

## EXPAND TESTING AND HEALTH CARE NOW

## MORRISON'S TO BLAME FOR SPREAD OF THE VIRUS

### CORONAVIRUS

Morrison spends billions  
on business bailout

### LGBTI+

Socialism and  
transgender liberation

### THE HOLOCAUST

The horrors of  
fascism 75 years on

# 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

### Sydney

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

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## Things they say

*Homo economicus is not a rational agent, but a confused beast, and economics is an outgrowth of societies, rather than a conventional science searching for truth.*  
Statement to investors from the Macquarie Wealth Management paraphrases Marx

*Conventional capitalism is dying*  
Macquarie Wealth Management's pessimistic message to investors

*Again my bad not realising the sheer scale of the decision on Sunday night by national leaders that literally saw hundreds of thousands, maybe a million, people unemployed overnight.*  
Government Services Minister Stuart Robert

*You know, this is an opportunity. Our sales are up in Harvey Norman in Australia by 9 per cent on last year. Our sales in freezers are up 300 per cent. And what about air purifiers? Up 100 per cent.*  
Gerry Harvey, 80-year-old billionaire, is not too worried about coronavirus

*If you are going to get COVID-19, anywhere in the world, Queensland is where you would want to get it.*  
Queensland Health Minister Steven Miles

*What do you want me to do?... I can't jump in front of the microphone and push him down.*  
Anthony Fauci, director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the face of Trump's medical response to coronavirus, clearly isn't happy with what Trump is saying

*The risk is on supply side but also demand side. I think it will get worse before it gets better.*  
Geoff Wilson, chair and investment chief of Wilson Asset Management sizes up the stock market crash

*The government is going to have to spend vast amounts of money without batting an eyelid.*  
Economist Chris Richardson

*An Australia without rugby league is not Australia!*  
Peter V'Landys, chair of the Australian Rugby League Commission, as to why the NRL season should proceed during the virus health emergency

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# INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

## Italian 3D printed ventilator valves illegal

AN ITALIAN engineer has worked out how to 3D print a key ventilator component needed to treat coronavirus patients. But the medical company that owns the patent told him his actions were an illegal breach of their patent.

Cristian Fracassi, who works for an engineering startup, produced 100 of the valves, which need to be replaced for each patient, for free and gave them to his local hospital in Brescia. So far they have saved at least ten lives. The hospital had run out of valves, and the company that makes them was unable to supply more.

He says he can produce them for around \$5 each. But Fracassi has been unable to help others by sharing the design file, despite numerous requests, after being told it was illegal.

## Rich get special access to tests and treatment



IN THE US, the rich are demanding special access to testing and medical care to deal with coronavirus.

Despite the shortage of testing has meant there are strict criteria for the general public to access them. In New York, California and other hard hit areas they have been restricted to health care workers and those admitted to hospital with severe cases.

Yet celebrities and the wealthy have been able to skip the queue.

Dr. David Nazarian, a private concierge doctor in Los Angeles, is organising house visits to perform tests for ultra-wealthy clients who would not be allowed tests through the hospital system, according to *Business Insider*.

Actor Idris Elba was able to organise a test to confirm he had the virus within days of contact with another person who got sick, despite having developed no symptoms.

The billionaire Joe Tsai, owner of the elite NBA Brooklyn Nets basketball team, organised to test the whole team at a private lab, despite many having no symptoms. Four of them actually tested positive.

Other NBA teams then also demanded tests, despite not meeting the official criteria. The Los Angeles Lakers, who had recently played the Nets, were tested straight away, as were players from the Philadelphia 76ers and the Boston Celtics.

A private London clinic is offering tests to anyone prepared to pay \$700, but the waiting list is so long only the well-connected can even make a booking.

Ventec Life Systems, which produces portable ventilators, has also received numerous requests to buy a personal ventilator, from wealthy clients prepared to pay any price, according to the company. It does not sell to individuals.

In the US, one woman who tested positive for COVID-19, Danni Askini, was hit with a \$34,927 bill for her testing and treatment because she had no health insurance.

Another Miami man, Osmel Martinez Azcue, simply asked to be tested after returning from China with flu-like symptoms. He wasn't able to get a coronavirus test because of limited insurance, but did have a test which confirmed he had the flu.

His bill was \$3270, which included \$1400 in out of pocket charges.

Donald Trump has not shown much sympathy, responding to anger that the elite have been able to jump the queue by musing, "perhaps that's been the story of life."

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

## Elites have more trust in government

IT'S NOT news that trust in government is running low. And a Prime Minister who heads off to Hawaii during an unprecedented bushfire crisis, and shamelessly spends up on swimming pools in an election campaign shows why.

But Edelman's newly released "Trust Barometer" has found workers are far less trusting in institutions than others. There is a big gulf in the level of trust in government between the university-educated middle class and the rest of the population, it showed.

Australia had the biggest gap of the developed countries—with just 45 per cent trust in institutions among what it called the "mass population"—the bulk of the working class, compared to 68 per cent for what it called the "informed public". To qualify as part of the "informed public" a person was required to have university education, significant media consumption and a household income in the top 25 per cent.

This is hardly surprising in a world set up to benefit the rich. But it's also a reminder why not everyone trusts the patronising directives from Scott Morrison to stop panic buying in supermarkets or pay attention to health advice.

## Rich jet off to self-isolate in luxury

THE OBSCENE consequences of inequality are on display through the pandemic, as the rich and powerful do everything they can to safeguard themselves. Some have opted for self-isolation in remote locations like the Galapagos Islands or Alaska.

The Ten Lifestyle Group's Alex Cheate said, "Private jets are certainly in high demand at the moment. It's not been a huge thing, but we have certainly seen an increase."

Another option is stocking up a private yacht. "People are looking for ways to weather the storm and a yacht in a nice climate isn't a bad place to self-isolate," Jonathan Beckett, chief executive of London yacht broker Burgess told *The Telegraph*.

## Coles gets 36,000 job applications in a day

SUPERMARKETS ARE one of the few places recording increased sales as people stock up in the face of the coronavirus.

But in a sign of the desperation for jobs, when the company advertised 5000 new jobs on 17 March, it received 36,000 applications in one day. An average day sees it receive 800 applications.

## Casino's special deal on coronavirus

CROWN CASINO in Melbourne was granted a special exemption from Victorian government social distancing laws limiting gatherings to 100 people.

The casino was allowed to devise its own distancing measures through switching off every second pokie machine and limiting numbers at its ballrooms, bars, restaurants and venues.

By the end of the week the Andrews government was forced to back down—saying the same rules would apply to Crown as to everywhere else. Last year the casino paid the state government \$238 million in tax.

# EDITORIAL

## Morrison's failure to stop the virus the result of a sick system

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic could see 150,000 people in Australia die if it spreads unchecked.

Morrison and the national cabinet have now announced major restrictions closing cafés, restaurants, pubs, churches and cinemas.

He claimed the reason this was needed was that ordinary people were not heeding "social distancing", saying that, "we can't have the confidence" it "will be followed to the level of compliance that we require".

Morrison is trying to blame ordinary people. But he has introduced the closures because the government has been too slow to properly test and to prepare hospitals and now the number of coronavirus cases is growing dangerously.

It's Scott Morrison himself who is to blame. The countries that have managed to contain the virus like South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore have relied on widespread testing that delivered rapid results, in order to find and isolate anyone infected. But health services here have restricted the tests due to shortages.

Hospitals and healthcare urgently need money and resources. Experience elsewhere suggests 5 per cent of those infected will require ventilation in intensive care. Serious outbreaks in places like Italy are overwhelming hospital resources.

Instead Morrison's focus has been on travel bans, border closures and bans on gatherings. These are being enforced with draconian state government fines of up to \$20,000 for individuals.

The first travel ban indiscriminately targeted anyone from China. This fuelled racist attacks. And even as the border closures were tightened, it didn't stop the virus spreading here.

The government is now preparing for drastic lockdowns as they desperately try to "flatten the curve."

The forced closures have meant tens of thousands in hospitality and retail lost their jobs overnight. Casuals at universities have been sacked. Already 280,000 people have registered with Centrelink. But workers should not be the ones to pay to contain the virus.

Morrison has temporarily doubled Centrelink payments. But many workers will still struggle to pay mortgages, rent and household bills. And the increase won't come for five weeks.

The government and big employers should guarantee workers paid leave at their existing wage if they close work-



**Above: Morrison wants to point the finger at ordinary people instead of facing up to his own failure to prepare the health system**

places, catch the virus or are forced to self-isolate. There are 3.3 million casual workers, almost one-third of the workforce, without any paid sick leave.

As schools close, parents will also need paid leave to look after their kids.

Organising sizeable demonstrations or meetings will be difficult in the coming weeks, with many people working from home or social distancing.

Sydney Uni management announced casuals would get 14 days' paid leave, after the union organised a large members' meeting and called a rally.

At Melbourne Uni, 100 casual staff held a protest outside the administration. The next day the university announced casuals would be paid if they get sick or have to isolate. But neither is offering to pay casual staff they no longer require after moving classes online.

Where workplaces are still operating—including from home—unions need to keep meeting and organising.

We have to fight to make sure every workplace is as safe as possible, with extra cleaning, hygiene measures and efforts at social distancing. NSW school cleaners have won a deal for the next three months for guaranteed, regular cleaning shifts, even if the school closes, as well as a 25 per cent increase in cleaning times paid at double time.

### Health not profits

The pandemic has graphically exposed the priorities of capitalism. A society run in the interests of human need—and people's health—would mobilise all of society's resources to produce the life-saving ventilators, tests, masks and protective equipment that are needed.

China alerted the world to the outbreak on 31 December. Australia's first case was recorded on 25 January—two months ago—yet the government dithered on producing the tests needed to control the spread. So far one NSW company, ResMed, has indicated that it could help to produce more ventilators. But that should have started weeks ago.

The ideology of the free market has crippled the response that could have contained the virus. It was only the horror at the number of deaths that drove Spain to put private hospitals under government control. Italy has nationalised the Alitalia airline out of desperation. In the US, the governor of New York State has called on Trump to nationalise the purchasing and distribution of dangerously scarce medical gear like masks, gowns, and ventilators.

Yet Morrison is providing billions for the bosses while the hospital system looms close to calamity.

Indonesia and The Philippines show every sign of facing a catastrophe. Of the 58 deaths in Indonesia by 26 March some are dying in the street, eight are doctors. Some medical staff are using raincoats as the only protective equipment they have. Meanwhile, Trump is reportedly scouring Asia for supplies. Such is global capitalism.

It is a sick system. We are going to have to fight for the health care that can contain the coronavirus and save lives. The system will take more casualties as it plunges into economic crisis. We need to fight for a socialist society where the needs of ordinary people come before profit. The future depends on it.

.....  
**Morrison is providing billions for the bosses while the hospital system looms close to calamity**

## Testing shortage and state of hospitals show Morrison's failure

By Lachlan Marshall

SCOTT MORRISON is losing control of the coronavirus outbreak due to lack of testing—and has failed to deliver the enormous expansion in healthcare services needed.

A number of countries have succeeded in controlling the spread of the virus—including South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and eventually China, where the virus emerged.

Key to this has been free, mass testing and contact tracing.

In China, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) assistant director general Bruce Aylward, “To actually stop the virus, [they] had to do rapid testing of any suspect case, immediate isolation of anyone who was a confirmed or suspected case, and then quarantine the close contacts for 14 days so that they could figure out if any of them were infected.”

“Those were the measures that stopped transmission in China, not the big travel restrictions and lockdowns”, he told *New Scientist*. This is why the WHO director-general is imploring governments to “test, test, test.”

South Korea has set up facilities to test up to 20,000 people every day at a network of 633 sites nationwide, including at drive-through testing centres. Results usually come through within 24 hours.

After reporting up to 850 new cases a day at the peak in early March, over the last week it has brought this down to less than 100 a day. South Korea was prepared because its government put money into pandemic planning after dealing with an outbreak of MERS in 2015, another kind of coronavirus.

Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong were also quicker to respond because of their experience with the SARS virus in 2003.

Taiwan began screening passengers from Wuhan for fevers on 31 December, as soon as China admitted that people were falling ill from an unknown disease, and began initial testing within days.

Italy and Iran failed to do this early enough and are experiencing catastrophic outbreaks as a result.

But testing in Australia is also woefully inadequate. Shortages mean health professionals have been forced into “rationing” the tests, as immunologist John Dwyer from UNSW told the ABC.



**Above: A drive-through testing clinic in South Korea**

Hospitals have imposed restrictive guidelines that allow only those who have returned from overseas with clear symptoms, or who have had contact with a confirmed case, to get a test.

One large hospital service in Brisbane was forced to tighten its criteria for access to a test twice in one day, the ABC reported.

Yet we know the vast majority of people who catch the virus will experience only mild symptoms, and some may not even realise they are sick. This makes widespread, proactive tracing and testing of those potentially exposed very important.

Yet people have been waiting at least five days to find out the test result. Labor's Chris Bowen complained that, “I've heard reports of eight days, sometimes six days...”

Although the import of 97,000 new test kits has been trumpeted, this will not be anywhere near enough.

Morrison has completely failed to plan for this. In the two months since the crippling outbreak in China exploded little has been done to prepare.

There is also a desperate shortage of protective equipment like masks and gowns in hospitals. The Australian government only in late March asked local manufacturers to begin producing it, as well as starting to explore options to manufacture testing equipment.

Instead, the government's strategy is to slow the virus's spread by locking down society until a vaccine is developed. But this is at least 12 months away.

The unbelievable bungle that saw almost 2700 cruise passengers allowed to leave a ship in Sydney after people were known to be sick, before tests confirmed they had coronavirus, shows the failure of planning.

### Health response

The spread of COVID-19 in Australia will overwhelm the health system unless there is a massive increase in testing and intensive care unit (ICU) beds.

Based on experience in China, around 5 per cent of those infected needed a ventilator in ICU. According to epidemiologist Raina MacIntyre, “If 50 per cent of Australians—3 million people—became infected that is up to 400,000 people dying, almost 2 million people needing a hospital bed and 650,000 people needing an ICU bed”, over the course of a year.

There are currently only around 2200 ICU beds in Australia equipped with ventilators, with suggestions this could be doubled to 4000. This is nowhere near enough to deal with a serious outbreak.

And many of them are in the private hospital system—which should be taken over and integrated with public hospitals.

Hospitals were already working at capacity. Australia has less intensive care beds per person than many other developed countries including Italy, the US and South Korea.

We need a massive expansion in health and aged care funding to meet the crisis, not billions of dollars to bail out business.

**In the two months since the crippling outbreak in China little has been done to prepare**

# Morrison spends big to bail out business not protect workers

By Ruby Wawn

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic means the world is facing a major recession, if not an outright depression. Scott Morrison has announced an enormous \$189 billion in economic measures in response—but his focus is overwhelmingly on bailouts for business, not protecting workers.

The scale of the economic crisis is huge. Investment bank Goldman Sachs has predicted a catastrophic 24 per cent drop in the US economy over the next three months as the economy faces a “sudden stop”.

Stockmarkets in the US and Australia have both dropped by around 35 per cent, with the American Federal Reserve moving to inject \$1.5 trillion in short term loans and securities purchases in an attempt to prevent collapse.

There have been mass sackings across retail, the arts and hospitality industries as people avoid leaving home.

Qantas has announced it will stand down 20,000 workers, forcing them to either use up leave entitlements or go without pay, despite the government committing to a \$715 million bailout. A Roy Morgan poll found 60 per cent of Australian businesses have already been affected.

Universities have been hit hard by the loss of revenue from fee-paying international students stranded by border closures.

They have already announced major austerity measures. Casual workers in particular have been left in the lurch, with casual academics in the firing line for job losses and the entire workforce feeling the pressure of moving classes online.

Many more have lost their jobs following the government's decision to force cafes, pubs and restaurants to close in an effort to stop the spread of the virus. But workers should not be made to pay for this through being unable to cover the bills.

Morrison has announced a temporary doubling of Newstart payments for those out of work. But this will not be enough for some workers to cover their rents and mortgages.

All workers should receive paid leave for any periods where companies are shut down.

This is a particular issue for casuals, who have no right to sick leave if they catch the virus. According to the



**Above: Long queues have stretched outside Centrelink offices as hundreds of thousands lose their jobs**

ACTU, there are 3.3 million casual workers in Australia with no access to paid leave.

## Propping up business

But 70 per cent of Morrison's stimulus spending is being spent on propping up business, not supporting insecure workers. This includes up to \$100,000 in cash payments for small business in an attempt to encourage them not to sack workers, and providing \$20 billion to help underwrite loans of up to \$250,000 per company.

Morrison's aim is to save capitalism from collapse. Most of the spending is temporary over the next six months, in the hope of aiding a quick recovery a few months from now.

The increases to welfare payments, for instance, are delayed with the doubling of Newstart not kicking in for five weeks and a second one-off \$750 payment for other welfare recipients including pensioners, disability pensioners, carers, and those receiving family tax only arriving on 13 July.

The increases to welfare payments need to be made permanent to ensure people are not forced back into poverty when they expire. Newstart payments have not been increased in real terms since 1994 and give recipients just \$40 per day to live off.

The economic fallout from coronavirus is expected to last much longer than six months. Economists who spoke to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* are predicting the unemployment rate will rise to 15 per cent,

the highest since the Great Depression.

Morrison's spending to keep businesses afloat far outweighs what he is spending on the health measures to combat coronavirus of just \$2.4 billion.

But the scale of the \$189 billion spending shows how hollow the usual government claims that we “can't afford” to fund proper health and education services or jobs are.

The tens of billions of dollars being spent to prop up business could be used to create socially useful work for health and human needs. In Victoria, the Andrews state government is committing \$500 million to fund jobs in cleaning, food services, health care and deliveries for those thrown out of work. This could be massively expanded.

In NSW, the nurses' union has called for the state government to bring forward its promise to fund jobs for 5000 new nurses.

If the government is spending millions to bail out companies like Qantas, it should nationalise them and ensure workers' jobs are protected.

With interest rates at historic lows, the government could expand health-care jobs and provide food deliveries support for people who are sick or self-isolating due to coronavirus, and start planning to build renewable energy infrastructure to deal with the climate crisis.

Workers should not pay for the medical and economic disaster capitalism has created.

**70 per cent of Morrison's stimulus spending is being spent on propping up business**



## Big pharma's thirst for profit has held back vaccine research

By James Supple

THE RACE is on to develop a vaccine capable of halting the new coronavirus, COVID-19. There are a number of treatments in development. But the minimum time to produce and test them is considered to be 12 months.

One reason is that the big pharmaceutical companies have been disinterested in developing virus treatments, fearing they won't be profitable.

Viruses are constantly mutating, so that vaccines or anti-virals can become useless against new variants that emerge. This means companies may not be able to make back the money spent developing them.

These problems can be seen in efforts to tackle the Ebola virus, which emerged in Africa in 1976 and has produced periodic outbreaks since.

A vaccine was developed by publicly-funded researchers in Canada that was known to work by 2003. But there was no interest from pharmaceutical companies in funding the clinical trials necessary to gain government approval. These can cost \$250 million or more. With outbreaks concentrated in Africa, big pharma could not see a market to enable them to make profit on the investment.

It was only after a major epidemic in West Africa in 2014, and growing political pressure, that a US pharmaceutical company, Merck, agreed to fund the necessary clinical trials.

If more preparatory work on coronavirus vaccines had been done before COVID-19 emerged, we would be in a better position to quickly develop treatments.

But governments failed to heed the warning of previous large-scale coronavirus outbreaks. In 2002 another coronavirus emerged, SARS, spreading to 29 different countries and claiming 774 lives. Another strain, MERS, was identified in 2012 in Saudi Arabia, and killed 400 people. South Korea experienced a particularly serious outbreak in 2015.

Pharmaceutical companies lost any interest in research once these outbreaks faded away. "Had we not set the SARS-vaccine-research program aside, we would have had a lot more of this foundational work that we could apply to this new, closely related virus," Jason Schwartz, an assistant professor at Yale School of Public Health, told *The Atlantic*.

Pharmaceutical companies are



**Above: Vaccine development is controlled by big corporations**

immensely profitable. The top ten companies globally made a total of \$150 billion profit in 2019.

Big pharma dominates research and development because only these enormous companies have the facilities

and the hundreds of millions of dollars needed to bring drugs to the public.

Drug research should be taken out of their hands and run in the interests of ordinary people and human health not profit.

### Imperialist rivalries put before human lives

INSTEAD OF co-operating in the face of humanitarian crisis, Donald Trump and other world leaders are using the coronavirus outbreak to advance their own power and imperialist interests.

Trump has insisted on calling COVID-19 "the China virus" in an effort to stoke racism and nationalism. His administration is also using the crisis to push protectionist policies that boost US businesses. As the scale of the outbreak in China became clear in January, his Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross gloated on *Fox Business* that, "I think it will help to accelerate the return of jobs to North America."

Supply chain disruptions as a result of the economic shutdown in China have slowed the production of iPhones, electronics and cars.

This has pushed some businesses to seek out alternative suppliers domestically, or look to low cost producers in other countries like Vietnam, Mexico or Eastern Europe.

The US has also moved to deepen the medical disaster in Iran, imposing further ruthless sanctions on the economy of its rival.

Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has pleaded for an end to the sanctions, saying they made it "virtually impossible" to purchase medicine and medical equipment.

The country has been hard hit by an outbreak that has killed almost 2000 people. The US's efforts guarantee that more people will die.

Most countries have imposed tough new border controls on entry, increasing the level of fear about foreigners. Instead of moving to test, isolate and treat those infected, they have simply tried to shut them out.

Australia rushed to follow Trump and announce a blanket ban on visitors from China. It followed this with a ban on Iran, shortly after Trump did the same. But it was much slower to target the US, Australia's imperialist ally. Three times more cases of coronavirus have now arrived with people coming from the US than from China.

But travel bans have not stopped the spread of the virus, with Australians returning from overseas simply carrying it back.

Poorer nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with higher levels of poverty and weaker health systems, are going to be hit hard. The world's richest countries should be organising a co-operative international effort against the virus—instead of resorting to nationalism and imperialist power politics. Their response is showing how the system puts power and profit above human lives.

**James Supple**

**The top ten companies globally made \$150 billion profit in 2019**



# No just transition for Holden workers after failure to fight for jobs

By Tom Orsag

THE FINAL end of the car-maker General Motors Holden came in February. But there was never a serious fight for the one thing that could have saved the jobs—nationalisation.

After Holden's 2013 decision to close its manufacturing plants, it still had 600 workers in its design team and 200 in after sales customer service. Now those jobs will go.

The last 800 jobs will go without any fight from the unions or intervention by the Morrison government.

Morrison was disingenuous, "I am angry, like I think many Australians would be. Australian taxpayers put millions into this multinational company. They let the brand just wither away on their watch. Now they are leaving it behind."

The same is true of the Coalition government. Since 2013 under leaders Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison, they have watched as Holden ended car production and refused to act.

The one thing Morrison is right about is the taxes and subsidies Australian workers paid over the years to keep Holden going. In just the 12 years prior to its 2013 closure, GMH received an average government subsidy of \$153 million a year. Right from 1948, when the first FX Holden came off the assembly line, Holden received government assistance.

Labor criticised Morrison yet has never produced any plan to save the jobs. Finally, the union that represents the workers—the AMWU—has done nothing to fight for jobs or nationalisation. Dave Smith, the assistant national secretary, could only "condemn the lack of Government support for Australian manufacturing." How about a union fight for jobs and nationalisation?

The 3000 former Holden manufacturing workers have struggled to find secure, well-paying jobs since 2013. An AMWU study found less than 5 per cent of members laid off by at Adelaide's Elizabeth plant had new jobs with the same or better conditions. Many had some work but two thirds were in part-time, casual or contract jobs. Those over 40 struggled to gain any sort of work. "We were speaking to members that were getting five hours one week and then 25 the next, and then maybe eight the week after that," union official Scott Batchelor



**Above: Holden manufacturing workers walk away after losing their jobs in 2013**

said.

There simply has been no "just transition" for Holden workers. This stands as a warning in shutting down other industries like coal.

Nationalising Holden could

have been the beginning of a green manufacturing sector—building public transport and renewable energy infrastructure. We have to make sure that workers aren't simply thrown on the scrap heap in future.

## Afghanistan invasion is the war crime

ALLEGATIONS OF Australian special forces (SAS) soldiers committing war crimes in Afghanistan have been around for years. But the *Four Corners* footage showing an Australian soldier executing Dad Mohammad, an unarmed father, leaves no doubt. The images were sickening.

*Four Corners*'s interview with Braden Chapman, a former SAS signals intelligence officer, was just as chilling. Chapman said that destroying people's homes and infrastructure, blowing up private cars and shooting dogs were regular occurrences; adding that the Taliban, "usually weren't doing the same".

He went on to say that planting radios and weapons on bodies to justify killings was a regular practice.

In an interview last year the son of an Afghan man allegedly killed by SAS soldiers in 2012 told the ABC, "Our civilians were killed; they killed our elders... wherever they have conducted raids, they have slaughtered people standing."

The AFP has interviewed Australia's most decorated living soldier and former SAS member Ben Roberts-Smith over allegations he kicked a handcuffed Afghan prisoner off a cliff in 2012. Roberts-Smith is also under investigation for the summary execution of an Afghan in 2009.

These atrocities are just the tip of the ice-berg. Australian troops have

been part of the imperialist invasion of Afghanistan since US President George Bush began the "war on terror" in 2001. This quickly expanded into the war on Iraq.

There are still about 300 Australian Defence Force members and defence civilians deployed in "Task Group Afghanistan", including a small contingent of Australian Special Forces supporting NATO's "Special Operations Component Command."

In 2019, the US dropped 7423 bombs and munitions on Afghanistan, an eight-fold increase since 2015. And the civilian casualties keep rising. According to UN figures, in the first half of 2019, 717 civilians were killed by government forces, including the US, a 31 per cent increase from a year earlier.

For successive Australian governments, Australia's involvement is an integral part of its imperialist relationship with the other "Five Eyes" countries, the US, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK.

There are 2500 US troops stationed in Darwin, one of the US bases scattered across Australia actively supporting US bombings.

The killing of innocent Afghan civilians by SAS soldiers is part of a wider atrocity—the war crime of Australia's imperialist intervention in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

**Ian Rintoul**

**There simply has been no 'just transition' for Holden workers**

# New refugee exodus from Syria as Turkey opens borders

By Mark Goudkamp

A NEW refugee crisis in Syria has seen up to a million people trapped along the Turkish border in desperate conditions. Overcrowded camps there and in Greece face major risks from the spread of coronavirus.

Tents have become a luxury, thousands of families are sleeping in the open without shelter, and several children have died from the cold.

Since last December, when the Assad regime started its offensive to recapture Syria's northwest province of Idlib, more than a million civilians have been displaced, hundreds killed, and entire towns destroyed and emptied of their residents. Schools, hospitals, ambulances, markets and displacement camps have all been deliberately bombed by Syrian and Russian jets.

The UN says that the situation there, in Syria's last opposition held region, may be the worst humanitarian crisis yet in a conflict that has already driven millions from their homes and killed hundreds of thousands.

For now a fragile ceasefire is holding in Idlib—after Russia and Turkey came close to direct military confrontation.

Under the agreement struck between Putin and Erdoğan, Russian and Turkish forces will carry out joint patrols along the strategic M4 highway linking Syria's east and west, and establish a security corridor either side of it. However, like similar deals in the past, this is likely to be short-lived. Russia still supports the Assad regime's drive to "take back every inch" of Syria.

Turkey's President Recep Erdoğan intervened in Syria to try to topple the Assad regime. But this effort has failed. Erdoğan is now scrambling to protest Turkey's imperialist interests in Syria. He wants to keep Idlib out of the hands of the Assad regime and to weaken the Kurdish militia groups along the Turkish border.

Erdoğan is treading a delicate line. He is also keen not to jeopardise Turkey's growing relationship with Moscow. Earlier this year the presidents of Turkey and Russia formally launched the TurkStream pipeline that will carry Russian natural gas to southern Europe through Turkey.

It was only when a Russian airstrike killed 36 Turkish soldiers that Erdoğan responded by launching a



**Above: Refugees in makeshift tents near the Greek border**

counter-offensive—shooting down two Assad regime fighter jets and targeting a chemical weapons storage facility and a barrel bomb factory.

He also wants to stop another massive wave of refugees from settling in Turkey.

So Erdoğan also announced that Turkey would no longer block refugees from crossing into Europe. Since then, despite the danger, thousands of people have tried to reach the EU through Greece, either by crossing the Aegean Sea to already overcrowded islands like Lesbos, Chios and Samos, or via the Evros River.

Turkey has taken in around four million Syrian refugees (far more than all of Europe put together), but Erdoğan cannot claim the moral high ground. Until now, Turkey has willingly upheld the 2016 deal it signed with the EU to prevent refugee flows in exchange for billions of euros. Turkey also built a wall along its border with Syria, and border guards have killed some 450 refugees who've tried to breach it.

Turkey has deported thousands back to Syria—including into the "buffer zone" inside Syria that it created during its offensive against Kurdish forces last October.

## Backlash in Greece

Greece, backed by the EU, has responded to the latest refugee arrivals with violence and xenophobia. The right-wing Mitsotakis government sent the military to the borders and

suspended asylum applications. *The New York Times* reported that Greece is using a secret extrajudicial black-site to detain and deport asylum seekers without processing their claims.

Horrific videos have emerged showing Greek forces firing tear gas on babies and shooting at a boat in an attempt to capsize it. One Syrian refugee, Ahmad Abu Emad, was shot and killed.

Instead of prioritising protection and human rights, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen travelled to the border and praised Greece as Europe's shield. The EU has since agreed to take between 1000-1500 unaccompanied refugee children, but this is a drop in the ocean.

The anti-refugee policies and rhetoric of Greece's New Democracy government have encouraged far right vigilante actions against refugees, activists and NGO workers. A warehouse with provisions for refugees on Chios and The One Happy Family community centre on Lesbos were both burnt to the ground.

By contrast, the refugee rights and anti-fascist movement in Greece has organised huge protests in Athens and Thessalonika, and others on the Greek islands, in opposition to the right-wing backlash.

It is through such a mass movement that the protection of refugees, the evacuation of people from the Greek islands to European countries, and an overhaul of Europe's broken asylum system can be won.

**The refugee rights and anti-fascist movement in Greece has organised huge protests in Athens and Thessalonika**

# Democratic Party unites to crush Bernie Sanders

By Adam Adelpour

THE DEMOCRATIC Party is now all but certain to run establishment figure Joe Biden in the election against Donald Trump in November.

Bernie Sanders' initial victories in the Democratic primaries have stalled in the face of the combined opposition of the entire party establishment.

Sanders started out the primaries as a surprise favourite. He humiliated Biden in the Iowa caucuses on 6 February, and a week or so later in New Hampshire.

Bernie Sanders is a self-proclaimed socialist. He promises free healthcare and education, a \$15 minimum wage, action on climate change, strict regulation of banks and taxes on the rich. Joe Biden doesn't support any of this.

The Democratic Party establishment—and the US ruling class generally—breathed a huge sigh of relief during the Super Tuesday primaries at the start of March when Biden made his comeback.

When it emerged that Biden had won the most delegates at the end of Super Tuesday, Wall St jumped 4 per cent.

**The Democrats are a dead end**  
But the collapse of the hopes attached to Sanders expose the limitations of relying on electoral politics and the Democratic Party for change.

The Democrats are a capitalist party that have withstood numerous efforts at take-over by the left over the decades.

The Democratic Party establishment boosted Biden massively by throwing everything they had behind him to stop Bernie. Rival candidates Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar were pressured to withdraw from the race in an effort to swing their supporters behind Biden. Both endorsed him on the day before Super Tuesday.

Progressive candidate Elizabeth Warren received \$14 million in funding from a hastily organised "Super PAC" funding body to boost her standing in Super Tuesday states. This allowed her to siphon more progressive voters away from Sanders at a crucial moment.

Even if Bernie had won the primaries, there was still no guarantee he would have become the candidate.

Unless a candidate wins a majority



**Above: Bernie is now going to fall in behind corporate stooge Joe Biden**

in their own right, the final decision can still be rigged. At the Democratic National Convention, which makes the decision, so called "super-delegates" appointed from the party establishment have a huge proportion of the vote. There are 3979 delegates that are actually elected in primaries and 771 unelected "super-delegates".

Unlike the Labor Party in Australia, in which trade union leaders at least maintain significant influence, the Democratic Party is funded and controlled by the rich.

After the 2008-2009 Financial Crisis literally tens of millions were on food stamps in the US. Working people were left living in their cars as they lost their jobs and houses.

Yet Democratic President Barack Obama chose to bail out the bankers. Despite giving hope to black people his administration also coincided with the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement—and the rampant killing of African-Americans by police.

## Building the struggle

The US needs a new left-wing party independent of the Democrats. But Bernie's decision to work within the Democrats means that he has already promised to fall behind Biden. In March he promised, "If Joe ends up winning, I will be there. We are going to come together".

People are right to be inspired by Bernie's vision of a more equal soci-

ety. But the entire political machine Sanders has built up around him is geared towards electoralism and getting votes rather than fighting where workers are strongest.

It is struggle in the workplaces and on the streets that holds the real power to change the world.

In the US workers participated in 25 major work stoppages in 2019, the highest number in 18 years. This is the biggest upsurge in workers' struggle in a generation and scored real wins—for example \$6000 pay rises for teachers in Oklahoma.

Even as Bernie was campaigning in the state, hundreds of graduate student teachers across four campuses of the University of California were organising an insurgent months-long wildcat strike, demanding cost of living wage increases.

Bernie's campaign could have mobilised people to attend the protests or helped raise money to support the strike. But the focus on winning votes meant that he simply made statements in their support, never visiting a picket-line or protest, despite numerous appearances in the state.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and unfolding economic crisis, these kinds of struggles outside parliament will be key. That is where the power lies to win the things Bernie stands for.

Building this fight now in the face of Trump and the brutal impact of COVID-19 in the US is essential.

**The political machine Sanders has built up is geared towards electoralism**

# ‘NEVER AGAIN’— UNDERSTANDING THE HORROR OF THE HOLOCAUST

On the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp, **David Glanz** looks at the causes of the Holocaust and how it emerged from Hitler’s fascist ideology

*We were taken by train to Auschwitz. I remember the masses of people, the SS soldiers with high boots and big barking dogs. Everyone had to get undressed. I had to put on a striped dress and wooden clogs, no socks, nothing else. They cut off my beautiful plaits and threw them into a pile and then shaved me bald. I was given a tattoo, No 26877, on my left arm. I discovered later we were the first transport in which people were not automatically sent to the gas chambers.*

Eva Szepesi, from Budapest, Hungary, liberated in 1945 aged 12

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS ago, in early 1945, first Russian and then British and US troops liberated Nazi concentration camps across occupied Poland and Germany. What they found shocked the world.

Dr Douglas Kelling, a medical officer who helped liberate Dachau, recalled: “When we got there, the furnaces were still warm, the odour of burning flesh was still strong ... Naked bodies numbering 100 were piled like cordwood outside the furnace area. Outside, 3000 bodies were piled in boxcars. They had been just thrown in, with legs and arms hanging out doors.”

The camps were killing factories, designed to massacre thousands of victims daily. In total, the Nazis murdered six million Jews in an attempt to “solve the Jewish problem” through genocide.

Jews were not the only victims. The Nazis also killed 500,000 Roma and Sinta (Gypsies) and millions of some of the Slavic peoples they despised as sub-humans (especially Poles and Russians).

The first inmates of the camps after the Nazis came to power in 1933 were communists, socialists, union militants, Jehovah’s Witnesses and LGBTI+ people. The first to be

slaughtered in mass numbers were people with disabilities.

After 1945, the world seemed united in its determination to declare “Never again”.

But today we are witnessing a resurgence of the far right, from the rise of Alternative for Germany, to the Christchurch massacre to the fascist attacks on refugees in Greece.

Mass revulsion at the horrors of the Holocaust means most of the far right talk in code rather than display their anti-semitism openly.

As Australian Nazi Neil Erikson wrote to fellow Nazi Blair Cottrell: “Stick to the Muslim shit and Cultural Marxism for max support ... do Jews later you don’t need to show your full hand,” to which Cottrell replied: “It will take years to prepare for the Jewish problem. If any of us come out with that now we would be slaughtered by public opinion.”

Others are not so coy. The US far right marching in Charlottesville in 2017 chanted, “The Jews will not replace us.” And a report published by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in November recorded 368 anti-semitic incidents over the previous year, a 30 per cent increase.

So understanding the Holocaust is not a historical question. It goes to the heart of resisting the rise of the far right today.

There are two common theories that attempt to explain the Holocaust. The first, widely popularised by author Daniel Goldhagen, is that German identity was grounded in a profound anti-semitism and that ordinary Germans became Hitler’s “willing executioners”.

Goldhagen’s argument runs counter to a number of factors. The Nazis never won majority electoral support, with the overwhelming bulk of the German working class remaining loyal to the socialists and communists

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**Today we are witnessing a resurgence of the far right, from the Alternative for Germany to the Christchurch massacre**

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until their parties were smashed in 1933.

Even under the Nazi dictatorship, resistance continued. In June, July and August 1935, for example, the Gestapo recorded 13 industrial disputes and 39 acts of sabotage. At an Opel factory, hoses were turned on machinery overnight, wrecking 200 motors destined for the army.

The exiled socialist party reported, “Ninety per cent of the workers beyond all doubt are convinced anti-Nazis” even while noting that the potential for collective resistance was extremely limited.

As soon as the war ended, German workers established more than 500 Anti-Fascist Committees to purge all Nazi influence. In Leipzig, 100,000 marched on May Day 1945, the day after Hitler’s suicide—one fifth of the population.

Goldhagen’s thesis has a more fundamental problem. Explaining the Holocaust as a uniquely German phenomenon risks disarming us in the face of the rise of the far right globally.

As the head of ASIO reported last month: “In Australia, the extreme right-wing threat is real and it is growing. In suburbs around Australia, small cells regularly meet to salute Nazi flags, inspect weapons, train in combat and share their hateful ideology.”

## Capitalism and Nazism

The other common way of understanding the Holocaust is simply as the most extreme case of the general evils of modern capitalist society.

This, too, is inadequate. The Holocaust was certainly a product of capitalism—it required railway systems, the manufacture of poison gas and munitions, and a massive industrialised military and bureaucratic machine.

But capitalism has brought us



many other horrors, from the attempted genocide of Aboriginal people to the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the racist policies that led to mass starvation in Ireland in the 19th century and in Bengal in the 20th.

To make sense of what made the Holocaust unique as an act of deliberate, industrialised mass murder, we need to understand Nazism.

Germany after World War One was a society in turmoil, with revolutionary upheavals in 1918-19 and 1923 followed by the onset of the Great Depression in 1929.

Hitler built the Nazi Party and its mass paramilitary forces out of the ranks of the middle classes—the shopkeepers, farmers and small business people who felt trapped between the power of big business and the power of the working class and who were driven to desperation by the Great Depression.

He bound together his supporters with a blend of anti-semitism and fake anti-capitalist rhetoric.

As British Marxist Alex Callinicos writes: “Nazi ideology was anti-capitalist in the restricted sense of holding ‘Jewish finance capital’ responsible for all the ills of German society. Counterposed to Weimar realities was the Utopia of the Volksgemeinschaft—of a racially pure national community where German capital and labour were reconciled and the small producer finally in the saddle.

“Here we see the centrality of racism to National Socialism. Their supposedly common biological ‘race’ united Germans of all classes against the alien Jews and against other inferior races, especially the Slavs, with whom, according to Hitler’s Social Darwinism, Germans were in competition for territory and resources in the East.”

In Hitler’s world, the Jews were responsible for communism and hence for the revolution of workers, soldiers and sailors that ended World War One, contributing to Germany’s defeat. Never again, he pledged, would Jews be allowed to deliver such a stab in the back.

Speaking in January 1939 he declared: “If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevizing of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!”

While some of Hitler’s big business sponsors found his anti-semitism



**Above: Hungarian Jews arriving in cattle trucks at the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz**

distasteful, and worried about whether Hitler could hold his mass movement in check, they all welcomed his anti-communism, bringing him to power so that his 400,000-strong street army could crush the left and the workers’ movement.

Once Chancellor, Hitler wiped out those supporters who took his anti-capitalist language too seriously. Having reassured his millionaire backers, he used the power of the state to establish a Nazi dictatorship that, while defending German capitalism, had its own ideological agenda.

Hitler’s primary aim was to attack Poland and then the Soviet Union—simultaneously striking a blow at communism, gaining land for German expansion and settlement to the east, and attacking the mass Jewish populations of Poland, Russia and the other eastern states.

### **Racial war**

From the start the Nazi leadership made it clear that this was not just going to be just another war but a war of extermination, waged against inferior races—the subhuman Slavs and their “Jewish-Bolshevik” masters—to win living space for the German folk.

Mass murder was built into the operation from start. As the German army drove eastward, the violence against non-combatants escalated—first against communist commissars, then against Jewish communities.

Initially, the massacres were carried out by shooting but the Nazis became frustrated at the slow pace and worried about the impact on their

soldiers.

SS officer Herbert Langer pioneered the first death camp in Chelmo in central Poland in 1941. The murder operation consisted of three trucks where opponents were gassed with carbon monoxide.

As the war began to go badly, the Nazis intensified anti-semitism to try to hold together their support. They became desperate to complete their mission of wiping out the Jews.

At the Wannsee Conference in Berlin on 20 January 1942, SS chief Reinhard Heydrich and various officials planned the so-called Final Solution.

A few months later, a consignment of Jews arrived at the Auschwitz death camp, the first of a million to be sent to the gas chambers there.

Modern capitalism made such slaughter possible, but Jews were not murdered for profit. If anything, the Holocaust diverted resources that could have been used to fight the war.

Nazism represented the coming together of industrial capitalism and a bestial anti-semitism—a mass movement of racist counter-revolution.

It is vital that we learn from the horrors of the Holocaust. Nazis may use democratic channels to build their support but their aim is the eradication of all working class organisation and the mass murder of those they deem sub-human.

We must respond with unrelenting determination to block them at every turn and to build a socialist society in which anti-semitism and all forms of racism are consigned to the history books.

# SOCIALISM AND TRANSGENDER LIBERATION

**Amber Karanikolas** reviews a new book on transgender oppression that argues winning the working class to the fight against oppression is the key to dismantling it

**Transgender Resistance: Socialism and the Fight for Trans Liberation**  
By Laura Miles, Bookmarks

LAURA MILES, a former lecturer, trade union activist and member of the UK's Socialist Workers Party was the first openly trans person to serve on the national executive of a British trade union. Her new book, *Transgender Resistance: Socialism and the Fight for Trans Liberation*, provides a richly detailed and much needed Marxist perspective on transphobia's material roots.

Despite increasing acceptance and visibility for trans people, in recent times, attacks on hard-won trans rights have intensified. Across the world, trans people continue to face high rates of deadly violence, catastrophic suicide rates and frequent exclusion from public life. The Transgender Murder Monitor, an international register, records 3317 trans people who have been murdered in the past decade.

Trans people 18 years and over are nearly 11 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population.

One recent tragic case in Britain involved a trans schoolteacher, Lucy Meadows, who died by suicide after she was outed as trans by a local newspaper and then subjected to public attacks across the British press.

*Transgender Resistance* examines the fight for transgender rights across the world—including an in-depth examination of recent struggles in Britain. Miles' analysis is clear that trans rights and so-called "gender ideology" have become such prominent targets for the conservative right in recent years.

For evidence of this offensive here in Australia, we do not need to look

further than *The Australian* newspaper's anti-trans campaign; the recent moral panics whipped up against "gender whisperers" and the Safe Schools program, or the transphobia of the 'No' campaign during the equal marriage plebiscite. In these cases, it is trans people and gender fluidity which are the clear targets of such transphobic bile.

## Where does transphobia come from?

One of the book's significant contributions is its overview of trans people in history and analysis of the role of class society and the development of the nuclear family in the establishment of trans people's oppression.

There are many examples of gender variant people across place, time and culture; especially within pre-class societies. Respect for "trans" shamans in the late Palaeolithic period, Two-spirit people in some North American Indigenous tribes and the Hijra communities in the Indian sub-continent are just some examples that allow us to safely say that today's Western "trans" or "non-binary" identities correspond with social roles that have been around for quite some time.

The book puts forward the argument that, although what we know today as non-binary and transgender expression has always existed, it is the emergence of class societies which led to the contemporary systematic oppression of trans people.

Miles' analysis demonstrates that once a nascent ruling class had achieved control over women's reproductive capability, the enforcement of a gendered division of labour became more strictly regulated.

The new ruling classes viewed control of women's reproductive capacity as essential to ensuring the

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**Marxism points to class, not as a form of "difference", but as the key agent of social change**

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control and inheritance of wealth.

Even in today's capitalist societies the nuclear family, and women's subordinate role within it, remains of great importance to the system. Drawing on Engels's work and understanding of the family, Miles points out that the nuclear family continues to ensure the reproduction of the next generation of workers at little to no cost to the ruling class itself.

The ruling class also promotes ideas that promote the nuclear family as the main and natural unit for sustaining and reproducing the next generation of workers.

Miles shows that transphobia and the enforcement of forms of appropriate sexuality and gender expression are essential parts of promoting the "family values" that underpin the nuclear family.

Strong links are drawn to the way in which the nuclear family remains the crucial site in the perpetuation of women's oppression and the oppression of sexual minorities and gender variant people.

Miles also discusses ideas that are often drawn on to understand trans oppression including identity politics, queer theory and privilege theory. She argues that these approaches highlight identity, privilege and "difference", emphasising the need to "organise around your own oppression" and reinforce strategies in which identity-based groups act independently from each other.

Despite their various contributions and insights, she argues that such theories provide a limited basis for fostering solidarity, collective action and a united struggle, and must be understood as rising to prominence in periods of defeat for the left in the West in the 1970s and 1980s.

Marxism, however, is better able

to explain the material basis of trans peoples' oppression and points to class, not as a form of "difference", but as the key agent of social change. The working class has the ability both to organise powerful forms of struggle and to abolish class society all together.

### Resisting left-wing transphobia

Perhaps one of the most helpful aspects of Miles' book is its discussion of transphobia on the left in the UK.

Since 2017, a government proposal to amend the Gender Recognition Act to recognise trans people's right to self-identify their gender, without the need for a medical diagnosis and a lengthy bureaucratic procedure, has provoked debate within the left. A minority of anti-trans feminists, who have opposed the reforms, have adopted a transphobic position (most often directed at trans women).

Anti-trans feminists have mobilised within campaign groups and unions against trans-inclusive policies and legislation, often viciously targeting trans women.

They assert that "sex" and "biology" alone determines gender and frequently argue that trans women pose a threat of violence in women-only spaces, such as bathrooms and in domestic violence shelters, and that the legal changes undermine cis-gendered (that is, non-trans) women's rights.

Claims about trans women committing violent acts in women-only spaces wilfully deny the reality that trans women face extremely high rates of violence and are much more likely to experience violence than perpetrate it.

Reports of trans women attacking women in refuges and public bathrooms are almost non-existent and where legislative bans against trans people using public restrooms have been implemented (such as in some US states) this has also led to greater suspicion and attacks on cis-gendered, gender non-conforming women.

Miles explains how many anti-trans feminists have been influenced by Janice Raymond's brand of virulent transphobic feminism. Raymond, author of the 1979 book, *Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, prepared a report for Republican President Ronald Reagan, which eventually informed his administration's position on medical care for trans people.

Reagan cut trans access to social services in the US, in part as a response to anti-trans feminist



**Above: Transgender activists Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera marching in New York City in 1973**

activism, which dovetailed with his own conservative politics. Although transphobes and trans critics are a small minority, the backlash against trans self-identification and non-binary recognition from some feminists has fallen into step with the conservative right's agenda.

Miles demonstrates how women and trans people are two groups often hit extremely hard by cuts to social services and neo-liberal policies. This is true in the UK, where anti-trans feminists strategically frame women's rights as being in competition with trans rights.

This logic needs to be directly opposed and socialists must start from recognising the material reality of both trans and women's oppression.

Miles argues that in order to achieve trans and women's liberation, we need a united front to promote common struggle; emphasising how both trans people and all women have shared interests against a common enemy.

### A trans liberated future

The left must show clear solidarity with trans people. But the fight for trans people to be able to live authentic lives is far from over. How should that fight be waged?

History demonstrates that the highest points of struggle against oppression for trans people has been where there has been the greatest working class challenge to capitalist rule.

The case is made by Miles that the relatively small number and limited social weight of LGBTI+ people is a necessary consideration in the struggle for trans and queer liberation—self-organisation often does not have the power to radically change society. Building solidarity is essential in order to link up the power of the organised working class in struggles for trans rights.

Inspiring examples of such solidarity include the work of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM), a solidarity group which raised money for British miners during their historic strike of 1984-1985; and the ways in which socialist and gay activists in the Britain took the fight against HIV/AIDS into their workplaces and won wider working class support.

*Transgender Resistance* not only fills an important gap in socialist literature on trans and non-binary peoples' oppression, it provides fresh perspectives on debates within queer politics and draws out the important role of socialists and unionists in historic struggles for LGBTI+ rights that continue today.

The book is accessible, yet detailed, and offers something for those well versed in debates and those who are eager to learn more. Its conclusion and call to action emphasises the need for mutual solidarity and for resistance to transphobia in the streets, in our workplaces and everywhere we see it.

# DETENTION IS NOT SAFE FREE THEM NOW

By Ian Rintoul

AS THE coronavirus spreads, calls are growing louder to free immigration detainees from the detention centres and hotels.

Almost 26,000 people have signed the “Human Rights for All” petition for their release. The Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases and the Australian College of Infection Prevention and Control have issued a joint statement echoing the call.

Refugees, almost all of them from Manus, staged a protest in Melbourne’s Mantra Hotel, with placards saying, “We don’t want to die of COVID-19.”

In Villawood, hundreds of detainees have signed a letter asking to be released and detainees have tried to keep Serco guards out of some of their compounds.

The revelation that two staff members at Sydney’s Long Bay jail hospital tested positive for COVID-19, and four prisoners showing symptoms, has highlighted the fact that prisoners face a high risk of infection.

Yet, as NSW prepares legislation to allow for the early release of prisoners from jail, Border Force and Serco are damned by their indifference to the risks inside their immigration prisons.

Unrest is growing in the detention centres and the hotels (in Brisbane, Darwin and Melbourne) that are holding refugees ironically transferred to Australia for medical treatment, now having their lives once again put at risk by the Australian government.

## Vulnerable

The refugees are the definition of vulnerable people, many with underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart and kidney problems, confined in places where any idea of social distancing is a joke.

With all movements between the hotels and the detention centres cancelled, the refugees have no fresh air. At Kangaroo Point (which has 80 refugees and around 40 staff at any one time) all activities are cancelled, yet English classes continue with at least 20 people in a room that doesn’t meet the four square metre rule.

One refugee told *Solidarity*, “We



**Above: Refugees protest in the Mantra hotel in Melbourne with signs “We do not want to die of COVID-19”**

are living in a time bomb. Serco guards come and go. It only takes one of them to bring the virus. We are really in a cage.”

Detainees are in cramped conditions, and eat in crowded meal rooms. At Kangaroo Point the limited hand sanitiser (one on each floor) ran out several days ago (as of 25 March). Despite constant requests none has arrived.

In Yongah Hill, it seems there is no sanitiser, only soap. Mantra hotel is even short of food, because of problems sourcing supplies, according to Serco.

There has already been one scare with a Serco guard in Brisbane testing positive for the virus.

Yet Border Force and Serco have made almost zero preparations for the virus. In every detention centre and hotel, there are complaints that the guards do not take the situation seriously.

Twice a day, at least 40 guards swap shifts. Few of them wear gloves or masks and are touching chairs, door handles, railings, all day. Detainees are even patted down by guards without protection.

Immigration detention has exposed the priorities of rulers around the world. In the US, where there are 37,000 people in immigration detention, more than 3000 doctors have

signed a letter urging ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) to release detainees—particularly those over 60 and people with serious chronic medical conditions that put them at higher risk. There are hunger strike protests in three detention centres in New Jersey, after first staff and now two detainees were tested positive for COVID-19.

Astonishingly ICE has put out a call for companies to supply 45,000 N95 masks, even though hospitals are running out of the crucial surgical masks. On Sunday 22 March, New York reported it had only ten days of mask supply.

In Britain, three immigration deportation centres are holding people with symptoms of coronavirus. While High Court action is being taken to try at least temporarily to free the detainees, a government statement said, “our priority is to maintain the lawful detention of the most high-harm individuals, including foreign national offenders.”

The threat of the coronavirus shows even more starkly how much the barbed wire of detention is integral to the system that imprisons us all, and puts all our lives at risk.

We might not be able to rally openly this Palm Sunday, but we need to keep alive the fight to end detention and free the refugees.

**The refugees are the definition of vulnerable people**

# Solidarity