

Solidarity

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MILLIONS MARCH WORLDWIDE JOIN THE CLIMATE REBELLION

HONG KONG

Where are the protests headed?

SEXISM

New book on causes of domestic violence

CLIMATE CHANGE

Why green business is not the solution

Solidarity WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

Capitalism is a system of competition, crisis, and war based on exploitation of workers, producing for profit not human needs. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over production or distribution. Through environmental degradation and climate change capitalism has become a threat to humanity's future and life on earth.

Workers power and socialism

The working class has the power to challenge the existing system and create a better world. We stand for socialism, a society based on democratically elected workers councils which would control and plan the economy to produce for human need. The authoritarian states like Russia and China are not socialist but forms of state capitalism where workers have no power.

What about elections and parliament?

Parliament, the army, the police and the courts are institutions of the capitalist state that maintain the dominance of the ruling class over the rest of society. The capitalist state cannot be taken over and used by the working class, it must be smashed. Workers need to create their own state based on workers councils.

While parliament can be a platform for socialists, real change doesn't come through parliament. It is won by mass action in strikes, protests and demonstrations.

We are internationalists

The struggle for socialism has no national boundaries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from another; we campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose borders and immigration controls, and welcome migrants and refugees.

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

Australia is an imperialist power established through genocide on stolen Indigenous land. We support the continuing struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for land, justice and self-determination.

Oppression and liberation

We oppose sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. We fight against all forms of discrimination and the oppression of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. We oppose discrimination against Muslims and people from the Middle East.

Linking up the struggles

We are active building movements for environmental and social change and economic equality. We are active in our unions and work to build the organisation and self-confidence of the rank and file. We work to bring activists together to strengthen each movement and build a common struggle against capitalism.

Educate, agitate, organise

Socialism cannot be introduced from above, by parliament or parties. The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself.

Solidarity is an organisation of activists, anti-capitalists and revolutionary socialists committed to socialism from below. We are part of the International Socialist Tendency.

A democratic revolutionary party is necessary to deepen resistance to capitalism and to build a movement to overthrow the system. Solidarity members are beginning to build such a party out of today's struggles against the system.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown

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Things they say

I struggle that the business community is singled out... Young kids can earn \$5 million now by playing Fortnite. And even influencers—you can earn millions of dollars just by wearing a nice jacket and standing in front of a landmark.

Telstra chairman John Mullen tries to defend multi-million dollar CEO salaries

You speak with major employers, they have a very good relationship with the SDA. It is constructive, it's sensible. Christian Porter, Industrial relations Minister, praising the Shoppies Union, which has signed agreements dropping penalty rates and casual loadings, leaving workers on as little as \$8 an hour.

We used to make 100,000 tonnes of boxes with 200 people. Now, we are making 200,000 tonnes with 100 people.

Billionaire Anthony Pratt enthuses about his expanding box-making business in Trump's America ("it's all about jobs").

The Paris accord is an agreement between countries not an agreement that binds companies.

AGL Chairman Graeme Hunt—the company's Loy Yang A coal-fired power station is not due to close until 2048.

I make no apology for BP continuing to invest in oil and gas.

BP chief economist, Spencer Dale.

So if you're against coal mining you're also for keeping people homeless in countries like India.

Liberal Resources Minister Matt Canavan seems to be confused about what coal is used for

If capitalism is to hold its place, it must up its game.

The Economist editorial on 19 September, getting nervous about climate change

It bothers me that kids today wouldn't know a bloody sandbag, let alone a shovel.

Tasmanian Senator Jacqui Lambie is very worried about the youth of today

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Newstart level 'killing Indigenous Australians'

TWO ANU academics say the hopelessly low rate of Newstart is entrenching poverty and premature death amongst Indigenous people. Dr Francis Markham and Professor Jon Altman, in a submission to a Senate inquiry, say the failure to increase the rate of income support affects Aboriginal communities the most.

One in five people on Youth Allowance and one in ten on Newstart are Aboriginal.

Many live in remote Indigenous communities where there is little prospect of work—especially after cuts to council jobs provided under the former CDEP.

"The simplest way to reduce poverty in remote Indigenous Australia is to raise the rate of Newstart", they argue. While the Newstart rate consigns people to poverty, the situation is actually worse than the rate of \$279 a week would suggest.

The rate of breaches and penalties where people are cut off payments are higher in Aboriginal communities—due to the racist Community Development Program which forces them to meet tougher work for the dole tests than everyone else.

Scaffolding problems on half of NSW building sites

CHECKS ON 700 building sites in NSW have shown widespread unsafe practices.

Scaffolding on 44 per cent of sites inspected had parts missing, and unlicensed workers had changed or removed scaffolding on 36 per cent.

The problems were found during Safe Work inspections triggered by the death in April of 18-year-old Christopher Cassaniti, after scaffolding he was working on collapsed.

The CFMEU construction union has called for industrial manslaughter laws in the state to send bosses who kill to jail.

Australia's coal plants to run until 2050



AUSTRALIA'S COAL power stations will keep pumping out pollution for decades yet, a National Energy Summit sponsored by the Financial Review has heard.

Some coal power plants have closed, like Hazelwood in Victoria, or are nearing closure, like Liddell in NSW.

But Sarah McNamara, of the Australian Energy Council, made it clear that based on current policies, "Coal is going to play an important role in our energy mix into the future, until 2050". The Energy Council represents the country's major energy companies.

Tony Wood, of think tank the Grattan Institute, agreed, telling the summit, "We've got 20 to 30 years of coal plant life in this country."

With scientists warning the level of carbon in the atmosphere is already at dangerous levels, this spells disaster.

Energy baron and coal fanatic Trevor St Baker, who owns the 40-year-old Vales Point coal plant at Lake Macquarie, even claimed, "We already have a program for extending the life of that [plant] for another 20 years."

This madness has to be stopped.

Coroner questions removal of Aboriginal child with rare disease

AN ABORIGINAL child with a rare genetic condition was removed from his parents by Territory Families in questionable circumstances, a hearing has heard. He died of the disease, Niemen Pick type C, less than six months later, according to the NT News. Child protection workers frequently accuse Aboriginal families of neglect due to racist prejudice.

Four-year-old Lebron Martin was described as a "generally happy child". Medical notes frequently mentioned, "the love his mother showed to him", Counsel assisting the coroner Kelvin Currie said.

According to a family statement, "Even when he was sick and feeling unwell, he loved [his mother] Kara and was truly happy when he was with Kara... When Lebron was returning to care, we could see the sadness in his eyes and we could tell that he was sad." Lebron died in the arms of his father and mother in December 2017.

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

Court says Elon Musk's anti-union measures illegal

TESLA CEO Elon Musk has been found guilty of illegally preventing his workers from joining a union. A Californian judge substantiated 12 separate anti-union actions the company had taken, from having security guards obstruct leafleting in the parking lot, banning workers from wearing union t-shirts and badges, repeatedly interrogating union activists, and then firing one of them.

The company was ordered to reinstate the worker with back-pay and read a statement clarifying what union activists are allowed to do to a meeting of the workforce—with Musk present.

Tesla, which produces electric vehicles, has been praised as a pioneer in technology that could slash carbon emissions. But it is the only large car manufacturer in the US that is non-union.

Workers at the plant have been trying to unionise its 12,000-strong workforce since 2016, saying they are paid lower wages than in other car plants and suffer high injury rates due to long hours and poorly designed machinery.

Australia world's second biggest arms importer

AUSTRALIA BECAME the world's second largest arms importer last year, surpassed only by Saudi Arabia. Last year the government spent \$2.3 billion on purchases including Joint Strike Fighter planes, new submarines, P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine aircraft, missiles, armoured cars, helicopters and radar systems.

Not satisfied with its role in the arms trade the government is still hoping to see the country become one of the top ten weapons exporters too. Last year it came in a disappointing 25th.

EDITORIAL

Morrison channels Trump as Liberals' right-wing agenda exposed

SCOTT MORRISON didn't just visit Donald Trump on his trip to the US—he started channelling him. First he backed Trump's campaign against China, by parroting the line that it should stop being treated as a developing country. Back in Australia he attacked "negative globalism" and the efforts of an "unaccountable internationalist bureaucracy" to tell his government what to do on refugees and climate change. It was a populist swipe that echoed Trump's speech at the UN a week before where he announced, "the future does not belong to globalists".

And when Trump abandoned the Kurds in Syria, Morrison shrugged it off, saying he had signalled it earlier and was just showing "consistency".

Morrison has locked in a deeply right-wing agenda, demanding drug tests for dole recipients, the anti-union Ensuring Integrity Bill, and the repeal of the refugee Medevac Bill alongside efforts to deport Priya, Nades and their children.

And his government still has no climate policy—with even the IMF now warning it won't reach its Paris Agreement reduction targets. Instead it is currently examining how to keep coal-fired power stations like Liddell running as long as possible.

The paralysis of the Labor Party is giving Morrison a free ride. Since the election we have seen 350,000 join Climate Strike protests, the largest nationwide rallies since the Iraq War, as well as Extinction Rebellion actions across the country. Yet Labor is debating whether to surrender on climate change, by adopting the Liberals' hopeless reduction target.

Morrison also faces major problems with the economy. Since the election the Reserve Bank has cut interest rates in half, to an alarmingly low 0.75 per cent. This, along with the government's tax cuts, has done little to boost consumer spending. Globally, manufacturing is already in recession across Europe, Japan and the US.

Yet, the government continues to dither, refusing to increase spending on infrastructure or jobs as it protects its cherished budget surplus.

Workers have faced years of stagnant wage growth. As the economy slows bosses will look to cut jobs and wages further. But unions that fight can win gains. GBAR asbestos CFMEU workers in NSW won a pay rise after ten weeks on strike. Fenner Dunlop workers in Melbourne won 5 per cent and 3 per cent annual pay



Above: Extinction Rebellion protests have blocked traffic across the country

raises plus improved rostering after striking for two weeks. And MUA workers at Sydney Ferries have won a 34 per cent pay rise and more permanent jobs after several strikes.

We need more of this kind of action—to defend wages and conditions, to stop Morrison's anti-union Ensuring Integrity Bill as well as fight for the climate.

Cops crackdown on Extinction Rebellion

EXTINCTION REBELLION (XR) actions blocking traffic and producing dozens of arrests have ignited a media backlash. Police have launched a major crackdown. In Sydney and Brisbane they used "wrist locks" to arrest non-violent protesters that in Sydney saw 75-year-old environmental scientist, Martin Wolterding, sent to hospital for checks on a swollen wrist and bruising.

In Sydney they imposed ridiculous bail conditions on arrested protesters, banning them from the city and from associating with other members of XR.

Extinction Rebellion advises activists to be polite and respectful towards police. Some think that they can be won over. XR members in London have chanted, "Police, we love you—we're doing this for your children."

But the police can never be on our side. Their job is to "maintain order"—to ensure the continuation of business as usual. There is a long history of brutal police treatment of protesters, trade unionists and Indigenous people.

The police's role is to defend the rich and powerful. Behind them are governments and corporations who are profiting from destroying the planet.

Labor Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk's new anti-protest laws have drawn comparisons—including from Labor Party members—to the bad old days of Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Palaszczuk

has branded protesters "sinister" and "ridiculous" in an effort to justify laws that mean possessing a "locking device" could result in a two year jail sentence.

Peter Dutton dialled up the hysteria further, demanding protesters lose welfare payments and face mandatory jail terms. He also incited right-wing vigilante action, suggesting, "People should take these names and the photos of these people and distribute them as far and wide as they can so that we shame these people."

All this represents an attack on the basic right to protest—for doing nothing more than disrupting traffic.

The Extinction Rebellion protests have shown that there is a movement of people prepared to take disruptive action for the climate. This can inspire more people to take action.

But blocking traffic alone will not force change. The climate movement needs clear demands and a strategy to link up with the unions and the working class. Extinction Rebellion's demand for a climate emergency declaration has been taken up by numerous governments while they carry on polluting with business-as-usual.

The movement needs to put the issues of jobs, and public investment in renewable energy and public transport, at its centre.

.....
We have seen 350,000 join Climate Strike protests, the largest nationwide rallies since the Iraq War

Replace Liddell with renewable energy—no extensions for coal

By Adam Adelpour

THE AGEING Liddell coal power station is at the heart of a battle over the future of energy generation in Australia.

Liddell, in NSW's Hunter Valley, was commissioned in 1973 and is at the end of its 50 year lifespan. Its original 2000 megawatt capacity has been reduced to 1680 megawatts, AGL estimates. Running the turbines any harder would result in failure. In the February 2017 heatwave, three of the plant's four turbines broke down.

AGL had planned to close it by 2022. But in August it caved to pressure from the Federal Government and announced it would keep Liddell operating until April 2023.

A week after AGL's announcement, Energy Minister Angus Taylor unveiled an inquiry into its closure. A task-force would consider, "everything from extension to replacement with like-for-like capacity". Government money to keep Liddell running was "on the table" according to Taylor.

An assessment by WorleyParsons found it would cost \$920 million for an extra five years of operation.

Taking up the Morrison government's support for Liddell should be a priority for the climate movement.

Australia has some of the highest per capita emissions in the world and electricity generation is the largest source of domestic emissions. There needs to be a fight to replace coal power with renewables.

The climate movement's history of concentrating on coal mines means climate activists are locked into opposing projects in communities that are often dependent on mining, with little ability to point to an alternative source of jobs.

The narrow focus on stopping Adani in the lead up to the Federal election meant the Coalition could pose as defenders of mining jobs. There were big swings to the right in mining communities in Queensland and in the Hunter in NSW. Targeting coal for export to India also does nothing to deal with Australia's domestic emissions.

Campaigning against Liddell is different. The fact that any coal power removed from the grid has to be replaced poses the question of large-scale job creation in renewable energy—and how to reduce Australia's emissions.

But AGL plans to partly replace Liddell with new gas projects. Its plan involves investing up to \$400 million in



Above: The Liddell coal-fired power station in NSW's Hunter Valley

a 252-megawatt Newcastle gas facility.

Liddell needs to be shut down and replaced with public renewable energy. There must be a job guarantee for Liddell workers. The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union is calling for the NSW government to set up

a Hunter Transition Authority to direct significant investment to the area.

Government investment in jobs could revitalise and transform the Hunter, making it into a hub for generating and distributing renewable energy for a sustainable future.

Sydney Uni students' Climate Strike success

AROUND 2200 students and staff from the University of Sydney marched to join the Climate Strike on 20 September. This was the largest student mobilisation for the strike in the country and the biggest student rally at the university in the last decade. The political strength of our demands and the tactics used to publicise the strike and politicise the issue of climate change were crucial.

To kickstart second semester, Spreading the Climate Strike (STCS), the group which formed to build the 15 March Strike, held a general assembly. Ninety students attended. Here, the group discussed and amended its demands. We decided to change the demand, "100 per cent renewable energy by 2030" to include "public renewable energy". While the demand for green jobs had been our focus in first semester, "public renewables" dominated in building September's strike. We also voted to include "No nuclear" and debated whether "Stop Adani" should remain in the demands.

The group held open weekly meetings to organise the campaign, and daily stalls on Eastern Avenue. These were a good way to meet new people and build the confidence and politics of newer activists.

We collected thousands of signatures on a statement of support for

the strike. These were delivered to the Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence, demanding no students or staff be penalised for attending the strike. The university agreed to this.

We passed 190 motions in classes supporting the strike. During first semester, after going into classes once, we could go back and hold a vote. This time we also asked for questions and speakers for or against the motions. Two common questions were "why not nuclear power?" and "why public renewables?" Allowing time for debate engaged more people and drew students into the organising.

We also held a well-attended forum on the need for public renewables and produced a Climate Strike lift-out in the student newspaper.

This time participation by university staff was much stronger, assisted by the university's assurances of no penalties for attending. Nine courses across different faculties either cancelled their class for the day, or moved their content and tests to another day. Staff in Geosciences voted to shut down for the strike. The Architecture department also shut down and organised their own contingent of 100 people. This support from staff made a huge difference in students' receptiveness towards the strike.

Thandi Bethune

AGL plans to partly replace Liddell with new gas projects—not just renewable energy

Unions back climate strike for jobs and secure future

By Miro Sandev

THE UNION turnout on 20 September was a crucial step towards putting jobs and workers' rights at the centre of the climate fight.

School climate strikers made a decisive shift following the election to reach out to unions and workers, adopting a demand for a just transition and secure, clean jobs.

In Sydney, the biggest union contingents were from the university education union, with hundreds of staff joining a feeder march from Sydney Uni, UTS and the University of Notre Dame. UNSW, Western Sydney Uni and Macquarie Uni also had their own contingents. There are now rank-and-file climate staff groups at most of the big universities in Sydney.

One of the highlights was the speech from the stage by maritime unionist Tommy-John Herbert. He told the crowd, "The MUA is currently fighting for an offshore wind project off the coast of Gippsland Victoria that has the power to bring hundreds of jobs to unemployed seafarers, hundreds of jobs to construction workers.

"In the Hunter Valley the government is desperately trying to keep the Liddell power station going, they could invest that money in renewable energy and retraining those workers. We need tens of thousands of those jobs."

He was on strike over enterprise bargaining, along with others from Hutchison who attended.

The national secretary of the electricians' union also spoke and called for "the government to invest in renewables" and "job security and a secure future" for workers transitioning from jobs in coal.

Fifty National Union of Workers members who were on strike from Fenner Dunlop voted to attend the Melbourne protest and one of them, John, addressed the rally. Farmworkers affected by climate change also shared the platform.

"Our work depends on the coal mining industry as we manufacture conveyor belts for coal mines", John said.

"Me and my workmates care about better wages and conditions, but we also care about climate change. I know the work we do needs to move away from coal mining, but workers who work in these industries like me must have a say in what comes next. We need to make sure good, well-paid



Above: NTEU members join the Climate Strike in Sydney on 20 September

union jobs are at the centre of future clean industries."

Victorian Trades Hall also organised a contingent of 150 workers to the Melbourne rally, which met with a university staff union contingent of another 100 people.

One group of workers at an organic foods warehouse managed to get their workplace shut down for the day to attend the Sydney rally.

The nurses' union bussed in members. Cleaners, firefighters and teachers all had contingents as did workers from the community, transport, retail, bank and public sectors.

The construction division of the CFMMEU brought 30-40 mostly delegates and members, as well as striking workers from GBAR. The union's flags were prominently displayed near the front of the stage.

Divisions

This was despite heavy pressure from the mining division of the union not to attend the rally—which stifled efforts to produce and distribute a leaflet supporting the rally and linking it to the fight against the Liberals' Ensuring Integrity bill.

The mining division of the CFMMEU remains hostile to the climate movement, preferring to defend jobs in the coal industry. It also pressured Unions NSW to scale down its support. The secretary of Unions NSW, Mark Morey, had been asked to speak at the rally, but declined as a result.

Hunter Workers pulled its support from the climate strike in Newcastle after facing similar pressure from the miners' union, and even reneged on an offer to lend the school strikers their stage.

There has also been some backlash within the RTBU transport union against members who attended the climate strike as an RTBU contingent. The union's members include coal train drivers. Some members have reportedly left the union over it.

Despite these ructions, the union mobilisation was a huge step forward from the previous strike in March. It shows the possibilities of winning union support for the climate movement—and to drawing in the power of workers' strike action. This will be vital if the movement is to force change.

The Workers for Climate Action group in Sydney has played an important role in building this perspective within the climate movement. If we are to successfully defeat Morrison and win a just transition, building support for the climate strike demands within unions at the grassroots level is critical, as is taking industrial action in favour of them.

The school strikers are discussing another big mobilisation next year on 1 May. In Sydney, the maritime and construction unions are already committed to a strike rally on May 1 around industrial demands. A joint rally including climate action demands, with some workers on strike, would be another step forward for the movement.

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One of the highlights in Sydney was the speech by maritime unionist Tommy-John Herbert

Tram and train companies attack workers and the right to strike

By Chris Breen

WORKERS AT Yarra Trams and Metro Trains in Melbourne are fighting private operators who want to increase casualisation and deny workers the right to strike.

RTBU members are asking for 5 per cent annual wage rises over three years. Yarra Trams has offered only 3 per cent a year. They also want to increase the number of part-time workers from 4 per cent to 15 per cent.

After two four-hour strikes their union, the RTBU, called off a planned 10 October strike despite 99.4 per cent of members voting for it. Yarra Trams CEO Nicolas Gindt asked the union to withdraw the strike, “in light of safety concerns around planned [Extinction Rebellion] protests”. The union should never have accepted this ruse, which undermined their strike campaign and risked driving a wedge between the union and climate activists.

Metro Trains has offered a 2 per cent pay increase and has also proposed measures that would undermine job security and increase casualisation. It has used legal manoeuvres to stop train workers taking protected industrial action in the form of fare free days.

In an appalling decision in August the Federal Court banned the action and instructed the union to pay for expensive ads on both Saturday and Sunday in newspapers notifying the public. The union should have defied the order—but unfortunately it called off the action.

Metro lawyers now say the union breached the Federal Court order by not placing the ads in time, and that any further industrial action will be unprotected. A four-hour strike planned for 27 August was also called off after the union cited progress in bargaining.

Last year Sydney trains workers were banned from striking completely because of the potential “damage to the economy”. The RTBU is returning to court seeking, “to clear away the uncertainty about whether we can take protected industrial action.”

The union wrote to the Andrews Labor State Government urging it to intervene in the court case on the side of workers’ right to strike, but Industrial Relations Minister (and former ACTU assistant secretary) Tim Pallas has refused.



Above: A Melbourne tram workers’ union mass meeting in August

Victorian Trades Hall Secretary Luke Hilakari rightly said, “We like for the government to walk beside us at ‘Change The Rules’ rallies but part of the rules that need changing are the ones that limit workers’ rights for industrial action.”

Despite failing to meet performance targets, Metro received a 20 per cent increase of \$164 million per year under its contract in 2017. Metro’s parent company reported a global 14 per cent revenue increase, listing Melbourne as the key driver.

As the RTBU points out, the state government is Metro’s sole contractor. The \$768 million per year the

government’s pays Metro comes with no requirement to protect workers’ rights or conditions. Privatisation is an expensive sham that allows the State Government to undermine workers’ rights one step removed.

The RTBU has called a rally against Metro trains for 17 October. All supporters should attend. But without the right to strike, the RTBU has no real bargaining power. What is really needed is to step up industrial action. Joint strike action by tram and train workers could shut down Melbourne’s public transport system, and defy the attack on workers’ right to strike.

Climate activists must back the fight

IN THE face of the climate crisis, we need a swift transition away from fossil fuels. Coalition PM Scott Morrison is heading in the wrong direction, considering new government funding to extend the life of the Liddell coal-fired power station. Government funding should go to renewables and public transport.

We need to take electricity and public transport back into public hands to drive the climate transition we need.

Our current transport system is Australia’s second largest source of greenhouse gas pollution after electricity. Due to our inadequate public transport system, nearly 87 per cent of people get to work via car. To cut emissions, we need a massive expansion of free public transport.

Jobs in public transport are exactly the kind of climate jobs we need to avert catastrophe. The fight to defend wages and conditions for tram and train workers is a climate fight that we can and should be a part of.

Yarra Trams, the private company that operates Victorian public transport, is trying to slash wages and conditions for public transport workers.

At the same time Metro Trains is forcing their workers through the courts and has legally blocked train drivers from taking strike action. If Metro wins, this will be a blow for public transport workers but also for the climate.

XR groups should mobilise to support their struggle.

Metro Trains has used the law to stop workers taking protected industrial action

Abortion finally 'decriminalised' in NSW despite right's mobilisation

By Caitlin Doyle

WOMEN'S RIGHTS advocates are celebrating after abortion was finally removed from the 119-year-old Crimes Act in NSW.

After months of debate, the Abortion Law Reform Bill (previously the Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill) finally passed the Upper House of the NSW Parliament on 25 September.

The passage of the bill, which will allow abortion on demand up to 22 weeks, after which the approval of two doctors is required, is an important step forward for women's reproductive rights, and could make it easier to access what is one of the most common medical procedures for women.

But while it is ultimately a blow to anti-choice bigots, the bill passed following a series of amendments pushed primarily by the hard right in the Coalition and conservative MPs like Mark Latham from One Nation.

The 25 amendments include replacing the requirement for anti-choice doctors to refer patients to a non-objecting doctor with a requirement to simply provide an information pamphlet; a requirement for doctors to care for a child if it is born alive after an attempted termination; and an ambiguous stipulation that doctors "may ask for advice about the proposed termination from a... hospital advisory committee".

Despite no evidence of sex-selection abortions in NSW, the health department will also be required to review the rate of sex-selection abortions within 12 months.

While doctors have said the amendments won't significantly impact the delivery of services, they were clearly intended to stigmatise women who choose to have an abortion and give more discretionary power to anti-choice doctors.

These amendments should never have been passed. With around 80 per cent of people supporting a woman's right to choose, there was real potential for a mass campaign that could have pushed back the bigots.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian's effort to appease the Right in her party by delaying the passage of the bill gave an opportunity for anti-choice conservatives to mobilise. Federal Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce, joining forces over the issue with the likes



Above: The campaign in support of decriminalising abortion left it far too late to try to mobilise support

of Tony Abbott and the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, described a woman's right to choose as a "death penalty for the innocent", calling it the "slavery debate of our time".

Unfortunately, the pro-choice campaign relied on a strategy of lobbying to get the bill introduced, instead of setting out to mobilise

public support. It was only at the last moment, following large anti-choice protests, that there was an attempt to build a sizeable rally in support of the bill.

The passage of the Abortion Reform Bill in NSW is a step in the right direction. But only mass campaigning can defend abortion rights.

More towns set to run out of water this summer

LAST SUMMER towns in western NSW completely ran out of drinking water, with major rivers like the Darling dry due to water theft by agribusiness and drought.

The NSW government has set aside \$2 million to cart water by truck, admitting that there are 40 towns across the state with less than six months of water left.

Based on worst case scenarios, where there is no more rainfall, large towns on the Macquarie Rivers including Dubbo, with a population of 34,000 people, could run out of water by November.

With surrounding rivers dry, more and more towns are reliant on poor quality bore water. In Walgett, water from the taps is often "the colour of mud", Kelli Randell, Chief executive of the Walgett Local Aboriginal Land Council, told *NITV News*. High sodium levels in the water have seen people who drink it suffer stomach aches and vomiting.

As a result many locals rely on expensive bottled water to drink.

More fish kills like that at Menindee last year, where up to a million fish died, are also feared. Already

thousands of dead carp, a destructive introduced species, as well as smaller numbers of native Murray cod, were discovered at Lake Pamamaroo near Broken Hill in October.

The majority of the Darling River is still dry, with no water flow at all.

NSW Agriculture Minister Adam Marshall had admitted there will be more mass fish deaths this summer, warning the state was facing "a fish Armageddon", which would, "literally dwarf the fish kill events that we saw last summer".

Bruce Shillingsworth, a Muru-wari and Budjiti man and activist, led a river tour of the areas around Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke, Wilcannia and Menindee in October.

"I took my mother down the river in Bourke and we walked the river. The dry river bed," he said. "My mother is now in her 90s. She had never seen the river in this condition."

This situation will only worsen due to climate change.

"We are the first generation to experience the climate change crisis, and we may be the last generation with a chance to fix it," Bruce said.

James Supple

The amendments were clearly intended to stigmatise women who choose to have an abortion

Kurds abandoned by US imperialism—again

By James Supple

TURKEY HAS begun a military offensive against Kurdish areas of northern Syria, after US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of US troops giving the green light for the operation.

Once again the Kurds, used as a proxy force by the US to fight Islamic State—as well as to limit the influence of Russia and Iran, their rivals in Syria—have been abandoned by US imperialism. Already there are scores of casualties as Turkey bombs towns and moves troops into Syria.

Turkey has threatened military operations ever since Kurdish party the PYD took control of northern Syria along the Turkish border, in the aftermath of the uprising against the Assad government in 2011. The PYD is linked to the nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which has waged a decades-long guerrilla struggle inside Turkey for autonomy and self-determination.

The Kurds, numbering between 30 and 35 million and divided between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, are the world's largest people without their own state.

Turkey says it wants to clear a “safe zone” inside Syria, but it plans to move two million of the Syrian refugees presently inside Turkey into the area in order to ethnically cleanse it of Kurds.

Since 2012 Syria has been consumed by war, after Assad turned the popular uprising against his regime into a civil war. Foreign powers including Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the US have all used the conflict to try to increase their own influence.

But it has been Russia, which has backed the Assad regime, that has emerged as the dominant player. The US has been largely sidelined. It has focused on supporting the Syrian Democratic Forces, which are held together by Kurdish troops, in order to defeat Islamic State.

There is a long history of US betrayal of the Kurds. When the US and other Western powers redrew the map of the Middle East after the First World War they were denied the state they had been promised. In the 1980s the US provided the poison gas that Saddam Hussein, then a US ally, used against the Kurds in northern Iraq. During the First Gulf War in 1991,



Above: Members of the Kurdish YPG militia in Syria

the US called on the Kurds to rise up, only to allow Saddam Hussein to crush them because US ally Turkey opposed Kurdish independence.

The US's sole concern in the Middle East is to advance its own interests.

Tragically, the Kurds are now looking to Russia and the Assad re-

gime to push Turkey out. But just like the US, Russia is concerned with its own interests, not Kurdish autonomy. Assad's Syrian army is re-occupying areas controlled by the Kurds. The Syrian Kurds are back to where they were before the start of the civil war—oppressed and the pawns of rival imperialisms once again.

GM workers' strike enters second month

ALMOST 50,000 workers at General Motors in the US have walked out on strike in the biggest strike in manufacturing there for 12 years.

The strike was into its fifth week as *Solidarity* went to press.

The latest offer from management would give workers a pay rise of 3 per cent and see temporary workers made permanent after three years of service.

But workers are also demanding GM reduce jobs cuts and re-open closed factories. The company has shut down three plants in the US recently and plans to close one more, in Detroit.

Workers walked out on 16 September at 31 factories and 21 other facilities.

During the economic crisis in 2007, workers at GM agreed to concessions after the company said it was in financial trouble. They ac-

cepted a wage cap and an increase in use of temporary workers. Since then GM has returned to making large profits, including \$16 billion last year. The strike is costing the company around \$650 million a week.

The last year has seen an increase in strike action across the US, with teachers across the US taking industrial action following the West Virginia teachers' victory over pay. Last year saw the highest number of strikes in the US since 1986.

Around 3600 Mack Truck workers went on strike in October, and 30,000 members of the Chicago Teachers Union are also set to strike over cuts to education.

After inflation, wages for average workers in the US have barely risen since the late 1970s—yet people are working longer and harder. A victory at GM could spur other groups of workers to take action.

The US's sole concern in the Middle East is to advance its own interests

Hong Kong fights on amid moves towards emergency rule

By Jason Wong

THE UPRISING in Hong Kong has successfully forced the withdrawal of the hated extradition bill. But protesters are not prepared to trust Chief Executive Carrie Lam and have continued hitting the streets in their hundreds of thousands.

Seventeen weeks in, chanting "Five demands, not one less!" protesters vowed not to stop until they win full universal suffrage, all protesters are released, and police brutality is investigated.

On 1 October, while China celebrated 70 years of "Communist" rule, 150,000 people marched. As soldiers paraded through Beijing, President Xi Jinping threatened, "No force can obstruct the advance of the Chinese nation."

Despite a partial shutdown of the train network, people rallied in Hong Kong's business district, shouting "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our time!" They held up open hands to symbolise the five demands, and broke out into a new protest anthem, Glory to Hong Kong.

The next day, cops shot 18-year-old student protester Tony Tsang at point blank range, nearly killing him. Thousands of students at schools and universities held rallies and sit-ins demanding justice.

The government's effort to ban the wearing of face masks, using a colonial British-era emergency law, has been defied en masse. The masks have become a symbol of the demonstrations used to hide protesters identities and avoid state repression. The emergency law allows the government to impose laws without reference to the local parliament, and is widely seen as another step towards authoritarianism.

Groups of activists have also fought back against police attacks with Molotov cocktails and stones.

Chinese-owned businesses have been increasingly targeted for attack, as well as those whose owners have opposed the protests.

Hong Kong's people have developed their own identity, and many do not see themselves as Chinese. There is also a strain of racism against Chinese mainlanders among some protesters.

But the movement will need to win the support of ordinary Chinese people, and encourage a fight for democracy in mainland China too, if it is



Above: Protesters defy the government's ban on face masks, imposed under an emergency law

going to secure democratic freedoms in Hong Kong.

US no ally

In desperation, some have turned to Western governments for support, even going so far as to call for "intervention". UK and US flags have been a presence at pro-democracy rallies for months.

A rally of 130,000 people in mid-October called on the US to pass the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, a bipartisan bill that has gone through the US House of Representatives, backed by hard-line conservatives like Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio.

Last month, pro-democracy activists Denise Ho and Joshua Wong spoke in support of the bill before a US Congressional Commission on China.

Formally, the bill calls for a yearly assessment of Hong Kong's autonomy to decide whether its preferential US trade conditions can continue. It also applies targeted sanctions on individuals and their families who have extradited Hong Kong activists to China.

But the bill itself says that its purpose is to protect US interests. Left-wing activists in the Lausan collective warn that the bill contains extraordinary provisions such as maintaining an active list of detained Hong Kong protesters and suspected Chinese operatives.

It compels Hong Kong to enforce US sanctions and extradite suspects to the US, and would have applied to NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden when he sought asylum there in 2013.

Looking to the West to rescue Hong Kong is a dead end strategy. The US has no real concern for democracy and only acts to advance its own interests. Trump's abandonment of the Kurds in Syria has shown again that the US cannot be trusted. It is also dangerous for Hong Kong to enflame the growing imperialist tensions between the US and China.

Strike action

The movement for democracy in Hong Kong needs to be connected to the fight for workers' rights. Demands around housing, wages and eliminating the horrific inequality in Hong Kong can help draw the working class into active participation.

Workers have the potential power to paralyse the economy through mass strike action. This could enable the movement to shut down society without forcing small groups into violent street confrontations with police. And such a movement could win wider support amongst mainland Chinese across the border.

Independent unions, grouped in the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), are weak. The general strikes held so far have mostly involved workers taking leave to attend as individuals. Even so, tens of thousands took part. The people have Hong Kong have shown enormous courage to stand up to the violence of the police as well as threats of military intervention. But the outcome of their struggle still hangs in the balance.

Looking to the West to rescue Hong Kong is a dead end strategy

Students shot dead as West Papua protests continue

By Jasmine Ali

LETHAL VIOLENCE from the Indonesian military and security forces has generated an “unprecedented crisis” in West Papua, according to human rights lawyer Veronica Koman.

In late September, a new wave of demonstrations by Papuan high school students ended with Indonesian police firing on student protests in Wamena, killing 31 people.

Witnesses told *The Guardian* that the demonstration turned violent after police opened fire, saying, “The police shot at the Papuans. There were about 16 to 20 people who died directly on the street that I saw.”

Some reports put the number killed higher, but figures cannot be verified due to the Indonesian government’s shutting down of the internet, phone lines, and restriction of access to Wamena hospital where bodies were taken.

The crisis, sparked by racist attacks on West Papuan students in August, have been the catalyst for demonstrations involving many thousands of Papuans, on a scale not seen for several decades. Central to the mobilisations are calls for the end of the decades-long Indonesian occupation.

Nduga crisis

Indonesia’s military has launched concerted attacks in the Nduga regency in the highlands, resulting in the displacement of over 38,000 Papuans.

The crackdown began just after 1 December 2018. Across Indonesia more than 500 people were arrested for attending protests that day. The date marks the first raising of the Morning Star flag and the attempted declaration of independence, before Indonesian troops arrived in 1963.

Following the protest in Nduga, independence fighters and local villages killed a number of Indonesians constructing a road project. The West Papuans say these were military personnel.

In reprisal, the military bombed the area using white phosphorous, according to a report by John Martinkus and Mark Davis in *The Saturday Paper*. Military operations are still ongoing.

The Australian government has backed Indonesia, with Scott Morrison simply urging, “calm on all sides”.

Australia is also complicit in the atrocities, training Indonesian elite special forces Kopassus and Detachment 88, which have been used against West Papuans.



Above: Thousands protest Indonesian occupation in West Papua

The Lombok Treaty, agreed by the Howard government in 2006, recognised Indonesia’s “territorial integrity”, cementing support for the Indonesian occupation. Labor’s Shadow Foreign Minister, Penny Wong, has likewise

pledged that, “Labor fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia”. Australian support for the repression must end. The struggle for self-determination and freedom in West Papua needs our solidarity.

Largest protests since 1998 shake Indonesia

TENS OF thousands joined mass protests across Indonesia in September—the largest the country has seen since the movement in 1998 that brought down the dictator Suharto. Police have used heavy repression. Five people have died and several hundred have been injured and arrested.

The protests were triggered by revisions to the Law on the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and a draft bill revising the criminal code.

The KPK was set up in the post-Suharto period and has achieved convictions against high-profile members of the police, politicians and businesspeople. The government is now seeking to weaken it.

The revised criminal code includes a swathe of anti-democratic clauses. If passed, it will criminalise insulting the president, vice-president or government, spreading communist or Marxist teachings, vagrancy and premarital sex. It will also further criminalise abortion and blasphemy.

Other laws including the mining law, the manpower law and the land law are also facing changes. The revisions will give incentives to investors while weakening the rights of labour and agrarian activists.

The revisions reflect the growing strength of the right in Indonesia. The Jokowi government is pursu-

ing these revisions while refusing to move on draft laws on the elimination of sexual violence and the protection of domestic workers.

Protestors are also demanding the government ban the Indonesian military and police personnel from holding civilian offices, end the militarism in Papua and release political prisoners, end the prosecution of activists, stop the fires in Kalimantan and Sumatra and punish the corporations responsible for them, and put human rights violators on trial.

The demonstrations have largely been coordinated by the student movement. Some unions and agrarian organisations have joined them. However, the presidents of the major union confederations KSPI and KSPSI have failed to support the protests. They opportunistically hope to secure the Manpower Minister position in the upcoming cabinet.

The demonstrations have forced the government to delay discussions on the revision of the laws. The students want President Jokowi to issue a government regulation to annul the law on the KPK but his coalition in parliament have said they will not support this.

Students are planning further protests during Jokowi’s inauguration for his second term as president.

Vivian Honan

Australia is complicit, training Indonesian elite special forces which have been used against West Papuans

Exposing state secrets—and the danger of the US alliance

Secret: The rise of Australia's security state

By Brian Toohey
Melbourne University Press, \$39.99

JOURNALIST BRIAN

Toohey has spent decades investigating the secrets of Australia "security state", embarrassing ASIO, Defence officials and successive governments.

His new book *Secret* ranges widely, tracing the history of Australia's spy agencies and the expansion of their powers under the "war on terror", Australia's relationship with the US, its role in US wars, and the history of the spy bases at Pine Gap and North West Cape. Much of this is told through recounting his own reporting on Australia's state secrets for the now-defunct *National Times* and the *Financial Review*.

He savages Australia's alliance with the US, showing how it feeds conflict and makes the world a more dangerous place—including for ordinary people in Australia.

In contrast to the rosy-eyed view of US power across most of the mainstream media, Toohey points out that, "the US repeatedly engages in illegal wars of aggression, breaks trade rules and abandons nuclear arms control treaties". It is a rogue superpower that habitually unleashes armed might around the world, on a scale that far surpasses China, Russia or any of its rivals.

"A Congressional Research Service study found that the US used its armed forces overseas on 215 occasions from its foundation in 1798 to 2016", Toohey writes. And far from creating a more peaceful world since the



Above: The US spy base at Pine Gap

end of the Cold War, the US's use of armed force has actually "stepped up greatly" since 1991, as it bombed or dispatched forces on 160 occasions.

Since the Second World War Australian governments have tied themselves to the US with the aim of securing Australia's own domination of the south Pacific. Toohey mistakenly views this as a surrender of sovereignty to the US.

But he outlines how Australia has great strategic value as the host of US surveillance bases at Pine Gap and North West Cape. Toohey traces the history of secrecy and lies over US bases in Australia. For decades both Labor and Liberal governments told the public Pine Gap's role was either for "space research" or monitoring Russian compliance with arms control treaties. Even the Whitlam government maintained this cover story, despite an election promise to tell the public their true purpose.

Whitlam kept mum after Defence Department Secretary Arthur Tange told him doing otherwise

would jeopardise Australia's relationship with the US. But Tange also withheld information from Whitlam, failing to tell him that the CIA, not the Pentagon, ran the base. This too was a lie designed to hide the base's purpose.

Some on the left have long claimed CIA involvement in the downfall of the Whitlam government in 1975. Toohey thinks there probably were covert efforts against him, and re-examines the evidence. But he admits there is no clear proof of US interference, or that this played any decisive role in Whitlam's dismissal.

Spy bases

Pine Gap began construction in 1967 as a receiving station for signals from US spy satellites. It re-

ceives an enormous range of electronic signals, from mobile phone to military communications, as part of the NSA's surveillance program. Today it plays a key role in targeting drone strikes and missiles for the US military, and is of vital importance in every US war.

This was confirmed in files leaked by Edward Snowden stating its role included "support to US military combat operations".

Despite the fiction of joint control by Australia, Toohey recounts how US congressional budget committees were told more about activity at the US bases than the Australian government. His report on plans to build a new ground station at North West Cape in 1977 appeared in the papers before Australian officials had received any notification.

The US bases made Australia a nuclear target during the Cold War, in particular North West Cape, which was used to dispatch orders to the US's nuclear-armed submarines.

Australia's military intelligence agency the

Office of National Assessments told the government as much, and former Labor leader Kim Beazley admitted it publicly in 2016.

Toohey cites declassified US government papers that argue the use of Australian territory for US satellite bases, as well as potentially for hosting troops during wartime, are by far the most important elements of the Alliance to the US.

This role also implicates Australia in any potential US conflict with China—whether or not Australian troops are involved.

It means, "Australia has a critical role in the US efforts to increase economic and military pressure on China, and if that fails, in winning the ensuing war".

Toohey rejects the hysteria about Chinese influence in Australia, noting that despite the claims of Clive Hamilton, there is "no evidence of an Australian government succumbing to clandestine Chinese influence". But the dangers of the US and Australian governments' efforts to confront China are real.

Toohey himself does not favour abandoning the US alliance, but wants a more independent Australian approach. Yet he provides a wealth of evidence in support of ending it.

Secret is a welcome critical account of Australia's military and security state. It covers enormous ground, which means some topics get only limited treatment, with a slant towards Toohey's own exposes over the years.

But in sounding the warning about Australia's ties to the US military agenda, he has done us all a service.

James Supple

WHY GREEN BUSINESS CAN'T SOLVE CLIMATE CHANGE

The trillions invested in fossil fuels and the cost of shifting to alternatives economy-wide means green business cannot solve the climate crisis, writes **Lachlan Marshall**

DESPITE THE need for urgent and systemic change to avert climate catastrophe, the global political economy is shifting at a snail's pace.

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) predicts temperature rises of between 2.9 and 3.4 degrees by 2100 compared to pre-industrial levels, if climate action doesn't escalate.

The world is already experiencing the effects of anthropogenic climate change: the fires in the Amazon, Queensland and NSW, alongside Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas are only the latest examples.

The September Global Climate Strikes mobilised millions of students and workers across the world to demand climate action.

Some business leaders, like Atlasian boss Mike Cannon-Brookes, encouraged their staff to attend the strikes, even giving them paid leave to attend.

In the face of the failure of Prime Minister Scott Morrison and governments to act, many have looked in desperation to business leaders for a solution. Cannon-Brookes has echoed this sentiment, saying business must, "step up and try to solve this problem."

In August the Business Roundtable released a "statement on the purpose of a corporation" signed by 181 American CEOs.

The statement replaced the Business Roundtable's longstanding principle of "shareholder primacy" with "a fundamental commitment to all our stakeholders," including the environment.

Business leader and proponent of stakeholder capitalism Marty Lip-ton told the *Financial Times*, "I put forward my ideas of stakeholders to save capitalism—not destroy it. But

if we don't act now, I don't think that capitalism will be around in the next 50 years."

Similar rhetoric is employed by a movement of "socially responsible" businesses called B Corps. Its website describes B Companies as "a new kind of business that balances purpose and profit." B Corps like Patagonia and Ben & Jerry's supported the climate strike.

But the idea that companies could give equal consideration to profit and "purpose" ignores the fundamental dynamics of capitalism.

Transforming companies to strip out fossil fuels would come at a significant cost. Businesses that subordinate profits to reducing their emissions would be undercut by competitors able to produce and sell their goods more cheaply, and would soon go out of business.

As even the pro-business *The Economist* admits, "What the world has not yet seen is a situation where ESG [environmental, social and governance] issues come into material, systemic conflict with profits. Purpose is flavour of the month, says Stephen Bainbridge, professor of law at the University of California, Los Angeles, 'but are companies really going to give shareholders a 10 per cent haircut for the sake of stakeholders?'"

Some companies argue that there is a growing market for green products, and that zero carbon energy sources like solar and wind power can be profitable.

Co-founder of B Lab, Jay Coen Gilbert argues that B Corps, "will out-compete in a marketplace that increasingly values an authentic commitment to purpose."

But these companies are selling to a small niche market of consumers

Burning fossil fuels is still highly profitable

who are willing to pay higher prices for "ethical" products.

Bosses like Cannon-Brookes may be sincere in their concern about climate change. But they are part of a small minority of companies who have a business advantage in speaking out on climate.

As John McDuling wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "The company is battling other tech firms to hire software developers, who tend to be well grounded in scientific concepts, and politically progressive people. Software developers, IT help desk staff and knowledge workers more broadly are also Atlassian's target customers."

This point was illustrated by the impressive turnout of IT workers at the Global Climate Strike, especially in the US, where thousands of workers from Google, Facebook, Microsoft and Twitter joined the strikes.

Worse, the claims of many of these supposedly environmentally friendly companies are simply marketing spin.

For years BP marketed itself as going "Beyond Petroleum". But it closed its BP Solar division in 2011 and didn't buy back into solar power until 2017, with a \$200 million investment. This pales into insignificance next to its \$19 billion in fossil fuel income last year.

Fossil fuel profits

Burning fossil fuels is still highly profitable, so as long as businesses are allowed to invest in it, they will. From the point of view of individual companies this is a rational approach because it makes them money. But its irrationality from the point of view of people and our planet is shown by the rush of oil companies to exploit arctic oil reserves made more accessible by

melting ice.

Despite slightly increasing investment in renewables, the world's top 24 publicly-listed companies spent just 1.3 per cent of their budgets on low carbon energy in 2018, according to one study.

But there are trillions of dollars worth of investments in fossil fuels that will have to be written off, in order to stop carbon emissions and replace them with publicly-owned renewables.

Beyond fossil fuel companies, the vast bulk of the economy depends on fossil fuels because they are built into the structure of capitalism. Firms in manufacturing, packaging, transport, clothing and agribusiness all rely heavily on fossil fuels due to their use in everything from fertilisers, pesticides and plastics to synthetic fibres in clothing.

At the United Nations climate forum in New York Cannon-Brookes pledged to dip into his own pockets to bankroll SunCable, a \$25 billion solar export project in the NT.

But the investment in renewables that we urgently need can't rely on the private sector, which will only invest if there's a profit to be made.

Profit margins in the solar industry are tight due to increasing competition and falling manufacturing costs. This has led to investment in solar flatlining.

The falling cost of solar should make it easier to build renewables. But due to competition and the need for businesses to make a profit, we're seeing the opposite.

The fragmented, piecemeal approach of the private sector won't deliver the mass investment in renewables we need in time to avoid catastrophic climate change. And carbon-neutral pledges by climate capitalists won't cut it either.

Working class

The scale of the climate emergency we face requires radical change to decarbonise the economy and create millions of secure and well-paid climate jobs.

To win this we need mass strike action by workers to win public investment in renewables and to keep fossil fuels in the ground. This means winning the right to strike and strengthening the power of workers against bosses. It also means fighting for demands that make life better for working class people and are capable of winning their support. But this approach will be resisted by business leaders.



Above: Lush and some other businesses closed their doors during the Climate Strike—but weren't shy about using it to market themselves

Capitalist solutions to the climate crisis are designed to make the working class pay. For example, an Adelaide waste management company wants the ability to fine residents who use their recycling bins wrongly after "three strikes."

The International Monetary Fund released another paper in October claiming that carbon taxes are the most efficient way to cut emissions—despite the fact that there are deeply unpopular because they force the cost of action onto ordinary people.

The climate movement must be clear about who is responsible for climate change. Just 100 companies globally are responsible for 71 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. Blame for climate change needs to be pinned on big business—and they should pay for it, not workers.

Paying for the investment in renewable energy, public transport and other changes we need requires taxing the rich to fund the transition to a clean economy. This means using the enormous wealth of people like Cannon-Brookes to fund publicly-owned renewables projects. Even supposedly climate-friendly businesses won't support this.

In the early days of the protests in Hong Kong some business leaders joined the marches. Business people might have been able to support a movement that defended Hong Kong's "rule of law."

But the Hong Kong ruling class do

not support the kind of action that is necessary to win greater democracy in Hong Kong, let alone a movement for a redistribution of wealth and power in society.

Just as Hong Kong's rulers are inextricably tied to China's ruling class, most big "climate capitalists" are also deeply invested in the fossil-fuelled status quo. They will oppose taxing the rich to fund publicly-owned renewables.

How supportive of radical change could business leaders like Cannon-Brookes be when his company depends on customers like BP, NASA, BAE systems and the US Department of Defense?

If the movement is going to win a safe climate it will require workers striking against fossil fuel capitalists and climate capitalists alike.

Unsurprisingly, when Atlassian encouraged staff to attend the climate strike, it cautioned, "Let's be really, really clear: We're not striking against Atlassian!"

Workers going on strike is the most powerful weapon the climate movement has to bring about the changes we need. When workers stop work, the ruling class is unable to continue making profits.

It's through mass actions like strikes and protests that workers and students can force the ruling class to take serious climate action. And such a movement could also go further, to create a society where planet and people come before profit.

GENDER, POVERTY AND THE FAMILY WHAT CAUSES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Lucy Honan looks at a new book by award-winning journalist Jess Hill on the causes of domestic violence—and what can be done about it

FEMINISTS ARE hailing *See what you made me do* by Jess Hill as a game-changing analysis of domestic violence. Her detailed research makes valuable reading. But despite collating important pieces, Hill does not put the puzzle together.

Her research into why men are violent, and how society traps women in violent relationships, reveals vividly the way class oppression and the nuclear family guarantee the reoccurrence of domestic violence.

And yet against her own evidence, Hill retreats back to framing the problem as one with men, rather than with the system.

Disappointingly, she advocates a rearranging of the very deck-chairs she convincingly reveals to be ineffectual or damaging; calling for more policing and more therapy. It is a missed opportunity to argue for the more radical social transformation required to end domestic violence.

What drives domestic violence?

Hill challenges the traditional feminist explanation of domestic violence: that it is simply a weapon of the patriarchy, and a way for men to exercise power and control over women.

Hill and the feminist domestic violence specialists she cites point out that the men who are perpetrating domestic violence are often not acting from a place of power. They are more likely to be relatively socially powerless, experiencing poverty, racism, trauma or a life otherwise filled with violence.

Rather than feelings of power or misogyny, more commonly perpetrators report feelings of intolerable shame and “humiliated fury” preceding their violent eruptions. And far from deriving any objective power from the violence, in abusing and terrifying their partners and children,

the perpetrators sabotage their own relationships.

These are confronting insights; they suggest men are both conduits and victims of a much larger system of violence and oppression. The implications are that at least part of the solution to domestic violence is to relieve the financial and social pressure that men are under.

But Hill remains in the realm of traditional feminist patriarchy theory, with a psycho-analytical twist, seeing men’s psyche and our ideas of masculinity as the root cause.

Despite admitting to its poor success rate, she promotes therapy to help men work through shame.

And despite raging at the lack of impact and potential for backlash from educational and awareness campaigns, she reiterates the need to gradually transform ideas of masculinity.

The family

Part of what holds Hill back from addressing class oppression as a root cause is her answer to the question “why are men the perpetrators”? While she acknowledges the powerlessness many perpetrators feel, she sees the entitlement men have to feel power over their partners, created by a patriarchal culture, as a more fundamental problem.

This inequality between men and women is clearly part of the problem. But in other sections of her book, Hill herself gives plenty of evidence that this emanates from the nuclear family and its unequal gender roles, not from men’s minds, or simply the broader culture.

In a fantastic chapter on domestic violence in Indigenous communities, Hill argues that before invasion, Indigenous communities had nothing like the unequal family relationships

**The men
perpetrating
domestic
violence are
more likely to
be relatively
socially
powerless**

that characterise nuclear families today.

Women had economic independence as food producers in their own right, and men and women entered, left and negotiated partnerships on equal terms. As a result, there is no evidence in pre-colonised Aboriginal societies of the kind of domestic violence seen today in Australia.

Another section on family law details conservatives’ use of legislation to force nuclear families to stay together, even when they are broken and obviously dangerous.

In the 1970s, family courts were supposed to determine custody using the principle of “the best interests of the child”. But a severe backlash including terror attacks from men’s rights groups, and campaigns by churches and newspapers, meant that Labor and Liberal governments have gradually shifted towards a principle of preserving nuclear family relations, even when they are totally dysfunctional.

In 2006 John Howard added a “friendly parent” provision, which forced courts to consider whether a parent was prepared to allow their former partner to remain part of their child’s life.

Parents who alleged abuse could be assessed as “hostile” parents, and lose custody of their children. The consequences, in some cases, have been fatal.

Pauline Hanson and Kevin Andrews are poised to use the new Family Court Review to push extremist family values and to demonise women who want out of abusive relationships. Hill provides essential reading on the dangerous tradition of family-enforcers they belong to.

These two chapters illuminate the nuclear family as a recent, unstable and enforced construct, not a natural

social form. They suggest, as Marxists argue, that sexist ideas and inequality are reflections of the dynamics of the family, rather than cultural or psychological phenomena.

Marxism and the family

Marxists argue that whereas men, women and children can suffer extraordinary trauma within the nuclear family, its benefits to the ruling class are significant. Through making childcare and housework the private responsibility of working class families it replenishes the labour supply at almost no cost to the ruling class.

Most of the free labour falls to women, who are under relentless ideological and financial pressure to assume the caring role.

Women are still paid less than men, so it makes financial sense in most families for women to take time off or reduce their hours in the paid workforce to take up the house and care work.

Neo-liberalism has increased the pressure on families; working class men are expected to provide for their family, yet it now takes two wages to pay the bills. To add to women's unpaid burden there is the full-time job of navigating the increasingly privatised childcare, education, health, aged care and disability systems, while still ensuring everyone is fed and clean.

When the pressure is too great, families break, fracturing violently along gender lines.

Men are supposed to be providers and in control. When job losses or poverty hit, family values dictate that men bear responsibility for failing to protect their family, rather than the real culprits in capitalism and the ruling class.

The shame accumulates, and women, embodying the weight of impossible social expectations and a man's failure to meet them, become a target for humiliated rage and frustration.

Violence is not innately male. Women are violent too. Some of the studies that Hill gives credence to show women are violent in relationships at the same rate as men. But, reflecting their relative lack of power within the family, women's violence is rarely terrifying to their male partners, and it is less likely to result in hospitalisation.

Walking away from the few social bonds and support not tainted by wage relations is hard enough, even if you can afford to. But as Hill comprehen-



Above: Walking away from the financial and social support in the family unit remains more difficult for women

sively describes, women do not have the same financial and legal freedom as men to escape. It is even harder for women who face racism, when family is the only connection to their culture and community.

The solutions

In the final chapter, "fixing it", Hill is filled with a justified rage for politicians who talk platitudes about the domestic violence emergency whilst simultaneously defunding women's refuges.

And she is rightly—although inconsistently—suspicious of the effectiveness of education and cultural change campaigns. These campaigns come off as shallow hypocrisy from elites because they never reflect any real willingness to change the social structures that keep working people, and women in particular, trapped in gender roles.

But in her urgency for real action, Hill appeals to the police, the very source of ruling class violent control. Hill admits that the misogyny and racism endemic to the police force has cost many women and children their lives.

She acknowledges that pro-arrest policies that were meant to be a win for victims have actually resulted in police arresting more women for DV offences.

Nonetheless, she uncritically promotes examples of increased police presence and police powers from the US as a model Australia should take up.

It is as if a different author had written the previous, unforgivingly detailed chapter on how police actively punish Aboriginal women who report domestic violence!

The urgent action that would really make a difference requires challenging the ruling class to loosen women's dependence on the family; to raise Newstart, nationalise childcare, build public housing, introduce equal pay, extended paid parental leave, and permanent visas for migrants and refugees, as a start.

These demands have the potential to unite working class men and women, and winning them would create immediate relief for those most at risk of domestic violence.

Fighting for them would build the power and confidence to win fundamental transformation and genuine liberation.

See what you made me do will not encourage those who want action on domestic violence to push squarely in this direction. Tragically, it is not the corrective against punitive law-and-order solutions and vacuous educational campaigns it could have been.

But for readers with a critical eye, the book is a cache of evidence that a world free of domestic violence is possible if we fight for its fundamental re-organisation.

See what you made me do: Power, control and domestic abuse
By Jess Hill
Black Inc Books, \$32.99

TRUTH, LIES AND PROPAGANDA IS THE MEDIA ALL POWERFUL?

Despite the role the media plays in reinforcing right-wing ideas, its power is often overstated—and it can clash with workers' own experience of life, argues **Ruby Wawn**

WHEN SCOTT Morrison and the Coalition won the election in May, many blamed the power of the mainstream media.

The Murdoch press, with 65 per cent of the circulation of national and capital city newspapers, ran a vicious campaign against Labor. Many in the Labor Party also blamed Clive Palmer's \$60 million spend on media advertising.

The idea that the media is all powerful is often used to deny the possibility of social change. It is a common argument in rejecting the idea that working class people can be won away from right-wing, racist, sexist or homophobic ideas.

There is no denying that the bulk of the media is owned and operated by the rich and powerful, who form part of the ruling class. Much of it is owned by the top 1 per cent—including media moguls like Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi who have amassed corporate media empires that span the world.

These people have a clear interest in promoting ideas that maintain the capitalist system.

That is why there are so many examples of the media either refusing to report protests at all, or attacking them when they do.

Most of the media reports on the Extinction Rebellion protests focused on angry commuters denouncing it all as "a waste of time".

Channel 9's *A Current Affair* even managed to find a commuter stuck in traffic who was on her way to pack up her dead mother's room.

The media also prints the anti-union propaganda of the bosses. It frequently paints unionists as undemo-

cratic thugs who force people to go out on strike—even though workers have to go through a quite arduous democratic process to take any industrial action.

Ideology

The media reports on many aspects of society, from politics to business and international affairs, but every section of the news is compartmentalised so that it is hard to see the connections between different issues.

There is rarely an explanation about how the system as a whole works—let alone how it can be challenged and changed.

The influence of the contemporary media is the reflection of Karl Marx's idea that the ruling class dominates society not only economically, but ideologically as well—that our ideas are shaped by the material reality of the world in which we live.

Capitalist ideology is embedded in all of our institutions—not just the media. It exists in our education system, our legal system and our workplaces.

The mainstream media is not homogenous—but there is one thing it has in common—it is overwhelmingly pro-capitalist.

The bias of the media towards ruling class ideas exists in both the openly right-wing media, like Murdoch's tabloids and *The Australian*, and also in supposedly more critical media outlets like *The Guardian*.

Journalists' agenda isn't simply set by their own newsroom but by a whole range of other ruling class institutions. They range of acceptable debate is usually limited by the positions taken by the two major political parties, respectable think tanks and big business

Media owners have a clear interest in promoting ideas that maintain the capitalist system

figures. Institutions like the courts and the police are taken far more seriously than their critics.

In many Western liberal democracies like Australia, the media appears to be free, independent, and balanced when in fact it is none of those things.

Even where the media is publicly owned and controlled by the state—such as the ABC—it is far from being independent.

The ABC is run by directors appointed to the board by the government. Even if the Board isn't explicitly partisan, they are always selected from the ruling class—they are business people and CEOs.

Just last year it was exposed that almost all of the directors on the ABC's eight-person board were appointed directly by the then minister for communications Mitch Fifield, and some of them were appointed even after being rejected by a merits-based panel. This included the appointment of the chairwoman of the Minerals Council of Australia.

The previous chair of the board was Justin Milne, a close business associate and friend of former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

Milne was forced to resign from the board after it emerged that he had directed the ABC to sack two of its journalists over their political reporting.

The government also wields the threat of funding cuts to demand the ABC include more right-wing commentators and weed out overly left-wing or critical journalists.

The media is a privileged institution. Most journalists are recruited from outside the working class and are

paid a wage higher than the national average.

As a result, they tend to inhabit “the establishment world” and think of themselves as “insiders” who identify with the concerns of governments and the political and business elite.

Greg Sheridan, the foreign editor at *The Australian*, is Tony Abbott’s best friend from university. And the newly elected Labor leader Anthony Albanese appointed a News Corp journalist of 16 years as his speech writer.

As a result they tend to accept ruling class assumptions and ideas about the world, and reproduce them in their reporting.

Ideas and experience

But this doesn’t mean the media is simply a propaganda machine for the ruling class. The media has to serve as a bridge between ruling class ideas and everyday people’s experiences of the world—it doesn’t work if they simply lie to people.

When the media is too obviously controlled or manipulated, it becomes useless for the ruling class. In Stalinist Eastern Europe in the late 1980s people regarded the state-controlled media of the authoritarian regimes as a complete joke.

And in Italy, Berlusconi’s control of large sections of the media, initially an asset to his political career, eventually led to many people rejecting what the media said about him as biased.

The media is not the only source of people’s ideas. These are also shaped by workers’ own experience of life.

The unpopularity of privatisation, for instance, is not a product of media reporting. In fact even more liberal media outlets like the *Sydney Morning Herald* supported the privatisation of the power industry in NSW in 2008 and the years following. It is unpopular because ordinary people’s own experience of privatisation is that it leads to higher prices and worse quality services.

Another example of this is the way that even the right-wing media has to at least partially reflect and fit with their readers’ experiences of life. The mainstream media is mainly sold and marketed to workers.

The main ideological role of the media is to maintain an illusion of national unity and the idea that what is good for business is good for everyone.

But in order to be effective in doing that it has to reflect some of

the concerns of ordinary people and at times even voice criticism of the system. So even right-wing tabloids will feature stories on corrupt businessmen and voice occasional criticism of the rich.

Media companies also need an audience in order to sell advertising. The profit motive can often pull the media in different directions and force them to present ideas which challenge the dominant narrative. We have seen this recently with Alan Jones speaking out against the deportation of the Biloela family or with Channel 9 being forced to admit they made a mistake hosting a Liberal Party fundraiser at their offices.

The clash between ruling class ideas and workers’ experience of the world points to how the hold of the media can be challenged.

When workers are actively involved in fighting aspects of the system, through going on strike or joining a protest movement, they begin to experience first-hand how the system really works.

If they try to take strike action to defend their rights at work the courts and the police may be used against them—and they will invariably side with the bosses. Their attempts to persuade politicians of the justice of their cause are likely to go nowhere.

They may even become the target of a media smear campaign, leading them to question the role of the media

Above: A media news studio



itself.

In situations of mass struggle and revolution, workers may even try to take control of the media out of the hands of the rich and run it themselves.

There have been several examples of this. In the 1974 Portuguese Revolution workers at the Republica newspaper threw out the management and began running the paper themselves.

In France in May 1968 workers from the film industry set up a new organisation called the Estates General of Cinema, designed to create a nationalised film industry that would be controlled by workers, to produce film for purposes other than making a profit that would be devoid of censorship.

The 1926 General Strike in Britain also saw parts of the media going out on strike which effectively shut down the press.

Workers collectively hold the power to fight back against the capitalist system. But it is also through the process of fighting back in which people can radically change the ideas they hold about society.

The media is powerful. But much of the working class already holds a general suspicion and hostility towards the media and towards political elites.

Its role as a weapon of ruling class ideas can be challenged.

DEFEND MEDEVAC BUT FIGHT TO OPEN THE BORDERS



By Ian Rintoul

AS *SOLIDARITY* went to press, the Senate report on the Medevac laws was about to be handed down.

But the battlelines over Medevac are already drawn. Eleven peak medical colleges, as well as the AMA, have publicly called on the government not to repeal the Medevac legislation.

Yet the government has thrown everything at trying to scrap the Medevac laws; feeding headlines to the *Herald Sun* claiming that medevac transfers are costing \$150,000 each. Ironically the article also includes the fact that the government has spent \$185 million to open the Christmas Island detention centre that is now holding just the Tamil family from Biloela.

Dutton went on the rampage, feeding another story to the *Courier Mail* about stopping an Iranian father from accompanying his mentally ill daughter to Australia, on the basis simply of allegations rather than any criminal conviction, as if that was something to boast about.

The government desperately wants to reverse the historic defeat it suffered in February when the Morrison government lost the vote on the floor of Parliament, and the Medevac legislation was passed into law by Labor, The Greens and the independent cross-benchers.

Morrison and Dutton want a return to the days of the government having total control over the lives of the asylum seekers and refugees they dumped on Manus and Nauru in 2013—regardless of medical advice.

Dutton wants a return to the days of the government having total control over the lives of the refugees

The real reason for pushing to repeal the Medevac laws was exposed in the “talking points” mistakenly sent to journalists in October, “It is the Government’s position that it should determine who is allowed to enter Australia, and the terms and conditions to be imposed on that entry, as is the right of every sovereign nation.”

The talking points also stated, “Medical services in Papua New Guinea and Nauru have improved over time to more effectively respond to transferee health needs and requirements.”

Yet around 130 people have so far been brought from Manus and Nauru under the Medevac legislation. And a large majority of the transfers have been approved on the first application by Peter Dutton himself, exposing Dutton’s hypocrisy and putting the lie to the claims about offshore medical services.

Offshore detention has made everyone sick. The suicide in Brisbane of the mentally-distressed Afghan doctor brought to Australia from Manus two years ago is more

shocking proof of the damage offshore detention does, and is still doing. The Medevac legislation is not going to end offshore detention. It is painfully slow, and many are left waiting even if they have registered.

But the government’s attempt to repeal the legislation is proof of its callous brutality and willingness to sacrifice more lives in the name of “border protection.”

We have no interest in protecting their border. Their border protects their system that has systematically tortured and denied medical treatment to women, men and children who sought Australia’s protection in 2013.

It is their system and their borders that are creating even more Kurdish refugees in Syria in 2019, at the same time as the Australian government has held Kurdish refugees imprisoned offshore for the last six years.

Opposing the government’s attempt to repeal Medevac is part of the fight to dismantle its whole punitive regime of mandatory detention, temporary protection visas and offshore detention.

By boat or plane—refugees are welcome

LABOR WILL vote against the repeal of the Medevac Bill, as they should. And they are calling for the Biloela Tamil family to be allowed to stay in Australia.

But these are exceptions to Labor’s mistaken strategy of attempting to outdo Dutton on people-smuggling by attacking him over the number of plane arrivals seeking asylum. Kristina

Keneally’s attack on Dutton for not stopping plane arrivals plays into the Liberals’ arguments about border protection. To consistently back a humanitarian policy, Labor must drop the border protection rhetoric along with its support for turnbacks and offshore detention. Asylum seekers should be welcome however they arrive—by boat or plane.

 **Solidarity**