

# TRUMP DUMPED

## NOW DUMP ALL THE FOSSIL FOOLS

## DUMP MORRISON'S GAS-LED

## RECOVERY



### CLIMATE

NSW renewables plan fails workers

### US ELECTION

Biden's narrow win means ongoing crisis

### THEORY

Friedrich Engels' revolutionary ideas at 200

# Solidarity **WHAT WE STAND FOR**

## Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

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

## Workers power and socialism

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

## What about elections and parliament?

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

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

## We are internationalists

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

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

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

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

## Oppression and liberation

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

## Linking up the struggles

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

## Educate, agitate, organise

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

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

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

## SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Online meetings via Zoom  
6.30pm every Thursday  
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## Things they say

*I'm not a f---ing socialist. My life is a manifestation of the American dream. I believe in free markets.*

Democratic Florida Senator Jazon Pizzo stands up for his party's values in the aftermath of electoral humiliation in the state

*There's not one single syllable that I've ever said that could lead you to believe that I was a socialist or a communist*

Joe Biden. At a Florida campaign stop 5 October, in case you were wondering

*Your question is fundamentally flawed, when you're asking, 'Where's the evidence?' You clearly don't understand the legal process*

Jenna Ellis, Trump senior legal adviser explaining Trump's challenge to the Presidential election results

*Welcome to normal transmission*  
Malcolm Turnbull on Joe Biden's win in the US presidential election, welcoming the return to business as usual

*Our involvement in Afghanistan is something every Australian can feel proud of.*

Deputy Labor leader Richard Marles' response to the official confirmation of SAS war crimes

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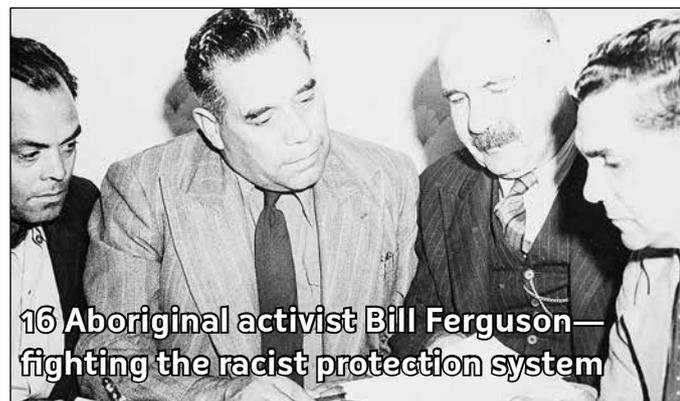
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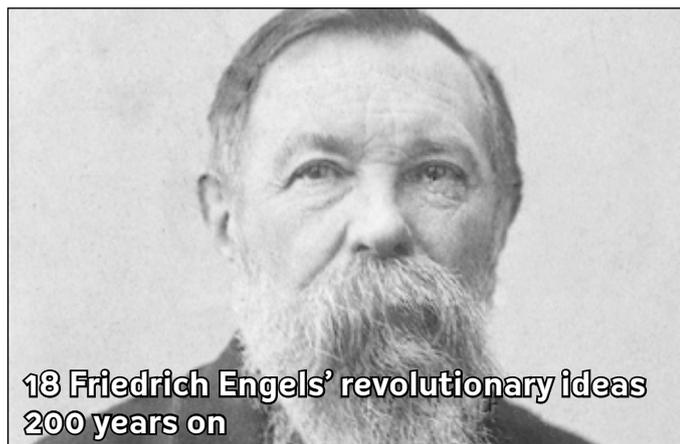
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## Premier's staff shred compromising documents

NSW PREMIER Gladys Berejiklian has been caught out in another grants scandal, funnelling \$252 million to councils in Liberal-held seats ahead of last year's state election. Staff of NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian shredded, and then deleted, all copies of documents detailing her decisions on the grants.

One of the Premier's advisers, Sarah Lau, told a NSW parliamentary committee that documents showing the Premier had "signed off" on \$141.8 million worth had grants had been shredded. She called the decision to then delete electronic copies, as "normal record management practice".

The Premier now denies she was responsible for approving the grants, 95 per cent of which went to Liberal seats.

The NSW upper house has demanded her office undertake a record recovery process to try to retrieve them. The issue has also been referred to the NSW Police Commissioner, who said an investigation was "under active consideration".

## Small elite runs Australia's biggest firms

A SMALL, elite club of highly paid directors are responsible for running many of Australia's biggest companies, a new study has shown. More than one third of vacant seats on the boards of Australia's top 300 companies were filled by someone who already had a seat on another company in the group.

Corporate advisers Ownership Matters analysed the 1777 executives and 4143 non-executive directors on the boards of ASX 300 companies, the top 300 companies listed on the stock exchange, since 2005. Since then, 38.5 per cent of director positions went to someone who had already sat on an ASX 300 board. In total, directors on the boards take \$400 million in fees. And directors whose companies performed poorly were not much more likely to be removed than other directors.

"It really is an invitation-only club," Nathan Parkin, co-founder of Ethical Partners fund managers told Guardian Australia.

## Invading Afghanistan was the war crime



NINETEEN CURRENT and former SAS soldiers are facing war crimes trials, after Scott Morrison agreed to appoint a special investigator to pursue prosecutions over the Afghanistan war. Those facing charges include Victoria Cross recipient Ben Roberts-Smith, according to Nine Media.

The release of the report from a four and a half year inquiry by Inspector General Paul Brereton has confirmed evidence of the "murder" of at least 39 Afghans that constitute war crimes. These are incidents where there is "credible information of a war crime" and "where it was, or should have been, plain that the person killed was a non-combatant", it said.

Reports of these atrocities have been circulating for years. In March the ABC broadcast video of one particularly disturbing incident, the cold blooded murder of Dad Mohammad, an unarmed father, as he crouched in a field.

The Inspector General's report confirms that patrol commanders developed a routine where junior soldiers were pressured to execute prisoners, a war crime, in order to get their "first kill". Soldiers also carried "throw downs", weapons that could be left at the scene to cover up executions and claim a civilian had been armed. This was all known about and covered up for years by high ranking officers.

These outrages were all part of a larger war crime—the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan from 2001. The war has made life for ordinary Afghans a misery. After almost 20 years of war the killing continues. A UN report recorded 3458 civilian casualties in the first half of this year alone, the majority of them caused by coalition troops. The war was never about the interests of the Afghan people. Popular support for the Taliban has grown due to the brutality of occupation troops and the US now wants a peace deal to bring them back into the government. Australia still has troops in Afghanistan. They should get out now.

## Farm companies reject the unemployed

AGRIBUSINESS SAYS it's suffering a shortage of workers, with backpackers on working holiday visas and temporary visa workers blocked from getting here due to the pandemic.

But recruitment company AgriAus found 1500 unemployed locals willing to do farm work, and was unable to find a single one of them a job. When companies failed to return calls "We did a bit of digging around why," a representative told *The New Daily*, "and farmers said 'one, they're lazy', and 'two, we have to pay them'.

"The moment you say you're a citizen you don't get a response whatsoever." Many are still advertising positions for backpackers only, preferring workers who are easier to underpay and exploit.

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

## US immigration detention kills too

MORE THAN 40 immigrants and refugees have died in custody in the US since January 2017, documents released to BuzzFeed have revealed. Many of them failed to receive necessary medical treatment. One man from Jamaica, with a treatable form of cancer, was thrown in solidarity confinement for a week without medical help and died a month later.

Roxsana Hernández, a transgender woman from Honduras who was applying for refugee status, lost almost 20 kilograms in custody before she was given any medical help. Authorities failed to provide her the anti-retroviral medication for AIDS which is a requirement for those in detention.

In another case, a detainee was recorded on video footage falling out of their wheelchair and having difficulty moving, but nurses told a guard he was faking symptoms. He died later that day.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) guards also failed to perform checks on detainees with mental health concerns, and then falsified documents. At least three people supposed to be under close observation killed themselves.

ICE has locked up migrants and refugees in record numbers under the Trump administration, with numbers in detention reaching 55,000 nationwide at their high point in 2019.

## Cops praise officer from frontier massacre

WA POLICE chose NAIDOC week to pay tribute to a murderer who died in a frontier massacre. "Today we remember Captain Theophilus Ellis who was murdered in Pinjarra on this day in 1834", it said, in a tweet later deleted. Up to 30 Aboriginal people were killed when set upon by a party of 25 soldiers, settlers and police in what is known as the Pinjarra massacre. Ellis was the only European to die, after injuries sustained falling off his horse.

# EDITORIAL

## Dump Morrison's Trumpism over climate—fight for jobs, wages and funding

DONALD TRUMP'S defeat has produced celebrations worldwide. His foul sexism, racism, and open encouragement of white supremacists, has finally been driven from office. But the result was far closer than it should have been.

Trump increased his vote by ten million, demonstrating that his racist populism still draws significant support.

This will encourage the right globally. But it's also clear that the combined crises around the pandemic, unemployment, inequality, and climate change are driving polarisation and support for the left.

Despite Biden distancing himself from Bernie Sanders' democratic socialism, James Downie wrote in the *Washington Post* newspaper that, "A near-majority of voters in swing districts supported the Green New Deal. Fifty-three per cent of Americans support Medicare-for-all. In exit polls, 57 per cent of voters expressed support for Black Lives Matter."

The inevitable disappointment with Biden will create a big space for the growth of movements on the streets and in the workplaces, like the historic Black Lives Matter rebellion. It is movements such as BLM and the "Fight For \$15" minimum wage campaign that can win real change.

Scott Morrison modelled himself on Trump—telling reporters, "We do share a lot of the same views." Morrison took up wearing baseball caps, and carried coal into parliament, aping his buddy's "Trump digs coal" placard. He stayed away from the 2019 UN climate change summit in New York to show solidarity with Trump's decision to boycott it.

While president-elect Joe Biden says he will endorse the Paris Climate Agreement goal of net zero emissions by 2050, Morrison has also explicitly refused to endorse the 2050 goal, and Trump-like is embracing a gas-led recovery instead.

Morrison may be globally isolated but Labor's mealy-mouthed "pro-gas" policy that it, "supports the gas sector and recognises all the important roles it plays" is playing to Labor's right-wing and letting Morrison off the hook.

Numerous groups have drawn up plans showing that a transition to re-



**Above: Scott Morrison tried to model himself on Trump, particularly in his refusal to act on climate change**

newable energy could create hundreds of thousands of jobs. The recently launched Hunter Jobs Alliance, a coalition of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU), climate activists and other unions, is an important step in one of the country's largest coal mining areas.

AMWU National Secretary Steve Murphy has rightly argued that, "there has to be a significant government intervention, to make sure that industries for the future are going to be built into the regions that are going to lose industries of the past".

Morrison's gas-led recovery is part of his "profits-as-usual" COVID recovery plan for Australian capitalism.

### **Fight for jobs**

Instead of funding the jobs and infrastructure we need, Scott Morrison has announced that JobSeeker payments will be cut by a further \$100 at the end of December. Three months later, in March, Morrison plans to drop JobSeeker to the pre-COVID rate of just \$40 a day.

Morrison's cuts will drive those on JobSeeker even further into poverty. Despite his claim that "jobs are returning", unemployment is rising. The winding back of JobKeeper wage subsidies in September saw another 150,000 people thrown into unemployment, payroll data suggests.

On top of this, Morrison has also announced plans to cut the wages of 230,000 federal public servants, capping wage rises to the private sector figure of 1.5 per cent a year, less than inflation.

In NSW, the Liberals have moved to cap NSW public sector wage rises into the future at 1.5 per cent too, after an increase of just 0.3 per cent this year.

Meanwhile 350 UOW workers in Sydney are facing a three-month long lock out after striking against planned redundancies, as Coles prepares to automate its Smeaton Grange warehouse.

It is a taste of things to come if Morrison gets his way, as he gears up to change industrial relation laws in favour of the bosses. The collapse of building company Grocon is another indication of the looming recession as the COVID crisis hits the economy.

But ETU, AMWU and UOW workers at Lactalis Bendigo have shown how to fight. A ten day strike (and 24-hour pickets) has won a pay increase of 10 per cent over 33 months, as well as increased penalty rates and an agreement to turn 30 labour-hire workers into permanent employees.

The campaign to stop job cuts in Medical Science at Sydney Uni has also saved 25 per cent of the jobs initially facing the axe.

Protests, walkouts and industrial action can stop the cuts and save jobs. Over the coming weeks and months, we need to build the resistance to Morrison and the bosses. We need stronger organisation in every workplace and social movement. And we need more organised socialists to link those struggles to the fight against the capitalist system itself. Join us.

**Morrison's cuts will drive those on JobSeeker even further into poverty**

# Right to protest win as hypocritical ban beaten in NSW

By Ruby Wawn

IN NSW, groups of 500 protesters can now gather outdoors, in a victory for the right to protest. The change is the result of consistent efforts by unions, students and anti-racist activists to defy police repression. For months, the NSW government had retained COVID-19 health orders banning outdoor gatherings of more than 20 people, even as thousands were allowed to gather at sports stadiums and in shopping malls.

But in Melbourne, which has just survived a 112-day lockdown, the right to protest is still heavily restricted to groups of only ten people.

Since the start of the pandemic, activists have organised creative, safe, socially distanced protests over the economic and health issues raised by the crisis.

As tens of thousands lost their jobs due to the lockdowns, many casual workers were excluded from the government's JobKeeper wage subsidy, and temporary migrant workers, international students and refugees faced destitution with no income support whatsoever.

In Sydney, the May 1 Movement, set up to organise a stop work rally to mark May Day, defied police to organise a series of car convoys with union backing under the slogan "No Worker Left Behind". On 1 May, a 150-strong car and bike convoy circled the Liberal Party headquarters.

But in Melbourne, participants at a car convoy calling for refugees to be released from the Mantra Hotel in Preston, organised by the Refugee Action Collective, received almost \$50,000 in fines. Organiser Chris Breen was arrested and charged with incitement.

## Black Lives Matter rallies

The biggest challenge to the restrictions on protest were the Black Lives Matter protests in June. Tens of thousands marched nationwide. In Sydney, the NSW Supreme Court initially banned the demonstration. But a last-minute appeal overturned this decision, when more than 20,000 people were already on the streets, in a spectacular show of defiance.

There was not a single case of COVID-19 infection at the BLM demonstrations. Outdoor protests, with participants overwhelmingly wearing masks, are far safer than the efforts to reopen restaurants and shopping centres.

Despite this, in a disgraceful



**Above: Police issue a \$1000 fine at Sydney University following a protest in October**

campaign of lies and fear-mongering, conservative leaders like Liberal Health Minister Greg Hunt and NSW Police Commissioner Mick Fuller blamed BLM rallies for Melbourne's second wave of COVID-19. This was an attempt to break public support for BLM and drive protest off the streets again.

Police repression in Sydney stepped up a gear when BLM protesters calling for justice for David Dungay Jnr, an Aboriginal man killed by prison guards, defied a court order to press ahead with a socially distanced protest on July 28. Before the rally had even started, police arrested and fined six people.

Recent months have seen drastic cuts at universities, with 12,500 staff sacked so far. Students at the University of Sydney organised a series of defiant protests, where police imposed an appalling \$56,500 in fines.

In September, students gathered in groups of 19 or less around the campus to comply with health orders. But over 100 police descended on the campus claiming that the protesters were there for a common purpose and therefore in breach of the law. Nearly \$10,000 in fines were issued, while activist Adam Adelpour was arrested and charged. Students kept defying the ban, turning up a week later with another 21 people fined by police.

Eleven people at a rally against a transphobic bill moved by One Nation MP Mark Latham also received fines.

The ban on protests, while many other large gatherings continued, was never about public health concerns but

rather the police grabbing the chance for more powers.

NSW Police have consistently taken protest organisers to the Supreme Court in an attempt to stop safe protests going ahead. But for a protest on 13 October, the National Tertiary Education Union won court authorisation to demonstrate against job cuts. Eminent infectious diseases expert Dr David Isaacs told the court that the rally plans were safe and argued NSW Health advice against protest was due to political pressure.

Even NSW Chief Health Officer Kerry Chant was forced to acknowledge the hypocrisy over protests, admitting at a NSW parliamentary hearing, "We have allowed people on beaches to be there provided social distance in the big groups at the beach or another environment."

Faced with plans for another BLM rally, and continuing defiance on campuses, police abandoned court action and the NSW government changed regulations to allow 500 to gather.

But protesters in Melbourne continue to face repression, with over 50 recently arrested at a rally to save the Djap Wurrung trees. Civil liberties group Liberty Victoria has said the ongoing restrictions are not "justified or proportionate", demanding recent fines be withdrawn.

In NSW up to 40,000 are allowed at sports stadiums, but the right to protest remains limited. We can't wait until the pandemic is over to fight racism and for workers' rights—we must continue to organise and protest.

**In NSW up to 40,000 are allowed at sports stadiums, but the right to protest remains limited**

# Lessons from Melbourne's 112-day COVID lockdown

By Chris Breen

MELBOURNE HAS halted the spread of COVID-19, with over two weeks of zero cases. There is now talk of Melbourne's lockdown as a model for the rest of the world.

But this is the wrong lesson. The lockdown would never have been necessary if adequate health measures, like contact tracing, had been put in place beforehand—and if hotel quarantine hadn't been privatised and reliant on casual workers.

Labor Premier Daniel Andrews's measures were severely authoritarian, including locking 3000 public housing tenants in their homes.

The five kilometre travel restrictions and nightly curfew had no health justification or impact. They were part of a draconian policing effort designed to put the blame for the second wave onto individuals breaching restrictions. By the end of August almost 20,000 fines had been issued.

This helped shift attention away from the state health department failures, and the more far-reaching measures needed to address casualisation, workplace safety and low wages.

Melbourne's second wave was a product of a neo-liberalism. It began in the privatised hotel quarantine system, ripped through the privatised aged care system, with its casualised workforce that moved between homes, and through poorly paid, unsafe workplaces like abattoirs.

These problems have not been solved. There are now some restrictions on staff movement between aged care homes, but there are no nurse-to-patient ratios except in state government-run aged care. Nor is there any move to nationalise the sector.

Nine months after the pandemic began, there are still persistent failures in hospital safety. A new cluster emerged from the Box Hill hospital in October, after the failure to fit-test N95 high protection masks in COVID wards, and allowing staff to work across different wards. Sarah Whitelaw from the doctors' association in Victoria told *The New Daily* there was still "a really widespread problem" in hospitals complying with health department recommendations.

Casual and insecure workers were often unable to stay home if they got sick. The Brotherhood of St Lawrence found that disadvantaged Victorians are twice as unlikely to be able to



**Above: There are still problems with infection control procedures in Melbourne hospitals, nine months into the pandemic**

quarantine. Around 44 per cent of workers in its employment program had no sick leave. Many were not aware of the government's COVID-19 testing and quarantine payments due to messaging or translation problems.

## Contact tracing

Victoria's Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton has indicated that lockdown restrictions alone were insufficient for success, highlighting government work to improve testing and tracing.

He told *The Age* that this included, "The way that we worked on the turnaround time for pathology testing, the way that we worked on reducing the time for case and contact management and outbreak management".

Ongoing problems with contact tracing were a key reason the Andrews government was nervous about lifting the lockdown. It was only in September, two months after the second wave began, that it announced plans to fully digitise contact tracing, which was still based on pen, paper and fax machines.

Its plans to replicate the NSW system of local suburban contact tracing centres were still not fully in place even when the lockdown was lifted in November.

Epidemiology Chair at Deakin University, Professor Catherine Bennett, told *GP News* that such a "community-led approach for contact tracing" was crucial to providing an, "understanding of local, social, and cultural factors that may facilitate spread or affect how people understand self-isolation and what's being

asked of them."

It would also allow local GPs to be involved in tracing, as an essential trusted contact, especially for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The rollout of testing, a time critical element of contact tracing, is still not up to scratch. When an outbreak occurred in Shepparton in October, residents either had to endure a six hour wait for a test, or come back another day.

The strength of testing and tracing measures will be crucial to avoiding a third lockdown. As new community infections in both South Australia and New Zealand in November show, it is very difficult to keep the virus out completely.

The Victorian government has begun a welcome testing blitz in Victorian suburbs hardest hit by coronavirus infections, aiming to test 500,000 people. They are also launching surveillance testing, with 25 per cent of workers in high-risk workplaces like abattoirs to be tested weekly.

But there are still big gaps. Epidemiologist Catherine Bennett told *The Saturday Paper* the program is not being rolled out widely enough, especially into cleaning, aged care and hospitals.

It was a sign of government failure that Melbourne spent over half of 2020 in lockdown. We need to fight for the measures to ensure that the government does not resort to it again—such as regular workplace testing, government run health and aged care, and permanent jobs with pandemic leave for all.

.....  
**Melbourne's second wave was a product of a neo-liberalism and casualisation**

# Andrews government pushes on with attack on Djap Wurrung

By Geraldine Fela

ON THE day Victoria's COVID restrictions eased, the Andrews government escalated their attack on the Djap Wurrung Heritage Protection Embassy.

The protest camp was set up by traditional owners and supporters on Djap Wurrung country in regional Victoria to protect a rich cultural landscape threatened by the extension of the Western Highway.

On 26 October, riot police brutally arrested protesters and moved to dismantle the camp. One person's arm was broken, and scores of people had their cars impounded and were left stranded.

The Directions Tree, a centuries old Yellow Box that is believed to have grown from a seed planted with the placenta of a Djap Wurrung ancestor, was cut down.

Djap Wurrung woman Sissy Eileen Austin explained the devastation that this had caused, saying: "They have broken the hearts of Djap Wurrung women, Djap Wurrung children, Djap Wurrung people. We are the last generation that will ever see that directions tree and if you think of it like that, it's a massive loss."

The attack on the camp produced outrage across Victoria, and enough pressure that a court injunction was granted on any further works until 19 November.

There have since been two protests in support of the Heritage Protection Embassy outside the Supreme Court.

For two years traditional owners have been fighting to protect this landscape, and a number of trees sacred to Djap Wurrung people. These include birthing trees that are hundreds of years old, were culturally modified prior to invasion, and continue to be an important site of cultural and spiritual connection.

The extension of the Western Highway at the expense of this sacred women's site has highlighted the hypocrisy of the Andrews government's treaty process through the Traditional Owner Settlement Act as well as the weakness of heritage protection laws. It has exposed their continued attacks on Aboriginal rights, even as they gesture to advancing rights via the treaty process.

In response, many Aboriginal



**Above: The Djap Wurrung Embassy demolished by police**

people have raised the slogan "no trees, no treaty".

On resigning from the First People's Assembly of Victoria, Sissy Austin put it succinctly, "You cannot treaty with a government that destroys cultural heritage, it is Djap Wurrung now but it could be anyone next."

### Trade union solidarity

Solidarity between the union movement and Aboriginal people has been particularly important. Union activists worked to push the Victorian Trades Hall Council to support the protest camp in opposition to the Andrews Labor government.

In 2018 Djap Wurrung activist Meriki Onus joined the picket line at the Chemist Warehouse strike and addressed striking workers, linking the destruction of the site to the fight at Chemist Warehouse over sexual harassment.

This helped lay the groundwork for Aunty Sandra Onus, a Djap Wurrung Traditional Owner, to address the Trades Hall executive in March 2019.

A motion of support and solidarity was unanimously passed calling on the Victorian Government to "urgently resolve the issue" and pledging to take solidarity action if

this did not occur.

In August 2019, after the Victorian government served the protest camp with an eviction notice, rank and file unionists organised a car convoy to the camp leaving from Trades Hall. Luke Hilakari, Trades Hall Secretary, addressed the protest.

It is disappointing that when the Directions Tree was cut down in October this year Trades Hall was silent—a reminder that consistent pressure from below is crucial to pushing trade union leaders in the right direction.

Negotiations between Traditional Owners and the Victorian government are fraught and ongoing.

However, a number of highly significant trees have been saved.

This long struggle is a glimmer of what is possible when connections are made between the trade union movement and the fight for Aboriginal rights.

It should be a source of hope and inspiration for people fighting for justice all over the continent, against Black Deaths in Custody, for climate justice and in the campaigns to protect country and cultural heritage from destructive industries like fracking.

# Workers left behind in NSW Liberals' energy plan—keep fighting for public renewables

By Paddy Gibson

NSW LIBERAL Energy Minister Matt Kean has announced a new “Energy and Infrastructure Roadmap” that will create a series of new renewable energy zones (REZs) across the state.

Kean claims the scheme will attract \$32 billion of investment and construct 12GW of new generation and 3GW of energy storage before 2030. This would shift the bulk of NSW energy production from coal-fired power stations on the coast, to REZs inland.

Greenpeace and WWF praised the scheme and both the Nature Conservation Council and School Strike for Climate encouraged supporters to write in and congratulate the Coalition government.

However, while a shift away from coal is urgently needed, this roadmap is not a victory for the climate justice movement. Indeed, it does not discuss the climate crisis at all.

There is no commitment of public money. The scheme is designed to provide “certainty” for energy companies looking to make profits out of renewables. This leaves our climate future hostage to corporate profitability and does nothing to provide well-paid, secure jobs or a just transition to a decarbonised economy.

Decades of privatisation and deregulation have left the NSW energy system fragmented and in crisis, while pushing power prices up to amongst the highest in the world.

Four out of the five major coal-fired power stations in NSW are set to shut down in the next 15 years and there is currently no coherent plan to replace them. This is a major problem for capitalism in NSW and is the stated motivation for the roadmap.

These power stations and the transmission grid they feed into were all built by the NSW government and were once publicly owned. If energy was still in public hands, planning and building new renewables to drive a just transition away from fossil fuels could be much more easily achieved.

Instead, as in much of Australia, the system is dominated by private operators, none of whom take any responsibility for avoiding climate catastrophe or maintaining the long-term viability of the system.

Wind and solar are not being embraced by the Liberals because



**Above: The NSW Coalition want to claim credit for supporting renewables, but won't fund any of it themselves**

they drive down carbon emissions, but because they are now by far the cheapest and quickest way of building new energy generation capacity.

Kean's scheme creates a new financial body that will act as an intermediary between generators, distributors and the network operator.

It promises big returns for all the corporate players looking to invest while also creating new financial products that will fuel speculation on the energy market.

## No certainty, no justice

Companies are currently lining up to cash in on the renewables gold-rush.

Key to the NSW scheme are “reverse auctions”, with companies competing to pledge the lowest price for long term energy production contracts.

“Reverse auction” schemes were designed in Europe on the premise that the private sector could lead investment in renewables. But they have not delivered—global renewable energy investment is only at one third of the level needed to keep warming to 1.5 degrees. New investment in Europe has declined below 2012 levels, even before the pandemic hit.

Reverse auctions elsewhere have also led to underbidding and bankruptcies among participating companies, and a “race to the bottom” on wages and conditions. Already, the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) has highlighted the shocking conditions that exist on many solar and wind farms, where rates of unionisation are very low.

There is no justice in Kean's

transition—no mention of the needs of workers and communities currently reliant on fossil fuel production or the Aboriginal people whose lands have been destroyed by coal or will now host renewables.

The Liberals' focus is to shift energy generation to Renewable Energy Zones in rural areas around Armidale and Dubbo. This makes a just transition for energy workers very difficult. The government has said that it will encourage local manufacturing, but only where “cost competitive.”

It has also agreed to amendments to create Illawarra and Hunter-Central Coast REZs. But these areas will face challenges as they have not been identified in the national Integrated System Plan for the electricity system—itsself a narrow market-based process.

There is no proposal to create a public Authority (like the LaTrobe Valley Authority) to lead planning and investment for a transition.

This scheme also leaves the door open for new gas-fired power stations to be built in the REZs.

Plans for new transmission infrastructure to the Central-West REZ formed part of an agreement between the NSW Coalition government and Morrison earlier this year, which also pledged to massively increase gas production in NSW.

Rather than praising Kean, the climate movement needs to continue fighting for urgent, large-scale public investment in renewables, driven by the needs of communities and the environment—not big corporations.

.....  
**There is no mention of the needs of workers and communities currently reliant on fossil fuel production**

# Medical Science academics' afternoon stop work protests job cuts

By Kelton Muir

ACADEMICS IN the School of Medical Sciences (SoMS) at Sydney Uni staged an “Afternoon of Action” on 18 November in protest against forced redundancies in the School. The “spill and fill” change process will see the restructuring of teaching and research in Physiology and Pathology, with 43 staff members sacked and forced to compete for a reduced 27 positions, a reduction of 37 per cent.

Twenty academics out of 30 in Physiology left work for the afternoon to attend the protest. They were supported by SoMS colleagues in Anatomy, Mortuary and Pathology as well as contingents from the Casuals Network and staff in the Arts and Social Sciences. Eight professional staff from Engineering also came to the protest because of the union email, telling *Solidarity* that, “we’re here because it could be us next”.

There was also an impressive turnout of over 100 students, for a protest held in the last week of a semester in which most students studied almost entirely online. As Meloni Muir, the protest’s chair, quipped, “The police have been on the campus this semester more often than some students!”

There is no doubt amongst academics that these two Disciplines are the first on the chopping block, with more restructures and job cuts in SoMS expected.

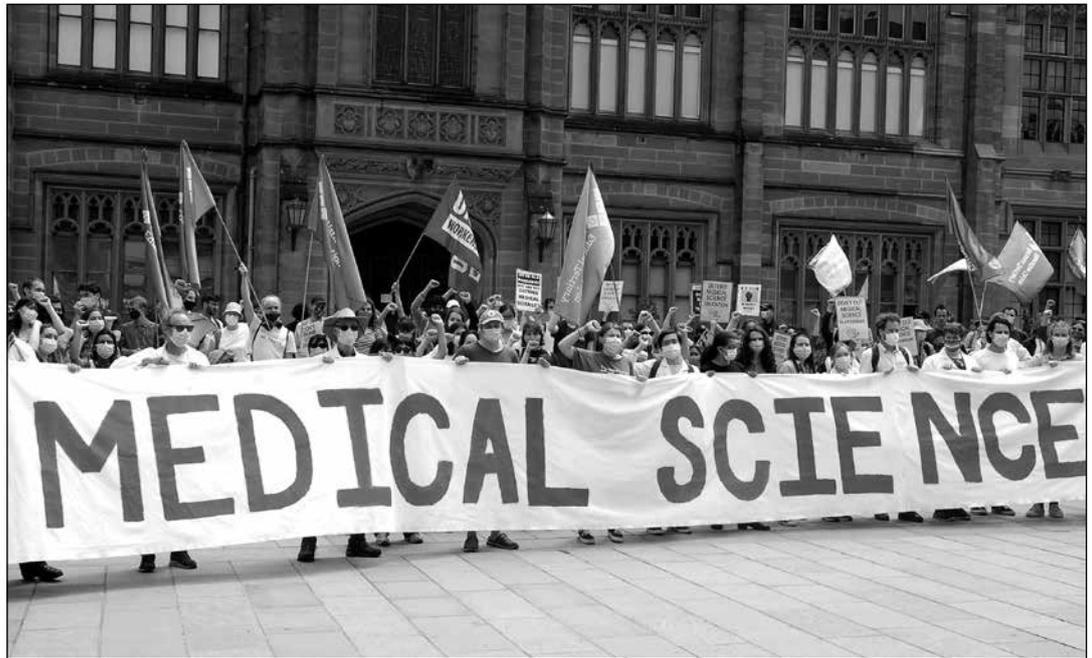
NTEU University of Sydney Branch President Kurt Iverson told the rally, “There is a deliberate and coordinated set of cuts that are going on across this campus, all being justified in the name of the pandemic.”

A statement read out by Emeritus Professor John Hearn savaged the new culture of managerialism in the Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of Sydney, saying, “The last two years has seen a disgraceful destruction of a famous School by an imported group of mercenaries who care nothing for the university, history, team or achievements.”

## Organising the fightback

The action was the best example this year so far of staff taking action to oppose job cuts at the university.

Despite intense anger at management and the cuts in SoMS, organising a campaign of public protest did not come automatically. Initially some staff wanted a media-only campaign.



**Above: The Medical Science protest on 18 November**

Organising began when a group of four academics and four students met on 30 October, outside official union structures, and reached out to 25 SoMS academics and supportive members of the NTEU Branch Committee. This cohered an email list and in-person meetings involving a majority of affected academics.

Academics launched the Defend Medical Science Campaign only one week before the protest.

The “Afternoon of Action” was originally billed as a “walk out” from work. A teach in was organised following the 1pm protest to allow academics who had stopped work to continue their action all afternoon and not return to their offices.

The 18 academics at the campaign launch on Wednesday 11 October unanimously agreed to the walk out.

However the NTEU Branch raised concerns that describing the action this way meant organising unprotected and unlawful industrial action, risking fines under workplace laws.

This is a crucial debate, with the fear of fines paralysing the union from taking any effective action against the thousands of job cuts across the sector. It is not enough to wait until the possibility of lawful action during the union’s bargaining round next year—by then many jobs will already be lost.

But the NTEU branch committee was unwilling to endorse the idea of a walk out, or to open the discussion

to a wider members’ meeting before the action. Disappointingly, NTEU Fightback members opposed calling a members’ meeting and sided with conservative opposition from the branch president to calling the action a “walk out”.

In response, the Medical Science academics agreed to change the wording of the action—although not its substance—in order to gain union backing.

This was the right decision. Union support strengthened the action, meaning it was advertised to all NTEU members on campus. Most importantly, it gave more SoMS academics confidence to come out of work.

To successfully stage unprotected industrial action, union activists still have a job ahead of them to win majority support in the University of Sydney NTEU branch. But the SoMS protest shows that action including cancelling classes and walking off work for the afternoon is possible. This is an important lesson for staff across the whole university sector.

*Solidarity* members initiated the “Afternoon of Action”. This struggle can act as a springboard for future actions and escalations against cuts at universities. NTEU members need to fight and take militant action – including unprotected industrial action when needed. This kind of action now is the best preparation for when the bargaining period opens next year and protected industrial action is possible.

**Academics agreed to change the wording of the action—although not its substance—to gain union backing**

# Corbyn suspended as Labour leadership declares war on the left

By Michael Douglas

LEFT-WING FORMER leader Jeremy Corbyn has been kicked out of the British Labour Party's parliamentary caucus, despite backing down on comments that saw him suspended from the party.

The new Labour leadership has declared war on the left of the party, determined to move to the right and either drive out or silence Corbyn and his supporters.

Corbyn had responded to a report into the party's handling of anti-semitism accusations, arguing correctly that the scale of anti-semitism inside Labour had been, "dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party".

Corbyn and other left MPs have faced accusations of anti-semitism ever since he was elected leader in 2015, based on their support for the Palestinians.

Last year Labour suspended MP Chris Williamson for telling a party meeting that Labour had been "too apologetic" in the face of anti-semitism smears from the right, and then blocked him from running as a candidate. In June, left-wing MP Rebecca Long-Bailey was sacked from the shadow cabinet for tweeting in praise of an article that contained a passing accusation of racism and brutality against Israel.

Corbyn is not an anti-semite. He has actively opposed racism all his political life—unlike many of his tormentors on the Labour right. He is right to stand for Palestinian rights and against imperialist war.

The right claim that Corbyn's support for Palestine encouraged anti-semites to join Labour. They claim left-wing politics is inherently anti-semitic because of its opposition to Israel, and that solidarity with Palestine is motivated by hatred of Jews.

Anti-semitism is a real threat because of the rise of fascism and the far right in many countries. It infests the QAnon conspiracy movement who cluster around Donald Trump. A Jewish cemetery in Grand Rapids, Michigan was vandalised with "Make America Great Again" graffiti just hours before Trump delivered a campaign rally across town.

But Labour Party leader Keir Starmer is not interested in opposing racism. He has distanced himself from Black Lives Matter protests, dismissing them as a "moment" rather than



**Above: Jeremy Corbyn while he was leader of the Labour Party last year**

a movement. Another Labour Party report has detailed a campaign of racism targeting left-wing MP Diane Abbott, a Corbyn ally. But Starmer has not lifted a finger to hold those responsible to account.

The continuing attacks on Corbyn show Starmer is firmly set on a right-wing trajectory. They are intended as an assault on the movement for Palestinian rights, and to demonstrate that a Labour government will be a reliable choice to maintain the system and pro-corporate policies.

An intense campaign by the right forced the Labour Party to adopt a definition of anti-semitism last year that restricts legitimate criticism of Israel. It restricts the right to point out that Israel was founded on the ethnic cleansing of some 850,000 Palestinians, or to compare Israel to apartheid South Africa. It also makes it harder to point out that Israel's founding ideology of Zionism is racist against Arabs.

Yet rather than defending the right to criticise Israel, Corbyn and influential sections of the Labour left conceded ground. They hoped that by showing they were listening to the right's accusations the criticism would stop and Corbyn would be allowed to continue as leader. Instead, they created space for more smears and accusations.

## Reformism

Because Labour is fixated upon parliament and elections, the left of the party see it as necessary to unite with the right. The Labour left always conciliates with the right and puts the

unity of the party above its principles, whereas the Labour right values loyalty to the political establishment rather than to the labour movement.

Both Labour left and right are united in their view that struggle outside parliament must be subordinated to struggle within parliament. All this has seen Labour repeatedly collaborate on everything from neo-liberalism, strike breaking, and scapegoating of migrants and refugees, to support for nuclear weapons and war.

Corbyn's left-wing leadership generated enormous excitement and hope, before he stepped down after losing last year's election. He has a record of decades of principled anti-racist and anti-war and socialist politics. It is essential to organise to defend Corbyn—but making apologies or concessions will not achieve this. If the right's anti-semitism smears had been fought from the beginning the left would not be in this position.

Many left-wing Labour members argue to remain within Labour and fight. But it is precisely Corbyn and the Labour left's commitment to the party, and to its reformist aim of winning government through parliament, that has seen them make concession after concession.

All this should prove that Labour and electoralism are a dead end for those seeking the radical change that is so urgently required. Fundamental change can only come through struggle in the workplaces and in the streets. We need to build a socialist party that looks to these struggles, and not to parliament, to bring change.

.....  
**Rather than defending the right to criticise Israel, Corbyn and influential sections of the Labour left conceded ground**

# Looking back on the Women's Liberation Movement

**Brazen Hussies**  
Directed by Catherine Dwyer  
In selected cinemas now

*BRAZEN HUSSIES* shines a light on the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s.

Drawing on a vast trove of footage—of rallies, stunts, speeches and meetings—the film captures much of the energy, bravery and dynamism of the movement, and the sense of hope for change that it brought, although its focus is unfortunately too much on the middle class section of the movement.

The interviewees, most of them prominent WLM leaders, speak of the exhilaration they felt as they began to challenge the oppressive gender roles and expectations that women had faced.

As feminist author Sara Dowse explains: “For three months I didn't know a single person's name. Because people couldn't be bothered with names. We were just women on fire.”

## Radicalisation

The WLM emerged out of the general radicalisation of the period, alongside mass movements against the Vietnam War and for Aboriginal rights, as well as a massive upsurge in working class struggle. The thousands of people who participated in these movements began to question the ideas that underpinned the system—including the oppression of women.

Women at the time faced enormous legal and social barriers. They were expected to accept roles as mothers and wives without question. Women often earned a fraction



of what men earned for the same job, while many industries were simply closed to them. Abortion, contraception, divorce and out-of-home childcare were out of reach for most women.

Some of the footage shows the abuse that activists faced, particularly during “drink-ins” against the ban on women in bars, and the sexist attitudes that they had to confront, not only in society but also within the radical movements.

But the focus on university-educated, middle class leaders like Anne Summers and Eva Cox fails to capture the full breadth of the struggle, which drew in thousands of ordinary people and profoundly transformed society's ideas about women in the process.

And the emphasis on hostility from men and particularly the “male left” means *Brazen Hussies* skates over some of the most uplifting moments of struggle for women's rights.

## Working class unity

While there was undeniably sexism amongst parts of the left, there were also many inspiring examples of unity between working

reasons behind them.

WLM leaders argued for a separatist approach to fighting sexism. They maintained that all men, regardless of their class position, benefitted from sexism, and could not be relied upon to fight it.

There is a telling moment in which an Aboriginal woman says to a group of WLM activists, “we're not strong enough yet to split [from our men]”.

For many working class women it made little sense to separate themselves from the men who shared their daily experience of racism, or who they worked and often struggled alongside in factories or offices.

Although they may hold some sexist ideas, male workers don't materially benefit from the oppression of women. They too have an interest in women's wages being equal, for example, as a lower rate for one group of workers drags down the rate of pay overall.

It is the ruling class that benefits from keeping women's wages low and not having to pay for the thousands of hours of unpaid child-rearing labour women carry out in the home. It is in their interest to perpetuate the sexist

ideas that maintain these arrangements.

## Retreat and the turn to bureaucracy

Increasingly the WLM turned away from organising broad-based, mass campaigns, to “consciousness raising circles” and political stunts by small groups. They also began to look to progressive politicians like Gough Whitlam to deliver reforms and, particularly as the radical movements of the 1970s retreated, taking up bureaucratic positions in newly formed government agencies for women.

The film makes the point that there is “still a long way to go”.

For all the achievements that have been won, many of the gains of the movement are under attack. The structural divisions in society, the gendered workforce that keeps women in lower-paid jobs, along with the lack of free childcare, mean that women still carry a double burden and do the bulk of unpaid domestic work and child care in the family.

The #metoo movement has also revealed the stark level of sexual harassment and sexist attitudes towards women that persist despite any formal equality. The media and advertising still portray the traditional sexist views of women in society as much as they ever did.

To defend these rights and win real liberation from sexist oppression we cannot rely on lobbying progressive politicians or taking the reins of state bureaucracies. We will need to build mass movements that draw in all sections of the working class, regardless of gender, and ultimately overthrow the system that keeps us all down.

**Caitlin Doyle**

# US ELECTION BIDEN'S NARROW WIN SIGNALS ONGOING CRISIS

Joe Biden may have defeated Trump, but his weak position and centrist politics mean he will be unable to deal with the crises that dominate the US, writes **James Supple**

DONALD TRUMP'S presidency is over, with Joe Biden finally claiming a narrow win to secure election as US President. There have been celebrations across the US at the news. But the result has only confirmed the deepening polarisation in a United States riven by crisis.

Expectations of a decisive victory for Biden and the Democratic Party were shattered, as voters turned out in record numbers for both candidates.

Trump won over ten million more votes than in his election win in 2016, despite his abject failure over the pandemic, producing the carnage of 230,000 deaths as well as spiralling unemployment, and four years of encouraging racism and white supremacists, systematic dishonesty and lies.

So close was the result that his Republican Party looks set to maintain control of the Senate, pending the outcome of two run-off elections in Georgia, and even won ground in the House of Representatives.

Biden's establishment, middle of the road approach had little appeal for millions of Americans. His key promise was to simply restore business as usual after four years of Trump. He repeated this following the election result, declaring, "I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide but to unify", and "to restore the soul of America".

But he offers no solutions to the problems dominating the lives of ordinary people.

The Democratic Party has been left stunned by its failure. "Something went wrong," Democrat Cheri Bustos, who led the party's campaign, told the House Democratic caucus, saying she was "gutted" and "heartbroken" at their losses.

Biden will be a weak president, at the mercy of the Republicans in the Senate as he attempts to push his agenda through Congress. Even his



**Above: Joe Biden during one of the presidential debates**

cabinet choices will need Republican approval.

Even before Trump, US politics had become sharply polarised between the Republicans and the Democratic Party, as the Republicans adopted ruthlessly partisan tactics in Congress and gerrymandered electoral districts to boost their numbers. Biden will face the same obstruction.

Trump has spent four years feeding polarisation and stirring up racism and nationalism.

His next move is unclear. He is continuing to deny that he has lost the election, claiming the count was hit by voter fraud and launching a series of court challenges to the results. Biden's margins in the swing states are now large enough that this won't change the outcome.

Some are speculating that Trump will run again for the presidency in 2024. But even if he quits the political stage altogether, Trumpism will remain a powerful force. It has a

stronghold on the Republican Party and it has shown its continued electoral potency.

Trump's claims of a stolen election will enrage his supporters and create the conditions in which right-wing protests and far right violence can grow.

## **Economic crisis**

Trump's rise was a product of the bitterness resulting from four decades of neo-liberal policies, supercharged by the economic crisis that began in 2009.

Inequality has exploded at the same time as people have been forced to work harder and longer hours. The top 1 per cent's share of income has more than doubled since 1975, while the bottom 90 per cent's share fell from 67 per cent to 50 per cent.

Trump's election in 2016 showed that anger at economic crisis does not automatically push workers to the left but can also feed the far right.

His success was also fuelled by

## FEATURES

disappointment with President Obama. Although Obama was elected in 2008 on promises of change and building a movement to take on Washington, he ended up defending corporations and the rich.

He bailed out the banks following the economic crisis, and presided over a recovery that saw the bottom 95 per cent of households with lower incomes in 2015 than they had in 2007, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

It was under his presidency that the right-wing Tea Party movement emerged, radicalising the Republican Party base and preparing the way for Trump. There is now a danger of an even more powerful right-wing movement emerging under Biden.

The gridlock and paralysis of the US political system is set to continue. Biden is not going to deliver change of the kind that could improve workers' lives.

And Biden typifies the moderate middle ground approach unwilling to pursue any bold agenda.

His allies in the Democratic Party are already blaming their dismal election performance on the left.

In a conference call between Democratic members of the House following the result, establishment Democrats declared figures on the left of the party such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as responsible, saying, "We need to not ever use the word 'socialist' or 'socialism' ever again" and claimed a focus on "socialised medicine" and defunding the police had hurt the party's prospects.

Biden completely distanced himself from the left during his campaign, repeatedly declaring that he had defeated Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries and rejected his policies.

Despite the crisis in the US health system further exposed by the pandemic, Biden refused to support a universal healthcare system, rejecting Sanders' plan of Medicare for all.

Although he promised to break from Trump's climate denial and spend significant amounts on climate action, he also distanced himself from calls for a Green New Deal and promised not to ban gas fracking. And he has also rejected the demands to defund the police coming from the Black Lives Matter movement.

The pro-business Financial Times has described Biden's plans as only "mildly social-democratic".

Biden drew in far more corporate donations than Trump, taking millions from the finance sector and big

## A corporate Democrat in the White House won't end systemic racism and inequality

**Virginia Rodino**, a socialist and member of Marx21 in Baltimore, spoke at a forum on the election result organised by Solidarity



WHAT WE'RE seeing play out is the weakness of the Biden campaign and the Democratic Party, as we saw with Hilary Clinton four years ago.

The Democrats tell workers they're on our side and then enact policies in every sphere that tear down our interests.

The corporate Democrats have assessed that socialism and the calls of the movement to defund the police are the reasons voters didn't vote for Biden. Apparently establishment Democrats believe that saying 'I am not Donald Trump' should be enough to earn our embrace.

This is a party that deliberately deactivates mass movements, such as Obama breaking the Black basketball players wildcat strikes, or the Democratic National Committee suppressing at all costs the Bernie Sanders campaigns in 2016 and in 2020.

But it's not through electoral politics and voting, it's through class struggle, that we will see change. We have seen a rebirth of calls for socialism by the movements. Occupy Wall St, the climate justice movement and the two Sanders campaigns saw the crystallising of anti-capitalist arguments.

The movements must break from believing that a corporate Democrat in the White House will end systemic racism and sexism, climate disaster, our mess of a privatised health care system or our illegal foreign policy.

Late last month the Movement for Black Lives Electoral Justice

tech firms. He was the choice of those looking for a steady hand to promote US imperialist power. And his decades as part of the neo-liberal establishment in Washington gave ordinary people no confidence he would be on their side.

His devotion to the interests of big corporations will leave him hamstrung in addressing inequality and working class people's needs.

### Socialism

But the polarisation of US society has also fed the popularity of socialist solutions to the crisis. The key expression of this has been Bernie Sanders'

project and the Working Families Party launched The Frontline, an initiative aiming to forge a Black-led multiracial coalition that can carry forward the energy of the uprising, the largest social movement in US history.

They commented, "we are committed not to fighting for a saviour on Pennsylvania Avenue (where the White House is located), but to fighting for our next target. And we will come as hard at the new administration which we hope will follow the Trump administration as we are at Trump right now."

We have to support this line of thinking. Biden wants to give another \$300 million to police departments. Obama's administration deported more people than Trump. He kept families in cages. Biden has stated his administration will not separate families but does not intend to stop caging them.

Billionaires saw their fortunes rise by 27 per cent during the pandemic, while 40 million Americans filed for unemployment benefits.

How do we change this perversion of priorities?

The Black Lives Matter movement is a multi-racial force that politicians ran to catch up with, the Climate Justice movement has been proven right again over the past few months just in the United States with the raging fires in the northwest.

We can't let the ruling class co-opt these movements to drain their energy and vitality.

We have to continue building movements like the movement for Black Lives, and united fronts against racism and fascism.

campaigns for president through the Democratic Party primaries.

Another reflection of it has been the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America to 75,000 members. A series of Democratic Socialists, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have been elected to Congress through the Democratic Party.

But the Democratic Party establishment easily defeated Bernie Sanders in the presidential primaries, and maintains a firm hold on the party.

Much of the left in the US fell in behind Biden's campaign in an effort to get rid of Trump. Bernie Sanders worked to mobilise his supporters

into campaigning for Biden's election and is trying to channel activists into working to reform the Democratic Party.

This meant getting tied into defending an essentially moderate and pro-capitalist party.

Internationally, similar efforts either to take over existing parties for the radical and socialist left or build new left parties focused on winning government through elections have both failed.

In Britain, former leader Jeremy Corbyn's effort to reshape the Labour Party into a vehicle for opposition to neo-liberalism and war is being dramatically reversed under new leader Keir Starmer. Corbyn himself has been suspended from the party as part of a witch-hunt against the left.

Elsewhere, the once radical Syriza party in Greece, elected to government in 2015 on a promise to tear up austerity, was discredited after it implemented even worse cuts than those it was elected to oppose. Podemos, a radical left party in Spain, has joined a government with the Labor-like Socialist Party.

In recent months, the most exciting developments on the left in the US have been outside the electoral process. More people participated in the Black Lives Matter protests across the US than in any other protest movement in history. The rebellion not only massively increased popular opposition to police brutality and racism, it won measures to defund the police and redirect money into social services in a number of US cities.

There are also signs that strikes are on the rise. Workers at Amazon, McDonalds, grocery stores and other companies have staged protests or gone on strike demanding COVID-19 safety measures. This follows the wave of successful teachers' strikes that began in Republican-controlled states in 2018.

The left needs to focus on building resistance on the streets and in the workplaces in order to fight for the radical solutions needed around climate action, racism and economic justice.

The stakes are high. There is a huge gap between the expectations in Biden and what he will actually deliver as the US plunges deeper into economic and social crisis.

That's why we need to build socialist organisation that puts building class struggle and the movement's strength outside of parliament at the centre of its focus.

## Why did 73 million vote for Trump?



**Above: Trump supporters stage a protest following his election defeat**

DESPITE LOSING the election, Trump was able to increase his support base significantly on 2016.

Trump was clearly dominant in small towns and rural areas, where he also won last time.

His increased vote relied on turning out more of the same kind of voters who backed him then. The Democrats, by contrast, increased their vote in the major cities.

Trump overwhelmingly won among white voters, beating Biden by more than 10 per cent among the group. It's clear that racism is part of his appeal.

But voters who said the economy and jobs were the most important issue in the election also overwhelmingly backed Trump, whereas those who thought the pandemic more important heavily backed Biden.

Trump's campaign to end lockdowns and open up the economy again clearly had a resonance, especially among small business owners but even with some workers.

As US writer Mike Davis put it, while the Democrats made the election, "a plebiscite on Trump's bungling of the pandemic", they did so, "without making an all-out effort to convince voters that a Biden administration would sustain family incomes and small businesses until COVID

was defeated."

This gave Trump an opening to claim Biden would hurt workers through another lockdown without protecting their jobs.

For all the claims of Trump's working class appeal, he trailed Biden by 8 per cent among the lowest paid section of voters earning less than \$50,000 a year.

Trump again held traditional Republican voters, including evangelicals, small business owners and the middle class.

But his success among those with only high school education indicates that a section of the working class did vote for Trump.

These workers could be won away from Trump and the right through policies targeted at actually improving their lives rather than encouraging them to resent migrants, Muslims or Blacks.

A movement that promised to tax the billionaires and use the money to fund universal healthcare, better schools and well-paid jobs could win their support on the basis of class.

A party that actually stood for such policies would be better placed to show how racism distracts workers, between white, Black or Latino, from their real enemies in the wealthy elite.

# BILL FERGUSON—UNIONS, ABORIGINAL RIGHTS AND THE RACIST PROTECTION SYSTEM

**Luke Ottavi** continues our series on key Indigenous activists with a look at Bill Ferguson, who fought racist laws in NSW against Aboriginal people to demand equal rights

ABORIGINAL ACTIVIST William (Bill) Ferguson helped lead a co-ordinated campaign against the draconian NSW Aborigines Protection Board (APB) in the 1930s. Bill spent decades fighting against the systemic oppression that was killing and marginalising his people.

Bill was born on 24 July 1882 at Darlington Point in central NSW, on the country of the Wiradjuri people. Bill’s father was a Scottish immigrant who worked as a rural labourer and a shearer. Bill’s mother, Emily Ford, was an Aboriginal woman who worked at Toganmain station on the Murrumbidgee river.

At 14 years old, Bill began shearing in sheds in the Riverina region of southern NSW and quickly became a member of the AWU (Australian Workers Union). At one point Bill was shed organiser for the union.

Due to his fair skin, Bill did not come under the control of the APB. When shearing, Bill would be paid twice the amount of Aboriginal people under the control of the Board. Raised as a devout Presbyterian, this went against Bill’s belief in equality under God, as well as his trade union principles.

Bill married Margaret Gowans in 1911 and settled in Gulargambone, north of Dubbo, where he re-formed the local branch of the Labor Party, joining the campaign against conscription during the First World War.

After a short stint in the postal service before returning to the shearing sheds, Bill and Margaret settled in Dubbo with their 12 children in 1933. There was already some opposition to discrimination against Aboriginal people by white organisers in the unemployed workers movement and the local Labor Party.

Bill was to draw on his experience as a unionist and a Labor Party member in his forthcoming campaigns for Aboriginal rights.

In NSW the APB was formed in 1883 to control Aboriginal people and take charge of the Reserve lands where many of them lived.

In 1917 NSW Parliament expanded its powers, making it easier to take Aboriginal children from their parents in order to sever them from their communities. This intensified the Stolen Generations in NSW, and the attempt to assimilate Aboriginal people into the broader population. This was a policy of genocide designed to see Aboriginal people eventually disappear.

During the Depression in the early 1930s, Aboriginal people were denied mainstream dole and family endowment payments and forced to relocate to APB stations to subsist on inferior rations. This inflicted widespread malnutrition and shocking health conditions.

Many refused to move and so in 1936, the NSW Parliament moved to increase the APB’s powers. The APB now had the power to forcibly move all Aboriginal people, whether living on the outskirts of towns or on stations, and concentrate them on Aboriginal reserves.

The Act became known as the “Dog Act” amongst Aboriginal people, because it allowed them to be moved around like animals. Previously, only people of “predominantly Aboriginal blood” were to come under the Board’s control. However, under the amended Dog Act, anyone “deemed to have Aboriginal blood” by a justice of the peace or local magistrate was now under the Board’s control.

## The Aborigines Progressive Association

Ferguson had been opposed to the punitive controls the Protection Board exercised over Aboriginal people for some time, but the increase in its powers pushed him to act.

.....  
**Bill was to draw on his experience as a unionist and a Labor Party member in campaigning for Aboriginal rights**  
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He launched the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) on 27 June 1937 in Dubbo. The meeting was attended mostly by Aboriginal people, including some from the nearby Talbragar reserve.

Bill spoke based on information and first hand-accounts from people he had visited and written to on reserves.

He told the audience how rations were withheld from the people at Bulgandramine as an arbitrary punishment, with the community too afraid to report the incident for fear that the manager would give out expulsion orders.

Bill was particularly concerned to outline why the fight for Aboriginal rights was important for the entire working class. He spoke about the low wages paid to Aboriginal workers at Pilliga sawmill, despite a sawmill paying union rates operating in nearby Dubbo. He explained how Aboriginal workers were being used as cheap labour, making wealthy squatters wealthier, and how this was being used to break down working class conditions.

The meeting passed a motion calling for the abolition of the APB, demanding full citizenship rights for all Aboriginal people, and direct representation in Parliament, similar to the situation in Aotearoa (New Zealand) where Maori had their own dedicated seats.

In 1937 Bill visited reserves across NSW and collected information about the conditions and treatment Aboriginal people were subjected to, holding meetings to establish branches of the APA.

He sought out press coverage in order to bring attention to discrimination and abuse, publishing and replying to articles and comments in newspapers such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Bill also used his union and Labor Party connections to gain support for

his cause. He was able to address the NSW Labour Council in October 1937, and after his impassioned speech, it adopted a detailed motion calling for equal rights in wages and unemployment relief, an end to all discrimination and full Aboriginal representation on the APB.

The motion was based on the Communist Party's "Draft Program on Aborigines".

He pushed the sympathetic Labor MP Mark Davidson, representing a part of Western NSW not far from where Ferguson lived in Dubbo, to move to establish a Parliamentary Select Committee into the operations of the Board.

Ferguson was hopeful that the Select Committee would expose the cruelty and mismanagement of the Protection Board and lead to sweeping changes. It heard evidence that at Brewarrina, Angledool, Cumerogunga and Walcha reserves trachoma had been rampant due to overcrowding and poor sanitation.

The Committee also heard of understaffing, with school children taught only two hours a day. Bill was able to give evidence, bring in witnesses, and also cross examine witnesses, including Board officials. However, as the hearings continued, politicians stopped attending. The Select Committee made no report to the government, dying due to political indifference.

But the APA had attracted a number of talented Aboriginal activists, including Jack Patten and Pearl Gibbs, and gained new support from predominantly white organisations such as the Feminist Club, United Women's Association, the Methodist Church, and the Church Missionary Society.

On 12 January 1938, Ferguson and Patten sent copies of a manifesto *Aborigines Claim Citizenship Rights!* to the press. It went out with a notice that the APA would hold a public meeting and march on 26 January to mark 150 years since invasion as a Day of Mourning.

This famous protest was co-organised with Aboriginal activist William Cooper, who travelled for it from Melbourne.

Not all Bill's efforts drew wider support. Mistakenly, the Communist Party criticised the APA as "separatist" when it insisted membership was for Aboriginal people only, and the Day of Mourning was to be organised exclusively for Aboriginal people.

Afterwards, on 31 January Fer-



**Above: Bill Ferguson (holding sign) at the 1938 Day of Mourning protest**

guson, Patten, Gibbs and around 20 Aboriginal people met privately with then Prime Minister Lyons and Minister for the Interior John McEwen. The Prime Minister was presented with a document demanding equal rights, including the same educational opportunities as white people, equal wages, and equal rights to own land and property.

Whilst the Prime Minister would not act on any of these demands, it gave the APA a clear purpose and program for their continuing activism.

### Protection Board

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, the APA began a concerted campaign to have Aboriginal representatives elected to the APB.

This was a more moderate position than earlier APA calls for complete abolition of the APB, crafted to win Labor Party support and concrete reform.

The failure of these reforms to drive any real change eventually saw Ferguson leave the Labor Party in despair.

From 1941-47 Labor held government in NSW. As a result of pressure, it agreed to place two elected Aboriginal representatives on the Board. However, some Labor politicians were determined to keep Bill off.

The APA launched a grassroots campaign to elect Bill and Walter Page to the Board, winning a comfortable majority of votes.

However, the Board refused to accept Walter Page as the "full blood"

Aboriginal representative, contesting his ancestry. The NSW Trades and Labor Council protested, telling its members that an elected Aboriginal representative was being refused office by a Labor government.

When all other nominations were withdrawn, the Labor government gave in. Bill and Page were elected, with Bill serving from 1944-49.

Despite his efforts on the Board, government officials were unresponsive to his demands for Aboriginal rights and self-determination.

The Labor government in power federally under Ben Chifley had also refused to act. Feeling betrayed by the Labor Party and heart-broken, Bill resigned from the Board and cancelled his Labor Party membership after 32 years.

Disillusioned, Bill ran as an independent for the seat of Lawson (containing Dubbo and surrounding districts) in the 1949 federal election. He won just 388 votes. Bill collapsed after addressing an election meeting on 8 December 1949 and died shortly after.

The deepening poverty and discrimination faced by Aboriginal people after the end of the war in 1945, as they were driven out of jobs, and still faced segregation in schools and in country towns, had often driven Bill to despair.

But his decades of activism did much to win sections of the union movement and broader society to the fight against discrimination and racism faced by Aboriginal people.

# 200 YEARS ON: THE REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS OF FRIEDRICH ENGELS

**Adam Adelpour** looks at the important contribution Engels played to the development of Marxist ideas, 200 years on from his birth

FRIEDRICH ENGELS was Karl Marx’s collaborator and co-author of the *Communist Manifesto*, the founding publication of the world communist movement.

He dedicated his life to the aim of workers’ revolution and developed ideas that helped lay the foundation of the Marxist tradition.

Engels began life in 1820 as a child of privilege in the provincial manufacturing town of Barmen in modern day Germany. His family owned manufacturing interests, and he grew up in an environment of religious piety and conservatism under the rule of the Hohenzollern Monarchy.

However, Barmen was not immune to the world shaking events across Europe. The industrial revolution, the development of capitalism and the impact of the French Revolution a few decades before were the foundations of the social and political order.

His exposure to radical political ideas began at school, but solidified when he did his military service in Berlin. He attended university lectures and was initially drawn to the ideas of the German philosopher Hegel.

A group called the Young Hegelians saw in Hegel’s ideas a promise of change and an end to the stifling, conservative and repressive political, social and cultural conditions that they lived under. At their most extreme left their politics were atheist, liberal and republican.

Engels’ Hegelian phase was a long way from his future of barricade fighting, political exile and incitement of proletarian revolution.

The left Young Hegelians wrote cultural criticism which contained veiled barbs directed at the Monarchy and religious dogma.

Despite Young Hegelian rebellion being largely restricted to the realm of

ideas and culture, Engels’ ideas were soon to be profoundly impacted by far more earthly forces.

## The Working Class in England

After moving to England for work in the family business, Engels came into direct contact with the powerful working class Chartist movement.

Shortly before he arrived, Britain had been thrown into turmoil by the Plug Plot riots in 1842. Almost half a million were involved in a general strike, shutting down factories, sabotaging machinery and clashing with police. The eruption was driven by the demand for the vote to remedy dire living and working conditions.

It was in this cauldron of working class rebellion that Engels began to develop many of the key ideas of historical materialism or Marxism, completely independent of Marx himself. Some of these were crystallised in his short book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, published in 1845.

The book describes the abject living conditions of the modern working class in England. Much of its grimy accuracy was a result of the guidance of Engels’ working class partner Mary who was able to shepherd him into the heart of Manchester’s slums.

But the book explains that these conditions were not simply a moral failing, but a product of the dynamics of capitalism.

The revolutionary component of Engels’ argument was that workers could be the agents of change rather than mere victims. He said that because, “the proletariat was called into existence by the introduction of machinery”, capitalism was creating the force that would deliver its destruction. He prophetically argued that England in the 1840s was a glimpse into the future of class conflict in Germany

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**He argued that England in the 1840s was a glimpse into the future of class conflict in Germany and elsewhere**

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and elsewhere as capitalism spread.

Engels described himself as “second fiddle” to Karl Marx, and is often relegated to a place in Marx’s shadow. But this doesn’t do justice to his contribution.

The lifelong relationship between Marx and Engels only made its start because both men were arriving at the same political conclusions independently.

Prior to the publication of the *The Condition of the Working Class*, Marx—who had also frequented Young Hegelian circles—viewed Engels with a degree of contempt. Marx was breaking away from Young Hegelian ideas, and he mistakenly saw Engels as a political apologist for an obsolete set of ideas.

However, Marx warmed to Engels quickly once it became clear that had arrived at the same conclusions about the working class and revolution, saying he, “Arrived by another road...to the same result as I.”

In fact Engels was in advance of Marx in some respects. His direct experience of the workers’ movement in England meant he was the first to grasp the importance of trade unions, and he recognised the importance of political economy even before Marx.

In 1847 they would co-author *The Communist Manifesto*, boldly laying out their common strategy for change and its theoretical foundations in an accessible form. It was Engels, not Marx, who penned many of substantial elements of the Manifesto.

Engels and Marx sharply differed from other socialists of the time, who they described as “utopian socialists”. The likes of Charles Fourier in France and Robert Owen in England recognised the grave ills of capitalism, and concocted elaborate visions of a better world. But their strategy consisted largely of proselytising their ideas to

the powerful who they expected to hand down change from above.

In contrast, Engels and Marx agreed that the battering ram that can deliver social change was to be found in the flesh and blood of the revolutionary working class.

### A spectre is haunting Europe

*The Communist Manifesto* begins with the famous words “A spectre is haunting Europe”. In 1848—immediately after its publication—a wave of revolutions against the Monarchic regimes of Europe broke out. Initially the revolutions were demanding liberal republican government, along the lines of the earlier French Revolution. Marx and Engels threw themselves into the fray.

Engels returned to Germany to join the revolt against the Monarchy on the barricades around Barmen, then, as the revolution collapsed, he joined its last stand south of Frankfurt.

But it was events in France—ruled again by a reactionary Monarchy—that confirmed the predictions of the *Manifesto* most clearly.

Here for the first time the organised working class emerged as an armed wing of the revolution with its own demands and organisation, distinct from those from the middle classes. In addition to liberal demands for freedom of the press and other political rights, workers demanded jobs and employment in vast state workshops.

After the abdication of the King workers came into violent conflict with the liberals who disgraced themselves by deploying the National Guard to crush the workers’ uprising.

The 1848 revolutions were ultimately smashed by a victorious wave of reaction. Revolutionaries were driven into exile.

Marx and Engels fled back to England. Opportunities for practical activity dried up and Marx and Engels were reduced to the status of impoverished political refugees.

Despite this, the following two decades saw Marx produce *Capital*, his treatise on the nature of capitalism, its dynamics and its tendency to sow the seeds of its own destruction through crisis, false scarcity and the creation of a powerful working class.

Engels’ role in the production of *Capital* was two-fold. He played the role of Marx’s editor and primary theoretical sounding board, but he also abandoned many of his own theoretical and political ambitions to resume work in his family’s business in order



**Above: Friedrich Engels pictured in 1864**

to financially support Marx’s work.

### The First International

From the late 1860s there was a revival in class struggle and Marx and Engels returned to the battleground of practical politics. In 1864 Marx helped found the International Working Men’s Association under the banner of the slogan “Workers of the World Unite”.

They published *Capital* shortly after. Engels went on a political offensive to spread the ideas of Marx within the socialist movement in Europe and America.

The establishment of the First International followed the working class support for the boycott of Southern cotton in England during the US Civil War, in opposition to slavery. This was despite the boycott’s devastating effect on English manufacturing areas and on workers’ jobs.

In Europe the First international was also reviled by the ruling classes for its strident support for the 1871 Paris Commune, where workers briefly seized political power in the capital city of a major power for the first time in history.

Engels was able to dedicate himself full time to the revolutionary cause, following his retirement from the family business in 1869.

In this period he consolidated the Marxist theoretical tradition by summing up its tenets in a book titled *Anti-Duhring*, an attack on the ideas of Dr Eugen Duhring, who was gaining popularity among German socialists. The book helped popularise Marxist theory, and was the first Marxist text read by the revolutionaries in Russia

who would go on to found the Bolshevik party.

After Marx died, Engels also produced his ground-breaking analysis of women’s oppression *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. While some of the underlying anthropology has been discredited, the book’s central theoretical argument that women’s oppression is not innate to human biology or society endures as a key weapon in the battle against sexism. His other writings on the environment in *The Dialectics of Nature* highlight the reciprocity between human society and the environment in a way that pre-figures what is now known as ecology.

Engels spent his last years helping guide the growing international socialist movement that he and Marx had helped shape. By the time of Engels’ death in 1895, there were mass socialist parties dedicated to Marxist principles across Europe, most importantly the German Social Democratic party with millions of followers. Just over 20 years later the workers of Russia would seize power, inspired by many of his writings.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, billionaires’ wealth has increased 27.5 per cent to \$14 trillion. Engels predicted a time where, “The war of the poor against the rich, now carried on in detail and indirectly, will become direct and universal.” Two hundred years after his birth—amid pandemic, economic crisis and looming climate catastrophe—Engels’ lifelong commitment to workers’ revolution should serve as an inspiration to all who demand a better world.



# HOLDING THE LINE AGAINST DUTTON PROTEST CAN FREE THE REFUGEES

By Ian Rintoul

FOR REFUGEES 2020 has been book-ended by Tasmanian Senator Jacqui Lambie. In January, Lambie voted with the Coalition to repeal the Medevac legislation. Then in October, the government dropped its attempt to get legislation banning mobile phones from detention centres, when Lambie finally declared her opposition to the laws.

In between, throughout the COVID crisis, with determined protests by refugees inside the hotel-prisons, the refugee movement has doggedly fought for the right to protest outside.

The demonstrations outside the Mantra Hotel in Melbourne and Kangaroo Point hotel in Brisbane have kept the appalling treatment of the hundreds of refugees transferred under the Medevac legislation on the political agenda.

The situation has grown more desperate. The government has forcibly relocated people they regard as “troublemakers” from the hotels to detention centres in an effort to stifle the protests. One of them, Iranian refugee Farhad Rahmati, has been forcibly shifted from Kangaroo Point to BITA and then to Villawood. Another four were forcibly shifted from Kangaroo Point to BITA in mid-November.

Meanwhile the mental health situation grows worse, with increasing numbers of attempted suicides and “resignation syndrome” as people give up hope.

Yet there are cracks appearing. As *Solidarity* goes to press, ten refugees and asylum seekers transferred from Nauru to a Darwin prison-hotel on 4

**Above: The refugees held in the Mantra hotel-prison in Melbourne are among hundreds brought for medical treatment still in detention**

September were released into community detention. Similarly, people needing medical treatment who were transferred from Nauru to Villawood detention on 25 September are also being granted community detention.

When Jacqui Lambie used her website to ask for opinions about how she should vote over the mobile phone bill, she got 100,000 replies; 96,000 telling her to vote against the government ban.

There are few campaigns that could mobilise 96,000 people to a Senator’s online poll. The response is one indication of the reach of the refugee movement. The challenge ahead for the refugee movement is to

mobilise even a proportion of those 96,000 in active opposition to the government.

2020 has been a period of trench-warfare against Morrison and Dutton for the movement. Over the past few months, the movement has held the line with continuing protests to end detention and free the refugees.

Sometimes just holding the line is a victory against an enemy with superior forces. And it can lay the basis for the movement to go on the offensive. That is the challenge for 2021. If we can get all the Medevac refugees out of closed detention, it will be a major blow against the government’s vicious anti-refugee policies.

## Saif’s family separation shows refugee torture

SAIF ALI, a 27-year-old Somali man, has become well known as the refugee in Kangaroo Point hotel separated from his wife and son (Sabah and Sammi) who are living just 29 kilometres away in a Brisbane suburb.

Saif was transferred from Nauru to Australia more than 16 months ago, in June 2019, under the family reunion clause of the Medevac legislation. His wife and son were brought from Nauru in 2017 when Sammi became sick shortly after his birth. The family has been separated for three years.

Saif’s plight drew national attention when a demonstration outside Kangaroo Point in June pressed against the fence chanting, “Let him hug his son.”

Since detention visits were cancelled in March, Saif had only seen his wife and son from the hotel balcony when they were able to come to stand outside the fence that

surrounds the hotel-prison.

In October, in a moment of desperation, Saif attempted suicide. He was subsequently transferred from Kangaroo Point to BITA – behind even higher fences, and even further away from Sabah and Sammi.

Border Force could easily have arranged for Saif to see Sabah and Sammi, but no visits were allowed.

What wasn’t so well-known was that Sabah had needed surgery, and Saif’s request to be with her and look after his son while she was in hospital had been declined.

Sabah is due for more surgery at the end of November, and Saif’s request to be with her has again been rejected, for no reason.

Prisoners being held in Queensland corrective service institutions can now have a maximum of two visitors. Yet there are no visits for Saif and Kangaroo Point and BITA remain closed to visitors.

**The government has moved ‘troublemakers’ from the hotels to detention centres in an effort to stifle the protests**