

RAGE AGAINST RACISM



Photo: John Janson-Moore

UNIVERSITIES

Fighting cuts and the
Liberals' fee increases

US REBELLION

Racism and the fight
against the system

CLIMATE CHANGE

Winning a recovery for
jobs and the climate

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

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Things they say

For eminent service to the people and Parliament of Australia, particularly as Prime Minister, and through significant contributions to trade, border control, and to the Indigenous community

The official Queen's Birthday Honours List justification for the award to Tony Abbott. This is not a parody.

This individual had some very questionable tweets.

Trump press secretary Kayleigh McEnany's response to police cracking open the skull of a 75-year-old protester when they pushed him down onto the footpath

The longer you stayed, the more folks you talked to, and the more information that emerged, it became apparent that the official account was a load of crap

Craig Melvin, a former NBC correspondent, on what he learnt about police operations against Black protesters in Ferguson in 2014

Hopefully George is looking down right now and saying this is a great thing that's happening for our country. This is a great day for him, it's a great day for everybody.

Donald Trump on US unemployment figures

The Australian economy is going through a very difficult period and is experiencing the biggest economic contraction since the 1930s.

Philip Lowe, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, makes it official

If tearing down statues is the social return from subsiding humanities then let's stop investing.

The Australian's Adam Creighton backs the government's plan to hike fees in order to drive students out of the humanities

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Public pays for COVID Commission private jet

TAXPAYERS ARE stumping up \$267,345 for Morrison's hand-picked COVID Commission chair, Nev Power. But it's emerged this is not a salary but for expenses including flights on his private jet between Perth and Canberra.

He told Senate Estimates in June that the government had paid for four trips on the private jet in his first three months in the role.

Power pilots the jet himself, and has been flying government officials with him, or as he put it, he, "gave them a lift".

Power's personal Executive Assistant is however being paid by the government, to work four days a week on his activities as Chair of the Commission.

Power is working hand in glove with the Liberals to promote a "gas-led recovery". He is also Deputy Chairman of gas company Strike Energy, owning shares worth \$2.4 million. Generously, he has agreed not to participate in decision-making at the company while working as chair of the COVID Commission to avoid "the perceptions of conflict of interest".

Cruise ship companies ignored health orders

THE RUBY Princess and other cruise ships commonly defied government requests to swab sick passengers for coronavirus in the early stages of the pandemic, the inquiry into the outbreak on the ship has heard. In late February NSW Chief Medical Officer Kerry Chant wrote officially to cruise ship companies asking them to collect swabs to test for COVID-19 for all passengers also tested for influenza. The Ruby Princess failed to do so before it docked in Sydney on 8 March. This was during an earlier cruise than the one that ended on 19 March and produced over 700 coronavirus cases across the country.

NSW health official Dr Vicky Sheppard told the inquiry that it "was not unusual" for cruise ships to ignore the instruction to collect the swabs. NSW Health supplied the companies with taxpayer-funded swabs, but beyond sending another letter did nothing to force the cruise operators to comply.

Rio Tinto not sorry for blasting Indigenous caves



RIO TINTO wasn't sorry after destroying 46,000-year-old Aboriginal rock shelters at Juukan Gorge in the Pilbara region of WA, despite issuing a public apology, the *Financial Review* has revealed.

In a recording from a staff meeting Rio Tinto Chief Executive Chris Sailsbury responded to criticism over how the company handled the incident by saying, "we haven't apologised for the event itself, per se, but apologised for the distress the event caused."

The company had the backing of senior government officials, he revealed, claiming, "quietly, there is still support for us out there."

It had earlier claimed the decision to blow up the site was a "misunderstanding", despite knowing the caves's significance from an archaeological report it commissioned in 2014 that said the age of the site at one of the caves was unique in the Pilbara and "of the highest archaeological significance in Australia". The company also paid for a film that discussed their importance to local Indigenous people.

The law makes it far too easy for mining companies to get away with the destruction of Indigenous lands and culture. Rio Tinto received permission to destroy the caves under the WA Heritage Act.

BHP too had government permission to destroy 40 significant sites in the central Pilbara to expand its South Flank iron-ore mine, despite knowing the local traditional owners were deeply opposed. They were only stopped due to a public outcry following the backlash against Rio Tinto.

In NSW research by the Environmental Defenders Office has shown that only one of the 704 applications by companies for construction on land with significance to Indigenous traditional owners was knocked back between 2012 and 2017.

Somyurek exposes Labor's corruption and careerism

ADAM SOMYUREK'S downfall has exposed not just corrupt practices, but how much the Labor Party is dominated by personal fiefdoms and careerism. Somyurek was captured on tape claiming he was so powerful he would soon be "running the joint" and "deciding who is going to be premier". This was based on "industrial scale" branch stacking to control party branches, with claims up to a quarter of the party's 16,000 members in Victoria could be artificial.

Somyurek's sole concern was building a personal powerbase, amassing control of branches so he could control pre-selections and ministerial appointments. Political principles or policy aims were of no importance whatsoever. The idea of politics as a vehicle for change seemed to be of no interest to him.

A federal intervention will see the Victorian Labor Party branch placed under the control of the National Executive. But Labor's whole aim of winning control of government inside the existing system, and its abandonment of any effort to seriously change society, means it is going to remain dominated by petty careerism.

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

Police targeting of Indigenous people exposed

A SUCCESSION of reports even in the last few weeks have exposed the everyday harassment and targeting Indigenous people suffer at the hands of racist police. In Sydney, just days before the massive Black Lives Matter rally, a cop kicked a 16-year-old Indigenous boy to the ground and arrested him simply for talking back to him. NSW Police Commissioner Mick Fuller dismissed concerns by saying the officer "had a bad day".

In Adelaide cops were caught on camera arresting and repeatedly punching 28-year-old Noel Henry on suspicion of drug possession before releasing him without charge, while in Casino an Indigenous teenager is suing police after they stopped him and struck him on the head while he was walking home at night.

An investigation by *The Guardian* in June also revealed massively disproportionate efforts to charge Indigenous people found carrying cannabis in NSW.

Around 80 per cent of Indigenous people found with small amounts of the drug were taken to court compared to 50 per cent of the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous people are also over-represented in those targeted for strip searches in the state.

It's no wonder there are so many Indigenous people in jail.

EDITORIAL

Unite against a system of racism, unemployment and inequality

THE REBELLION against racism and police brutality in the US has found echoes all around the world.

The treatment of Indigenous people by cops and the prison system here mirrors the racist targeting Black people face in the US. Africans, Asians and Muslims alike also face racism in Australia—including from the police.

Tens of thousands of people—Indigenous, white, Asian and Black—have flooded the streets nationwide to declare that Black Lives Matter (BLM). At least 50,000 marched in Melbourne, 40,000 in Sydney and 20,000 in Brisbane, along with the largest rallies for some time in places like Darwin, Rockhampton, Newcastle and Wagga Wagga.

This was despite a government campaign against people protesting, claiming it risked spreading coronavirus. Two weeks on, there is no evidence of a single case resulting from the rallies.

But it also showed the official contempt for the right to protest. Thousands have been allowed to gather at schools, shopping centres and workplaces. The right to organise and protest is essential to being able to force change. We can't let it be suspended for months into the future.

George Floyd was brutally murdered by a racist cop with a long history of abuse.

In Australia 438 Aboriginal people have been killed in custody since the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody in 1991. Yet police and prison guards continue to kill with impunity. Not one has ever been convicted over a death in custody.

The killing of David Dungay Jnr is one of the most graphic recent cases. Despite his death at the hands of five prison guards, calling out 20 times "I can't breathe", the NSW Coroner refused to recommend charges against anyone.

But the uprising in the US has shown how it's possible to win change. Derek Chauvin, the cop who killed George Floyd, has had his charge upgraded to second degree murder. The three other officers involved were also charged.

The Minneapolis City Council has voted to defund and dismantle the police department. New York's Mayor has committed to redirecting some of the city's \$6 billion police budget to social services. Schools in Minne-



Above: The crowd of 40,000 at the Sydney Black Lives Matter protest

apolis, Denver and Portland have ended contracts with police to work there.

Economic crisis

The uprising in the US has been fuelled by the disproportionate deaths of African-Americans from the coronavirus, and the surge in unemployment through the economic shutdown.

In Australia, unemployment in May rose to 7.1 per cent, the highest for 20 years. It sits at 11.3 per cent, including those who have lost jobs but aren't looking for work. And it will get worse in September with the end of JobKeeper.

Morrison may extend the scheme for some sectors like tourism, signalling an announcement on 23 July. But there will be deep anger if JobSeeker unemployment payments plummet back to pre-coronavirus levels of \$40 a day, as the government has indicated—especially after the news it spent \$60 billion less on JobKeeper than budgeted.

Bosses and the government are using the crisis to attack workers and force through their agenda. The Coalition have announced plans to double student fees for humanities courses, to force students into the areas business wants. Some students will see lower fees, but overall the changes will force more of the cost of education onto students.

Morrison is also preparing attacks on workers' rights following his so-called "Accord" talks with the unions, hoping unions will accept pay cuts and other concessions to benefit business.

These attacks can be stopped. We

need a fight to demand Morrison fund a massive program of spending on jobs to tackle unemployment. This could fund proper services to improve the lives of Indigenous people, as well as expand renewable energy.

The CFMEU construction union in Sydney is planning a stopwork rally in October. The same kind of action is needed from other workers, including NTEU members at universities.

The militant spirit of the Black Lives Matter rally in Sydney, where tens of thousands took the streets in defiance of a court order, is needed in our unions, facing draconian anti-strike laws.

And the fight against racism has to be connected to a fight against the economic inequality and unemployment that destroys the lives of Indigenous people, migrants and white workers alike.

In a brilliant display of solidarity, on 19 June strikes and mass rallies led by the ILWU shut down all ports on the US West Coast in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. Unions in Australia need to back the upcoming protests for BLM and for justice for David Dungay and others killed in custody.

The racist police and prisons are a product of a system that sets out to oppress and divide workers in order to protect the profits of the rich.

We need a united working class fightback for jobs, services and living standards—and against the capitalist system that is plunging us into economic crisis and Depression-level unemployment.

The uprising in the US has shown how it's possible to win change

Paul Silva: ‘The video of George Floyd took me back to when I saw my uncle’s death’

Paul Silva, whose uncle David Dungay Jr died in custody in disturbingly similar circumstances to George Floyd in Minneapolis, sends a message of solidarity to the uprising in the US.

I AM the nephew of David Dungay Jnr, a Dughutti man who was killed by prison guards in Long Bay jail in December 2015. I want to send a message of solidarity to everyone on the streets in the United States fighting for justice for George Floyd.

I really feel for the family of George Floyd and want them to know we feel their pain and stand with them.

When I saw the video of George Floyd being murdered, I had to stop the footage. It took me straight back to when I first saw the video of my uncle’s death.

Both men died from “positional asphyxia”. This happens when police or prison officers restrain someone face down with too much pressure. Both men were continuously saying “I can’t breathe” and begging for their lives.

Both men had multiple officers restraining them, pushing them into the ground and ignoring their cries for help, until they took their last breath.

In the case of David Dungay Jnr, he was alone in his cell eating a packet of biscuits. Because he was diabetic, a nurse was worried about his sugar levels and asked him to stop. But he knew how to manage his diabetes and they were his biscuits, so he refused.

A riot squad stormed his cell—over a packet of biscuits—and pushed him into the ground until he died. George Floyd was doing nothing wrong either.

Targeting

In both Australia and the United States, if you’re Black, the police and the justice system are going to target you. It’s appalling, there is so much injustice.

All my life I have experienced harassment, we get pulled over, or stopped and searched. Not just from police, even going to the local convenience store you get continually watched. There’s terrible racism in the education system too, in housing and employment, right across society. I feel like it’s worse than it has ever been—people would shoot



Above: Paul Silva addresses the media at the inquest into the death of David Dungay Jnr. Photo: Charandev Singh

us if they could get away with it. Last year a young Aboriginal man was shot dead by police in a family house in Yuendumu.

Police and prison guards use violence against us just for a power rush. They want to show they have total control. They know they have the government behind them no matter how badly they abuse their authority. In the case of David Dungay Jnr, the six officers who killed him are still walking around free, some have even been promoted.

The masses of people on the streets in the United States calling for justice is amazing. That is the only force that can hold the police accountable.

More people are starting to realise the injustices against Black people and against First Nations people everywhere. In Minneapolis and other cities, it’s not just Black people out there protesting, there are white people too, people from many backgrounds jumping on board and showing their support.

I’ve seen on the news that they have said that they will charge one of the officers who killed George Floyd. But it’s one thing to get charges, and another to get justice. The court system is so corrupt, and works to protect

police and prison guards.

No consequences

After my uncle’s death, there was a Coronial Inquest. But they knew the result before the case even started. The Coroner found there was no justification for the riot squad to rush my uncle’s cell. He found that the use of force was a cause of death. But there were no recommendations or referrals for charges to be laid, no consequences whatsoever.

The inquest might be over, but our fight for justice is not. We will be starting a campaign in June for the Department of Public Prosecutions to lay charges and the SafeWork authority to also prosecute the guards that killed David Dungay Jnr.

We don’t get the same big response in Australia as they do in the United States with the Black Lives Matter movement, but we have had many people, both First Nations and non-Indigenous people standing with us.

We can build on that—we need many more to join us. We can take inspiration from the United States and get back out on the streets in our own backyard, where there is so much brutality against Black people too, that’s the only way to get justice.

The Coroner found there was no justification for the riot squad to rush my uncle’s cell. But there were no referrals for charges

Refugee supporters blockade Brisbane's Kangaroo Point Hotel

By Ian Rintoul

AFTER WEEKS of protests inside and outside the hotel-prisons and detention centres, the Kangaroo Point hotel in Brisbane has emerged as the immediate focal point for the campaign to free the refugees in Australia.

World Refugee Day is celebrated each year on 20 June. This year, 20 June also marked 80 days of protest by refugees being held at the Kangaroo Point hotel-prison on one of Brisbane's main roads.

Each afternoon the refugees hang their banners, made of black garbage bags taped together, off the balcony of the hotel.

The white-paper lettering is easily readable from the road and reads, "NO CRIME 7 YEARS IN DETENTION," and "WHERE IS THE JUSTICE."

Forced relocation

On 11 June, Border Force and Serco guards tried to move Iranian refugee Farhad Rahmati from Kangaroo Point hotel to the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation (BITA) detention centre. Alerted by Farhad, scores of people turned out that night to stop the van carrying Farhad, preventing him from being moved that night.

Early the next morning, however, with more police, Serco guards managed to move Farhad into BITA's high security compound.

Since then hundreds of people have surrounded the hotel 24/7. Sometimes strong enough to maintain a blockade, stopping vans, checking for refugees; sometimes a vigil keeping watch on the gates.

Farhad had been central to the protests being organised inside Kangaroo Point, and was a key media contact.

Four other detainees had been moved the day before Farhad, as part of the government's attempt to stop refugees accessing the balcony that has given them such a platform for their protests and connecting with supporters on the outside.

As Farhad told a Refugee Action Coalition Zoom meeting after being transferred to BITA, "I was not surprised they moved me. It is a tactic we know well from Manus."

Farhad Bandesh, a leader of the



Above: The protest takes over the road outside Kangaroo Point on Sunday 21 June

protests inside Melbourne's Mantra Hotel was moved from the hotel to Melbourne's detention centre on 23 April, for the same reasons.

On 13 June, as part of a "Free the refugees" national day of action, hundreds of protesters gathered at Kangaroo Point.

Hundreds more rallied at eight socially-distanced protests targeting the Mantra Hotel and MITA detention centre in Melbourne. And in Sydney 150 protestors defied a court order prohibiting a rally, and police harassment, to march through the city from Town Hall to the Immigration department.

'Let him hug his son'

Late in the afternoon, the crowd outside Kangaroo Point surged at the fences calling, "Let him hug his son," referring to Saif Ali who has been held in the hotel for a year.

Saif's wife and son are living in community detention in Brisbane, and were with the protesters, but visits have been banned for weeks because of the COVID-19 risk.

The Kangaroo Point protest has focused a lot of attention on the dreadful situation of refugees in onshore detention.

The stand-off has also drawn a huge amount of media attention. The Acting Minister for Immigration, Alan Tudge, went on ABC radio to tell a bunch of lies, including that the

Medevac legislation requires transferred refugees to be held in detention facilities. The same radio station interviewed Farhad from inside the Brisbane detention centre the following day.

Like the blockade of Lady Cilento Hospital in 2016 that prevented baby Asha and her parents being returned to Nauru, the hotel protest is attracting support from Brisbane unions.

The ETU Youth Crew called for union members to bring flags and "wear your ETU shirts" to the rally on 21 June. The Queensland Council of Unions also promoted the rally.

Hayden Vandekruk spoke to the 1000-strong 21 June rally, "As far as the ETU youth crew is concerned, an injury to one is an injury to all, and we will proudly stand in support of these people whose only crime is seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

"We are here to send the message that human rights are union business, and will always be union business. We will continue to support these people until they are free."

The government would like to snuff out the protests, but the blockade is continuing and refugee supporters will rally again at Kangaroo Point on Sunday 28 June.

Melbourne has called a rally for Sunday 19 July, to mark the seventh anniversary of offshore detention—seven years too long.

Like the blockade of Lady Cilento Hospital in 2016, the hotel protest is attracting support from Brisbane unions

Morrison's 'Accord 2.0' talks with unions have nothing to offer

By David Glanz

SCOTT MORRISON has set a trap for the union movement and the ACTU has walked straight in.

In late May, he announced the formation of five working groups made up of employer and union representatives, to be chaired by the Minister for Industrial Relations, Christian Porter.

The groups would “chart a practical reform agenda, a job-making agenda, for Australia’s industrial relations system”.

The ACTU immediately took the bait, welcoming “the opportunity to sit down with the Government and employers to discuss how our economy can be rebuilt”.

Commentators dubbed the exercise Accord 2.0 in a nod to the Prices and Income Accord implemented by the Hawke and Keating Labor governments and the unions from 1983 until the early 1990s.

Morrison’s five working groups will examine award simplification; enterprise agreement making; casuals and fixed term employment; compliance and enforcement; and greenfields agreements for new enterprises or projects (which are finalised before any of the workers are employed there).

The words hide a minefield of threats to workers. The top bosses’ organisation, the Australian Industry Group, has already issued its wish list.

It includes scrapping the Better Off Overall Test, so that deals can make some workers worse off; more individual “flexibility” for award workers, making it easier for bosses to divide the workforce; and greenfield agreements that run for the life of the project, which means workers in mining, for example, can be locked into shoddy deals for decades.

The ACTU has drawn its own lines. Secretary Sally McManus said: “The ACTU will measure any changes to industrial relations law on the benchmarks of: will it give working people better job security, and will it lead to working people receiving their fair share of the country’s wealth?”

In return for the ACTU’s cooperation, Morrison withdrew the Ensuring Integrity Bill, the vicious legislation aimed at deregistering militant unions. But while this is welcome, the Liberals had already been defeated in the Senate and knew they had little



Above: Scott Morrison has already made his pro-business agenda clear

chance of getting the Bill passed.

The ACTU thinks it is making sure “the voice of working people continues to be at the table”. But the working group exercise is no more than Liberal window-dressing.

After the political debacle created by his response to the bushfires, Morrison has twigged that looking inclusive and appearing to listen strengthens his image. Creating the National Cabinet has seen his ratings soar.

Political theatre

Bringing the unions into the tent is the next bit of political theatre.

But it will be very short-lived, with the process wrapping up by September. And even as he announced the working groups, Morrison made it clear they would have no real influence on the government’s agenda.

“The working groups will either reach something approaching a consensus on issues or they won’t ... Ultimately it will be the Government that will take forward a job-making agenda from this process.”

This makes this exercise very different to the 1980s Accords. Then the government was looking to tame a union movement that organised half the workforce and led massive strikes.

The Accords were written agreements between the government and the ACTU that, on paper, offered increases to the social wage (welfare, health, education) in return for wage restraint.

While the reality was the biggest cuts to real wages in more than a generation, union leaders could console

themselves with being key players in shaping national economic policy for a decade.

This time around, the exercise is a charade—little more than three months of discussion with no guarantee that union claims will be considered seriously.

Weakening the union position further is the way that leaders fast-tracked changes to awards covering more than two million workers to make it easier for employers to cut hours and redeploy workers during the pandemic.

Porter joked that he and McManus had become BFFs. Now he is saying that all sides need to “lay down their arms”.

But the government and the bosses have no intention of declaring a truce. In September, the Liberals will dump one in ten people into deeper poverty by dropping JobKeeper and halving JobSeeker.

They have imposed a year-long pay freeze on federal public servants, ostentatiously refused to fund universities’ deficits and abolished free childcare.

Morrison splashed billions to keep the economy from total disaster but he will expect workers to pay.

Facing these challenges, the union leadership has to relearn an old lesson: you can’t win at the table what hasn’t been won on the ground.

The ACTU should walk out of Porter’s parlour game, declare that workers will not pay the price of the system’s failures and start organising our side for the fight that is coming.

Even as he announced the working groups, Morrison made it clear they would have no real influence on the government’s agenda

Melbourne Uni no vote on cuts to pay and conditions boosts other fights

By Geraldine Fela

NTEU MEMBERS at the University of Melbourne (UoM) have dealt a decisive blow to management, voting No to a non-union ballot to vary the existing enterprise agreement.

The result strengthens campaigns against management-driven variations at other campuses including ANU and Wollongong Uni. But the union leadership is continuing to push its own variations at three universities where management backs their failed national framework.

UoM had sought to cut pay by 2.2 per cent and reduce redundancy entitlements.

National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) activists and delegates mobilised around the clock to defeat the variation, a mammoth task given that campus is shut. Over 16 mass workplace meetings were organised by activists and delegates in order to put the no case and encourage union members to campaign amongst their colleagues.

The day before the vote opened, activists organised a socially distanced protest outside the Chancellery building in the morning, crashed the VC's online webinar at noon and facilitated an online casuals' speak-out in the evening to clinch the campaign.

The variation was resoundingly defeated, with 64 per cent of staff voting no. Out of this victory, we have many more activists and delegates involved in the branch for the fight ahead of us.

The non-union ballot was management's response to the profound crisis facing the higher education sector. For decades, university managements have been singing from the neo-liberal song book and running universities like businesses, reliant on private funding arrangements like corporate sponsorship and domestic and international student fees.

COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on this model. The federal government has refused to step in with any stimulus package for universities, as it has elsewhere, and staff have been denied access to the JobKeeper scheme. In response, UoM management is trying to pass the bill on to staff and make us pay for the crisis. The variation was their first attempt. But it won't be their last.

Shamefully, the NTEU leadership



Above: NTEU activists put a Vote No sign on the admin building at Melbourne Uni

had adopted a strategy of concessions that dovetails with managements' attempts to pass the pain on to staff. Their failed "National Jobs Protection Framework" (JPF) rested on a vague promise to save jobs if staff accepted pay cuts of up to 15 per cent. The framework was defeated nationally by a rank-and-file revolt. But the union leadership has continued to push versions of it at the University of Western Australia and La Trobe and Monash in Victoria.

Activists at those campuses have continued to mobilise to reject the leadership's bad deal.

However it's been an uphill battle. The NTEU leadership have put significant resources into running an unrelenting scare campaign claiming that voting yes to the framework is the only way to prevent mass job losses.

The leadership have won votes among union members to accept the framework with 74 per cent in favour at La Trobe and 78.6 per cent at UWA. A similar outcome is expected at Monash. All three campuses also need to hold an all staff vote to ratify the variation.

It was painfully obvious throughout UoM's no campaign that our union leadership did not prioritise defeating the variation.

Its resounding defeat at UoM has gone for the most part unremarked upon by the leadership, because it undermines the argument they have been prosecuting on other campuses,

which is almost identical to that of UoM management—accept a pay cut to save jobs.

Fight ahead

The defeat of the variation shows the willingness of members to organise and fight for their jobs and pay, rather than accepting compromises that hurt staff.

There is a massive fight ahead on every campus, against pay cuts, job losses and the erosion of conditions. At the University of Wollongong staff have already voted to reject their VC's attempt to cut wages in an online poll, and at ANU the NTEU branch is in the midst of a No campaign against their VC's variation.

Now we are also facing a brutal attack from the Liberals through doubling fees for the arts and humanities. This will not only deter working class students from an education in the arts, it will decimate jobs.

The victories at UoM and Wollongong are a modest but significant step in defending the sector. The cuts on campus and the Liberals' attacks are two sides of the same coin. The Liberals are creating the crisis and the VC's are trying to make us pay for it. To beat them both back we need mass workplace meetings building towards demonstrations that bring together staff with current and future students. Ultimately we are going to need to challenge the anti-strike laws and flex our industrial muscle.

COVID-19 crisis shows childcare should be a public service

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT funding for free childcare will end on 12 July, with the sector due to “snap back” to the previous arrangements based on the Childcare Subsidy system.

The COVID-19 crisis initially threatened the sector with collapse.

Many families withdrew their children over reasonable concerns of transmission, given the close physical contact at centres between children, and with staff.

Since Early Childhood Education is largely provided by private companies, families are normally charged a fee per day their child is enrolled, subsidised by the government. Parents pay the “gap” between the Service fee and the Child Care Subsidy out of their own pocket.

As these fees can reach up to \$6000 a year, many families also began to withdraw their children’s enrolment, rather than pay for days they were not attending. This stripped centres of revenue, leaving these workplaces and their workers in a dire position.

The announcement of “free child care” guaranteed centres 50 per cent of their previous government funding under the subsidy scheme, with the idea being that JobKeeper payments would cover the rest through paying a significant portion of their wage bill.

This worked out well for families, as free Early Childhood Education has helped parents save money in the face of loss of work and income, while allowing those forced to work from home the space to do so (a feat that would be incredibly challenging while supervising and catering to the needs of a child under five full-time).

It has also allowed financial relief for families that may have quickly found themselves out of work as a result of COVID-19, while allowing them to look for new jobs or access support services like JobSeeker.

More importantly it has given children a much needed sense of comfort and regularity during COVID-19, which is essential for mental development within their early years. It has allowed children to learn about the large changes that are happening in their environments and lifestyles from trained professionals who can deliver these messages in age appropriate and developmentally accessible ways.

However this has been a very confusing and stressful time for Early Childhood Educators and Teachers.

The package left many workers



Above: Childcare was thrown into crisis by COVID-19, and many workers have had hours and wages cut

in the lurch. Centres have had to cut costs to stay viable, and the largest and most easily reduced expense is their wages.

Workers’ pay cut

Some “for profit” services have closed their doors but kept workers on their books through JobKeeper. Other services have decided to limit the number of children who can attend and thus reduce the number of Educators and Teachers working each day.

There have also been cases where centres run by larger organisations were not eligible for the JobKeeper wage subsidy, since the organisation failed to meet the threshold for loss of income. Even after the government made adjustments, not all centres were covered.

For those who run Family Day Care or In Home Care services, the inability to charge fees under the temporary system had a severe impact.

This has been very stressful for educators in the sector. Despite receiving praise for carrying out “essential” work, their already low pay has been cut as a result of reduced hours or centre closures. Early Childhood Educators have also been continually described as “childcare workers”, continuing the misrepresentation of their work and the patronising view that Early Childhood Educators’ main role is to take care of children while their parents go off to “real work”.

The hastily announced COVID-19 relief package saw many services fall through the cracks. As a result many in the sector are crying out for a move back to the old fee paying system.

But returning to the fee paying system in a COVID-19 affected economy, with higher levels of unemployment, may see enrolments drop, producing the same funding crisis the temporary arrangements sought to relieve.

Meanwhile, parent groups, advocacy body Early Childhood Australia and large Early Childhood provider Goodstart have called for an extension to the system of free childcare.

The solution is to nationalise early childhood education and run it as a public service, rather than allow companies and non-government operators to run it for profit.

Centres run for profit charge high fees but also cut costs on qualified educators and resources. They also push Educator-to-child ratios to the limit, putting stress on workers and leaving children at risk.

A public system could also ensure teachers and educators receive the higher wages they deserve.

Much like primary and secondary schooling, a public, government-funded system would ease the economic burden on families, and allow wider access to quality Early Childhood Education for all children.

By an Early Childhood Education worker

The solution is to nationalise early childhood education and run it as a public service, rather than for profit

Conspiracy theories don't explain society's problems

By Michael Douglas

RECENT ANTI-LOCKDOWN protests have given voice to a range of conspiracy theories—the belief that secret networks of powerful individuals rule the world.

One theory is that 5G mobile network towers are responsible for spreading COVID-19 by producing radiation that weakens our immune system. Another version is that COVID-19 is a hoax intended to cover up deaths attributed to the virus but caused by 5G radiation. And to force people to take vaccines that include tracking microchips. There is no evidence to support these claims. But there are deeper problems with conspiracy theories than a lack of evidence.

Conspiracy theories are disempowering because they reinforce the idea that those who control our world are so powerful they cannot be challenged.

Many conspiracy theories reinforce divisions in society and reflect the toxic ideas of those who are responsible for injustice and crises. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly referred to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” and pushed the theory it was manufactured in a Wuhan laboratory, again without evidence. All this suits our rulers because it deflects attention from struggle against them.

Despite these failings, it is not difficult to understand why some people believe in conspiracy theories. People do not believe the media—and with good reason. Politicians and bosses pick and choose what information they release to suit their agenda. Trust in official sources of information has declined to record lows.

An element of truth lies at the heart of many conspiracy theories—our rulers do want to control society and they act in secretive and brutal ways to do it.

Another factor that draws some people to conspiracy theories is that much official decision making is not democratic. Unelected bosses, government bureaucrats, generals, and judges make many of the key decisions in society. The majority of people experience life as a series of events over which they have little or no control.

Millions more have been consigned to poverty as inequality has increased. Climate chaos and war have forced people to become refugees in



Above: A conspiracy theory rally in Sydney a few weeks ago

record numbers.

Because these are monstrous crimes, some people conclude they must be the result of monstrous plots. One hundred and fifty years ago Karl Marx agreed you have to look beyond the surface appearance of things to understand their causes. But Marx looked beyond particular governments and powerful individuals to how the whole of society is organised.

Marx insisted that human history, like natural history, could be understood by scientific inquiry and analysis.

He pointed out that around 10,000 years ago, advances in agriculture saw many societies develop the ability to produce a surplus of food beyond their daily requirements. These societies divided into classes as a result—with a class of people labouring to produce the surplus and a ruling class controlling its storage and distribution.

From the beginning there was struggle between the classes—over the conditions of production and the equity of distribution. Marx identified class struggle as key to understanding the history of economics, politics, and ideology. As Marx put it, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”.

Capitalism

Marx also pointed out that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, further advances in technology allowed production to be organised on a much larger scale. Production was increasingly for sale on the market for profit. And profits were reinvested by bosses to expand production in pursuit of

further profits.

This capitalist mode of production came to dominate everywhere as firms and states competed with each other. Economic competition soon became military competition, imperialism, and war.

The capitalist ruling class was united in their fear of, and contempt for, the working class labouring to produce their wealth. But they were also divided against each other in competition for resources and markets. As Marx put it “Capital exists as many capitals”.

Marx’s analysis of class and capitalism has enormous explanatory power. Rather than being controlled by a tight-knit all powerful minority, the capitalist system has its own laws of motion that shape society. Investment decisions are governed by the market and the drive for profits, rather than human needs.

The capitalist ruling class is trapped by the system that produced it. They can recognise the threat to their system and to the world posed by nuclear war, species extinction, and climate change. But they are unable to break from the logic of competition and profit to coordinate a response.

But Marx’s analysis also revealed how the system can be fought. Because capitalism relies upon the labour of the working class whom it must divide in order to rule, workers have a common interest in uniting to overthrow capitalism and replacing it with socialism—a society in which decision making is democratic and therefore in the interests of the majority.

Marx looked beyond particular governments and powerful individuals to how the whole of society is organised

Defund the police—but ultimately they need to be abolished

By Ian Rintoul

ONE OF the more radical demands to come out of the Black Lives Matter rebellion in the United States is the demand to “Defund the Police.”

It is a demand that has resonated with the multi-ethnic demonstrations in hundreds of cities among working class communities and the 40 million unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The demand also resonates in Australia where despite 438 Aboriginal deaths (since the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in custody in 1991) not a single police or prison officer has been convicted of any charge associated with the deaths.

Trump has vehemently opposed the demand to defund the police and is posing as the law and order presidential candidate.

But Democratic Presidential nominee, Joe Biden, also rejected the demand, a position adopted after he raised proposals for police to be retrained “to shoot... in the leg instead of the heart”.

Bernie Sanders too, who spoke of socialism and a “political revolution” just months ago, has also rejected the demand, and is calling for increasing policing budgets at a time when the US spends twice as much on law and order (police, prisons and courts) than it does on social welfare.

Yet, the demand has already seen extraordinary developments. Los Angeles has announced it will cut up to \$150 million out of the LA Police Department’s budget. Minnesota announced the divestment of on-campus police in higher education, and then later announced a plan to defund and dismantle the police department.

Seattle police have been driven out of a section of the city. Portland, Oregon announced plans to divert police funds to other programs.

One of the reasons that the defund demand has struck a chord is that, over many years, so many attempts to reform the police have failed—including in Minneapolis where George Floyd was murdered.

Alex Vitale, coordinator of the Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College explains, “In Minneapolis, five years ago, they fully embraced the idea that they could get out of their policing problem by having people sit around and talk about racism. “They tried all these tactics to



Calls to “Defund the Police” have become increasingly popular on the demonstrations against police racism in the US

restore community trust in the police while at the same time the police were permitted to go on waging a war on drugs, a war on gangs, a war on crime, and criminalizing poverty and mental illness and homelessness... And five years later, it’s not better.”

Role of the police

To understand why efforts to reform the police fail, we need to understand the role of police in capitalist society. It’s not a matter of there being a few bad racist apples in the police force that can be weeded out.

The police are one part of the armed bodies of men (as Marx called them) that are part of the coercive apparatus of the capitalist state.

Their job is not to solve crimes. Ultimately policing is about protecting and maintaining a system of private property that allows oppression, exploitation and inequality to continue.

The reason the police are more violent and prejudiced than the rest of society is precisely because they reflect the attitudes and needs of the capitalist class.

Police in Australia were given extraordinary controls over the lives of Indigenous people in the 20th century, as “protectors” who could remove children, distribute rations and dictate movements. Hyper-surveillance of Indigenous communities never stopped.

Racist policing is also reinforced by economic marginalisation. A considerable amount of police time is spent in “proactive policing”,

patrolling of poor neighbourhoods to supposedly deter crime. But they are really policing inequality and oppression.

As with Black people in the US, the poverty of Indigenous communities comes with extra police attention and this in turn hardens police racism. In Western Australia, Indigenous men represented 38 per cent of the male fine defaulter prison population, sent to jail for failing to pay fines for swearing, consuming alcohol or traffic offences.

Indigenous women made up 73 per cent of female defaulters.

Figures obtained by *The Guardian* showed that in NSW between 2013 and 2017 only 11.4 per cent of Indigenous Australians caught by police with small amounts of cannabis were issued cautions instead of a police charge, compared with 40 per cent of the non-Indigenous population.

Since their formation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, police forces have been used to maintain regimes of colonialism and industrialization—to suppress resistance and revolts, and break picket lines and strikes.

Disarming the police and defunding them, to shift funds away from the police to provide housing, jobs and community services that people really need, would be a step forward.

But the racism of the police is part and parcel of the system they serve. To get rid of racist cops, we will need to abolish the police and the racist system that creates them.

Policing is about protecting a system of private property that allows oppression and inequality to continue

Eyewitness from LA: Burning rage engulfs the US

By Clare Lemlich

THE SCALE of the rebellion in the US since the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis is astonishing.

The last few years have seen periodic protests by the Black Lives Matter movement following high profile police murders. But this rebellion is different.

The public health crisis, with the pandemic killing people of colour at the highest rates, the economic misery many face due to lockdowns, and the combination of Trump's catastrophic leadership have created a tinderbox which Floyd's execution set aflame.

At the time of writing, protests have been raging across all 50 states for over two weeks. Where I live in Los Angeles there are actions every single day—from marches through downtown, to street sit-downs outside the mayor's house, car caravans, family-friendly vigils in local neighbourhoods, and solidarity actions held by LGBT+ and immigrant organisations. It's often hard to tell who has called each action or to hear any speakers, because the marches are so large and popular.

The police response has been brutal. There are daily images of tear gassed protestors—including children—and injuries from rubber bullets.

Local politicians running city councils have imposed night-time curfews, sometimes at the last minute while protests are still taking place, in what many consider a coordinated attack on demonstrators.

Trump deployed the military to several cities including my own. The intersection outside my office was patrolled by soldiers and tanks rolled down busy thoroughfares for several days following a violent crack-down on protests in the Fairfax neighbourhood of LA. Yet people keep taking to the streets despite the risk of police violence—not to mention the risk of COVID-19.

Looting

The ruling class is attempting to divide the movement by differentiating between "peaceful" protests and "violent" ones. This is what prompted Trump's declaration that Antifa is a terrorist organisation.

One particular object of their attack is looting and property damage. In a beautiful display of solidarity,



Above: Protesters confront the National Guard on the streets of Los Angeles

several small businesses around the country that sustained damage during protests have spoken out, arguing that their smashed windows are nothing compared to the ongoing police racism in this country.

And the looting and property damage has often been politically targeted. In LA a great deal of the looting hit the luxury stores in Beverly Hills. Property damage has often been directed at police vehicles, kiosks, and stations—like the now famous image of the Minneapolis police station on fire.

It seems the ruling class attempt to split the anti-racist resistance is not working: 54 per cent of people nationwide supported burning down the Minneapolis police precinct, according to one poll.

In any case, small-scale looting at demonstrations pales into insignificance next to the looting going on at the top of society. We are teetering on the edge of a massive economic crisis. People are losing their jobs, healthcare, houses, and standing in food lines. Yet by the middle of May billionaires in the US had increased their wealth by \$434 billion since the beginning of the pandemic. And just days before the anti-racist rebellion erupted Congress handed billions to the banks and corporations in bailout money.

Defund

The most encouraging political development during the rebellion has been the growing support to defund the police. This demand was once the pre-

serve of the revolutionary left, but is now the slogan of a mass movement.

There are important debates still to be had about what exactly defunding the police looks like, and how to go about abolishing the police when they are just one component of the larger violent and repressive apparatus of the capitalist state.

Sadly, Bernie Sanders, once a beacon of hope for many on the US left, is working against the demand to defund the police. In fact he has argued they need more money, including funding to give the cops higher pay.

The rebellion is raising huge questions about the Democrats. While many mainstream organisations and politicians are trying to use the revolt as a get-out-the-vote opportunity, this doesn't have much sway among protestors.

People know that George Floyd was murdered in a Democratic state, in a Democratic city, by a cop who was funded by Democratic lawmakers. In LA, 54 per cent of the city's budget goes toward the racist and killer police department, which is overseen by Democratic mayor Eric Garcetti.

Across the country, Democrats have called in police to violently crush protests and sent in the National Guard. There are debates in the movement about how to respond to this.

But there is also a growing understanding that there is no electoral solution to the vicious police racism that produces the routine murder of so many Black people in the United States.

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The police response has been brutal. There are daily images of tear gassed protestors and injuries from rubber bullets

REBELLION AGAINST A RACIST SYSTEM SWEEPS THE US

The explosion of protests in the US are confronting the way racism and Black oppression is structured into capitalism, writes **James Supple**

NIGHT AFTER night of mass protests and riots have swept the US following the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of police.

Fresh protests erupted following the police shooting of Rayshard Brooks on 12 June, who was asleep in his car at Wendy's store in Atlanta.

This is a cry of rage against a system of racism and inequality. The anger has been simmering for decades, and the coronavirus crisis has only heightened the bitterness against Trump and the system.

Police harassment and killing of African Americans is routine. Being shot by police is one of the leading causes of death for young Black men in the US.

In Australia too, Indigenous people continue to die in police custody at appalling rates. In total 29 per cent of prisoners in Australia are Indigenous despite making up 3 per cent of the population.

In December 2015, 26-year-old Dungutti man David Dungay Jnr was killed by prison guards in circumstances shockingly similar to George Floyd in the US. Yet the NSW Coroner has refused to recommend charges against any of those responsible.

Racism remains at the heart of US capitalism. Black people are six times more likely to be imprisoned than whites. On average they have one tenth of the wealth of white households.

The coronavirus pandemic has intensified this oppression, devastating Black communities.

Black people are dying at rates 2.4 times those of white Americans, with many forced to work in unsafe conditions in low income jobs classified as "essential", while others stay home. Unemployment amongst Black Americans has rocketed to 16.8 per

cent in May.

Donald Trump's racist provocations all through his time in office have encouraged racists and the far right.

He has set out to demonise the protesters and encourage the brutal police crackdown, first tweeting "when the looting starts, the shooting starts", then threatening to deploy the military if the protests continued.

Today's riots are reminiscent of those that erupted in Black ghettos across US cities in the 1960s, raging against many of the same issues of police racism, poverty and slum housing.

That decade saw the height of the Black civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King along with the emergence of a more radical movement around groups like the Black Panthers.

At the time the establishment was almost entirely white. As the struggles lost momentum in the face of recession and increased state repression, the focus of efforts to win change shifted more and more to electing Black people into positions of power.

Between 1970 and 2010 the number of elected Black officials across the US grew from less than 1500 to more than 10,000.

This meant that if you wanted something done, instead of relying on protests and grassroots organisation you could go to a Black mayor, a senator, or congressman.

Today African American politicians have built up significant influence inside the Democratic Party.

Another result of this was the growth of a Black middle class. The civil rights movement had won the right for Black people to attend elite schools and eventually to take

Decades of hoping to win change through working within the system have failed

positions on the boards of major US corporations.

The end result was the election of Barack Obama as the first Black president in 2008, something that was inconceivable a generation before.

There were huge expectations, fuelled by Obama's promises of "hope" and "change you can believe in". But Obama continued the bank bailouts in response to the 2007 financial crisis that handed trillions to Wall Street. In March 2009 he met CEOs of the leading banks and reassured them he was on their side, saying, "My administration is the only thing between you and the pitchforks."

During his time in office the only people to increase their incomes were the top 20 per cent of the population.

For many poorer African Americans in particular, nothing seemed to change.

While a small layer of African-Americans have moved into the middle class, the overwhelming majority continue to suffer brutal class inequality inside the wealthiest nation the world has ever known.

It was also during Obama's time in office that the Black Lives Matter movement first took to the streets.

Despite having a Black president in the White House and more Black people in positions of power than ever, cops were still getting away with shooting Black people dead in the street.

The reason for this would have been clear to Black radical Malcolm X, who pointed out in 1964 that, "You can't have capitalism without racism." Martin Luther King also argued in 1967 that, "We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others."

Racism remains structured into capitalism. It remains crucial to the capacity of the ruling class to divide and rule.

Black and white unite

The decades of hoping to win change through working within the system have failed. The rebellion rocking the US is a sign of hope that ordinary people are starting to see the need to take action themselves.

The protests are facing down the armed might of a militarised police force armed with tear gas, rubber bullets, automatic weapons and tanks.

The power to resist this exists in the organised working class mobilised across racial lines.

White workers have an interest in rejecting all the ideas of racial superiority and division in order to unite against a system that keeps workers of all racial backgrounds oppressed by crushing economic inequality. With 40 million Americans now being pushed into unemployment through the current crisis, the willingness of the system to impose misery on working people across the US has never been clearer.

Workers have forged unity in struggle across the racial divide many times before. The recent teachers' strikes involved multiracial workforces and took up anti-racist demands in places like Los Angeles, Oakland and Chicago.

In Minneapolis and New York, bus workers have refused to help cops transport arrested protesters to jail. The Amalgamated Transit Union's 1005 branch declared, "Minneapolis bus drivers—our members—have the right to refuse the dangerous duty of transporting police to protests and arrested demonstrators away from these communities where many of these drivers live."

Workers at a Mexican restaurant in Columbus, Ohio walked off the job after being asked to produce 500 tacos for police. On 19 June, the day marking emancipation from slavery in 1865, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shut down 29 ports on the West coast with a one day strike in solidarity with the protests.

And nurses and medical workers have also come out of their hospitals still dressed in personal protective gear to applaud demonstrators, with some joining the protests.

In Australia, union support for the 1966 Gurindji walk-off for land rights was crucial to its success. Unions also



Above: A crowd in Minneapolis watches the police state burn

supported the Tent Embassy and went on strike for land rights in the 1972 Black Moratorium, and have supported many more recent campaigns for Aboriginal rights and to welcome refugees.

In the factories, the schools, offices, public transport systems and the hospitals it is also the working class that keeps society operating.

United workers' strike action has the ability not just to paralyse the working of the capitalist economy, but

to take control of it out of the hands of the top 1 per cent into those of ordinary people.

The movements of the 1960s stopped short because they were unable to mobilise that power in the fight for change.

It will take a revolution from below, based on such mass movements of ordinary working people, to get rid of both the racism and economic inequality that are structured into US capitalism.

Riots are a cry of rage against injustice

THE WAVE of anger across the US has seen widespread rioting. In Minneapolis, where George Floyd was murdered, over 1200 buildings were set on fire including the 3rd precinct police station.

Some have condemned the riots, like Scott Morrison, who said it wouldn't, "change anything by burning anything down or by looting any shops".

But people riot for good reason—they are tired of calls for justice being ignored and can see no other way to strike back. It is over five years since protests in the US first had to assert that "Black lives matter". Yet the police murders and injustice continues.

We are on the side of the rioters and their rage against the system.

Much of the rioting has been tar-

geted. The police station in Minneapolis was among the first buildings burnt down.

Poor people are also stealing items they desperately need. Many supermarkets and Target stores have been hit, with people carrying out products like nappies.

But the raw anger of the rioting has also seen small Black and minority-owned businesses destroyed.

Riots are an expression of rage against the system. But they are rarely able to last long or produce ongoing organisation.

To move from riot to revolution requires taking the anger on the streets into action in the workplaces—and building the strikes and ongoing workers' organisation that alone has the power to bring down the system.

SOLVING THE JOBS AND CLIMATE CRISES TOGETHER

Penny Howard looks at the proposals to create hundreds of thousands of jobs through government stimulus that addresses climate change, and how we can win them

IN THE coming months significant government spending will be necessary to support an economy entering one of its worst-ever crises. There is a pressing need to create hundreds of thousands of jobs to deal with the growing unemployment.

This situation is also a major opportunity for government stimulus that addresses the climate crisis. Calls for this have been taken up by sources as diverse as the Australian Industry Group and the ACTU, renewable energy companies, and Friends of the Earth.

But the government has largely ignored them. Instead it wants to further increase public money to support new gas and coal extraction and infrastructure.

Gas-fueled recovery?

In April, Energy Minister Angus Taylor declared that plunging global gas prices were an opportunity for a “gas-fired recovery”. Climate NGO 350.org have documented a lengthy list of demands put forward by the fossil fuel industry, many of which have already received government support.

Scott Morrison’s hand-picked COVID Commission, tasked with helping promote the economic recovery, also appears to be pushing for government subsidies for new gas projects.

A leaked report of the COVID Commission’s Manufacturing Task Force calls for subsidies to encourage the development of new gas fields and the construction of new gas pipelines. Gas “completely dominated” taskforce discussions, according to Paul Bastian, National Secretary of the AMWU and member of the Task Force, with, “not enough discussion about [other] opportunities that are presented and the need to focus on renewables.”

While some manufacturing uses gas as a feedstock in ways that can’t be immediately replaced with

renewable energy, the current 166 petajoules of gas used in homes could be saved through a program of substituting household appliances. This is much more than the 110 pJ of increased manufacturing demand the COVID Commission Task Force claims justifies new gas wells and pipelines.

The government also claims more gas will be needed to ensure energy reliability as the use of renewable energy increases.

But projections for the electricity grid by the government’s own Energy Market Operator (AEMO) forecast that the proportion of gas and coal in the grid will decline as renewable energy increases. A recent AEMO study outlining the key actions needed to increase the levels of renewables further did not recommend more gas power generation.

While gas has been touted as a “transition fuel” with lower emissions, “fugitive emissions” released during the extraction and transport process are rarely measured and are significantly undercounted.

The liquefaction and transport of gas as LNG also significantly increases the energy and emissions from gas. The need to sharply reduce emissions means we need to invest in zero-emissions solutions—not spend billions more on polluting infrastructure.

Towards a zero emissions future

Horried by these developments, environmental organisations are rightly starting to flesh out what an investment program to reduce emissions and create jobs could look like. New modelling released in March by ClimateWorks shows that Australia could reach zero net emissions by 2035, and stay within the carbon budget needed to keep global heating to 1.5°C.

The report is clear that achiev-

Climate recovery plans must be clear about the need for quality jobs, public investment and lower power prices

ing zero net emissions even by 2050 requires “direct government intervention” and “faster change than under typical market conditions”.

The need for electricity decarbonisation is well known, and the ClimateWorks report describes this as critical to decarbonising other sectors. In order to meet the 1.5°C pathway, it says renewable energy should be at 79 per cent of electricity by 2030. The Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE) Million Jobs Plan argues that we should build 90 GW of renewable energy in the next five years, and estimates this could provide up to 50,000 jobs per year (including in construction, manufacturing, transmission and batteries).

ClimateWorks breaks down emissions by the industry electricity is used in, and by the current availability of zero-emissions solutions. Looked at this way, buildings are the next big area for climate action, consuming 21 per cent of energy by end-use.

Buildings and electricity both “have access to mature zero-emissions technologies” and should be able to achieve zero or near zero emissions by 2035. Zero-emissions buildings should be insulated, draft sealed, with the most efficient lighting, heating and cooling, and with gas appliances switched over to electric.

But considering the cost of housing in Australia, the growing number of renters, lack of public housing, and poor building standards, it is very difficult to imagine how the market could do this.

BZE’s plan for buildings includes 30,000 zero-emissions social homes per year (87,000 jobs per year) and “deep energy retrofits” of 500,000 homes per year (100,000 jobs per year). BZE proposes that government could underwrite the provision of “managed energy agreements” to households. This would pay the upfront costs of energy efficiency

renovations and ongoing maintenance. Residents would pay a set fee per month, which would be less than their current energy bills.

The ClimateWorks modelling, however, relies on tree planting or “carbon forestry” offset schemes in order to achieve zero net emissions by 2035. This simply delays the spending needed to reduce emissions, and even they acknowledge it could only be a temporary measure.

Politics of a climate recovery

ClimateWorks argues that reducing emissions requires “all-in” commitment from business, in addition to government support. But under capitalism, businesses only invest in new technologies if they will increase profits. They have billions invested in existing technologies that are still profitable, and the expense of installing new technologies and processes risk them losing market share through increased costs and reduced competitiveness.

Yet both the BZE and ClimateWorks plans are locked within a business and market framework. They do not recognise the extent of public investment and ownership needed to deliver the plans we need in the required time frame. BZE are explicit about wanting to get support from business and “capital” but don’t mention unions or workers—only “community” support.

It is essential to heed to lessons of the 2019 election. In order to win, the climate movement needs the working class onside.

In the context of much higher unemployment, this means emphasising the number of potential jobs on offer. But climate recovery plans must also be clear about the need for quality jobs, for public investment and lower power prices.

BZE’s decision to organise an advisory board for its One Million Jobs plan that includes Malcolm Turnbull and the Secretary of the NSW Liberals’ Energy Environment Policy Branch will make it harder to win working class support.

The current poor wages and working conditions in a great deal of the renewable energy industry, the fact that fossil fuels remain a significant employer with jobs that are generally well-paid and unionised, and the history of programs such as Tony Abbott’s Green Army (paid half the minimum wage) means that any credible jobs plan must address the quality of jobs it seeks to create. Both BZE and ACF have released very jobs-focused



plans, but without a clear discussion about the quality of jobs.

It is a positive step that the 350.org Peoples’ Recovery platform includes a call for “secure and unionised jobs”. Friends of the Earth also talk about prioritising interests of workers and the community not corporations.

The Greens have also called for job creation, including a government “job guarantee” employment scheme for people under 30, “paid at industry-standard wages and with full entitlements”, and public ownership of new transmission infrastructure and a government-owned energy retailer.

In vaguer terms, ALP leader Anthony Albanese has also recognised the need to tackle climate change as part of a stimulus, including boosting social housing, and the possibilities this creates for creating jobs, reducing energy prices, and revitalising manufacturing.

The Australian Government has recently poured hundreds of billions of stimulus money into the hands of companies through JobKeeper wage subsidies and business loans, with few strings attached.

We simply cannot allow decisions about transforming the economy to deal with climate change to remain in the boardrooms of companies each siphoning off profits at the expense of workers’ wages and conditions, and jockeying for their own individual advantage.

If billions more are to be invested, this must be done under public control, and require the creation of good union jobs.

The privatisation, corporatisation and marketisation of Australia’s current electricity system must be

Above: A climate stimulus program could create up to a million jobs

reversed. The development of renewable energy in Australia was already in trouble with the end of the subsidies through the Renewable Energy Target and a total lack of planning for new renewable projects, which means there are significant problems in connecting them to the grid.

Now the economic crisis means that 15 new renewable energy projects have been cancelled or postponed.

Winning climate action

Faced with the enormous power of fossil fuel interests in our economy, and the degree of economic transformation required, the drive for change will not come from sections of business.

It will require a mass climate movement that reaches into the workplaces and involves workers on a mass scale.

To do so requires winning over the majority of the working class to the need for climate action, alongside much wider social change. The climate movement needs to have a clear focus on good union jobs, on providing affordable basic services under democratic control, and on improving people’s lives. Only with this kind of politics can the student strikes develop to involve mass mobilisations and strikes by workers, with the power to win the change we need.

Discussions are underway about a major climate mobilisation in mid-August, backed by School Strike for Climate, that will call on government to invest in climate action and jobs, and not to subsidise fossil fuel developments. This is a chance to deepen working class support for climate action, and take the next step in developing the climate movement we need.

UNITED STATES—A HISTORY OF REVOLTS AGAINST RACISM

Alongside a history of vicious racism in the US, there is a tradition of militant anti-racism. **Yuri Prasad** looks at when Black and white people have fought back together against the system

ALL CAPITALIST societies are racist and oppressive, but the US appears uniquely vicious.

A country that was built on the blood of conquest and slavery seems trapped in history, unable to escape its past.

But for as long as there has been US racism, there has also been a tradition of militant anti-racism. And, at its highest points, workers and the poor have been the motor powering it forwards.

Barely two decades after US independence in the name of liberty, Black revolutionaries in Richmond, Virginia, hatched a plan to overthrow the state's racist regime.

In the loosely multiracial underworld of urban artisans, a slave blacksmith named Gabriel Prosser plotted in 1800.

Gabriel and his conspirators assembled a small army and planned to march on Richmond in three columns under the banner of "Liberty or Death". Crossing bridges, they would then seize the treasury and arsenal and take the governor hostage.

Gabriel and his mostly Black army wanted to end slavery, but wanted most of all a republican revolution.

Their chosen enemies were the merchants that exploited Black and white labour. Gabriel expected "the poor white people" and "the most redoubtable republicans" to join him, and he would kill the rest.

But a combination of terrible weather, which washed away the town's bridges and roads, white terror and Black betrayal saw the attempt defeated.

Captured revolutionaries showed no remorse, and instead invoked the US Founding Father George Washington in their defence.

"I have adventured my life in

endeavouring to obtain the liberty of my countrymen, and am a willing sacrifice in their cause," said one as he was killed.

The idea that slaves would desire anything more than personal freedom was news to many in authority. That these rebels wanted to follow the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789, they found astounding.

Radical Reconstruction

The biggest challenge to racism that century came after the American Civil War in the 1870s.

Despite President Abraham Lincoln's initial intentions, the Northern Union forces had to abolish slavery in order to win the war.

The North's victory in the Civil War was greatly aided by the active support of slaves and former slaves.

By the end of the war there were 200,000 Black soldiers fighting in the Union armies.

With the old slave-owning Southern ruling class broken and defeated, freed slaves and poor whites together forged a new society amid the ruins of war.

The period, known as the Radical Reconstruction, saw voting rights extended to all. Hundreds of people, who until recently were someone's "property", now found themselves elected to high office.

Fourteen Black congressmen and two Black senators were elected. Over 800 public legislators were Black. All were from the South.

Many states opted for a racially mixed public school system.

The old Southern elite was eventually allowed to re-establish its rule through a campaign of electoral fraud and savage Klan violence.

But white farmers also forged their own left wing Populist movement in a

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Farmers forged a left wing Populist movement in a bid to wrestle the power from the rich, appealing to black and white unity
.....

bid to wrestle the power from the rich.

One of its leading members, Tom Watson, appealed to Black and white unity. "You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves you both," he said.

"You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system which beggars you both."

However in what was still a rural economy, most of the land was still owned by the former slave owners. Now the war was over northern capitalists had no taste for the confiscation of property to give the former slaves or the poor whites somewhere to farm, whatever may have been promised in the heat of battle.

Most of the Northern rich felt more comfortable dealing with the former slave owners than supporting the more radical reconstruction effort.

But by the 1890s the old Southern ruling class was rebuilding. To fully restore themselves, they needed to reinstall racism in order to break Populism.

The rich brought together various militia to form the Ku Klux Klan and a reign of terror fell upon the Reconstruction and wore down Populism.

The Southern old guard instituted new "Jim Crow" laws designed to segregate Black from white. Even the poorest white farmer was told they were part of a superior race to which no Black was equal.

The memory of freedom and unity faded, but a new generation of radicals would invoke it decades later.

As industrial production gave rise to huge mills, factories and mines across the South, a new wave of trade unionism spread. With this came strikes, and with strikes, the question

of whether Black workers could join the union.

While some unions refused Black workers membership, more welcoming workers' organisations also sprung up.

By the 1920s, mass strikes were becoming more common and some involved Black and white workers.

Bosses were quick to blame stoppages on Communists—and for once there was some truth in the accusation.

The recently formed Communist Party USA was firmly committed both to fighting racism and to industrial militancy.

The Communists made their name in anti-racism in the defence of the Scottsboro Boys.

In 1931, nine young Black men, aged 13 to 21, were falsely convicted of the rape of two white women in Alabama.

Authorities rushed a trial before an all-white jury, knowing a guilty verdict was a formality. This form of “legal lynching” was widespread in “Southern Justice”.

Frenzy

In the racist frenzy that followed, mainstream Black organisations all but washed their hands of the Scottsboro Boys.

But the Communists saw a chance to expose US racism to the world—and the opportunity to build a multi-racial defence campaign.

They toured families of the convicted men from city to city, going from street meetings to Black churches to union branches and beyond. When they organised protest marches in Harlem, the police beat the Communists bloody.

The sight of so many badly wounded whites in the blackest area of New York was a revelation to many.

And it convinced some that the Communist claim that white workers could be broken from chauvinism was in fact true.

As the editor of the New York Black newspaper, *The Amsterdam News*, declared, “I was suspicious of these gift-bearing Reds... lest they should rise to power on the backs of American Negroes and then leave them to their fate.

“The victory thus far of the Communists in the Scottsboro case... the fight they are putting up for coloured and white farmers in Alabama... strike forcefully at the wrongs suffered by the Negro today.”



Above: Members of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, which organised in Detroit's car factories in the 1970s

After many years campaigning, the charges against four of the nine were dropped and none now faced the death penalty.

The campaign had been vital to keeping them alive.

Many of the tactics Communists used—such as sit-in, boycotts and pickets—would later become hallmarks of Civil Rights campaigns in the 1960s.

Unions and many well-known worker activists played a prominent role in this new movement. But it wasn't until the late 1960s that workers' battles came centre stage.

The spirit of Black Power and urban rebellion found an expression in the heart of the industrial US, Detroit.

Groups of revolutionary Black workers in the city's car plants felt that riots did not take full advantage of the specific power that they had to stop the flow of profits.

At the Dodge plant, they formed the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (Drum) and their aim was to combine Black Power with workers' power.

Drum was formed to fight discrimination, both in and outside the factory—and was prepared to use unofficial strikes to achieve its goals. The initiative spread from one firm to another.

Not only could Drum's strikes hit profits, they were much safer compared to the strategy of street warfare that others in the Black Power move-

ment advocated.

Not one member of Drum was shot, put on trial or jailed.

But inside Drum there were tensions between socialists and Black nationalists over white workers. During wildcat strikes most Drum members refused to give leaflets to white workers, even if they had honoured their picket lines.

This allowed bosses to divide the resistance.

Drum petered out as Black Power went into decline.

But the official UAW union was forced to allow Black workers to become shop stewards and shop convenors. These vignettes are just a small picture of the way radical anti-racism sought to combine the power of workers with a militant struggle against racism.

On the protests and uprisings in the wake of George Floyd's murder, Black and white people have flooded the streets together.

And some organised groups of workers have shown their solidarity.

The uprisings are part of that rich tradition of unity. These examples should inspire us to take on the system and uproot oppression.

They show us that it is both possible and necessary to break the hold of prejudice.

And when we do so, we strike fear in the heart of bosses and their racist, capitalist system.

Socialist Worker UK

STUDENTS AND STAFF FIGHT CUTS AND FEE INCREASES

By Jordi Pardoel

STUDENTS AND staff at Sydney Uni are leading the way in the fightback against cuts on campus. With the Liberals announcing new plans to increase student fees, we need to escalate the fight to defend our education.

Sixty arts units are currently on the chopping block at the university. Casual staff have been told they are unlikely to have jobs next semester, with further cuts expected until revenue returns to “normality” in 2024.

Despite not being on campus, students have spent the last few weeks of semester building opposition to the cuts, passing motions in over 80 Zoom classes.

At a 100-strong protest in the last week of semester, students stuck a photo collage of the classes that had passed motions, as well as an open letter to the Vice Chancellor with 700 signatures, to the wall outside the administration building.

Students are organising within their departments against the cuts. Government and international relations units are being heavily targeted, with 20 courses threatened—so students held a speak out at Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence’s subsidised mansion. Seven history units are in jeopardy including American Slavery and Fascism and Anti-Fascism. On 2 July history students will hold a teach-in outside the Great Hall to highlight the attack on critical thinking.

Units in Sociology, Anthropology, English and political economy will also be suspended.

Despite quietly gutting Indigenous Studies over the years, rendering it what staff call a “skeleton” major, more Indigenous focused units are set to go.

Already protest action has forced Sydney University to revise down their list of arts subjects being axed.

Whilst the majority of units being cut are elective, management is trying to reduce staff even in compulsory units for degrees. Permanent staff are being asked to teach courses run by expert and experienced casual and fixed term staff. The outcome will be



Above: Students and staff rally against course cuts in the last week of semester at Sydney Uni

an erosion of teaching quality and higher workloads for permanent staff.

Whilst the revenue shortfall due to reduced international student enrolments is real, staff and students should not have to foot the bill.

Sydney Uni has the funds to avoid cuts, including \$600 million in borrowing capacity plus \$482 million in cash reserves. Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence’s \$1.63 million salary would pay for around 10,000 hours of casual tutoring, according to NTEU policy and research director Paul Kniest.

No fee increases

The Liberals could fund the \$5 billion hole across the university sector for a fraction of their \$60 billion under-spend on the JobKeeper program. Instead they have excluded university staff from JobKeeper and refused any extra support for the sector.

Now the Liberals want to make students pay more for their degrees, and push people into courses that serve the needs of business.

The government has announced a doubling of fees for humanities degrees. For these courses Commonwealth contributions will fall to 7 per

cent and students will pay 93 per cent of the cost or \$14,500 a year. Fees for law and commerce will also increase, while those for nursing, teaching, maths and science will be reduced. But overall students will pay a higher share of the cost of degrees, up from 42 to 48 per cent.

At a time where our Prime Minister claims slavery never existed in Australia, and defends statues of colonial figures including Captain Cook, fighting for a free, accessible education that critically engages with history and politics is of great importance.

Large student protests can help give staff the confidence to take the unprotected industrial action needed to win.

The rank and file staff networks that formed to fight the union’s now-defeated National Framework, which would have conceded across the board cuts to wages, need to be deepened and used to mobilise a fight against cuts and for federal funding.

We need to fight for a University education that is free and publicly funded, not one where big business and politicians dictate what students learn.

Despite not being on campus, students passed motions in over 80 Zoom classes

Solidarity