and the rate of thawing of permafrost in the Arctic, which releases potent greenhouse gases, is also shocking scientists.

Morrison—climate criminal

Meanwhile, the Morrison government continues its climate denial. Going into the Pacific Islands Forum in August, Morrison rebadged existing aid commitments as a “climate” fund, to help develop renewable energy and mitigation infrastructure as sea level rises on the islands force displacement. But Australia is rejecting Pacific calls to take responsibility for its own emissions and suppressed any references in a conference declaration to a transition away from coal or a binding 1.5 degree target.

Huge expansions of fossil fuel extraction are planned across Australia. Adani has begun to clear land on the proposed site of the Carmichael mine and fracking is expected at two sites in the NT any time now, the start of a planned fracking onslaught across the Territory. The Coalition also wants



Above: High school and university students are set to strike on 20 September, and are pushing for unions to join them

new coal and gas fired power stations. They are even considering public subsidies to keep AGL’s aging Liddell coal-fired power station open.

Strike back

The accelerating crisis is leading to a new wave of climate activism.

On 20 September, school students are calling for workers to join them in a Global Climate Strike. In Australia, the School Strike for Climate (SS4C) organising group have shifted decisively since the disastrous federal election, to emphasise the need for a “just transition” for workers and communities currently dependent on fossil fuels. In July, SS4C issued a statement explaining their new focus:

“We see that there are enormous opportunities to create good, safe and secure jobs in response to the climate crisis, for Governments to invest in sustainable infrastructure, to properly support communities and to transform our economy in a way that leaves no one behind.”

Draconian laws make strike action illegal in Australia, except for a small window during Enterprise Bargaining negotiations. In this context, the statement from SS4C condemning the Morrison government’s anti-union “Ensuring Integrity Bill” has also been important.

There has been a growing list of supportive statements by unions mobilising for 20 September, including national resolutions from the MUA, NTEU, ASU, with Victorian Trades Hall and numerous state branches of

unions like the NSW Nurses and Midwives and Victorian CFMEU also pledging to join in. Most are looking to find ways to allow members to attend without taking formal “strikes”.

On university campuses staff and students are campaigning in lecture theatres, resolving to cancel activities and join the strike. An organising meeting of 80 students at Sydney University has voted to strike, with over 300 signatures collected on the first day of semester.

Sydney University has already agreed not to penalise staff or students for attending, with the Vice Chancellor agreeing to a motion moved at the university Senate. Activists at other universities are raising similar demands on Vice Chancellors to guarantee no penalty or loss of pay for participation. At UTS, the Jumbunna Indigenous research unit has announced it will reschedule all activities so staff and students can attend, and other departments including Design Architecture and Building are discussing similar moves.

A major forum on August 31, planned at Unions NSW by the activist committee “Workers for September 20” is set to discuss how to extend the climate movement in the unions, including hearing from the Electrical Trades Union about why public ownership of electricity is needed to get us to 100 per cent renewables.

The seas may be rising but so is the movement—we need to make 20 September a huge blow against Morrison and the corporate interests destroying our planet.

.....
The School Strike organising group have shifted to emphasise the need for a “just transition” for workers

UQ protests feed into xenophobia against China

By James Supple

PROTESTS THAT began as a show of solidarity with Hong Kong have turned into a xenophobic campaign against “Chinese influence” at the University of Queensland.

A group of international students from Hong Kong began staging gatherings on the campus in July in support of the protests at home. Students held displays and set up a “Lennon wall” where people could leave messages of support, like those used by protesters in Hong Kong itself.

Then on 24 July 200 students from mainland China organised a rowdy counter-protest, repeatedly singing the Chinese national anthem at them. Some tore up posters and scuffled with the other group. Subsequently the Hong Kong students Lennon Wall has been torn down at night on several occasions.

The Hong Kong students have the right to protest without intimidation—and we should defend their ability to do so. Ordinary people in Hong Kong have protested in the millions to demand democracy in the territory, against increasing restrictions imposed by the Beijing government.

But it is a serious mistake to play into efforts to whip up xenophobia against China. A further protest at UQ on 31 July, organised mainly by domestic students, targeted “Chinese influence” on campus, calling for the closure of the Chinese-funded Confucius Institute at the university, labelling it “a propaganda centre”. Rally organisers also pandered to Australian nationalism, saying they wanted to “celebrate freedom in Australia”.

The Chinese state is an authoritarian dictatorship that deals brutally with ethnic minorities such as the Uighurs. But the US rivalry with China is producing a xenophobic campaign designed to justify US and Australian military aggression.

Former SAS soldier and hard right Liberal MP Andrew Hastie recently condemned China as a “threat to our sovereignty and freedoms”, and demanded tougher action to oppose China in our region.

Academic Clive Hamilton, in a book with the xenophobic title “Silent invasion” has depicted China in lurid terms as a threat to academic freedom in Australian universities.

The student campaign at UQ has now organised for Clive Hamilton to speak on campus, in a further sign of



Above: Student rallies at University of Queensland have fed into xenophobia against China

its mistaken direction.

We should oppose China’s imperialism in the region as well as its stifling of democratic rights. But the US and Australian ruling classes have no

commitment to democracy or workers’ rights either. Our most important task in Australia is to oppose the nationalism and racism that goes along with our own government’s imperialism abroad.

Terf wars: protesting transphobia at Melb Uni

OVER 100 students and staff at the University of Melbourne took part in a protest in early August against an event hosted by the so-called Victorian Women’s Guild (VWG), a new transphobic lobby group formed around opposition to the Andrews Government’s proposed gender recognition reforms.

The protest was led by the Student Union Queer Political Action Collective and addressed by student union office bearers, members of the university’s Pride in Action Network, and members of the National Tertiary Education Union and Retail and Fast Food Workers Union. Signs included “hate speech is not academic freedom” and “trans rights are human rights.” A further 1500 people signed an Equality Australia petition to Vice-Chancellor Duncan Maskell calling for the VWG event to be cancelled.

An NTEU organiser read out a statement of solidarity from the Melbourne University branch committee restating the union’s existing support for, “the rights of trans and gender diverse workers who experience particular oppression in the workplace.” This stance was all the more important given that disgracefully, the NTEU branch president at La Trobe chaired the VWG panel.

The campus rally forms part of a wider campaign for identity document changes in Victoria. Under the

Andrews Government’s proposed reforms, trans and gender non-conforming people will be provided correct identification documents without needing to undergo gender reassignment surgery.

The Victorian Women’s Guild is a Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) organisation. Terfs claim to be “critical” of gender as a social construct, but support a biologically-based sex essentialism. The VWG opposes gender neutral bathrooms and trans rights in sports by claiming they threaten the “sex-based” rights of women who are biologically female.

Despite its radical-sounding rhetoric, the VWG’s aims are indistinguishable from those of conservative culture warriors and opponents of Safe Schools. On the same day as its event, Mark Latham and One Nation launched a campaign to deliver transphobic propaganda packs to 600 schools in NSW. Scott Morrison has recently criticised Cricket Australia’s recognition of trans players. In providing “feminist” cover for the Victorian Liberals’ campaign against gender recognition, the Guild has been quoted favourably in *The Australian* as part of the paper’s anti-trans campaign.

This is a political alignment that Terfs are neither embarrassed nor ashamed of. The left should have no qualms about where it stands.

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US rivalry with China is producing a xenophobic campaign designed to justify military aggression

Support for Ihumatoa forces Ardern to halt development on Maori land

By Jasmine Ali

AN EXTRAORDINARY 500-strong occupation by local Maori at Ihumatoa has galvanised massive opposition to plans to build 500 high-cost dwellings on culturally significant land for tangata whenua (Indigenous people of the land).

The proposed site, near Manukau Harbour in Auckland and owned by Fletcher Building company, sits adjacent to the historic Stonefields reserve, an area which hosts the city's last major remnants of Maori stone gardens, and one of the earliest sites of human occupation of Aotearoa.

Ihumatoa is also the scene of a long history of Maori struggle for land justice. Ihumatoa was stolen from Maori via a land confiscation scheme at the bloody height of British and settler-colonial expansion in Aotearoa (New Zealand) in the 1860s.

In 1863, Governor Grey delivered an ultimatum to the Maori at Ihumatoa, punishing tribes that resisted colonisation by demanding that Maori either surrender their weapons and swear their allegiance to the Crown, or forfeit possession of land granted in 1840 by the Treaty of Waitangi.

After confiscation, the land was sold to European families. Ihumatoa remained with one family until 2014, when it was purchased by Fletcher Building.

Struggle for land justice puts heat on Ardern

The occupation, which began as response to the proposed development three years ago, burst onto the national stage in late July when 100 police were sent in to break up the protest camp to enforce eviction notices. Up to 5000 people from across New Zealand rallied at the site on 28 July.

Although police forced protestors and protectors off the original occupation site, a protest camp is now based at a road intersection, preventing the development making any progress.

In March this year, the protest camp campaign group, SOUL (Save Our Unique Landscape) presented a petition with over 18,000 signatures to Jacinda Ardern's Labour coalition government.

The petition called upon the Ardern Labour government to intervene, by either buying the land or by mandating a process accepted by all parties to the dispute, as well as asking Auckland Council to acquire the



Above: Protesters block the road at Ihumatao to stop the development

land as heritage.

While the National Party Opposition leader told protestors to “go home” so that houses can be built, Labor Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, having stalled for weeks, was finally forced to intervene, announcing that there would be no building on the land until a solution was reached.

Ardern's government has tried to defend its tacit support for Fletcher's development by portraying the dispute as one between pro and anti-development Maori in which the government cannot “take sides”.

The protest has become a focus for dissent across the country. Support for the campaign has poured in, including groups bussed from Wellington, churches, school groups, Greens MPs, Muslim leaders, migrant workers, and First Union, E tu (Stand Tall) union, and Unions Auckland.

Just in the last week, Auckland Council has been forced to rezone the land, adding another nine hectares to the Stonefield reserve—another victory that shows much more can be won.

Growing discontent

Although the land development is being supported by some conservative Maori, Fletcher's high-cost housing development offers no reprieve to the punishing housing crisis facing the country. New Zealand is one of the top two countries in the world with the most unsustainable housing markets and has the highest house price to rent ratio in the world.

The declining rate of home owner-

ship for Maori and Pasifika is substantially higher than the rest of the population, highlighting compounding impoverishment and class inequality for the majority of Maori, especially working class.

The growing support for the Ihumatoa campaign has also coincided with hundreds marching on Parliament in Wellington on 30 July calling for an overhaul of Oranga Tamariki (Ministry of Children), the government's child welfare agency.

The protest was organised in response to the shocking number of Maori children being taken into care, some just hours after birth. Just as in Australia, where appalling numbers of Aboriginal children also continue to be forcibly taken by child welfare services, Maori children are now more than 50 per cent of all children in state care in NZ, a new generation of stolen children.

The government can and should intervene to stop Fletcher's development. In its recent budget, the Ardern government announced a massive \$20 billion on defence spending over 11 years, increasing the imperialist militarisation in the Pacific.

That money could be used to protect Ihumatoa, plan public housing, and address structural issues like entrenched poverty.

The growing anger crystallizing at Ihumatoa has exploded in context of a massive 24 hour national strike by nurses last year and teachers' strikes this year. Jacinda Ardern's Labour government is on notice.

Jacinda Ardern, having stalled for weeks, was finally forced to intervene

Trump's racism inspires El Paso mass shooting in Texas

By Gabby Thorpe

AT LEAST 22 people were killed and a further 24 injured in a mass shooting in El Paso, Texas, on 3 August.

Shooter Patrick Crusius posted a racist manifesto on the website 8chan hours before he shot people at the El Paso Walmart. Crusius singled out "race mixing" and said that he related to Brenton Tarrant, who murdered 51 Muslims in Christchurch.

His manifesto said the shooting was targeting Hispanic people. And Mexico's president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has confirmed that three Mexicans were among the victims.

President Donald Trump called the shooting a "hateful act", but his racism inspired Crusius to take action. He often tweeted in praise of Trump, including sharing a photograph where someone had spelt out "Trump" using guns.

And Trump has given confidence to other far right and racist figures to act on their beliefs.

His administration has spearheaded a racist assault on Muslims and migrants. A new report shows that over 900 migrant parents and children have been separated at the US-Mexico border in the last year.

US border police have locked migrant children into cages and kept them in detention camps.

Trump is ramping up racist rhetoric to play to his base ahead of the 2020 US presidential election. At a recent rally he inspired chants of "send her back" about congresswomen Ilhan Omar, and said she and her colleagues Ayanna Pressley, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib could "leave" the country. No one should be surprised that Trump's words have inspired acts of violent racism.

Another mass shooting took place in Dayton, Ohio, just hours after the El Paso shooting. Ten people are confirmed dead—including the shooter—and a further 27 injured.

The Ohio shooting brings the number of mass shootings in the US in 2019 to 252. As Trump's racist rhetoric worsens ahead of the 2020 election, the problem is likely to get worse.

Trump's bigotry must be opposed, but this has to go beyond voting him out in 2020. There needs to be a mass movement which stands against the Trump's racism and the far right it boosts. Change in the US is sorely needed and it must come from below.

Socialist Worker UK



Above: Trump's rallies stir up racism against migrants and encourage the far right

Kashmiris take to the streets over Modi's racist crackdown

THE INDIAN government's crackdown in Kashmir, on the border between India and Pakistan, is leading to resistance on the streets.

Sporadic demonstrations have erupted in the capital Srinagar. Troops and heavily armed police reacted by firing live rounds, tear gas and projectiles into the dense crowds.

Hard right Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi shut down all communication in the state in the hope that such scenes wouldn't reach the outside world.

But BBC footage smuggled out of the area shows large and militant demonstrations demanding freedom amid the cackle of gunfire and clouds of smoke.

Millions of people in the disputed region are under a military curfew. Supplies of food in the few shops that have opened are now very low.

Modi's government has stripped India's only majority-Muslim province of its limited autonomy as part of a plan to fully incorporate Kashmir into the Indian state.

That state increasingly regards Muslims as the "enemy within".

Modi said removing Article 370, which gave Kashmir special status and powers, would be a blow against

"terrorism".

In reality Modi's move is a result of racism and comes straight out of the Donald Trump playbook.

Investment

Trump's Middle East plan involves repression of the Palestinians, together with promises of investment if they accept Israeli domination.

Modi's offer to Kashmir is similar. Accept rule from India and military domination, cease all resistance—and as a reward there will be economic development in the region.

Already right-wing Hindu businessmen are promising factories if only Kashmiris can be brought to heel. But that is not likely to happen.

Kashmiris have been fighting for self-determination since 1947, when Britain withdrew from India.

As part of the withdrawal, Kashmir's land was handed to India as part of a partition that carved out the new Pakistani state.

Hundreds of thousands of overwhelmingly young people have died fighting for self-determination since.

Modi's repression risks reigniting the armed rebellion that dominated the region for most of the 1990s.

It also raises tensions elsewhere in India where rule by the central state is barely tolerated.

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Trump is ramping up racist rhetoric to play to his base ahead of the 2020 US presidential election

Glorifying the butchery of the Vietnam War

Danger close: The battle of Long Tan
Directed by Kriv Stenders
In cinemas now

IN 1944, George Orwell wrote that he feared the true history of the Spanish Civil War would never be told, “History is written by the winners,” he said.

It usually is. But in the case of the Vietnam War (or the American War, as the Vietnamese call it), although the Vietnamese decisively defeated the US and Australian imperialism, the losers are constantly trying to rewrite their loss as a victory.

There are a lot of books written about the Battle of Long Tan that try to portray the battle as a victory for the Australian military. Now there is a film, *Danger Close*, that tries to glorify the butchery of the Australian military.

It is not a good sign when the film’s producer, Martin Walsh, perpetuates common myths associated with Vietnam War vets, telling the media, “They were treated like shit when they came back. They wouldn’t let them join the RSL, they were called baby killers.”

Walsh should have read the recently published book, *Australia’s Vietnam Myths vs History* by Mark Dapin. Dapin is not an anti-war activist—he is a war historian—and there are points in the book to take issue with. But he has done history a service by debunking these myths, including that Vietnam Vets were spat on, that there were airport demonstrations against returning soldiers, and that there were no “welcome home” parades.

There were in fact too many welcome home parades, Dapin documents



16 between 1966 and 1971.

No doubt Vietnam Vets have been badly treated by the Australian Army. As in every other war, the conscripts and the regular service personnel were just so much cannon fodder sent to do the dirty business of Australian imperialism. But there is no solace in trying to gloss the bloody history of the Australian army.

Counting the dead

Much is made of the “victory” of Long Tan—how 108 Australian soldiers held off a force of 2000 Vietnamese.

One review gushed, “This is the story of how a small bunch of men head off a military disaster—basically through sheer grit.” But the real story is the tremendous heroism of the Vietnamese who were up against the tactical advantage and enormous power of Australia and US imperialism.

Hundreds of Vietnamese were killed by the massive bombardment of US, New Zealand and Australian artillery, firing 3500 artillery rounds in three hours.

The much-vaunted Australian commander on the day, Lt Col Harry Smith, says he can still see the blood of the Vietnamese on the trees at Long Tan. In the days follow-

ing Long Tan, Australian soldiers found body parts, and Vietnamese corpses, spread across the battlefield.

The Australian version of the “victory” puts the number of Vietnamese dead at as many as 800. But Ernie Chamberlain, a retired Australian army brigadier, a in privately published book in 2016, has arrived at a more accurate figure of 178.

Ashley Ekins, head of the Australian war memorial history section, put the argument in context, saying that according to the reports of Australian soldiers it was impossible for them to get an accurate tally of the enemy dead because artillery fire had mangled so many of the bodies.

The Australian Army celebrates Vietnam Veterans Day on the anniversary of the battle of Long Tan each year on 18 August in an attempt to reclaim the history from the Vietnamese and the anti-war movement.

It is typical of the arrogance of Australian imperialism that the Long Tan cross does not bear the names of the Vietnamese

who died so needlessly. How politically satisfying that original brass commemoration plaque was taken and turned into a cooking plate.

In 2016, one Vietnamese told *The Conversation*, “The idea that foreigners come here and commemorate (or celebrate in the people’s minds) a war event in which we were enemies is outrageous to most of us.” It should be outrageous to us, too.

When John Wayne’s propaganda movie, *The Green Berets* played in picture theatres in the late 1960s, anti-war activists picketed and disrupted screenings as part of building the anti-war movement.

There won’t be pickets of screenings of *Danger Close*, but the film is just as surely a propaganda attempt to rehabilitate the Vietnam War and whitewash imperialist intervention. The *New York Times* reported that is some pre-screenings, “veterans of past wars spoke up saying they thought [the film] was glorifying the Australian military”. Tellingly that has not been reported in Australia.

A generation learned about the horrors of imperialism during the Vietnam War. Workers took strike action and hundreds of thousands marched to end the war.

With thousands of US troops now stationed in Darwin, and the government preparing to join yet another US military venture in the Gulf, it is the anti-war movement that should be celebrated, not Australia’s killing machine.

The real story of Long Tan and the defeat of Australian imperialism is still waiting to be written by the victors.

Ian Rintoul

The film is a propaganda attempt to rehabilitate the Vietnam War and whitewash imperialist intervention

MARXISM AND ECOLOGY

Karl Marx argued that capitalism was a system that distorts humanity's relationship to the environment

THE WORSENING ecological crisis—the urgent issue of climate change, depletion of land, forests, and water resources are all indications that something has gone terribly wrong in the relationship between society and the environment.

Despite widespread official recognition of the catastrophic threats posed by this crisis, including formal UN agreements to limit carbon emissions since the early 1990s, ecological destruction has only accelerated.

In Australia, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and the Morrison government wants to extend the life of coal-fired power stations and encourage new mines.

Deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, commonly described as the Earth's lungs, producing 20 per cent of our planet's oxygen, has grown to its fastest ever pace.

Our rulers refuse to act because any meaningful change requires confrontation with the fundamental logic of the capitalist system that produces their wealth and power. Capitalism is a form of social organisation based on competition, where production is run on the basis of profit for the benefit of a tiny elite.

The destructive operations of capitalism are unique in human history. Human societies have developed many different ways of relating to the environment. Aboriginal societies in Australia lived sustainably with the land for at least 60,000 years, both adapting to and changing the environment.

Their use of fire, for example, significantly transformed the fauna and flora. It was not until the British class system was brutally introduced into Australia that sustainability became an issue.

Although environmental damage, such as the deforestation and soil erosion on Easter Island 1300

years ago, occurred in previous class societies, the magnitude of capitalist environmental degradation dramatically surpasses anything previously. Capitalism has relegated nature to a mere “input” to a system driven by competition and profit.

As witnesses to the early stages of capitalism's development from feudalism, Marx and Engels wrote about the destruction of nature as being inextricably connected to the development of industrial capitalism. This anticipated much of present-day ecological thought.

At the centre of Marx's critique was the idea that capitalism had created an “irreparable rift” in the “metabolic” interaction between human beings and the earth.

The idea of this “metabolic” relationship reflects a key component of Marx's political writings—that human beings, like other animals, were a part of nature and relied on nature for the maintenance and reproduction of life.

Yet we are also distinct from other creatures in that the food and shelter humans require comes from nature through a process of conscious labour. We are capable of planning and thinking through the way we produce our livelihood in a way no other creatures can.

The rift that Marx described was a result of the way capitalism uprooted previous modes of existence (and their specific relations with nature), restructuring the economy and society. This included the creation of new agricultural technologies and the growing division between town and country.

Marx's ecology

The ecological aspects of Marx's thought are little known and there is a widespread view that Marx had little to say about the environment.

Marx wrote about the destruction of nature as being inextricably connected to the development of industrial capitalism

Marx is often portrayed as having a pro-industrial outlook that continued the “exploitative paradigms” of the capitalists he so bitterly criticised. As a result, Marx is charged with taking nature for granted and with advocating a socialism based on unconstrained “growth”.

Others distinguish a “softer”, “romantic” Marx of his early *Philosophical Manuscripts*, and the “harder”, “technocratic” Marx of *Capital*. This mistakenly paints Marx and Marxists as being crude economic determinists, advocating science and technology as the solution to environmental problems.

The ecological aspects of Marx's thought, like so many others, have been distorted by the historical association of Marxism with Stalinism in Russia.

Stalin's rule saw massive environmental destruction as he drove a massive effort to industrialise in order to compete with the West.

Stalin's Russia was not socialist or communist—it is better understood as being “state capitalist”—founded on the defeat of the revolution of 1917 and driven by the same logic of capitalist accumulation as in the West.

Marx and capitalism

Marx's description of the “irreparable rift” that emerged as a result of capitalist production was drawn from his studies of the burgeoning industrial agriculture in the 19th century and its impact on soil fertility in Europe and North America.

During the 1820s and 1830s European farmers were so desperate for ways to replenish soil nutrients that the Napoleonic battlefields of Waterloo and Austerlitz were raided for bones to spread over their fields.

The mounting crisis in soil fertility, its impact on crop yields and therefore profits stimulated the de-

velopment of synthetic fertilisers and what is termed the “second agricultural revolution”.

Justin von Liebig, a German chemist, was commissioned by wealthy landowners to investigate soil nutrients, and later developed the first synthetic fertilisers.

Marx also observed how capitalist agriculture fuelled imperialism as the demand for fertiliser resulted in massive importation of guano from Peru.

Both Liebig and Marx drew the conclusion that these new “high farming” methods of British agriculture were a “robbery” system opposed to any sort of rational farming. Marx writes in *Capital*:

“All progress in capitalist agriculture, is not only a process in robbing the labourer but robbing the soil. All progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the last sources of that fertility.

“The more a country develops its foundations of modern industry, the more the rapid is this process of destruction.

“Capitalist production therefore develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth, the soil and the labourer.”

By the late 1860s, the contradictions of capitalist agriculture were obvious to Liebig and Marx as agriculture had ceased to be self-sustaining.

Although the initial application of single nutrients such as phosphate generated dramatic results, this diminished rapidly, as soil fertility is limited by the nutrient in least abundance. Marx pointed out that the developments in soil science in this way actually laid the basis for further degradation of the soil.

In recent times, the introduction of genetically modified (GM) crops presents a similar story. GM products are said to be the solution to world hunger.

But GM development is driven by agri-businesses’ concerns to control production and increase profits, not any consideration of their ecological impact.

This misuse of science and technology is a result of the way it is developed and controlled under capitalism.

Marx’s writing, far from advocating a blind and uncritical reliance on science and technology, was acutely aware of this problem.



Capitalism produces things, commodities, to be bought and sold on the market.

The commodification of all aspects of life has also transformed nature too into a commodity. This process divides nature into products to be exchanged on the market, removing natural resources from their role in the ecosystem.

Industrial logging destroys forests, industrial fishing destroys fisheries and industrial use of fossil fuels drives climate change.

As the very existence of individual companies relies on ensuring profits, the environment is just another input. The health of the ecosystem cannot be registered as a genuine priority.

Why the working class?

The fight for a sustainable future therefore goes beyond changing attitudes and ideas about the environment.

The scale of the environmental destruction we see today is the system of capitalist production.

Creating a sustainable society will require an active challenge to, and the eventual overthrow, of the existing relations of production.

While Marx understood capitalism’s destructive ability, he also saw that capitalism itself created the potential power to challenge it.

In an oft-quoted phrase in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx refers to the working class as the “grave-diggers of capitalism.”

Capitalist production concentrates large numbers of people in the modern day workplace—from traditional fac-

Above: Karl Marx drew conclusions about our relationship to the environment from studying soil depletion due to industrial agriculture in Europe

tory workers and construction workers to call centre workers and teachers. Through strike action, workers have the ability to stop environmental degradation where it begins—at the point of production.

Trade unions, as organisations to defend working class wages and conditions, have also played important roles in defending the environment.

In the 1970s, the green bans of the Builder’s Labourers Federation protected natural heritage sites and low cost housing from developers. Similarly union bans on handling uranium put a halt to the expansion of uranium mining for many years.

Working class action challenged the immediate priorities of capitalism and also raised the more fundamental question of workers’ control over both the natural and built environment.

An orientation towards union activity opens up serious possibilities for tackling the current ecological problems that confront us. Just as capitalism and environmental destruction are inextricably linked so, too, is the future of the planet tied to the future of the working class.

Union power is crucial to winning the transition to renewable energy and the zero carbon economy that we need. And it the working class alone that has the power to get rid of the system that now threatens catastrophic climate change.

The history of the green bans is a small example of the potential power of the working class to fight for a truly sustainable society in which humanity and nature are not in conflict.

DEREGISTRATION— UNION BUSTING THE BLF

Tom Orsag looks at how deregistration in 1986 virtually destroyed the Builders Labourers Federation, in a warning for unions facing the same thing today

UNION MEMBERS denied the union of their choice at police gunpoint on government orders. Their union leader jailed. The union offices raided for membership lists and its funds stolen by the government.

This was not the work of a military dictatorship, but of Labor governments in their efforts to break construction union the Builders' Labourers Federation (BLF).

In 1986, the BLF was deregistered in NSW, Victoria and the ACT, then its areas of largest membership. This meant it was banned from striking agreements with employers and lost the right to appear in industrial courts to represent its members.

Laws against it were drawn up by Prime Minister Bob Hawke in Federal Parliament. The union's organisers were also banned from building sites and construction workers were forced to resign from the union or lose their jobs.

Simultaneous laws were introduced by State Premiers in NSW and Victoria. Steve Crabb, then Victorian Minister for Industrial Relations, set in motion police raids on the BLF offices to confiscate its membership list and the union funds.

Today the Liberal government is again threatening to deregister unions with its "Ensuring Integrity" legislation. The construction division of the CFMMEU and its Victorian Secretary John Setka are the main target. Last time deregistration succeeded in smashing the BLF. We have to make sure this doesn't happen again.

Union busting

The targeting of the BLF began with a Royal Commission under Malcolm Fraser's Liberal government in 1981. It was designed to deliver a raft of anti-union headlines and hunt down evidence against the BLF.

After spending \$1 million of public money, the Royal Commission finally discovered that BLF Secretary Norm Gallagher had asked bosses to

provide him \$100,000 in building materials for his beach house. Gallagher eventually went to jail for corruption.

But the move on Gallagher was part of a concerted effort at union busting. The builders who had corruptly paid him got off with fines or a slap on the wrist.

The BLF had been too successful for its members, winning wage rises, shorter hours and safer working conditions. The union also had a proud record of support for Aboriginal rights and the environment, made famous through its Green Bans in NSW in the 1970s.

The BLF knew how to turn the short-sighted greed of the builders to its members' advantage. The union would pick key events in the building cycle like the concrete pour to hold lightning stoppages. Such action could cost the bosses dearly.

BLF organisers were also willing to risk arrest for defying the courts and anti-union laws, and BLF members willing to strike until they were released.

It was the BLF's opposition to the Prices and Incomes Accord that finally led to deregistration. The Accord was agreed between the peak union body, the ACTU, and the Labor government when Bob Hawke came to power in March 1983. It saw the union movement agree to accept a limit on wage rises, supposedly in return for increases in the "social wage" in health and education spending.

Australian bosses wanted to cut wages and curb union power in order to restore profits following a series of recessions. Between 1971 and 1983, Australian strike days per worker were 30 per cent higher than the average among the OECD developed economies.

The Accord imposed wage cuts of about 7.5 per cent in its first five years.

It was endorsed at the 1983 ACTU Conference without a single dissent-

The BLF had been too successful, winning wage rises, shorter hours and safer working conditions

ing voice. The BLF's Norm Gallagher was on the ACTU Executive. He had doubts but refused to raise them publicly.

When the small Food Preservers' Union was threatened with deregistration in late 1984, over a strike demanding a wage increase beyond the Accord limits, the BLF supported them. But it did little to organise a political campaign against the Accord within the union movement.

In late 1984, the *Financial Review* gloated that, "The Hawke government has become a jailer for unions which dare to buck the Accord consensus, and the ACTU has become an industrial police force." Little did the BLF appreciate how far the ACTU and the Labor Party were willing to go.

In 1984-85 the economy recovered and the BLF refused to be bound by the Accord framework, using strike action to force higher pay rises and demand shorter hours from employers. This was too much for the Labor government.

Pressure was building on the Accord as a whole, as the *Melbourne Age* noted in November 1985, "The same officials who two years ago, spoke of the wages tank as being empty, now speak of the difficulty of holding wages down while profits keep rising."

In July 1985, Hawke told Cabinet unabashedly, "We're gonna smash those bastards. We're going to deregister the BLF."

The state and federal Labor governments marshalled all the powers at their disposal to force building companies to "hold the line".

The Federal Government and the state governments drew up Codes of Conduct for building companies to stop them dealing with the BLF or paying wages above the Award limits. Building companies who refused faced the loss of federal government work. In Victoria, Premier John Cain threatened to hold up planning permits and cut off gas, electricity and water to building sites.

As Clive Bubb, of the bosses' association the Master Builders Australia put it, "This is a fully coordinated, carefully structured, national campaign dedicated to ridding our \$15 billion a year industry of the BLF blight."

BLF response

Norm Gallagher did not appreciate the forces arraigned against the union. Three weeks before deregistration in April 1986, he blustered that, "An analysis of Crabb's 'master plan' shows it to be merely wishful thinking. Most building unions are already complaining of its impracticality."

The union had been deregistered before. The BLF had survived deregistration between 1974 and 1976, and even increased its membership during the period. Then, under a Liberal government, the ACTU had supported the union and the wider union movement refused to poach its members.

This time the ACTU was united with the Labor government in its assault on the BLF. Rival unions the Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU) and FEDFA, the crane drivers' union, set out to carve up the BLF's membership. This was all the more appalling as the BWIU had a reputation as a left-wing union, led by former Communist Party members Tom McDonald and Pat Clancy.

Large contingents of police moved onto building sites around Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra to help employers and union organisers intimidate rank and file BLF members to join the BWIU.

Their methods of surrounding Builders' Labourers on site or locking them in a shed were so blatant that even The Financial Review admitted that labourers were "heavily leaned on".

Key BLF organisers like Victoria's John Cummins were arrested and jailed for six nights for "trespassing" when they tried to go onto building sites.

Former BLF members attempted to organise within other building unions including the BWIU. The leadership of the union tried to ignore them, cancelling meetings and even union elections.

The Victorian state Labor government provided the BWIU with money to finish the job. In February 1988, The Age noted it had handed the BWIU \$500,000 to "promote occupational health and safety." Its editorial asked pointedly, "Were the payments



in any way designed to help the union fight off the remnants of the BLF in the recent union elections?"

Despite all this, the BLF continued to fight on, particularly in Victoria. Many supporters there continued to maintain BLF membership alongside that of other unions. In 1993 what was left of the BLF amalgamated with the BWIU into the new super union, the CFMMEU.

Former BLF officials including John Cummins and John Setka would go on to play important roles in the new union.

Bitter lessons

The Labor Party was founded by unions to represent their interests, and by extension workers' interests, in parliament. Yet it was Prime Minister Bob Hawke and a series of Labor governments who set out to break the BLF. This was a lesson in how far Labor is prepared to go to defend capitalism and serve the interests of the bosses.

When it came to the crunch only one single Labor Left MP, Queensland Senator George Georges, voted against the anti-BLF laws. He was threatened with expulsion and ended up with a three-month suspension for his defiance.

Victorian Socialist Left MLAs George Crawford, formerly from the Plumbers Union, Joan Coxsedg and Jean McLean, while verbally supportive of the BLF, did not vote against

Above: Marching in support of the Builders Labourers Federation

the laws in State Parliament. Victorian Socialist Left powerbroker Bill Hartley was expelled from the party for his support for the union.

Despite votes against the laws at two Labor Party Conferences in 1985, Victorian Premier John Cain could write that, "We just continued to ignore them."

The smashing of the BLF marked a turning point for the Australian working class, comparable to the defeat of the air traffic controllers' union in the US in 1981-82 by President Ronald Reagan and the defeat of the British miners' strike in 1984-85 under Margaret Thatcher.

It deepened the collapse in strike levels and the downturn in class struggle, paving for the way for further neo-liberal attacks.

But it needn't have been that way. The BLF was only defeated because of the failure of other unions to offer solidarity.

The major left unions in the building and metal trades abandoned it. Unions like the AMWU and the BWIU chose to enforce the Accord by scabbing, and in the case of the BWIU stealing members from the BLF.

The result is that today the union movement as a whole is far weaker.

This time around any effort to deregister the CFMMEU must be opposed by the trade union movement as a whole, not simply in words, but through mass protests and stop work action.

CHERNOBYL— WHY NUCLEAR POWER IS NOT THE ANSWER

The new TV series Chernobyl has reawakened interest in the shocking nuclear disaster. **Michael Douglas** looks at the lessons and why nuclear is no solution to climate change

ON 26 April 1986 a nuclear power reactor exploded at Chernobyl in Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union. Radioactive material equivalent to 400 Hiroshima bombs was hurled into the atmosphere.

Authorities failed to organise evacuations and lied to emergency workers sent to contain the disaster, and to thousands of volunteers who poured into the region to help. These shocking events are examined in the new television series Chernobyl.

The scale of the Chernobyl catastrophe has never been officially acknowledged. Soviet authorities tried to cover up the scale of the disaster, and as a result the number of deaths from radiation exposure is still unclear.

Academic Kate Brown spent four years examining numerous studies and archival material for her new book *Manual for Survival*. She estimates it caused between 35,000 and 150,000 fatalities. After Chernobyl, in areas contaminated by radioactive material, people, “fell ill from cancers, respiratory illness, anaemia, autoimmune disorders, birth defects, and fertility problems two to three times more frequently in the years after the accident than before”, she wrote.

The Ukrainian government alone still pays compensation to 35,000 people whose spouses died as a result of the disaster.

The effects are ongoing. Most of the radiation from Chernobyl hit Belarus. Today 20 per cent of its farmland is permanently unusable.

Contaminated soil was found as far as Corsica in the Mediterranean. In Britain almost 9000 farms were placed under restriction after rain dropped material from Chernobyl into the soil. The last restrictions were not lifted until 26 years later.

The Soviet government issued no

warnings. The world only learned of the disaster when Swedish authorities detected increased radiation in the environment two days after the explosion.

Stalinist Russia

These events at Chernobyl and their attempted cover up were another nail in the coffin of the Soviet Union.

Some reviews of the new TV series have complained that it treats the Soviet Union unfairly and that the agenda of series writer Craig Mazin, who previously worked on comedies like *The Hangover Part II*, is to smear the Stalinist system in an effort to undermine the idea of socialism as an alternative to capitalism.

Even if these criticisms are accurate, they are secondary. There is nothing about the Stalinist dictatorship in Russia that the left should defend.

The Soviet Union was founded by a genuine workers revolution in 1917. But Joseph Stalin led a counter-revolution in the 1920s that crushed working class organisation and resistance, turned the country into a dictatorship, and imposed a program of forced industrialisation to compete with the West.

This meant all industry in the Soviet Union was owned by a state over which workers exercised no democratic control. The system relied upon the accumulation of capital by, and in the interests of, a new ruling class through the ruthless exploitation of workers. By the time of Chernobyl, this system of state capitalism was in a deep economic crisis after decades of stagnation.

French liberal theorist Alexis de Tocqueville famously observed the most dangerous moment for a bad government is when it begins to reform. The Soviet ruling class was split about the way forward. Presi-

Most of the radiation hit Belarus. Today 20 per cent of its farmland is permanently unusable

dent Mikhail Gorbachev had come to power in 1985 representing a section of the ruling class that wanted to open the economy to the market and integration into the world economy—a process known as “perestroika”.

But Gorbachev was soon locked in a power struggle with more conservative sections of the ruling class determined to carry on as before. In order to help push this restructuring through, Gorbachev signalled the limited opening up of political freedoms, known as “glasnost”. These moves only increased the appetite for more change.

The Chernobyl disaster accelerated this process. Millions of people lost faith in the Soviet system and its claims of technological superiority over the West. In 1989 a wave of miners’ strikes swept Russia for the first time in decades. Revolutions soon overthrew the Soviet Union itself.

Not safe

Chernobyl was the world’s worst nuclear accident—so far.

The United States’ worst nuclear disaster was in 1979. Mechanical failures led to a partial core meltdown in one of the reactors at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station in Pennsylvania.

In the United Kingdom, there were 1767 leaks, breakdowns, or other safety “events” at nuclear power reactors between 2001 and 2008.

The French government is required to announce all nuclear incidents. These have numbered up to 800 per year. In 2009 a heatwave shut a third of French reactors because rivers became too hot to act as a coolant. As the Earth warms due to climate change, the impact on nuclear safety will be even greater.

In 2011 Japan faced nuclear meltdown. Explosions at its Fukushima

nuclear power plant, after an earthquake and tsunami, released radiation into the atmosphere.

Japanese Prime Minister at the time, Naoto Kan, has said that in a worst case scenario, the evacuation of Tokyo's 30 million people would have been necessary.

Both the Fukushima and Onagawa nuclear power plants have a history of radiation leaks, damaged reactors and cover-ups. But Japan's government let them carry on operating. And it still hopes to increase reliance on nuclear power, after many plants closed following the disaster.

The picture is similar elsewhere. India has commissioned 21 nuclear power reactors by 2031, many of them already under construction. China has 45 nuclear power reactors in operation, about 15 more under construction, and plans to commission another two every year for the next two decades.

In Australia, Coalition MPs are again campaigning to develop nuclear power, with another official inquiry now launched. The main purpose of this is to legitimise further uranium mining, with Australia holding the world's largest reserves. The Yeelirrie uranium mine in WA was recently given the go ahead by the state's Supreme Court.

Clean power?

To justify this madness the nuclear industry has claimed green credentials, arguing that electricity produced by nuclear power is carbon neutral. This means it doesn't generate carbon dioxide and is therefore a way to combat climate change.

On the surface this is correct—the nuclear reactions that take place inside a reactor to generate power do not add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. However, nuclear power reactors require a cycle of mining, transport and waste storage that generates huge amounts of greenhouse gases.

A Friends of the Earth report in 2004 took into account the carbon dioxide released by the building of a nuclear power reactor, the mining and transport of uranium, the processing and then further transport of the nuclear fuel, followed by the long term storage of the spent radioactive waste. It showed that nuclear power produces "about 50 per cent more global warming emissions than wind power".

Olympic Dam mine located near the town of Roxby Downs north of Adelaide is the second biggest



uranium mine in the world. It is the region's largest producer of carbon dioxide and consumes a quarter the state's electricity.

It also has a terrible record for destruction of the local environment and poisoning the surrounding area with radiation.

Converting the world's energy generation from fossil fuel technology to nuclear power couldn't happen quickly enough to produce the immediate reduction in carbon dioxide emissions that are needed. A nuclear power plant takes 15 years to build.

Nuclear power is not part of the solution to climate change—it is part of the problem.

Investment should be directed towards sustainable, green and safe energy instead. And workers should not have to choose between their jobs and living standards on the one hand and tackling climate change on the other. Spanish mining unions recently won a €250 million deal which will see the closure of nearly all coal mines in Spain and the retraining of effected workers as part of a just transition.

The environmental claims of the nuclear industry look even shallower when you consider the huge amounts of waste produced, much of it lethal for hundreds of thousands of years.

There are serious doubts about the ability to store this waste safely. The British agency responsible for storage proposes burying the material up to a kilometre underground. Yet its own advisers are worried that the containers

Above: "Liquidators" who volunteered to help clean up Chernobyl measuring radioactivity inside the 30 kilometre off-limits zone soon after the disaster

used could rust in less than 500 years.

The Observer newspaper pointed out that, "almost 90 percent of Britain's hazardous nuclear waste stockpile is so badly stored it could explode or leak with devastating results at any time".

So much nuclear waste exists in the United States that an entire mountain has been hollowed out to store the material. Existing waste would more than fill the mountain and a new alternative must be found.

These are not even the worst aspects of nuclear power.

"Civilian" nuclear power programs arose to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. When the Sellafield nuclear power reactor opened in the United Kingdom in 1956, its primary role was to produce plutonium for British bombs.

The same is true of early reactors in the US, France, Russia and China. Of the ten nations to have produced nuclear weapons, eight have nuclear power reactors. And both Israel and North Korea used the pretence of nuclear power programs to amass plutonium.

Chernobyl reminds us of the day we almost lost Europe. It examines how class divisions determine who is affected by disasters and how badly. It should also remind us that Stalinism was never an alternative to capitalism. It also shows there is no safe way to generate nuclear power or store radioactive waste—and that nuclear power is no solution to climate change.



HONG KONG RISES UP AGAINST REPRESSION

By James Supple

HONG KONG'S extraordinary protest movement has now lasted over ten weeks. Every weekend brings new demonstrations, and battles with police.

Protesters have occupied the airport for days, disrupting flights. Up to two million joined the largest of the protests in July.

The Beijing government has issued strident warnings, labelling the protesters "violent criminals" and declaring, "As for their punishment, it's only a matter of time." Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam warned protests were approaching "a point of no return".

This has led to fears of a Tiananmen Square style crackdown. But sending in the military to crush the demonstrations would carry a high cost. Business investment would flee the province, seriously damaging its economy.

The authorities are for now hoping to wear down the protesters, with heavy police repression and an attempt to force more and more dramatic confrontations with police.

In early August police announced that they had arrested 420 people since June, with widespread use of tear gas as well as rubber bullets against demonstrators.

Police have also used Triad gangs to stage brutal attacks on protesters. On 21 July, thugs in white t-shirts armed with metal poles and bamboo sticks moved into the Yuen Long subway station following a protest, indiscriminately attacking protesters as well as other passengers. Police failed to respond to emergency calls for 50 minutes.

According to Hong Kong-based socialist Lam Chi Leung, "The Hong Kong government hopes to discredit the demonstrators as a riotous mob. By doing this, it hopes to regain some popularity from the masses which is now at an all-time low.

"But, despite its best efforts, public opinion has not been significantly reversed. On the contrary, the police's obvious collusion with organised crime aroused greater anger among ordinary people."

The protests began over a bill that would allow China to extradite political opponents to the mainland for trial. Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam has halted the bill but refused to completely scrap it. Protesters are also demanding an independent inquiry into the police's behaviour and the democratic election of the territory's leader.

Under the agreement that brought Hong Kong under Beijing government control in 1997, the territory has greater democratic rights than the rest of China, but its leader must still be approved by the central government.

Recent years have seen increasing efforts by the central government to assert control, including the arrest of leaders of the Umbrella movement of 2014 and bans on candidates who tried to stand for political office.

Strikes

In early August the territory was shaken by a general strike. The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions said 350,000 workers took part. Hundreds of flights were cancelled as air traffic controllers called in sick.

Workers in the civil service, advertising, finance, construction

Above: Protesters in Hong Kong occupy the airport in response to savage police attacks on demonstrators

and retail also joined in. Protesters "enforced" the strike on the Metro by holding open train doors, disrupting peak hour services.

Hong Kong's union movement is divided, with the larger pro-government union federation working to undermine the strike.

While this was "an initial attempt", there are also plans to launch, "a larger and longer general strike" in the future, according to Lam Chi Leung.

"Some demonstrators have realised that they need to unite with the masses on the Chinese mainland", he said. "They distribute leaflets to tourists from mainland China to explain the purpose and significance of the mass movement." This is vital to undermining the Beijing government's ability to crush the movement.

But there are also right-wing forces that see both the mainland government and people as their enemy. The slogan used by a far right group "Liberate Hong Kong—revolution of our times" has been taken up by some of the demonstrators.

More widespread and sustained strike action will be needed for the movement to succeed. Action at a workplace level could bring the mass of Hong Kong's working class into active support for the movement.

Achieving this means connecting the struggle to a fight against surging inequality and declining social conditions. Hong Kong is one of the world's most unequal places, with long working hours and hugely expensive rents.

This kind of struggle could win support across mainland China—and mobilise the power that could beat China's ruling class.

In early August the territory was shaken by a general strike

Solidarity