

Solidarity

Issue No. 137 / May-June 2020

\$3/\$5

NO TO PAY CUTS NO TO JOB CUTS MAKE MORRISON AND THE BOSSES PAY



UNIVERSITIES

No to the NTEU
National Agreement

CHINA

Trump and Morrison's
attack fuels racism

ECONOMIC CRISIS

Why wage cuts
don't save jobs

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

National

Online meetings via Zoom
6.30pm every Thursday
See fb.com/soliaus/events for details
or contact solidarity@solidarity.net.au

Sydney

For more information contact:
Adam on 0400 351 694
sydney@solidarity.net.au

Melbourne

For more information contact:
Chris on 0403 013 183
melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Perth

For more information contact:
Phil on 0423 696 312

Brisbane

For more information contact:
Mark on 0439 561 196 or
brisbane@solidarity.net.au

Canberra

For more information contact:
canberra@solidarity.net.au

CONTACT US

Magazine office

Phone 02 8964 7116
Fax 02 9012 0814

Email

solidarity@solidarity.net.au

Website

www.solidarity.net.au

Facebook

Search for "Solidarity Magazine" or
go to fb.com/soliaus

Twitter

@soli_au
twitter.com/soli_au

Solidarity No. 137

May-June 2020

ISSN 1835-6834

Responsibility for election

comment is taken by James

Supple, 410 Elizabeth St, Surry

Hills NSW 2010.

Printed by El Faro, Newtown
NSW.

SUBSCRIBE TO SOLIDARITY MAGAZINE

Solidarity is published monthly. Make sure you don't miss an issue—pay by credit card online at www.solidarity.net.au/subscribe or send in this form with a cheque or money order and we will mail you *Solidarity* each month.

☐ 5 issues—\$15 ☐ One year (12 issues)—\$36 ☐ Two years (24 issues)—\$65

Name Phone

E-mail Address

Cheques payable to Solidarity Publishing. Send to PO Box 375 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.

Things they say

Maybe we shouldn't have waited for a third case, maybe in these settings we should shut an entire place down.
Victorian Chief Health Officer Dr Brett Sutton now thinks Cedar Meats should have been shut down earlier after 100 cases have been linked to the plant. Maybe.

What the extreme right don't understand is that Malcolm Turnbull supported action on climate change not because he was a leftie but because he was an economic rationalist
NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean

There are more important things than living
Texas lieutenant governor Dan Patrick defending his claim that grandparents should be willing to die from coronavirus

It's a bloodbath out there; can you imagine minus \$37 a barrel? There's something wrong with that market. It's ridiculous.
As thousands die, Patrick Montalban, president of Montalban Oil and Gas Operations, thinks the collapse of oil price is the real crisis

I think that Tracy Grimshaw needs to be given a firm uppercut or a slap across the face, and I mean that virtually, of course, I wouldn't want to invoke (sic) any violence on anyone.
Australian Federation of Travel Agents chief executive Jayson Westbury over *A Current Affair's* reports on customer disgruntlement over airfare refunds

CONTENTS

ISSUE 137 MAY-JUNE 2020



Coronavirus, racism and cuts to jobs and wages

- 5 Editorial
- 7 No to the NTEU national agreement
- 8 Keneally's attack on migrant workers is racist scapegoating
- 9 Trump and Morrison's attack on China
- 14 Why taking wage cuts won't save jobs

Australia

- 10 Teachers, workload and school shutdowns
- 11 Women, the family and coronavirus
- 20 Mental health crisis but solidarity protests can free the refugees



16 Marx and the metabolic rift: Capitalism's threat to the planet

International

- 12 Poverty and unemployment spark protests during lockdown
- 12 Trump pushes to reopen business but health system in disarray
- 13 Poverty and unemployment surge as coronavirus sweeps Indonesia



18 The Vietnam Moratorium 50 years on



Reports of anti-Asian racism surge

OVER 300 incidents of racism against Asian Australians have been reported through a new survey tool established since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

In one case, an elderly woman shouted that Chinese people were “filthy f---ing animals who eat bats”, others have been told to “go back to where you came from” and “you’re bringing the virus here”.

A third of the cases were of physical abuse, including being spat on, pushed, shoved and tripped.

A family in Melbourne had their home graffitied two nights in a row, with “COVID-19 China die” spray painted on their garage and a window smashed. Two female international students were physically assaulted in the street by two other women, one of them kicked to the ground.

The survey was produced by Erin Chew from the Asian Australian Alliance in collaboration with Per Capita research fellow Osmond Chiu.

Bosses’ failure on safety caused Cedar Meats outbreak

BOSSSES ARE still cutting corners on coronavirus safety, as the outbreak at Cedar Meats in Melbourne shows. The company was notified that there were two confirmed cases of people who worked at the plant on Monday 27 April. Two days later another four people tested positive.

Even then, Cedar Meats decided to stay open. Victoria’s Chief Health Officer now admits this was a mistake. The company says it gave workers “the option” of staying home, but one Cedar Meats worker told *The Guardian* that staff there were often migrant workers who felt they could not question management, “I don’t speak English well,” he said. “Everything they tell us to do, we don’t say no.”

It was only at this point, six days after the first case was confirmed, that it gave workers face masks. On Friday 1 May, it called all 350 workers back to the plant to attend a staff meeting held inside. That day there were still 260 people working “to process the remaining product” before it closed. In total 100 cases, including 64 staff and 36 close contacts, have been linked to the plant so far.

Liberals want a fossil-fuelled recovery



SCOTT MORRISON’S personally appointed National COVID-19 Coordination Commission (NCCC) is promoting an expansion of gas mining to get the economy going again.

In a presentation to the Trans-Tasman Business Circle, titled “Resilient Leadership in Challenging Times”, its head, former mining company executive Neville Power, declared that “debates about climate change” could wait until the crisis was over—or in other words, be ignored until later.

As Mike Secombe revealed in *The Saturday Paper*, “He went on to pitch for expanded gas mining in Australia, as a means of encouraging greater manufacturing in this country of ‘agrichemicals and fertilisers, and things like that.’”

A number of the NCCC members have links to the gas industry. Power himself is former CEO of Fortescue Metals and is now Deputy Chair of Strike Energy, which is looking to exploit gas reserves in WA and SA. Andrew Liveris is Deputy Chair or oil company Worley Parsons and board member of Saudi Aramco. Catherine Tanner is Managing Director of Energy Australia and a former Managing Director of Queensland Gas Company, which was renamed BG Group and acquired by Shell.

This dovetails with Energy Minister Angus Taylor’s push for a gas-led recovery. In late April he told *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* that lower gas prices caused by the economic crisis “provides us with an opportunity for strategic economic stimulus”, to increase the use of gas in supplying “reliable power”. He is also set to allow the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and Clean Energy Finance Corporation funds to be used to support “carbon capture and storage” projects, to allow companies to keep using fossil fuels.

This means even more government money will be funnelled into fossil fuels instead of funding renewable energy.

Coal industry uses as much water as population of Sydney

ACROSS NSW and Queensland, the coal industry is using as much water as the whole population of Sydney every year, a new report has found.

Altogether coal mines and coal-fired power stations use 383 billion litres of water, around the same amount as the residential needs of 5.2 million people. A much larger amount of 2383 million litres of freshwater are used but much of it is later returned to the environment. This is often in a polluted form that harms fish and other species, the report says.

Adelaide Uni water resources academic Ian Overton prepared the report for the Australian Conservation Foundation.

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

Minimum wage freeze would hit retail agreements

BUSINESS GROUPS, the Coalition government and many economists are lining up to demand a freeze in the minimum wage. The peak employers’ group the ACCI has even floated the idea of a Great Depression-style 10 per cent cut to the minimum wage.

Fair Work’s decision will directly hit workers employed under Awards.

But tens of thousands of other retail workers on enterprise bargaining would also be hit with pay freezes if bosses’ push for a freeze in the minimum wage succeeds. In total new agreements covering 48,400 retail workers linked pay rises to the minimum wage in the six months to December, the Attorney-General’s Department data from the Trends in Federal Enterprise Bargaining report has shown. These include agreements at Kmart, Hungry Jack’s, Flight Centre and Big W, although some workers are Kmart and Hungry Jack’s would still get small increases above the minimum wage increases.

Unemployed at 9.6 per cent including participation drop

The unemployment figures for April mask the mammoth loss of jobs in the past month. The official rate of unemployment was up 1 per cent to 6.2 per cent. The increase in the number of unemployed was 104,500. But almost 600,000 officially “left” the workforce. In other words they gave up looking for a job because it was almost impossible to find one.

Without the drop in participation the unemployment figure would be 9.6 per cent. Including those who lost hours, the underemployment level hit a record high of 19.9 per cent.

And that’s not including the over six million workers now on JobKeeper wage subsidies, one in four of the entire population.

EDITORIAL

No return to the thirties—fan the flames of resistance

WITH CORONAVIRUS restrictions being relaxed across the country, and community spread at low levels, Morrison's focus is now turning to reviving the economy. But government and employer demands for pay cuts and sacrifices from workers will only create more misery and deepen the economic crisis.

Unemployment has massively increased to 6.2 per cent in April as 600,000 workers lost their jobs. It is expected to hit at least 10 per cent later this year.

Deloitte Access Economics says it won't return to pre-crisis levels until 2024.

The economy was already in trouble before the COVID-19 crisis hit. We can't afford to return to business as usual. It was "normal" capitalism that created the health and economic crisis.

Scott Morrison found hundreds of billions of dollars to expand healthcare and subsidise business when the shutdown crippled the economy.

But the Liberals are already insisting that the JobKeeper wage subsidy will end, and JobSeeker payments will drop back to \$40 a day after 24 September. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg says they, "were not designed to go forever".

But the dole has been too low, for too long. Both JobKeeper and JobSeeker need to be extended, not cut.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese has called for JobSeeker payments to be permanently increased (although not at current levels) and for increased spending on infrastructure like high speed rail and renewable energy.

Even mainstream economists are warning that suddenly cutting government support measures could push the economy deeper into recession.

This is exactly what happened in the 1930s, when wage cuts and government austerity only deepened the slump.

Large numbers of workers have already been excluded from the wage subsidy. The government has changed the rules three times to make sure university staff can't get it.

Over 4500 workers at Dnata, a Qantas catering company, have been refused JobKeeper just because their employer is a foreign government-owned airline.

Another 2.2 million migrant



Above: Over 150 cars and bikes joined the May 1 convoy in Sydney to demand "no worker left behind"

workers on temporary visas and casuals employed for less than 12 months also miss out.

Up to one third of workers still lack paid sick leave, meaning they are forced to choose between going to work sick, and risk spreading infection, or losing pay.

The Liberals have also cut the notice period bosses need to give before a vote on varying Enterprise Bargaining Agreements to 24 hours—leaving workers no time to understand or organise to oppose the changes.

Wage cuts

Unions including the ACTU have called on Morrison to widen the eligibility for JobKeeper so no worker is left behind.

But as unemployment grows, most union leaders are scurrying to collaborate with the bosses and accept wage cuts in the false hope this will protect jobs.

Union officials and the ACTU have negotiated Award variations in restaurants and office administration that allow bosses to cut hours and impose wage freezes.

Part-time workers at McDonalds are losing overtime pay and set shifts under changes to the Fast Food Award supported by the SDA and the ACTU.

The NTEU national leadership has taken things a step further, disgracefully negotiating a "National Framework" with the university bosses that will mean across the board pay cuts of up to 15 per cent.

Despite their claims, there are no

guarantees that this will save jobs.

But there is a growing revolt amongst NTEU members, with rank and file members organising to "vote no" to both the National Framework deal and any attempt to vary agreements to cut pay and conditions on individual campuses.

The NSW state government is considering cancelling pay rises for teachers, public sector workers, and even nurses.

In a welcome break with the capitulations from other union leaders, the Teachers Federation and the nurses' union in NSW have rejected the pay cuts.

The Federation says it is prepared to take "whatever action is necessary" to keep a 2.28 per cent pay rise.

The words will need to be turned into action in the weeks ahead. Despite the health restrictions, workers can still organise and take industrial action.

In Sydney over 150 cars and bikes defied the lockdown restrictions to join a convoy on 1 May to demand no cuts to jobs or wages.

Workers in warehouses and at Hutchison Ports have walked off the job to demand safety measures and testing.

We are not "all in this together". The bosses are demanding more sacrifices and more flexibility from workers to prop up their sick system, and keep their profits while hundreds of thousands are thrown out of work. We need more socialists, and stronger organisation to fan the flames of every bit of resistance.

.....
Most union leaders are scurrying to collaborate with the bosses and accept wage cuts

Tenants organise to resist landlords and the Liberals in Sydney

By Adam Adelpour

WITH SOARING unemployment a crisis for renters was inevitable in the absence of strong government support. Renters disproportionately work in industries like retail and hospitality which have been the hardest hit.

But tenants and the newly formed Housing Defence Coalition in Sydney have shown how to fight back.

Even before the full lockdown, growing numbers of renters were being driven out. In March residential bond refunds were up 17 per cent, year on year, while new bond lodgements were up just 3.2 per cent over the year. Unusually high numbers of people were leaving their homes but unable to rent new one.

Yet it wasn't until 15 April that the NSW Liberal Government introduced any protections for renters.

The new laws are woefully inadequate. The 60 day stop on evictions only applies to tenants who have lost 25 per cent or more of their income due to COVID-19 and who are being evicted for non-payment of rent.

The Liberals' policy has left landlords able to throw people onto the street for any other reason. Their six month framework for negotiating rental reductions is close to useless. Landlords can largely ignore their tenants' requests and the only enforcement mechanism is mediation through Fair Trading. The policy does, however, make it harder and slower to evict tenants for non-payment of rent if they have lost income due to COVID-19.

Unemployment, weak protections and landlords' willingness to act outside the law have all meant struggle is necessary to defend the right to safe and secure housing.

Sydney Uni Village

Sydney Uni international students were the first to show it is possible to fight. Many had lost all income from jobs or parents, while also being excluded from JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments by Morrison.

In March, after being pressured to keep paying high rents at Sydney University Village and other Sydney Uni linked student housing, they organised a sign-on letter to the Vice-Chancellor demanding no evictions and a reduction in rent.

At first, there was no response. But management cracked after students



Above: A protest outside Iglu student housing in Chatswood stopped an attempt to evict an international student

went to the media and campaigned to win solidarity from other students, who displayed posters saying "SUSPEND RENT" in their windows.

An attempt to intimidate the campaign by sending staff into a student's unit to tear down the posters ended in embarrassment for the university.

Students defied the bullying and posted a video of the incident on social media.

Aman Kapoor, an Indian international student who led the protests, said, "We won the no eviction confirmation from Vice-Chancellor. And many students are now getting their rent fully suspended or getting other options like rent reduction up to 50 per cent."

Protests

International and domestic students also won a guarantee of no evictions at the Macquarie Uni Iglu Student Accommodation in Chatswood, after an attempted illegal eviction.

An international student who was living off food donations was threatened with eviction for non-payment of rent in early May.

The student challenged management and the Housing Defence Coalition organised a protest demanding no evictions and a rent suspension. Twenty protesters delivered food parcels to students and invaded the Iglu foyer, forcing management to issue

an email saying they would not evict anyone.

In April, another action was launched when Layla, a trans-woman living in St Peters in Sydney, was threatened with illegal eviction.

She had lost all income due to an injury and was excluded from any government payments as she is from New Zealand.

Layla was given three days' notice to vacate the property, with heavies organised to move furniture on the eviction date.

The Housing Defence Coalition organised 15 people to assemble at the house on the day.

Despite restrictive public health orders and police threats, the eviction was abandoned. She won the ability to stay while seeking help and awaiting a tribunal date.

The St Peters landlord owns millions in property on the street and one neighbour described him as a "slumlord".

Sydney University Village's parent company Campus Living Villages is worth around \$2 billion. Iglu has over \$150 million in assets and their major shareholders include Macquarie Group and GIC Sovereign Private Limited, whose assets are estimated to be worth over \$600 billion.

The Liberals' weak laws have emboldened mega-rich landlords' shameless abuse of tenants.

But resistance has shown we can fight back and win.

No to the national agreement—defend every condition, fight for every job

By Geraldine Fela

THE LEADERSHIP of the NTEU both at a national and state level have struck a deal with the Vice-Chancellors that accepts significant cuts to conditions and pay. There needs to be a strong no vote rejecting this in the national electronic ballot of members on 25 May.

The deal is being sold as a life-buoy for “the most vulnerable” staff members, touted to save up to 12,000 jobs.

Staff are being told, “it takes solidarity to save jobs”, but by solidarity the NTEU executive means a pay cut of between 5 and 15 per cent for permanent staff members.

Giving up our pay and conditions is not an act of solidarity, it merely accepts the logic that workers should pay for this crisis, not the government or the bosses.

The agreement offers only dubious promises of consultation; there are no guarantees that jobs will be protected.

Alongside the pay cut, the framework cedes power to Vice-Chancellors, heads of school and school managers. Section 21 of the framework’s “Heads of Agreement” document suggests that if management can show that an academic’s ability to perform research is impacted by COVID-19, they can allocate them additional teaching. This is a recipe for mass casual job losses.

Astonishingly, many university managements (including at Sydney Uni, UTS and ACU) are saying that the NTEU framework agreement goes too far in eroding staff jobs and conditions.

Any vote for the national agreement will weaken the possibility of fighting specific agreement variations on individual campuses. A successful variation anywhere will encourage all university bosses to seek similar changes to cut staff wages and enforce greater “flexibility”.

Every university has the ability to take out low interest loans to see themselves through this period. Instead, university managements are crying poor as they sack casual staff, vastly increase the work load of permanent staff members and attempt to slash our pay.

The University of Melbourne is already moving to cut courses and shed casual jobs. Yet the university



Above: The NTEU needs to start building a fighting campaign that includes industrial action

has hundreds of millions of dollars in cash reserves and an enormous portfolio of investments and other assets.

Melbourne University management has already rejected the National Framework and indicated that they will seek their own variations to the enterprise agreement.

The onslaught of propaganda from the NTEU leadership encouraging members to accept concessions, in the context of their own proposed framework, has made it easier for university administrations to push for even worse changes.

Tragically, the NTEU executive is following in the wake of most of the union movement and offering concessions to the employers, rather than building an industrial and political fight.

The NTEU should be mounting a campaign against the Morrison government to demand full government funding of the tertiary sector.

The 21 May National Day of Action should be the first step in a concerted campaign to tell the federal government and university management that university workers will not pay for the latest crisis in tertiary education.

We have paid too much already. The sector was already a victim of neo-liberalism, suffering constant corporate restructures and rates of casualisation among the worst in the country.

The National Executive’s framework will make us weaker, not stronger. A No vote will send a strong message that members demand a fight

for jobs and funding.

Build a fighting campaign

The consistent beacon of hope is the resistance of NTEU members to both management and the union leadership’s framework. In the opening throes of the COVID-19 crisis 100 casuals at the University of Melbourne rallied for pandemic leave and occupied the foyer outside the university’s COVID-19 task force office. They won guaranteed sick leave and isolation leave within a matter of days.

In the last few weeks, members’ meetings across the country have passed motions opposing concessions on pay and conditions, and calling for a fighting campaign for government funding. It is this kind of willingness to fight that can steer us through these difficult times.

The National Day of Action is an opportunity to build pressure on the Liberals to properly fund the shortfall and open up JobKeeper for university workers. And it is an opportunity to flex our muscles and build confidence, networks and organisation for the battle we are facing against our Vice-Chancellors and school managers.

We need to “Vote No” to the National Agreement and convince our colleagues to do the same. But to make the VCs and the Liberals pay for this crisis, we need to build broader and stronger mobilisations.

We are not powerless in the face of this crisis. Managements everywhere are relying on the goodwill of staff to carry the extra burden of online classes and everything that goes with them. Managements and the government are vulnerable to political and industrial action.

.....
The NTEU should be mounting a campaign to demand full government funding of the tertiary sector

No to Keneally's racist scapegoating—Migrants don't take jobs

By James Supple

LABOR'S KRISTINA Keneally has revived the racist myth that immigration costs workers' jobs and wages, with an opinion piece in early May that has sparked a furore.

Appallingly, even Labor Left MPs like Ged Kearney and the ACTU's Sally McManus have gone along with it.

Predictably, the racist Pauline Hanson welcomed her comments, gloating that she had been saying the same thing for years.

Keneally's comments are a continuation of her misguided and opportunistic efforts to attack the Coalition from the right over immigration, following her claim that Peter Dutton had "lost control of our borders" through allowing asylum seekers to arrive by plane.

They threaten to reignite the campaign against temporary migrants that we saw from the Labor Party under then leaders Bill Shorten and Julia Gillard.

Keneally declared that temporary migration, "undercuts wages for Australian workers and takes jobs Australians could do".

In a situation of growing unemployment, this is a dangerous development. It will feed a racist response that blames migrants for the cuts to jobs and wages.

It is doubly dangerous given the escalating attacks on China coming from Trump and Morrison over the coronavirus outbreak. These are already leading to an increase in racist attacks here.

In the past, some unions have also campaigned against temporary migration in defence of "Aussie jobs". This is a disaster for the union movement. Racism divides workers and prevents the united struggle we need to defend jobs and wages.

It is bosses' efforts to maintain profits that are responsible for cuts to jobs and low wages, not migrants. Qantas stood down 20,000 workers because it could no longer make profits due to the coronavirus.

Casual workers are being sacked at universities across the country due to drastic revenue losses and lack of government funding—in this case due to the halt to temporary migration in the form of international students, not because of too much of it.

The idea the immigration causes



Above: Temporary migrants must be made welcome

unemployment is a total myth. All the evidence is that, because it generates greater demand for goods and services, migration creates jobs. The Australian economy has been built on the back of high levels of migration over many decades.

Temporary visas

Keneally has blamed temporary migrant workers in particular for denying "Australians... a first go at jobs", claiming there are 2.1 million in Australia.

But this includes those on tourist visas, international students and New Zealand citizens. Many of them have work rights. But there are only 139,000 people here on temporary skilled work visas, around 1 per cent of the workforce.

Migrants on temporary skilled work visas are more vulnerable to exploitation. Their visa conditions mean they are reliant on their employer for the right to stay in the country. They must leave the country if they lose their job and cannot find another one within three months.

The solution to this is to demand full permanent migration rights for everyone that comes here—and to organise them into the unions.

The United Workers Union in particular has run excellent campaigns to unionise migrant farm-workers on temporary visas, who

often face appalling exploitation by their bosses.

The whole union movement has been united in calling for migrant workers on temporary visas to have access to the JobKeeper wage subsidy. At the moment there are thousands of temporary migrant workers who have lost their jobs and are either facing destitution or being forced to leave the country due to lack of any income support.

We need to build on this approach and reject the racist scapegoating blaming migrants for job losses.

This runs directly counter to Keneally's celebration of the fact that these workers "are going home" and her declaration on whether they should be allowed to come back in the same numbers, "our answer should be no".

Unions need to welcome new migrants if we are to build an effective fighting movement. Around 30 per cent of the Australian population was born overseas. On current trends, over 40 per cent of temporary migrants will end up staying permanently. Campaigning against migration risks alienating huge numbers from the movement.

Keneally's call for a lower level of migration after the end of the coronavirus lockdown is nothing but racist scapegoating.

It must be rejected.

It is bosses' efforts to maintain profits that are responsible for cuts to jobs and low wages, not migrants

Morrison and Trump fuel racism in attack on China over COVID-19

By Lachlan Marshall

SCOTT MORRISON has joined Donald Trump in fuelling anti-Chinese racism, targeting China over the COVID-19 outbreak.

Donald Trump has consistently referred to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus.” Then Trump lashed out at the World Health Organisation (WHO), threatening to cut its funding because it wasn’t critical enough of China.

Trump’s suggestion that the US would demand billions of dollars in reparations from China is just the latest in his desperate attempts to deflect attention from his own failures and the terrible toll of the virus in the US. For over a month, Trump downplayed the threat, and did nothing to prepare. Now there are over 1.5 million infected Americans and nearly 100,000 dead.

While Morrison did not go along with the attack on the WHO, he was quick to support Peter Dutton’s anti-Chinese rhetoric when he joined calls for China to be “transparent” about the origins and spread of the virus.

This is the context for Australia’s push for a global inquiry into the outbreak of the coronavirus and its emergence in China. China’s ambassador to Australia, Cheng Jingye, responded by threatening a boycott of Australian tourism, education and exports. China has now imposed tariffs on Australian barley and beef.

Meanwhile, racist graffiti and attacks on Chinese people have dramatically increased. The Human Rights Commission reports that a quarter of racial discrimination complaints lodged in the past two months have been related to COVID-19. As the website *Being Asian Australian* comments, “People are now emboldened to act out their hate due to how Government ministers and tabloid media have given the green light to do so.”

All this comes in the context of growing imperialist rivalry, as the US tries to hold back China from challenging its position of global dominance. Trump has escalated tensions through a trade war designed to boost the US economy.

China and the pandemic

With Trump’s response to the pandemic proving so disastrous, China is attempting to occupy the global leadership position previously filled by powers like the US and EU.



Above: Scott Morrison has Australia and the US as “the best of mates”

China’s response to the virus is nothing to celebrate. When it emerged in early December, state authorities tried to cover up the outbreak by gagging whistle-blowers like the Wuhan doctor, Li Wenliang, who later died from the disease. China eventually managed to contain the virus through brutal lockdowns and stringent testing. But thousands died in Wuhan as inadequate health services collapsed under the strain.

But with such disasters in Italy, Spain, the UK and the US, the Chinese government has moved to promote its own response as a success story and to assist other countries struggling with the pandemic, in an attempt to prove itself as a good global citizen and project soft power.

It sent ventilators, test kits, masks and health professionals to Italy, as other EU nations were refusing to help. In early April the Chinese government even donated 1000 ventilators to New York.

Australia echoes Trump

Australia’s alliance with the US has driven Australian politicians to join the attacks on China. After a phone call with Trump, Morrison described the two countries as “the best of mates.”

Labor has echoed this, with health spokesperson Chris Bowen supporting the government’s call for an international inquiry targeting China’s handling of the outbreak.

From the start, the Morrison government has responded to COVID-19 with measures that deflect blame onto foreigners.

The government’s first act in response to the pandemic was to introduce a discriminatory travel ban on any non-residents from China.

Since strict lockdowns have been introduced Morrison has doubled down on the nationalist response, framing the fight against the pandemic as a matter of “defending and protecting Australia’s national sovereignty.”

Migrants on temporary work visas have been excluded from both income support and the JobKeeper wage subsidy. Morrison told migrants who couldn’t support themselves (or couldn’t rely on family support) to “go home.”

To their credit, the ACTU and the United Workers Union in particular have been campaigning for the rights of migrant workers to income support. Labor has also called for the JobKeeper payment to be expanded to all temporary visa holders.

The emergence of a new pandemic has been anticipated by health experts for years—with numerous close calls including from coronaviruses SARS in 2002 and MERS in 2012 to flu viruses including swine flu in 2009 and avian influenza from 1997. But research was abandoned when pharmaceutical companies could not turn a profit, and government cuts left populations vulnerable as they ran down public health systems.

COVID-19 has precipitated a health and economic crisis unprecedented in living memory. Our leaders are scapegoating China in order to defend their system. We need to fight this growing racism, and the system that fosters racism and pandemics.

Morrison was quick to support Peter Dutton’s calls for China to be “transparent” about the origins and spread of the virus

Teachers pay as COVID-19 exposes school inequality and workload crisis

THERE IS an intense discussion underway as state governments move to re-open schools. But there can be no talk of a return to “normal”.

Along with questions of teachers, staff, and students being safe in the school environment, the long-standing issues of class sizes, private-public funding, resources, testing, and “autonomy” have to be urgently addressed. The teacher unions need to seize this opportunity to redress the burning issues as a result of years of attacks on public education. The hesitancy and suspicions that many teachers have about returning to work is directly related to the years of neglect inflicted on public education. Teachers have already been carrying the burden of an under-resourced system.

In these circumstances, it is inexplicable that the NSW Teachers Federation has signed an extension of the existing staffing agreement with the NSW Liberal government, when staffing and class sizes are central to establishing safe schools as well as being central to the education we need “on the other side”.

State and federal governments have shown their absolute disregard for educators, students, and their families during the COVID-19 crisis.

Through the shift to remote learning and now the plan for a return to school, teachers’ concerns have not been listened to, nor have the resources been provided that the education system desperately needs. Instead, haphazard and poorly resourced policies have intensified the pre-existing gross inequities and issues within the Australian school systems.

Workload has long been an issue for teachers and for many it has now increased further under the shift to remote learning. An Australian Education Union (AEU) submission to a House of Representatives committee last year—prior to COVID-19—stated that nearly 92 per cent of teachers are concerned they do not have enough time for lesson planning, marking, report writing and administrative tasks.

Remote learning workload

During the shift to remote learning, teachers were expected to change whole units of study overnight. Teachers had to learn how to use online tools, create worksheets to mail out, and find new strategies to engage students through remote learning; all while continuing to teach in the most demanding of circumstances.



Above: The rapid shift to remote learning produced a huge increase in teacher workloads

Administrative tasks also increased. Teachers were expected to teach those students engaged in the online learning, while also following up the many who have not logged in or completed work. Teachers who are parents had to do these tasks while supervising their own children’s learning at home.

Another issue is the unequal access to technology. Students were sent home to begin remote learning without any guarantee of access to a device and internet.

Private school students, however, were already well equipped, with technology a normal part of their school days. Even under normal circumstances, public school access to technology is patchy at best.

At a time when the economic crisis is worsening, the burden of providing these resources has now further fallen on families and under-resourced schools. The government should be ensuring every student has a device and internet to complete their schoolwork remotely.

The smaller class sizes being negotiated for the safe re-opening of schools must be part of rectifying inequity and workload issues and establishing smaller class sizes post-COVID-19. This would mean less administrative work for teachers and would allow for more focused teaching for those students who have been left behind.

An end to standardised tests would provide teachers with more class time, reduce student stress, and limit some of the inequities between schools that have grown with the MySchool web-

site. The cancellation of NAPLAN this year due to COVID-19 was a welcome reprieve. But permanently scrapping the test should be an essential demand of the return to work.

Similarly, end-of-high-school exam results are already mostly a reflection of socio-economic status. A 2016 Fairfax analysis of HSC results showed a direct correlation between results and postcodes. This year’s HSC results will be even further skewed in favour of private school students, who in NSW are set to return to school earlier than their public school counterparts.

Rather than exploring the options to support teachers and students during and post COVID-19, the NSW and QLD state governments have instead flagged freezing teacher and other public sector workers’ wages.

Teachers and our unions need to be organising now and preparing the fightback. The willingness of the government to spend money in this time of crisis shows it can find the funds when it chooses.

Teachers and support staff deserve higher wages that recognise the work we do. We need smaller class sizes, an end to standardised tests, and a redistribution of public funds away from private schools to public schools.

COVID-19 has exposed the importance of teachers’ labour and the fundamental inequalities that have festered within the school system for too long.

Teachers are now in a more powerful position. It is time we leveraged that power to change the education system for the better.

Haphazard and poorly resourced policies have intensified the pre-existing inequities and issues within Australian schools

Pressure on women with families locked down due to sexist setup

By Ruby Wawn

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic has exposed the reliance of capitalism on the nuclear family and women's unpaid domestic labour.

As workplaces and schools shut, parents have been expected to home-school children on top of paid work and the usual unpaid cooking, cleaning and care work—with most of the burden falling on women.

According to a New York Times survey, in 80 per cent of cases women have taken up the responsibility for home-schooling—only 3 per cent of women reported that men were doing more unpaid labour at home. And women already do up to three times more unpaid work in the home than men.

Yvette McDonald, who has two young primary school age children, told the *Sydney Morning Herald* she was “at breaking point... Many of us are managing crisis at work, but then on top of that we’re schooling our children as well. We feel as though we’re failing, but we’re not failing—we’ve been asked to do impossible things.”

But it's not just workplaces and schools that are closed—many of the other public spaces accessed by parents and families are also shut including playgrounds, after-school activities and libraries.

And for working women who rely on extended family for help with childcare, the risk of exposing elderly parents and relatives to coronavirus means these supports are also off the table.

For some women, the family home is not a safe place to self-isolate. Domestic violence support agencies in Australia are reporting a 10 per cent increase in urgent requests for assistance, while the Family Court has received a 40 per cent increase in urgent domestic violence applications.

But in Australia, the sector hasn't received “a single dollar in extra funds” to deal with increased demand, the peak body Women's Safety NSW said.

Women have also been more likely to lose their jobs.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that women have been the hardest hit by job losses in Australia, as they are more likely to work in the hardest hit service indus-



Above: The requirement to stay at home has put huge pressure on families

tries like hospitality and retail.

In April, women accounted for 55 per cent of all job losses while those still employed are experiencing a higher rate of reduction in hours than men. In some states in the US, the majority of unemployment applications since the coronavirus hit have been filed by women.

With women more likely to work part-time and earning 14 per cent less than men overall, these job losses are predicted to have longer term effects on pay equity and women's superannuation.

But women are also being expected to put their bodies on the line to fight the pandemic, with 70 per cent of global healthcare workers being women, and one in three jobs held by women being deemed “essential”.

And while the Australian government is providing free childcare for essential workers during the coronavirus crisis, under normal conditions families spend 27 per cent of their income on childcare, one of the most expensive in the OECD.

Childcare workers themselves, who are over 90 per cent female, get paid well below the national average.

Sexist society

The disproportionate impact of coronavirus on working class women is not because of innate biological differences that make women more caring than men. It is a direct result of the way society is organised under

capitalism—sexism is hardwired into the capitalist system.

With access to parental leave being more readily available to women, and with the price of childcare being unaffordable for the average woman, capitalism forces families to make the “economically rational” decision for women to spend more time at home looking after the family.

The nuclear family is essential for raising the next generation of workers at as little cost to the ruling class as possible.

Women's role in the family and unpaid labour bringing up children means the capitalist system can avoid paying for this itself.

But sexism doesn't affect all women equally. Wealthy women can afford to outsource domestic labour like cleaning and childcare to low paid, working class women in order to pursue careers or share the burden on household labour.

Coronavirus is forcing women to be the mother, the teacher and the essential worker.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Caring work like childcare, cooking, cleaning and laundry shouldn't be seen as something confined to the private home.

The responsibility for these kinds of household tasks could and should be shared collectively by the whole of society. We have to fight for a world where these tasks are socialised and provided free so that the burden no longer falls on women.

Women's unpaid labour bringing up children means capitalism can avoid paying for this itself

Protests rage at poverty and sackings during lockdown

By Amber Karanikolas

THE IMPACTS of the coronavirus pandemic are being sharply felt in many parts of the global south, across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, creating extreme hunger and poverty that have led to significant protests, despite the lockdowns.

Lebanon has seen country-wide protests in response to escalating food prices and poverty. Demonstrators have attacked a number of bank fronts in the northern city of Tripoli, Lebanon's poorest city, and blocked roads throughout the country.

Activist Nada Nasif said that once people figured out that if things continued as they were, "they were going to die anyway ... we decided that we might as well die in the streets from the corona. It is better [than dying of hunger]."

The anti-government movement which began in Lebanon in October against government austerity and corruption has re-emerged. Earlier this year, Lebanon failed to make a \$1.2 billion Eurobond payment, with the IMF demanding tough measures in response. Limits have now been placed on withdrawals from bank accounts. Nearly 50 per cent of Lebanon's population currently live in poverty, with Lebanon's financial crisis now the worst since the 1975-1990 civil war.

In South Africa, since the lockdown began, residents in poorer areas of Cape Town have been struggling, due to loss of jobs and the forced shutdown of the informal sector where many earn a living.

There are long queues for food in stores as prices escalate. Residents in the township of Mitchells Plain have protested, and residents from the Booyens squatters' camp have blocked off streets, as many have not received the food parcels promised since the lockdown began.

In April in Bangladesh, thousands of garment workers took to the streets against unpaid wages, as some factories have already closed their doors due to a reduction in orders. Workers chanted "we want our wages". One protester, Brishti, from a factory in the Dhaka said: "If we don't have food in our stomach, what's the use of observing this lockdown?"

Here in Australia, it has been shown that safe, socially distant protest action, with people separated in their own cars or bikes, is completely



Above: Lebanon's movement returns to the streets

possible. However, in Melbourne and Brisbane, refugee rights protests and car convoys observing social distancing have become political targets of police repression under guise of

enforcing the health rules.

As long as public protest remains necessary, lockdown laws should not be used to curtail the right to safely protest and demonstrate.

Trump demands US reopen for business but health system in disarray

AS *SOLIDARITY* goes to print, the coronavirus death toll in the US has passed 90,000. It continues to rise by over 1000 most days. Several states have lifted lockdown restrictions through May as Trump continues his push for "Opening Up America Again".

But testing and contact tracing programs—the key requirement for easing quarantine restrictions—are drastically unprepared.

Local health departments are frantically hiring staff for contact tracing but are far behind targets. Los Angeles County for instance, with a population of 10 million people, is estimated to need 6000 contact tracers under California's criteria for re-opening. It currently has 400. The number of tests administered in the US has increased significantly in the last month but still lags behind other countries relative to the population.

With the US's leading immunologists voicing strong concerns, Trump has continued to rebuke advice that goes against his preferred views. US Infectious Disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci has warned strongly against lifting lockdown restrictions and particularly against the plan to reopen schools in Au-

turn. Trump has since declared Dr. Fauci's warnings "not an acceptable answer". Government whistleblower and immunologist Dr. Rick Bright said in a statement to a government committee that 2020 in the US would be the "darkest winter in modern history". Trump dismissed Dr. Bright as "a disgruntled guy".

This pattern of science denialism is part of a response that prioritises the market over all else. Revealingly, a White House official quoted in the Financial Times described a conversation between Trump and Jared Kushner in which Kushner advised against increased testing on the basis that more known cases could "spook the markets".

For workers, the lack of adequate social security compounds the problem. As stay-at-home orders are lifted, workers still in employment are now met with a choice between risking their health to go back to work or losing their eligibility for unemployment benefits if they refuse.

Trump's America presents a gut-wrenching vision of the failure of free market capitalism to prioritise human lives. Workers resistance is the force that can intervene to put health before profit.

Matilda Fay

One protester, Brishti, from a factory in the Dhaka said: "If we don't have food in our stomach, what's the use of observing this lockdown?"

Poverty and sackings surge as coronavirus sweeps Indonesia

Indonesia now has over 1200 confirmed deaths from coronavirus, the highest in southeast Asia. Inadequate testing means the real figure is surely far higher. Through to the end of April, Jakarta alone had almost 3000 more burials than expected. Amnesty International says at least 38 doctors and 21 nurses have died, with a desperate lack of masks and protective gear for those treating virus patients.

Alang, a member of Unifikasi Sosialis (Socialist Unification) and the union Sentral Gerakan Buruh Nasional (National Labour Movement Centre), explains the impact of the coronavirus and the economic crisis it has triggered on workers.

SINCE THE emergence of COVID-19, the Indonesian government has been unprepared in dealing with the crisis. There is now panic everywhere, and the poor, particularly the working class, are the ones most affected.

The number of positive cases continues to grow every day.

Testing is minimal, except in the big companies that are still operating. But many companies provide only self-made hand sanitiser upon entry to the workplace. It is difficult for ordinary people to access healthcare, and people are even asked to pay to get the COVID-19 test. The tests are only free at public hospitals and are not available at healthcare clinics.

The government policies to slow the spread of COVID-19 are actually highly discriminatory towards workers because not all workers can work from home, or are able to practice social distancing or comply with the social restrictions. Many workers are still working as usual, although a number of companies have stood down workers, with some workers only receiving 50 per cent of their usual wage, some 60 per cent, and others nothing at all.

The Centre for Indonesian Policy Studies (CIPS) estimates the number of poor people in Indonesia has increased this year by 8.5 million because of the spread of COVID-19. Researcher Felippa Ann Amanta has stated that the Indonesian economy might only grow 2.1 per cent or even zero this year.

The Manpower Ministry has recorded more than 100,000 companies affected. These companies have fired



Above: Burials in Jakarta surged during April

and stood down more than two million workers.

But we know the government is under-reporting. Sometimes it is only when unions make a complaint that the government makes note of the workers affected. Many companies are firing workers without making any report to the government ministry.

No help for workers

Government policies have been of little benefit to workers, as factories and companies continue to operate without provision of PPE, despite the government's circular on protecting workers. Worksites where workers have tested positive for COVID-19 continue to operate.

In addition, the government also issued the "Pre-Work Card" [a scheme to allow workers to get training] which is intended for workers made redundant. It has been criticised for being a waste of funds, has the potential for corruption and does nothing to solve the issues of COVID-19. People need to eat, they do not need more training, particularly at a time when companies are shut down.

As if that was not enough, the government then issued another circular on the Religious Holiday Allowance. This allows companies to delay or pay in installments the [Ramadan] holiday bonus if they are having financial difficulties, even though the holiday bonus is a legal requirement. This policy is incredibly pro-business.

The labour movement in Indonesia continues to resist. Although activity has been minimal, one thing that the unions have done is to build solidarity so that the government cannot ignore their responsibility over the fate of Indonesian workers.

Because of the laws against assembling, if there is a gathering of more than five people, police immediately break it up, even arresting people. On May Day this year when five to ten people gathered to raise a banner on the parliament building gate as a symbolic action, they were immediately forced to disband, and taken to the Athlete's Village (the COVID-19 patient quarantine site).

Unionised workers are fortunate in that they can meet directly with the company to negotiate over the issues they are facing, but non-unionised workers face complicated problems. Unions have also joined with peasants to collect basic goods (such as rice) from villages to support workers that have been stood down or dismissed.

In the middle of COVID-19, the government is also still discussing the draft omnibus law on Job Creation and other problematic draft laws, when it should be focusing on how to handle COVID-19. This would increase use of outsourcing and exempt some business from paying the minimum wage. They are taking advantage of the situation of a narrowing democracy and the prohibition on holding rallies to attack workers' rights.

Many workers are still working as usual, although many companies have stood down or sacked workers

WHY TAKING WAGE CUTS WON'T SAVE JOBS

The calls to accept wage cuts or forego wage rises won't save jobs, they will simply encourage bosses to demand even more concessions, argues **David Glanz**

THE PANDEMIC has led to more than a million workers losing their jobs or being stood down. Others have lost hours. The fear of unemployment and the hardship it brings is very real.

In response, the Morrison government and the employers have gone on the ideological offensive, arguing that flexibility and wage cuts can save jobs.

The message is particularly focused on the hospitality sector, which has seen the most sackings, retail and other service industries. But universities are also on the front line.

The government is arguing that if workers are prepared to accept fewer hours or to give up penalty rates, then employers can afford to keep on more workers.

It is an echo of the idea pushed in the 1970s by Clyde Cameron, a left minister in the Whitlam government, that "one person's wage rise is another person's job".

Then, the union movement was willing to resist. Sadly, today the ACTU has bought the argument, applying with employer groups to the Fair Work Commission to increase "award flexibility" in the light of the pandemic.

Four awards covering more than two million workers have been amended, covering clerks, general staff in schools and workers in restaurants and hospitality.

Meanwhile the leadership of the university union, the NTEU, has negotiated a framework agreement that it claims may save 12,000 jobs (out of 30,000 under threat) by making a raft of concessions that include temporary pay cuts of up to 15 per cent.

All the bosses' Christmases have

come at once. Those covered by the clerks award, for example, can be told by their manager to do any task they are capable of doing.

School admin staff can have their hours cut by a quarter. Permanent university staff can be made to take on tasks previously carried out by casuals.

As Christian Porter, the Attorney-General gloated: "So behind the scenes, in a quiet and cooperative way, there have been a series of reforms to modern awards and the IR system ... It's probably fair to say that there's been the type of change in three weeks inside the award system that you might otherwise wait 30 years to see."

Lessons of the past

Some will argue that workers must be pragmatic and do what it takes to hold on to a job in extraordinary times. But the argument that wage cuts save jobs doesn't stand the test.

In 1931, in the middle of the Great Depression, the Scullin Labor government cut wages and pensions by 10 per cent. Yet unemployment went from 20.1 per cent in 1931 to 23 per cent in 1932.

In 1934, the wage cut was reversed by the Arbitration Commission (forerunner to Fair Work). Unemployment fell to 17.9 per cent that year and to 15.5 per cent just before the Second World War.

Under Labor's Accord with the unions in the 1980s, profits were boosted and real unit labour costs fell. Yet unemployment went from around 10 per cent in 1983, to 6 per cent in 1989, but to almost 12 per cent in 1992.

In June 2013, Holden asked its

Accepting pay cuts not only leaves workers worse off, it undermines traditions of resistance

factory workers to take a pay cut of up to \$200 a week or risk the company shutting its Australian manufacturing operations.

They accepted the cut—and the company waited just months to announce it was shutting down in 2017 with the loss of 3000 jobs in Adelaide and Melbourne. Meanwhile, the parent company, General Motors, was boasting of a fourth consecutive year of profits.

In recent times, workers in the federal public service have received meagre pay rises at or around CPI—but there has been no reward in terms of staffing levels. Overall headcount has fallen from a peak of more than 167,000 in June 2012 to 147,237 in June 2019.

The argument that wages and jobs are linked comes up in other ways. Employers routinely argue against decent increases to the minimum wage, yet when Reserve Bank of Australia researcher James Bishop analysed the data in 2018, he admitted that increases in the minimum wage "appear to have had little adverse effect on hours worked or job loss".

In 2017, the Fair Work Commission approved cuts to penalty rates paid to retail and hospitality workers on Sundays and public holidays, arguing that the move would lead to more trading hours "and an increase in overall hours worked".

Two years later economists Martin O'Brien and Ray Markey carried out a survey and concluded, "We were unable to establish any evidence of a relative increase in the prevalence of Sunday, public holiday or weekly employment for modern award employees or employers." In

other words, cutting penalties had not increased jobs.

Dividing the pie

The argument that a wage cut can save jobs relies on the apparently common sense assumption that the economy is like a pie—the larger the slice for one group of workers, the less for others.

Karl Marx took up this issue more than 150 years ago, arguing against those in the workers' movement who said that unions shouldn't fight for pay rises as workers should simply end up worse off.

In two speeches in 1865, later published as the pamphlet *Wages, Price and Profit*, Marx showed the double fallacy in the pessimists' argument.

First, he pointed to the dynamism of the system. The pie sometimes shrinks, but it's often growing.

That might seem hard to believe in the midst of the current crisis, but from just 2015 to 2018 world gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 10 trillion US dollars.

More importantly, Marx showed that within certain limits (starvation for the workers on the one hand, total seizure of profits from the capitalists), how that wealth was distributed was decided by struggle.

He wrote, "The will of the capitalist is certainly to take as much as possible. What we have to do is not to talk about his will, but to inquire into his power, the limits of that power, and the character of those limits."

Marx acknowledged that the working class needed to look beyond "these unavoidable guerrilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital" to a new society which would end the wages system.

But he was clear that in the here and now, workers needed to fight to avoid being "degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation".

We can see how Marx's arguments have been vindicated over the past 30 years as working class struggle in Australia has declined.

In 1989, Australia's GDP was worth 299.3 billion US dollars. By 2018, it had risen to 1.434 trillion US dollars.

Workers should be much better off. Yet the share of GDP going to workers collapsed, from more than 55 per cent of GDP in the early 1980s to 46.5 percent in the March



quarter of 2017, the lowest point since 1960.

As Jim Stanford, Director of the Centre for Future Work, put it, "The labour share began to decline rapidly after 1984, initially due in part to the effects of the Prices and Incomes Accords system launched in 1983 by the new Labor government (led by Bob Hawke) and the trade union movement.

"The Accord process was aimed at restricting wage growth and boosting profits, purportedly to ameliorate the effects of 'excessive' wage growth in previous years."

Undermining workers' resistance

The Accord put a brake on industrial action, encouraging first the Keating Labor government and then the Howard Liberal government to impose the kind of restrictions on workers' right to strike that would have been unthinkable in the 1970s.

The decline in struggle has been accompanied by increasingly meagre wages growth.

Far from moderation leading to more jobs, it has laid the basis for today's assault on pay and conditions.

Then as now, accepting pay "flexibility" not only leaves workers worse off, it undermines traditions of resistance. When the ACTU goes along with pay cuts, it weakens the class's memory of struggle.

Above: Holden workers took wage cuts continually, but this didn't stop the company's closure

As one Holden worker said in 2013, "We've done everything that can be done. We took the pay cuts, we took the other concessions."

But there was so much more that could have been done. In 2013, they could have gone on strike, occupied the car plants and insisted either General Motors underwrote its Australian operations or that the government nationalised Holden.

Today, the transport unions could be calling mass protests at the airports, refusing to move aircraft on the ground to save jobs at Virgin.

There will be car convoys in Melbourne and Sydney for the NTEU national day of action but if the union leadership rejected cuts and instead put its efforts into mobilising thousands of members into convoys, we could be seeing city centres brought to a halt.

That would put political pressure on Education Minister Dan Tehan and give members confidence for in-person protests on campuses.

Every backward step encourages bosses to take more—more pay, more conditions, more jobs. Wage cuts do not save jobs. Instead, by breaking down hard-won habits of fightback and solidarity, they make it easier for employers to sack, casualise and dump conditions.

Workers are already bearing the brunt of the pandemic. It's time to demand that the bosses pay the price of recovery.

MARX AND THE METABOLIC RIFT HOW CAPITALISM IS KILLING THE PLANET

British climate activist and socialist **Martin Empson** writes on why the fight against climate change must be a fight for system change and for socialism

THIS YEAR should have been a year of mass climate protest. Australian activists will need no reminding that the year began with appalling bushfires; fires that symbolised the inability of neo-liberal governments to deal with the climate crisis. But those fires weren't the only symptom of a deepening crisis—in the same period we saw floods in Jakarta and the UK and these followed a year of environmental disaster.

The coronavirus pandemic has, at least in mainstream media and political thought, dominated everything else driving climate change from the headlines. Yet despite hopes by some environmentalists that the lockdowns would lead to significant cuts in pollution, it looks like total emissions will only decrease by 5 per cent in 2020. Reduced air pollution in cities is enjoyable, but has little to do with wider emissions caused by capitalism's addiction to fossil fuels.

Here in the UK we were building towards mass protests at the United Nations climate COP talks in Glasgow in November, involving mobilisations by trade unionists, climate strikes, Extinction Rebellion, NGOs and many other activists. Those talks have now been postponed, but the crisis has not gone away.

In April a team of scientists reported that in 2019 the Greenland Ice Cap had melted at an alarming rate. In July last year, Greenland lost 197 gigatonnes of ice. One of the team, Dr Xavier Fettweis was quoted in *The Guardian* on the study, "This melt event is a good alarm signal that we urgently need to change our way of living to hold [back] global warming because it is likely that the IPCC projections could be too optimistic for [the] Arctic".

Dr. Fettweis was right to link the crisis with wider questions of how we

live our lives. Both the climate and coronavirus crises have their origins in capitalist society, which sees the natural world only in terms of its benefits to economic production.

Capitalism, as Karl Marx explained, is a system of generalised commodity production based on the desire to make profits at all costs. This need to accumulate wealth by companies and multinationals in constant competition with each other means that all other considerations get ignored. The bosses drive workers harder to maximise profit, but they also destroy the natural world in the process. Marx wrote:

Capitalist production... disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth... All progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil... Capitalist production... develops the technique and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker.

All human societies have an ongoing metabolic interaction with the natural world. For survival, people need water, food and shelter and we satisfy these needs through collective social organisation. Throughout history, we have had many varied ways of organising our societies, hunter-gathering, feudal societies and so on. In all of these societies, human labour appropriated nature in the interest of satisfying our needs. However, what is key is how that labour is organised. Because humans have changed nature throughout history, all societies have the potential for that change to be ultimately detrimental upon ourselves. Ancient Greek and Roman deforesta-

All human societies have an ongoing metabolic interaction with the natural world

tion caused the silting up of rivers for example.

COVID-19 likely originated from animals before making the jump to humans. This process also happened in the distant past. The first domestication of animals took place around 30,000 years ago and once our ancestors began living in close proximity to animals, there was the possibility for diseases to spread to humans, a process that scientists call zoonosis. Diseases like TB, diphtheria, measles, mumps all made this jump in the past.

However, capitalism qualitatively and quantitatively transforms the process of zoonosis and environmental destruction because of the way it relates to nature.

Key to understanding emergent diseases is the role of industrial agriculture. This is an environmentally destructive, highly intensive method of farming that is predicated on the need to maximise profits rather than feed people. Dependent on vast quantities of inputs like pesticides, fertiliser and fossil fuels, industrial farming utilises monocultures of crops and animals and creates the conditions for diseases to spread and ecologies to be destroyed.

Capitalism further encourages the spread of disease because it causes poverty, inequality and refuses access to healthcare. Friedrich Engels, writing about the living conditions of workers in Britain in 1872, noted that once disease began to affect the rich, as well as the poor, they began to do something. But, despite improvements, the problems kept reoccurring, because the basis of the system remained the same:

Government commissions were appointed to inquire into the hygienic conditions of the working class. Their reports... provided the basis for new, more or less

thoroughgoing laws. Imperfect as these laws are, they are still infinitely superior to everything that has been done in this direction up to the present on the Continent. Nevertheless, the capitalist order of society reproduces again and again the evils to be remedied, and does so with such inevitable necessity that even in England the remedying of them has hardly advanced a single step.

The Marxist evolutionary biologist Rob Wallace shows in his book *Big Farms make Big Flu* the various ways industrial farming leads to the spread of disease. But he is also clear that this is the consequence of the drive to impose such forms of farming through neo-liberal processes. US agribusiness in particular, in collusion with the US state, worked to impose industrial farming on the rest of the world through the 20th and into the 21st century. One consequence of this is the destruction of traditional farming practices in a process very similar to those that took place in Europe with the arrival of capitalism.

Marx developed his understanding of capitalism's ecological destructiveness through his investigations into the nature of capitalist farming. He drew heavily on the work of scientists like Justus von Liebig who showed how intensive farming, which produced food for the cities, led to a systematic destruction of soil fertility in the countryside.

The crops brought to urban areas grew by using nutrients from the rural soil. The loss of these nutrients undermined longer-term fertility.

The only way to restore fertility was with the systematic application of external chemicals—fertiliser from bird guano, or even human bones from Napoleonic battlefields. Later the development of chemical fertilisers and pesticides allowed the restoration of the soil through technological inputs, but this produced their own cost to the environment.

Examining agriculture, and extending this analysis, Marx wrote that capitalist production created an “irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism”. This “metabolic rift” between nature and society is inherent to capitalism.

Capitalism required a break with previous societies. In England the development of capitalism saw the systematic destruction of historic methods of agriculture—the enclosure of fields, the forcible eviction of the peasantry and the breaking up of old social and



economic rural relations. The essentially local system of production left over from feudalism was broken up to create a capitalist agricultural system that functioned for profit.

The metabolic rift in agriculture arose because it was more profitable to strip the soil bare in producing crops for the cities. In the process, the peasantry was transformed into agricultural wage labourers, or forced into the newly industrialising cities.

While Marx and Engels did not know about global climate change, they did understand that capitalism would lead to serious environmental crisis. Marx argued that if we could rationally manage our relationship with nature, we could build a sustainable world. As he wrote:

From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni patres familias* [Good Heads of Household], they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition.

So the struggle to stop environmental destruction is simultaneously a struggle against capitalism and for socialism. This is not to say that socialists say to climate activists “wait for the revolution”. Rather we must develop the sort of movements that can fight ecological degradation today—against the expansion of mining or the building of pipelines, in favour of renewable energy and low carbon

Above: Industrial agriculture is producing environmental disaster and increasing the spread of disease

public transport. But we also must argue that these movements have to challenge capital itself.

In her most recent book *On Fire*, Naomi Klein argues that the success of movements fighting for the Green New Deal will depend on their ability to involve ordinary working people because as well as challenging the bosses over environmental issues, we are also linking them to wider social issues—racism, imperialism, poverty and inequality. We need to argue for a Just Transition that does not leave workers behind, but utilises their skills in decent, well-paid jobs that improve the environment.

These movements must also develop into a challenge to the capitalist system. Today many people in the environmental movement demand, “System Change not Climate Change”. That means that many people recognise that capitalism is the problem. But what to replace it with? Here socialists can pose a concrete alternative. A vision of a society where ordinary people, through the democratic institutions they have built from the bottom up, organise and control production. It is only by finally destroying capitalism and building a new socialist society that we can build a world where people's health and environment comes before to the wealth and luxury of a tiny minority. Martin Empson is the author of *Land and Labour: Marxism, Ecology and Human History* (2014), ‘Kill all the Gentlemen’: *Class struggle and Change in the English Countryside* (2018) and editor of *System Change not Climate Change: A Revolutionary Response to Environmental Crisis* (2019). He is a member of the Socialist Workers Party in Britain.

STOPPING WORK TO STOP THE WAR

THE VIETNAM MORATORIUM 50 YEARS ON

The Moratorium marches, remembered as the highpoint of the anti-Vietnam War movement, saw thousands of workers on strike against the war explains **James Supple**

ON 8 May 1970, fifty years ago this month, 200,000 people joined the first national Moratorium march against the Vietnam War. These were more than just street marches. The main protests were held on a Friday, with tens of thousands of workers striking or leaving work to attend.

They were the culmination of years of anti-war organising, and showed that large numbers were prepared to take disruptive action to bring the war to an end.

The largest demonstration was in Melbourne, where 100,000 marched down Bourke St.

"I remember it being the most enormous thing I'd ever seen, it stretched all the way up Bourke St, you couldn't move, the rally was just so vast," socialist and historian Phil Griffiths told *Solidarity*.

In Sydney 30,000 joined the Moratorium, along with 8000 in Brisbane and thousands more in other cities.

Hall Greenland, who spoke at the Sydney rally, told *Solidarity*, "I was at Sydney University at the time and was part of organising essentially a general strike on the day at the university, there was a huge mass rally on the front lawn and then we marched down to the Town Hall.

"The day itself was basically young people and militant workers. The building sites and the wharves, and a lot of schools as well, closed and thousands of them marched."

Phil Griffiths explained, "The reason Melbourne's rally was so much bigger was because the trade union movement said, we are out on strike against the war. There were massive union contingents. I remember some of them marching from Trades Hall to the rally."

The 27 "rebel unions", who had split from the Victorian Trades Hall Council, appointed a full-time organiser who set up workplace meetings to

build support. Another six unions still affiliated to Trades Hall also backed the mobilisation.

Unions paid for an ad in Melbourne's *Sun* newspaper that encouraged unionists to stop work on the day to attend.

Across the country strikes to join the Moratorium included a, "national 24-hour stopwork by seamen on ships in ports around the Australian coast, and shorter stops by watersiders in Sydney, Brisbane and various other ports and by big numbers of building, metal and other workers," *Tribune*, the newspaper of the Communist Party, wrote at the time.

"Between half and two-thirds of people at the weekday rallies were workers," according to Phil Griffiths.

"They drew everyone in. I was working at a conservative high school at the time of the second Moratorium in 1970. Around half the teachers struck."

Anti-war movement

The Moratoriums are remembered as the high point of the movement against the Vietnam War. But they could not have happened without the previous five years of organising.

In the early 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, Australia was still a very conservative society.

In 1965 Robert Menzies' Liberal government introduced conscription. Initially there was overwhelmingly public support for sending troops to Vietnam.

Student activists and others began to campaign against conscription. Some of the first protests came from left-wing unions. In Melbourne 2500 dock workers walked off the job against the decision to send troops and in Brisbane 500 demonstrated outside the US consulate.

In May 1966 seafarers refused to work on the Boonaroo, which the

Civil disobedience helped to shift the mood in society and built wider opposition to the war

government had chartered to carry military supplies to Vietnam. But they were forced to back down, when other unions were unwilling to support their stand.

Labor opposed both the war and conscription at the 1966 election but was soundly defeated. In response, sections of the anti-war movement turned to more radical tactics in an effort to force change.

Students at Monash University caused uproar in 1967 by declaring their support for the resistance fighters, collecting money on campus for the Vietnamese National Liberation Front.

A Draft Resisters Movement was formed, to explicitly go beyond "conscientious objection" and organise for 20-year-olds eligible for conscription to refuse to register, and instead go underground to defy the draft.

There was a significant divide in the movement between the new radical left that had exploded amongst students and young people, and the older left including the Communist Party and the Labor Left.

The new revolutionary left, including currents such as the Maoists, Trotskyists and anarchists, spearheaded the revolt on the university campuses and militant, civil disobedience actions against the war.

Initially the more moderate sections of the movement argued for vague slogans such as "peace now" or "stop the war, negotiate", claiming this would attract wider support for the movement, while the radicals demanded "Troops out now" and "Smash US imperialism."

But, "by 1970 nobody opposed the demand for withdrawal of the troops, that became the central demand of the Moratorium," according to Hall Greenland. This was, "a victory for the more radical wing of the movement in Sydney".

The students' radical action pushed others to take a stand and shifted the movement to the left.

Radicalisation

Civil disobedience actions also helped to shift the mood in society and built wider opposition to the war. The movement radicalised as larger numbers of people were drawn into action against a government and political establishment determined to continue the killing.

The impact of the students' militancy coloured the Moratorium marches too.

"The atmosphere was absolutely one of confrontation in the lead up to the protest in May", said Phil Griffiths. "There was clearly an attempt by government to intimidate people from going.

"Billy Snedden [who was the Federal Minister for National Service in charge of conscription at the time] described the protesters as 'political bikies pack-raping democracy' and the Victoria Police said that they expected violence on the demo.

"There had been a lot of police violence against demonstrations in the previous period."

On 4 July 1968 a rally of 4000 people tried to storm the US embassy in Melbourne in Commercial Road, South Yarra. There were pitched battles with police, who rode horses into the crowd at a full canter.

"The Maoists had organised to physically attack the building," Phil remembers, "I don't know if they actually smashed every window in the building, but that was the legend."

"The year later I went on the 4 July protest. Police had barricaded Commercial Road, and had horses dispersing the demonstrators."

"To add to the sense of menace [a few] days before the Moratorium rallies you had protesters shot down dead at Kent State University. So when the police said they expected violence, this is in the context of the National Guard shooting demonstrators at a university in America and killing four."

But the scale of the turnout showed how far the public mood has shifted against the war—and the growing mood of radicalism and defiance.

The Vietnamese "Tet Offensive" in 1968 had proven that the US was losing the war—despite continual lies from the US and Australian governments that everything was going well.

By 1969 a majority supported



withdrawing troops.

The new radicalism against the war also began to feed into the trade union movement, leading to an increase in strikes and class struggle.

In 1969 one million workers went on strike in response to the jailing of union official Clarrie O'Shea. The strikes won his release and smashed the anti-union laws of the time, the penal powers, which had imposed large fines against industrial action.

The idea of the Moratoriums was to hold "a moratorium against business as usual", halting work to shut down society and force an end to the war.

The term was borrowed from the US, where an enormous national Moratorium protest on 15 October 1969 drew 250,000 in New York and 100,000 in Washington.

At the 1969 federal election there had been a large swing towards the Labor Party, but the Liberals narrowly retained government. This gave a boost to opponents of the war, as it showed public opinion was turning against the government.

But it also meant the prospect of electoral change was closed over for the immediate future. So the Labor Party, trade union leaders and the Communist Party were more open to mobilising against the war on the streets.

There were sharp debates over the shape that the Moratorium protests would take between the radicals and the more moderate parts of the movement.

The student radicals pushed for mass meetings of activists to set the

Above: The May 1970 Moratorium march in Sydney

overall direction of the Moratorium campaign.

The most famous was held in February at the Richmond Town Hall in Melbourne where 500 people met to discuss the Moratorium.

Jim Cairns, the Federal Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, was elected chair of the Victorian Moratorium Committee and helped lead the march.

There were two further Moratorium marches, in September 1970 and June 1971. In December 1971 Liberal Prime Minister John Gorton announced the complete withdrawal of troops.

The US was also beginning to pull out its troops, but continued bombing Vietnam until 1975. The heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people combined with mass opposition to the war in the US had defeated a superpower. It was a massive blow to US imperialism.

The movement in Australia also succeeded in turning public opinion against the war and building political pressure to the point where the government was forced to give in.

The Moratoriums were a high point not just because of their size, but because they drew in the social power of organised workers. They showed how strike action was capable of paralysing society through stopping business as usual and disrupting the flow of profits.

As we face the challenge of turning the student Climate Strikes into serious workers' strikes, and of fighting the unemployment and wage cuts triggered by the coronavirus, there are rich lessons for today.

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS BUT SOLIDARITY PROTESTS CAN FREE THE REFUGEES

By Ian Rintoul

IN 2010, psychiatrist Patrick McGorry made headlines when he described detention centres as, “factories for producing mental illness and mental disorder”, just after he was declared Australian of the Year.

He went on to say, “I am just stating the facts... Prolonged detention of anyone beyond a short period is harmful to mental health.”

Some of the casualties of the detention factories on Manus and Nauru were successfully transferred to Australia under the Medevac Bill which operated from February to December 2019. Some were transferred because six years of hell on Manus Island had taken a severe toll on their mental health.

But instead of freedom, the refugees are being held in closed detention in Australia.

For some, detention in Australia is even worse than detention on Manus or Nauru. One father transferred from Nauru to Brisbane to join his wife and child is being held in the Kangaroo Point hotel while his family is living just on the other side of the wire.

There is no hope of recovery while they are held in closed detention. And just as surely as it happened on Manus and Nauru, the attempted suicides and self-harm incidents are escalating in the hotels and detention centres here.

In the first two weeks of May, there have been two attempted suicides, one in Kangaroo Point Central Hotel in Brisbane, and the other in the Mantra Hotel in Melbourne.

In Brisbane, in early May, a refugee in the Kangaroo Point hotel who had been transferred from Nauru following a suicide attempt was hospitalised after refusing food for 17 days. Another Iranian refugee who had also been refusing food collapsed inside the hotel, and was taken to hospital but was returned after a few hours.

In Melbourne’s MITA detention centre, a Sudanese refugee, who had spent sleepless nights in pain despite repeated requests for a medical appointment, was taken away by Serco



Above: Refugees protest at the Kangaroo Point motel in Brisbane

security guards after announcing he had swallowed razor blades. Meanwhile, the man who attempted suicide in Mantra was released from hospital, only to be held in an isolation cell in MITA.

Protests

But protests inside and outside the hotels and detention centres are keeping the pressure on the government.

The protests outside the hotels in Brisbane and Melbourne have also been central to the fight for the right to protest during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Despite the creative use of the health guidelines to hold protests outside the hotels, the police in both Queensland and Victoria have made it clear that what is at stake is the right to protest. In neither state has the police action been about keeping the community safe from coronavirus. It has been about using health regulations to prevent protests.

On Good Friday in Melbourne, police arrested Melbourne Refugee Action Collective member, Chris Breen, for organising a car convoy protest, and issued fines to 30 car drivers safely sitting in their cars for daring to drive past the hotel prison.

In Queensland, scores of police have been used to fine and intimidate the regular Friday afternoon protesters.

Last Friday, while up to 100 people exercised their way past the Kangaroo Point hotel, one protester was arrested because she was carrying a placard. It was a reminder of the worst of Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s attempts to outlaw protests in Queensland.

A day later in Melbourne, with groups of ten allowed to publicly gather, for 90 minutes around 150 people took turns to assemble in groups of ten outside the Mantra Hotel, going around the block before assembling again outside the hotel.

Meanwhile the government is having another go at passing legislation that will extend Border Force powers and allow it to ban mobile phones from detention. A National Justice Project petition (DialItDownDutton) opposing the legislation has almost 50,000 signatures.

The government wants to silence the protests inside and outside of detention. A coordinated day of defiance has been set for Saturday 13 June. That’s the next step in building the solidarity that can win the refugees’ release from their Australian prisons.

The attempted suicides and self-harm incidents are escalating in the hotels and detention centres here

Solidarity