

# STOP THE KILLING, FREE PALESTINE ISRAEL IS A TERROR STATE



## PALESTINE

Why they are  
right to resist

## CLIMATE

Are world leaders  
finally acting?

## UNIONS

Jane McAlevey's  
organising model

# 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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## Things they say

**Some people may die but it will be way smaller than the flu.**

Virgin Australia CEO Jayne Hrdlicka calling for the borders to be reopened once COVID vaccination is widespread

**When people want to make manoeuvres, they have to find something that you can't do anything about. And one thing I can't do anything about is the day I was born, nor the sex that I was given courtesy of the chromosome interaction, whatever, which caused me to be a male.**

Eric Abetz on his demotion on the Tasmanian Liberals' Senate ticket

**He is going to be in parliament, he has been elected to represent the people of Bowman for three years... He's made mistakes and importantly owned up to them.**

Defence Minister Peter Dutton, explaining why sexist MP Andrew Laming should be able to continue sitting in parliament

**War is not just possible in our region, but likely.**

Liberal Senator and war criminal, Jim Molan, boosts the anti-China warmongering

**Australians do need to realise there's an eventual bill to pay... it won't be fun**

Chris Richardson, director of Deloitte Access Economics, on what's in store when the government decides to start cutting its debt

**They survive because they are provided food and shelter. But should the government support be withdrawn, these people left behind here, they would be dead.**

Father Giorgio Licini, the general secretary of Catholic Bishops conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, on the situation for the refugees and asylum seekers formerly on Manus Island that Australia is holding in PNG

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## Australian arms fuel Yemen war

THE AUSTRALIAN government has approved arms sales to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) all through their bloody and destructive war in Yemen since 2015.

Between 1 July 2015 and 31 March 2021, the Defence Department approved 103 permits for munitions exports to the two countries, knocking back just three. This was despite pleas from the UN for all countries to stop supplying arms for the conflict.

UN investigators have condemned the Saudi and UAE-led military operation as responsible for killing thousands of civilians through air strikes, torture of detainees, the rape of civilians and use of child soldiers. They have contributed to the world's largest humanitarian disaster, with 14 million people on the edge of starvation, massive displacement and over 233,000 dead.

Australia's arms export sales have grown from \$1.5 billion in the 2017-2018 year to \$5.2 billion in 2019-20, after the government launched a new arms industry strategy. Saudi Arabia is a key US ally in the Middle East, receiving US support for its operations in Yemen under Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump, until Joe Biden finally announce a shift in February this year.

## Israeli settler gangs organise racist violence



ALONGSIDE ISRAEL'S ruthless bombing of Gaza, gangs of Israeli settlers have roamed the streets terrorising Palestinians who live inside Israel. The Palestinian minority in towns including Nazareth, Haifa, Jaffa and Lod staged protests in solidarity with Palestinian families facing dispossession in Sheikh Jarrah. Afterwards, extreme right-wing Zionist settlers organised to descend on the Palestinian minority areas, seeing, "settlers that are residents outside of mixed cities and outside of Arab towns, that are organising through social media calling each other to arrange where they will attack tonight and tomorrow, at what time, what to wear, what weapons to bring", Sawsan Zaher, of the Haifa-based rights group Adalah said.

"They are being accompanied by the police, they arrive in right-wing buses to mixed cities with police, and they are not being arrested by the police."

One young Israeli told a reporter that, "we gathered to walk around the city and show it's Jewish." After the Palestinian protests, he commented, "When they get crazy like animals, to shoot one in the chest or in the head, just once is enough and it will be over." Lod, which Palestinians call Lydd, has seen some of the worst violence. In 1948 Israeli soldiers took the land by force and expelled thousands of Palestinian residents. Their assault began with the massacre of 426 Palestinian men, women and children. Ethnic cleansing was designed to ensure a Jewish majority state. The discrimination and violence against Arab Palestinians who remained has never ended.

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

## Police block domestic violence research

QUEENSLAND POLICE refused to allow studies of attitudes to domestic violence among officers, despite evidence of a growing number of them among police ranks.

Three separate researchers, including criminologist Kerry Carrington, told Guardian Australia that Queensland police claimed there was no need for the studies because there were no problems with police attitudes.

The only recent study resulted from a "death review" committee run by the State Coroner.

It ran focus groups of police officers and found they often acted on the basis of "gut feelings" or body language, which the authors concluded was, "concerning when considered alongside the gendered and racialised attitudes that may inform some police decision-making".

Two recent cases have seen Doreen Langham and Kelly Wilkinson murdered by their partners after repeatedly seeking police help—and failing to receive it.

## Stop Morrison's fossil fuel expansion

Continued from back page

The Morrison government has intentionally missed a pivotal moment to prioritise climate action. The increase in government spending brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic provided a chance to move towards climate jobs as part of acting on climate change.

While other governments, such as the Biden administration in the United States, are talking of increasing their targets for cutting emissions to around 50 per cent by 2030, the Morrison Government remains deeply committed to its current climate and energy policy—more gas, and a refusal to change Australia's existing pledge to

**Morrison remains committed to more gas, and a pledge to cut emissions by 26-28 per cent by 2030**

cut emissions by 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Australia is a global leader in fossil fuel trade and extraction, and wants the world to continue its dependence on fossil fuels. As recently as last year, Australia became the world's largest exporter of LNG (liquefied gas). An Australian Conservation Foundation report found that "when we add Australia's exported emissions to our domestic emissions, Australia rockets equal fifth on the list of major global climate polluters, alongside Russia, behind India, the EU, China, and the US".

Morrison's support for gas devel-

opment is designed to promote fossil fuels as a source of jobs. Labor is still not willing to challenge this.

The climate movement needs to begin mobilising again in serious numbers. The high school-led Climate Strike on 21 May will be our first major opportunity. Its call to "fund our future not gas" also dovetails with Aboriginal resistance movements like the Gamilaraay Next Generation, who are fighting the proposed \$3.6 billion Narrabri coal seam gas field in NSW. Building union support and a fight to fund climate jobs will also be key to challenging the Morrison government's destructive fossil fuel obsession.

# EDITORIAL

## Morrison spends up on fossil fuels and election fixes—keep fighting to force him out

SCOTT MORRISON is hoping budget spending will put his failure on sexism and the vaccine rollout behind him.

The budget was a transparent effort at fixing his political problems by pouring money into women's health, childcare and aged care.

It also confirmed his addiction to fossil fuels, with up to \$600 million to build a new gas-fired power station at Kurri Kurri near Newcastle, and \$300 million for other gas plants and projects.

Instead of supporting the transition to renewable energy, Morrison is funding fossil fuels and criticising the market for starting to move away from them.

The announcement came the same day as the International Energy Agency said an immediate end to new fossil fuel projects was necessary for the world to meet climate targets.

Energy experts have universally condemned the spending on the Kurri Kurri plant, saying there is already enough capacity to replace the Liddell coal power plant when it closes in 2023, and that it won't reduce power prices.

Morrison's support for gas is an effort to promote fossil fuels as delivering jobs, and present climate action as a threat to workers. Yet the Kurri Kurri plant will provide just ten ongoing full-time jobs after construction.

The Liberals want to head to an election while concern about the COVID pandemic still lingers, and before any decisions about budget cuts.

But their effort to capitalise on border politics and fear about the pandemic through a ban on flights from India backfired badly. The Indian-Australian community felt targeted, with similar action never taken during COVID surges in the US or Britain. Morrison's border closure didn't just strand Australian citizens but showed his lack of concern for the Indian population in the face of a COVID catastrophe.

The Coalition's focus on getting back to budget surplus has simply been delayed, not abandoned.

While they have postponed a decision on NDIS "independent assessments", they are already preparing for cuts by complaining about the system's growing cost.

The budget cements declining



**Above: Scott Morrison is spending almost \$1 billion on gas power plants and projects**

wages into the future. As journalist Michael Pascoe notes, after tax is factored in, "the government aiming for three years of negative real wages".

The Coalition is helping push down wages through cutting public sector wage increases instead of maintaining modest 2 per cent pay rises.

This means living standards for the vast majority are set to fall.

To add insult to injury, the Coalition is sticking with tax cuts delivering huge handouts to the rich beginning in three years' time. They would see everyone earning from \$45,000 to \$200,000 paying the same rate of tax.

Meanwhile, the Tax Offset for everyone earning under \$126,000 will be axed from next year.

### **No opposition from Labor**

The budget leaves Labor with a problem. The Liberals' embrace of higher spending leaves Labor with little to differentiate themselves.

Leader Anthony Albanese adopted a small target strategy following Labor's loss at the last election. His budget reply speech was more of the same. The only major announcement was funding for 20,000 social housing properties—a start but nowhere near enough to reduce surging house prices.

Instead of serious investment in renewable energy all he could manage was the stunt of a startups scheme and some apprenticeships subsidies.

Pressure for action on climate change, sexism and workers' rights is going to have to come from a fightback

on the streets and in the workplaces, not from Labor.

Morrison shouldn't have been given the chance to brush aside his failure on sexual assault.

High school students in Sydney took to the streets again in May to demand action. But the lack of any larger follow up demonstrations after the huge March 4 Justice protests has made it easier for Morrison to get away with it.

So it's welcome that School Strike for Climate have called nationwide Climate Strike protests for 21 May. More demonstrations need to follow. Joe Biden's talk of more ambitious action leaves Morrison exposed in the lead up to the major UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November.

The anger at Israel's massacres in Gaza and repression against Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and within its own borders can also target the Australian government's complicity. The Liberals are pouring tens of billions into military spending that could go to aged care and higher JobSeeker payments, in order to lock in their support for US imperialism.

Every union campaign and strike for higher wages will help highlight the years of declining wage rises under the Liberals.

Resistance from below is the way to build an alternative to the Liberals' agenda of warmongering, wage cuts, sexism and climate chaos—and a fight for a world run in the interests of people and planet not profits.

.....  
**The Liberals' embrace of higher spending leaves Labor with little to differentiate themselves**

# Youth survivors march against Morrison’s ongoing failure on sexism

By Matilda Fay

A CROWD of 200 people, most of them high school students and young women, gathered at Sydney Town Hall on 8 May to protest Scott Morrison’s ongoing failure to act on sexism. The rally was called by Youth Survivors 4 Justice, a group of mainly high school women and survivors.

Shanaya Donovan, a 17-year-old Darug, Dhungutti and Gumbaynggirr woman and one of the rally organisers, laid the blame for sexism squarely at the feet of the Liberal government, telling the crowd, “it starts in government and it trickles down to the rest of society like a giant domino that we can’t stop unless we band together”.

In the wake of the rape crisis in parliament, the Coalition government have put more Liberal women in cabinet positions.

But as Feiyi Zhang, a community sector worker and member of the Australian Services Union, put it, “services are drastically underfunded and overwhelmed by the people they need to support. They don’t have the staff and resources to assist. DV West alone had to turn away 1280 women and children last year, half of the number who sought their help.”

“The government has now cut JobSeeker despite poverty being a key determinant in whether women leave violent relationships. Many women will stay with abusive partners because there are no other options for them to financially survive.”

The rally demanded an increase in the JobSeeker rate to \$80 a day, adequate funding for domestic violence and women’s health services, and legislating enthusiastic consent and expanding education around sex, consent and sexism in schools.

Speeches from survivors revealed the depth of pain at the heart of the issue. Survivor and activist Amanda Matthews spoke of her own childhood trauma, emphasising how sexual violence often takes place in the home. She called on everyone to “teach young people, teach children that it’s ok to speak up” about sexual abuse.

Jenny Leong, NSW Greens MP for Newtown, called on governments to, “not pretend that any of the traumas that people here have gone through are things that we cannot solve. We can. There are people in charge who have an interest in keeping that trauma happening.” Wider issues like homeless-



**Above: The Youth Survivors for Justice march in Sydney**

ness, police violence and privatisation all exacerbate sexism, she argued.

On the same day in Brisbane, 150 protesters rallied near Liberal MP Andrew Laming’s office, calling on him to resign over his repeated harassment

of women—and on Scott Morrison to kick him out of the Liberal Party now, not at the next election.

It is going to take more protests to push back sexism and tear up the system that promotes it.

## Wide support for Climate Strike at Sydney Uni

IN RECENT months, activists at Sydney Uni have built wide support for the Climate Strike, pulling off the first mass Student General Meeting (SGM) since 2007. The meeting took place on 28 April, after a successful petition campaign to call the meeting got over 1000 signatures.

Activists held daily stalls and lecture announcements in dozens of classes to advertise the meeting, as well as stepping up poster and chalking efforts in the final days beforehand, resulting in an impressive level of awareness on campus. We also called through every single person who signed the petition for the SGM to ask them to attend.

The meeting voted to join the May 21 Climate Strike and build the widest possible shut down of campus, calling on the Interim Vice Chancellor Stephen Garton to commit to not penalise staff and students who join it. The second demand was already met before the meeting even happened. While this showed the importance of our work in building the SGM, the university has not shut down classes or operations, nor has it widely advertised the position of no penalty.

We needed 200 students to turn up to meet the official requirement

for a SGM, and managed to get 227 students there, with supporters taking the total number in attendance to over 250. The energy in that crowd was clear when the meeting voted unanimously in support of the motion.

The fact that most lectures are still online and only smaller tutorials are being held on campus made this even more impressive.

The meeting was opened by SRC President Swapnik Sanagavarapu, with speeches from Environment Collective members Lauren Lancaster, Tiger Perkins and India Pardoel, who set the tone for the meeting, telling students that, “Corporate and political interests destroying our planet for profit will not drive this transition. We urgently need to build a mass movement that mobilises the collective power of workers.”

Chants included “Build solar, build wind. Strike till we win.” and “One struggle one fight. Climate justice, workers rights.”

The effort at Sydney Uni has proved that students can be a leading force in the climate movement, with strong politics that can orient a core of society around the focus on working class action needed to win.

**Angus Dermody**

.....  
**‘Services are drastically underfunded and overwhelmed by the people they need to support.’**

# Budget spending can't hide Liberals' big business agenda

By David Glanz

THE LIBERALS are preparing for the next election by spending money on issues that have hurt them in recent months—aged care and violence against women. But their budget offers no real solutions and is riddled with nasty measures that illustrate their real agenda.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg was happy to bill the budget as a cash splash and was rewarded with headlines such as “Everyone’s a winner, baby” (*The Age*), “Full-strength recovery” (*Herald Sun*) and “Super spender event” (*The Australian*).

The government is pumping tens of billions into the economy over the coming year to maintain the post-COVID economic bounce.

But Frydenberg’s already signalled he plans to turn off the tap after the election, cutting the deficit from \$106 billion in the coming year to \$57 billion in 2024-25.

And even the big spending increases fall well short of what is needed for real change.

In the case of aged care, the government has failed to make the fundamental reforms recommended by the royal commission—including needs-based funding, mandated minimum staffing levels and a requirement for registered nurses on-site at all times.

Extra funds that will flow to home care operators will not be tied to improving services, allowing unscrupulous private operators to cream off even higher profits.

The government’s gestures towards women also fall well short. As ACTU president Michele O’Neil put it: “This budget contains \$17.9 billion in tax write-offs for big business and only \$1.1 billion for women’s safety over the next four years.”

There is no new money to extend paid parental leave and the government rejected a recommendation to include superannuation on the payments.

The cut in childcare costs only helps families with two or more children in care—and the measure doesn’t start until July next year.

The plan to help single parent families (overwhelmingly women) buy a home with a 2 per cent deposit will apply to just 2500 people a year.

Meanwhile, as the ABC noted: “There was zero support for women



**Above: Morrison’s budget is designed to get his through the next election**

on the pension who don’t have a lot of super and don’t own their house.”

Government spending on universities will *fall* over coming years, from \$7.56 billion in 2021-22 to \$7.17 billion in 2023-34, setting the scene for even more job cuts on campuses.

## Nasty measures

There were some genuinely nasty measures hidden in the budget small print. New permanent residents are banned from claiming welfare for four years. Newly unemployed people’s JobSeeker payments will be backdated to when they submit a job plan, not to the date they first register.

These two measures will rip around \$200 million a year from the poor—while the government is spending \$90 billion on a dozen submarines.

No such worries for big business and the rich, who are set to gain \$62 billion in tax cuts and subsidies according to the Greens. While workers will not get their modest tax cuts until later this year, businesses can claim instant cash-back for buying equipment.

There’s plenty of support for fossil fuels, with \$58.6 million for gas projects and \$30 million for early works on a new gas generator in Port Kembla.

The budget contains \$264 million to fund new carbon capture and storage projects—an unproven technology that green-washes the continuing use

of fossil fuels.

And there are hundreds of millions—the government won’t admit the exact amount—for Australia’s remaining oil refiners.

Labor responded with a welcome nod towards building more housing. But it had no more to say on climate change than the Liberals.

And its scheme to encourage young entrepreneurs is little more than a gimmick.

Critically, Anthony Albanese was mute on whether a Labor government would stop the next giant round of tax cuts in 2024-25, due to flow almost exclusively to the wealthy and expected to cost \$95 billion over five years.

Frydenberg’s budget figures rely on everyone being vaccinated by the end of the year, an opening of international borders in mid-2022 and iron ore export prices remaining high.

He is also gambling on consumer spending and business investment to drive the economy as he winds back public spending.

But low wage growth means the consumer spending boom is likely to wane.

And business capital spending has been falling for years—from \$37 billion a quarter in December 2015 to \$31 billion before the pandemic hit.

If workers are to avoid paying the price of a fundamentally weak economy, there will need to be a fight for the wage rises and services we need.

.....  
**The cut in childcare costs only helps families with two or more children in care—and doesn’t start until July next year**

# ‘He was treated like a dog’: Bailey Mackander’s father on his son’s death in custody

BAILEY MACKANDER was a 20-year-old Wiradjuri man who died in 2019 while in the custody of Kariyong Correctional Centre near Gosford in NSW. Bailey was on remand at the time of his death awaiting trial. He had been experiencing acute psychological issues and was placed in a Risk Intervention Team (RIT) cell, a small solitary cell on suicide watch. In the cell he had a severe and prolonged panic attack with chest pains, vomiting and struggles to breathe. Bailey urgently needed medical assistance, but was left to suffer.

Eventually, after telling guards he had swallowed batteries and razor blades, Bailey was taken to Gosford Hospital, but was discharged almost immediately. On the way back to the prisoner transport van, Bailey jumped over the side of the car park wall, falling ten metres to his death. Niko Chlopicki and Padraic Gibson from *Solidarity* spoke with Bailey’s father David Mackander on the first day of the inquest into Bailey’s death held at the Lidcombe Coroner’s Court.



**Above: Bailey Mackander hoped to go back to working in construction**

## Can you talk about how Bailey came to be locked up? Do you believe there were alternatives to prison?

Bailey was unsentenced in prison. He was the driver of a car they found drugs in. I have a letter we found where someone is thanking Bailey for taking the rap for them, so it looks like he was actually innocent on these charges. I’m not trying to say Bailey was an angel. He did have an addiction, he had done the wrong thing in the past when it comes to drugs and he needed help.

He was constantly trying to get approval to do drug rehabilitation programs but they just wouldn’t organise this for him in prison. He was bashed so many times in there and he was constantly getting moved. He never got the help he required.

I found another letter in his belongings. It was saying that he couldn’t wait to get back and work for me [in construction] and see his little brothers and just have a proper family again.

But while ever the prison population is expanding like this, the people in there are not going to get help. People in Bailey’s situation need rehabilitation. But as we can see with

Bailey, the system just doesn’t care. We’re Indigenous and they just think you’re a piece of meat or a mongrel. It’s not right.

He was crying out, pleading for help and they were just teasing him through the cell. That’s the culture.

What gets me is the prison guards are paid good money and they chose to go into the profession. If you’re going to treat someone like a dog, then choose a new career. No one’s making you stay. If that culture doesn’t change, we are never going to get the help for our loves ones that are in there.

## What happened in the days leading up to Bailey’s death?

They had put him in an RIT cell, that is apparently so vile that whenever you put someone with mental issues in there, it only makes things worse for them.

Bailey was pleading to see a psychiatrist, pleading to see a doctor, pleading for anyone to come and help him. He swallowed things. He was so desperate to get out of that cell.

Right at the end, in the last two days, Tracey [Bailey’s mother] was constantly ringing up and talking to people, begging for help for her son and they just would not get back to her.

It seems that the mental health nurse they put Tracey through to at one point was actually in Silverwater, a totally different jail. They just don’t care.

## How was Bailey treated at the hospital?

Bailey had swallowed things, but they didn’t use the proper equipment to detect anything inside him. We’ve got statements now that say this was an error. No psychiatric assessment was done.

In one of their earlier statements that came from the hospital, they mentioned that they try and get inmates in and out really quick, because it makes the other patients feel uncomfortable [to have them in hospital]. So there is no humanity in their treatment.

## What would you like to see happen out of this inquest?

If there’s no accountability for Bailey’s death, we will never be able to change the culture and fix this situation for everyone else who has loved ones in jail. The Gosford hospital have got a lot to answer for, Corrective Services have a huge amount to answer for and Justice Health as well. None of them did what they were paid to do and they need to be held accountable.

.....  
**‘He was crying out, pleading for help and they were just teasing him through the cell.’**  
**—David Mackander**

# Australia beats the drums of war with China and fuels conflict

By James Supple

AUSTRALIA'S RULERS are feeding a conflict that could see war between two nuclear-armed powers, the US and China. It's madness.

Recent weeks have seen a barrage of official comments talking up the prospect of war. First it was senior public servant Mike Pezzullo, warning staff on Anzac Day that the "drums of war" were beating and the country had to be prepared to fight.

Then newly minted Defence Minister Peter Dutton gave a series of interviews, declaring that the prospect of a Chinese attack on Taiwan "should not be discounted".

Australia was "already under attack", he claimed, through cyber hacking against businesses and government organisations.

All this comes following months of increasing tensions between the Australian government and China.

The hyped-up rhetoric is a sign the Australian government wants to prepare us for the chance of actual military conflict and justify increased military spending. Dutton told the media he wanted to have a "more frank discussion with the public" about China's intentions.

A propaganda offensive to build support for military confrontation has followed.

Dutton tried to put the blame solely on China, saying its government had been "very clear about their strategy, their approach and their desires". The media has marched in lockstep, with even *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* fanning the anti-China offensive, running interviews with Peter Dutton and breathless stories on "the military view" that there was a "high likelihood" of war, based on leaked comments from an SAS briefing.

Although Labor has criticised the government's language, it is in full agreement on the underlying approach. Former Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, despite criticising Dutton, agreed "changes in Chinese policy and posture under a much more assertive Xi Jinping" were ultimately to blame.

But the Australian government, like its US ally, has gone out of its way to inflame conflict.

After introducing new "foreign interference" offences in 2018, it last year gave itself the power to cancel



**Above: A war between major powers China and the US could be catastrophic**

any agreement with a foreign power by state governments, universities or councils. Both were aimed squarely at China, with Victoria's token participation in the Belt and Road investment program the first to be torn up.

The Australian government also made a point of demanding humiliating terms for the investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic in China. Before that Australia led the way in banning Chinese firm Huawei from its 5G network, in a move that has been followed by US allies including the UK, Canada and India. The company's profits have taken a big hit as a result.

Australia has also stepped up naval operations in the South China Sea, where China has built bases on a series of islands with disputed ownership.

China has responded with a series of trade bans targeting Australian exports.

## US power

What's behind all this are growing fears in the US about the threat China poses to its own power. In global terms the US has been the dominant military and economic power since 1945—and will remain so for decades.

But China's rapid economic growth, and its enormous population, mean it has the potential to eclipse the US as the world's largest economy and build a powerful military. This is a challenge to the US's capacity to write global rules and bend other states to its will.

This has seen the US adopt a strategy of trying to weaken China. President Joe Biden has maintained Trump's trade tariffs and technology bans on selected Chinese companies and is working to shore up alliances with China's neighbours Japan and India.

China is still Australia's most valuable export market, worth \$13.4 billion between January and March, due above all to iron ore.

Yet the Australian ruling class remains determined to throw its weight behind continued US supremacy.

The US alliance remains central to Australian policy, not because of any US bullying, but because Australia's rulers see it as ensuring their own power in the region.

Australia is a regional imperialist power in its own right, with military spending greater than Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines combined. It has historically sought to dominate the island states of the South Pacific, including Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, in order to exclude military rivals and secure sea lanes.

As Dutton himself put it: "There are many approaches to Australia from the north and the west ... we need to make sure we are in a position to defend those waters."

China is an authoritarian one-party state. But in Australia, our main responsibility is preventing our own government from stoking the drive to war—and ending the US alliance that is feeding it.

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**A propaganda offensive to build support for military confrontation has followed**

# Labor backs Coalition's indefinite detention powers

By Ian Rintoul

ABOUT 100 people rallied outside Brisbane's detention centre (BITA) on Saturday 15 May calling for freedom for refugees.

The protest came just two days after the government rammed through legislation that dramatically entrenches its powers to indefinitely detain refugees.

The misnamed Migration Amendment (Clarifying International Obligations for Removal) Act 2021 does not clarify the government's international obligations to refugees at all. In fact, the new amendments allow the Minister to remove protection obligations from refugees whose visas have been cancelled.

Shamefully, Labor maintained its more than 20-year history of bipartisan support for anti-refugee laws by voting with the Coalition to guarantee the government's power to indefinitely detain refugees and potentially to deport refugees to their home countries.

Labor's consistent bipartisan support for anti-refugee policies was established in 2001. The then Labor leader, Kim Beazley, after initially saying that Labor would oppose the Howard government's border protection laws, quickly capitulated to support the Coalition expelling the Tampa refugees.

The legislation included excising islands from Australia's migration zone in order to prevent asylum seekers making visa applications, and allowing the navy to remove asylum boats from Australian waters. It established the first version of offshore detention in Nauru and PNG.

Labor is boasting that it managed to include two changes to the government's latest Bill; one to review the legislation in two years' time and another that provides that any ministerial decision to overturn a refugee determination can be appealed. But these small changes cannot conceal the infamy of Labor's latest failure to defend refugee rights.

The government's legislation is designed to pre-empt the High Court's decision concerning a Syrian refugee (ALJ20) who had been detained after his visa was cancelled in 2014, under section 501 of the Migration Act, following a criminal conviction.

In the Federal Court, a single judge found that ALJ20 was unlawfully detained because the government



**Above: Refugee detention on Christmas Island**

had made no effort to remove him to any other country and was not going to return him to Syria. In an unprecedented move, the court ordered that he be released.

The government appealed the ALJ20 decision to the High Court, which is yet to hand down its decision. Regardless of any High Court ruling, the government's new amendments change the Migration Act to ensure that refugees whose visas are cancelled can be indefinitely detained.

## Justice denied

Indefinite immigration detention that is separate from, and in addition to, any sentence for a criminal conviction goes against accepted ideas of justice.

The fundamental lack of justice in immigration detention is worse than that. The Minister can refuse to grant a visa to people even when they are found to be refugees, if they fail the character test.

The visa of anyone who is sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 12 months is automatically cancelled. Any person who is convicted of any offence—even trivial ones—while they are in immigration detention also automatically fails the character test.

Ironically anyone who is convicted of escaping the injustice of immigration detention also fails the character test. Since the discovery of an unused tunnel in Yongah Hill detention centre in WA in May, a search warrant alleging property damage has been executed against three people there.

Indefinite detention was enshrined

in law by the High Court in the Al-Kateb case in 2004.

The Al-Kateb decision declared immigration detention to be administrative rather than punitive and that detention was lawful as long as there was some process happening or arrangements being made for deportation, even if in fact that person could not be deported and there was no immediate prospect of them being deported.

There have been many cases since Al-Kateb that have confirmed that indefinite detention is Australian law. Although there have been cases in which the High Court or High Court judges have said "at some point" administrative detention can become punitive, somehow that "point" has never arrived.

ALJ20 was the first decision since Al-Kateb that had provided some hope that the courts had finally found there were limits to detention.

The Migration Amendment (Clarifying International Obligations for Removal) Act 2021 snuffs out that hope. Indefinite detention is L-A-W, law.

The new law will not affect refugees currently in the community. The power to review refugee determinations applies only to refugees whose visas are cancelled.

Neither will the amendments impact directly on the legal cases presently being run for the Medevac refugees who are still in detention.

But the new laws show, yet again, that there is no justice in the courts. It is protest action, not legal action, that is going to free the refugees.

**The government's legislation is designed to pre-empt the High Court's decision concerning a Syrian refugee (ALJ20)**

## Palestine strikes ‘from the river to the sea’ to defy Israeli terror

ISRAEL HAS unleashed terror on Palestinians, bombing Gaza and killing at least 215, including 61 children, in a week.

The bombardment has left the two million inhabitants of Gaza, more than half of them refugees, with no safe tap water and limited electricity.

This is the fourth Israeli war against the Palestinians of Gaza, following attacks in 2007, 2012 and 2014.

Since 2007, the enclave has been under an Israeli and Egyptian blockade that has gutted its economy and deprived its inhabitants of food, fuel and medicine.

But Palestinians are fighting back. On 18 May, they held a general strike across Israel and the occupied territories.

As Palestinian journalist Rami Younis put it: “It’s a historical event. For the first time since 1936—that’s 12 years before the Nakba, the catastrophe of the Palestinian people, or the founding of the state of Israel—for the first time ever, we are striking, all over Palestine, from the river to the sea.”

The strike was apparently first called by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel. This is an umbrella group of Palestinian councils and political parties inside Israel’s borders and has semi-official status in Israel.

Palestinian teachers’ unions, lecturers’ unions and the lawyers’ Bar Association in the West Bank announced their support for the strike. Palestinian prisoners’ organisations said they would join it.

It was also backed by the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign.

*Middle East Eye* reports that unlike previous strikes—symbolic actions called by the Palestinian Authority’s ruling party Fatah—this one is “pushed and organised by ordinary Palestinians”. This time, Fatah and the Palestinian Authority fell in behind the strike, declaring that all public sector institutions in the West Bank would shut down.

The strike builds on weeks of resistance, including within Israel itself. Palestinians have taken to the streets in at least 11 towns and cities, including Lydda—known as Lod by Israelis—Nazareth, Haifa and Jaffa.

One Palestinian news source reported protests took place in more than 200 places across the West



Bank—met with fierce repression by the occupying Israeli military.

There was a major protest in Bethlehem and in other cities including Tulkarem, Qalqilya and Hebron.

Significantly, there have also been protests in solidarity at the borders in neighbouring countries, Lebanon and Jordan. Some protesters at both demonstrations crossed the border.

### Dispossession

This latest conflict was sparked by an attempt to steal Palestinian homes in the East Jerusalem district of Sheikh Jarrah.

Video went viral of an Israeli settler arguing with a Palestinian woman in the garden of her East Jerusalem home as he said: “If I don’t steal it, someone else will steal it.”

Settlers are using a law passed in 1970, a mere three years after Israel illegally invaded and occupied East Jerusalem, to “legally” force Palestinians out of their homes if Israeli courts decree that the land was owned by Jews before the arrival of Palestinians. Yet hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were dispossessed in 1948 with the formation of Israel have no right to return.

The institutionalised racism of the Israeli legal system and the seizure of land by settlers on the West Bank have reduced Palestinian territory to a fraction of its former self. Palestine is now limited to Gaza and fragments of the West Bank.

**Above: Palestinians protest on the day of the general strike in the West Bank city of Ramallah**

All the while, the United States and its allies, including Australia, continue to provide almost unconditional support to Israel as a loyal ally in a region where most people are hostile to Western imperialism.

Scott Morrison has urged “restraint”, refusing to condemn the bombardment of Gaza and saying Israel has the right to defend itself.

At the same time, his government is considering negotiating a free trade agreement with Israel to boost the \$1.3 billion annual trade between the two countries.

Israel’s brutal bombing of Gaza underscores why the respected NGO, Human Rights Watch, last month issued a report declaring that Israel is guilty of crimes of apartheid against Palestinians.

It stated that Israeli authorities “have dispossessed, confined, forcibly separated and subjugated Palestinians by virtue of their identity to varying degrees of intensity.

“... these deprivations are so severe that they amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution.”

Socialists stand with the Palestinians and support their fight for liberation. There can be no justice without the formation of a single, democratic state with equal rights for Muslims, Jews and Christians, and which guarantees the right of return for all Palestinian refugees forced from their homes since 1948.

**Human Rights Watch last month issued a report declaring that Israel is guilty of crimes of apartheid against Palestinians**

# PALESTINIANS ARE RIGHT TO RESIST—AND CAN INSPIRE WIDER REVOLT

Israel's latest assault has exposed it as a racist, violent state. People who say 'both sides' must end violence are really siding with the oppressor, argues **Nick Clark**

TWO RECENT quotes sum up the regime of violence that Israel forces on Palestinians. The first was a chant by Israelis tearing through Palestinian neighbourhoods—"Death to Arabs." That's the murderous hatred towards Palestinians by Israelis who for more than 70 years have driven them from their homes.

The second was a threat by Defence Minister Benny Gantz to resistance groups in Gaza.

"Israel is not preparing for a ceasefire," Gantz said. "Only when there is complete quiet can we talk about calm."

That's the punishment for Palestinians who dare to fight back—bombed into silence. And that's why it's obscene to talk of Israel's "right to defend itself" while calling for "an end to violence on both sides".

In practice it means denying Palestinians the right to resist, and granting Israel the right to bomb them into submission if they do.

It also means ignoring the source of the violence. As Israel's history shows, it is founded on racism and violence towards Arabs designed to keep them in a ghettoised minority. Its role as the US's enforcer in the Middle East has made it a highly militarised society.

For Palestinians, violence is a fact of life. Inside Israel's borders they face discrimination, poverty and harassment by Israeli citizens and police.

In the Gaza Strip, there are young Palestinian adults who have grown up under siege. In the 14 years since Israel first imposed its blockade, it has pounded Gaza with countless airstrikes and waged three devastating wars. The latest assault looks set to become the fourth.

And in east Jerusalem and the West Bank, Palestinians live under a repressive Israeli military regime. Soldiers restrict their movement with

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**Israel is not "defending itself" when it bombs Gaza or shoots down protesters—it is enforcing a system of violent oppression**  
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checkpoints, raid their houses, and protect the settlers who attack them.

Palestinian academic and activist Mark Muhammad Ayyash described growing up under the constant threat of violence in an article for Al Jazeera:

"We would regularly be confronted with armed Israeli civilians walking around with their guns out in the open, asserting their supremacy, reminding us that we ought not to look at them the wrong way or else," he wrote.

"Conversations between us children would turn to stories we heard about torture methods that the Israelis use, the beating a friend or relative took at the hands of Israeli soldiers, an armed Israeli civilian cursing and spitting on a Palestinian, the long imprisonment and suffering of relatives and friends.

"Certainly things seem worse today than they were in those days. Nevertheless, those days and stories pile up one on top of the other, along with experiences of violent acts and events, building and instilling in Palestinians a state of fear."

Throughout their history, many Palestinians have decided that, rather than living in a state of fear, they're going to resist. Whenever—and however—they do resist, they're met with brutal and often lethal repression that makes violence not only justified, but necessary. When Palestinians are shot down for protesting, as thousands were in Gaza during mass protests in 2018, it is hypocrisy to demand they be peaceful.

Israel is not "defending itself" when it bombs Gaza or shoots down protesters—it is enforcing a system of violent oppression. When Palestinians fight back, they are challenging that oppression.

They have the right to do so—with rocks or with rockets.

Palestinian resistance has taken different forms throughout its history.

There have been mass protests, uprisings and strikes. And there have also been heroic campaigns of armed struggle aimed at inflicting defeats on Israel's military.

There is an important difference between the two—but it's not whether resistance is violent or non-violent. And often the different struggles are linked.

For instance, when Palestinian resistance groups in Gaza began launching rockets this month, they said it was in defence of protesters in Jerusalem.

Yet it wasn't the rockets that terrified the Israeli state. It was the fact that the protests in Jerusalem threatened to spread across Palestine, including inside Israel's borders.

## Battle

On the same day that Gantz threatened, "Gaza will burn" he also warned, "Our internal divisions are what threaten us. We must not win the battle in Gaza and lose the battle at home."

For decades Palestinians in Israel have been brutalised by an Israeli police force that considers them an enemy within.

But now Palestinian protesters have them rattled. Israel's politicians and generals know that protests can become uprisings that spread—and take years to put down.

They are much more confident that they can contain armed struggle. That's not just because Israel's military is more powerful by far than the resistance groups it faces.

In fact, armed resistance has inflicted defeats on Israel in the past. In 2006, Israel invaded Lebanon claiming it would crush the armed Lebanese movement Hizbollah. Weeks later, Hizbollah's fighters forced Israel to retreat.

And in 2014, Israel ended its

all-out war in Gaza—which killed 2251 Palestinians—after seven weeks without inflicting a decisive defeat on Hamas.

Yet armed struggle has never come close to ending the occupation or Israel’s apartheid regime.

Resistance groups use armed struggle as a tactic to force Israel, and the US and its other Middle East allies, into negotiations and concessions.

They want to force the US and Israel to accommodate them as leaders of a Palestinian state. This leads them to make concessions of their own. In the 1970s, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) waged armed struggle against the occupation.

They relied on the support of Arab states in the region, which they hoped could be drawn into war on their behalf. The problem was that many of those rulers had ties with the US and Britain, which dominated the Middle East.

So the PLO was careful not to challenge them. Arab rulers sometimes found the PLO useful—but also turned against it. In Jordan, where the PLO grew so powerful it became a rival power to the state, the regime carried out a massacre of Palestinians.

More and more, the PLO began looking for ways to be accepted as legitimate negotiating partners with Israel.

One consequence of this was that they abandoned the goal of reclaiming all Palestinian land. Instead, they accepted the promise of a “mini-state” alongside Israel.

In 1993, the PLO renounced armed struggle in favour of a “peace process” that promised them that state. In reality, the deal it led to left them under the thumb of Israel.

Hamas and other Islamist groups emerged as an alternative to the PLO in the wake of the deal. But they follow the same strategy.

Hamas also looked to the support of other Middle Eastern regimes such as Iran. Years of siege in the Gaza Strip has pushed Hamas into deals with the Western-backed Egyptian regime.

The regime helps to enforce the siege of Gaza. But every time Hamas fights back, it also looks to Egypt to intervene and “mediate” on its behalf.

Despite what Israel claims, Hamas has also suggested it’s prepared to make concessions in return for control of a Palestinian mini-state.

## Uprisings across Middle East

The most significant challenge Is-



**Above: Palestinians protest in East Jerusalem**

rael has ever faced didn’t come from armed resistance groups. It came when ordinary people rose up across Palestine—the First Intifada.

It was sparked in 1987 by a shocking act of brutality. Hundreds of Palestinians were returning home from a day’s work in Israel when they witnessed a gruesome killing.

An Israeli tank transporter drove at a line of workers’ cars at a checkpoint—crushing four Palestinians to death.

Funerals for three of the men that night turned into a 10,000-strong demonstration. Israeli soldiers tried to crush every protest with lethal violence. But with each killing came more funerals and more demonstrations until the whole of Gaza—and then the whole of Palestine—was in revolt.

Activists’ committees rooted in every neighbourhood, town and village coordinated the rebellion. The most brutal repression by the Israeli state couldn’t crush it.

For five years, Israel was bogged down in an uneven war it seemingly couldn’t win. In January 1988 the Israeli newspaper the Jerusalem Post wrote, “The streets in Gaza, the West Bank and in East Jerusalem are in effective control of the youth. It is a case of our 20-year-olds battling their 20-year-olds. Ours using armour, helicopters and guns, theirs, clubs, rocks and primitive Molotov cocktails.”

Such images of Palestinians standing up to the might of Israel’s military with little more than rocks and petrol

bombs exposed the reality of the occupation. Support for the Palestinians grew—crucially across the Middle East.

Arab rulers declared support for the intifada. But they suppressed solidarity demonstrations, fearing that they could turn into revolts of their own.

In Algeria, a mass movement against the government took inspiration from the intifada. Opposition leaders told protesters to “unite and take measures into your own hands like the Palestinians”.

The solidarity movement in Egypt quickly turned its fire on its own government’s close relationship with Israel and the US.

The biggest fear of the US-backed regimes in the Middle East was that the revolt could spill out of Palestine. This eventually pushed Israel into signing the 1993 peace deal with the PLO that aimed to curb the resistance.

Yet Israel and the Arab regimes remain terrified that Palestinian resistance could inspire wider revolts.

In other Arab countries supporters of Palestine can see how the struggle is linked to the fight against their own dictators. That’s why during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, people stormed the Israeli embassy in Cairo and forced the new regime to open its border with Gaza.

And it’s why the Arab regimes that recently signed deals with Israel are now demanding it halts its assault on the Palestinian resistance—because they fear where it might lead.

**Socialist Worker UK**

# ARE WORLD LEADERS FINALLY ACTING ON CLIMATE CHANGE?

Recent pledges from Joe Biden and other wealthy nations suggest deep emissions cuts are on the way. But they go nowhere near what's needed argues **James Supple**

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden's first moves on climate change have put renewed pressure on Scott Morrison. Morrison has refused to increase Australia's pathetic target of 26-28 per cent emissions reduction by 2030. The figure was set back in 2013 when Tony Abbott was still prime minister.

Joe Biden used his virtual summit on Earth Day in late April to announce a doubling of the US's climate target to a 50-52 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030.

Other rich countries also announced an increase in ambition, with the EU aiming for 55 per cent by 2030, and Japan for 44-48 per cent compared to 2005 levels.

After Donald Trump's efforts to completely derail global action, these figures seem impressive. But they are still nowhere near enough to stop dangerous global heating.

The world has already warmed by at least 1.1 degrees since 1880, according to NASA. This has led to more powerful bushfires, storms and heatwaves, including the unprecedented fires here in the summer of 2019-20.

The Paris climate summit in 2015, on the advice of the scientific body the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), agreed that the world should aim to limit warming to 1.5 degrees, giving the potentially catastrophic consequences beyond that.

But even the increased targets world leaders are now promising would likely produce a catastrophic 2.4 degree increase.

Even at 1.5 degrees, climate scientist Will Steffen warns: "Heatwaves, droughts, bushfires and intense rain events will become even more severe. Sea levels will rise, species will

become extinct and crop yields will fall. Coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, will decline by up to 90 per cent."

A report by Australia's Climate Council released in April warned that inaction meant it was now "almost certain" the planet would exceed 1.5 degrees of heating.

This also carries the danger of detonating feedback effects, like ice sheet collapses or the release of vast stores of frozen methane in the Arctic, that could trigger runaway temperature increases making vast areas of the planet uninhabitable for humans.

In order to stabilise the climate wealthy nations like Australia and the US will need to use less carbon than their share of the global population implies.

This is because developing nations and those with a lower standard of living like China and India are still heavily reliant on fossil fuels to drive economic development—a situation that will not change without massive technology transfers from rich countries.

In India, for instance, 13 per cent of the population are still not connected to the electricity grid.

The wealthy nations are responsible for the bulk of the historic emissions that have pushed carbon pollution to dangerous levels.

As the Climate Council argues, rich nations like Australia need to radically reduce emissions by more like 75 per cent by 2030, or at least 57-63 per cent for the US, according to Climate Action Tracker.

Even Biden's new pledge falls far short of this.

Nor is it clear each country will even meet their new targets. Under

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**Australia's Climate Council has warned that it was now "almost certain" the planet would exceed 1.5 degrees of heating**

the Paris Agreement negotiated in 2015 to coordinate global action on emissions, country pledges are completely voluntary and non-binding.

## Biden's plans

In the US, Biden's key policy to meet his target is his infrastructure and jobs plan.

Around half, between \$1 trillion and \$1.3 trillion, is dedicated to climate spending, according to an assessment by academic Adam Tooze.

This sounds impressive, but it is spread over eight years and amounts to just 0.5 per cent of GDP per year. A comparable figure in Australia would be \$9 billion a year—one-fifth of annual defence spending and pathetic compared to what is needed.

Bernie Sanders, with the support of climate activists such as Bill McGibben, has proposed a \$16.3 trillion spending plan as necessary to meet the task of slashing emissions.

Spending on this scale is needed within the next ten years not just to reach 100 per cent renewable energy, but to dramatically increase the use of public transport, replace much of air travel with high-speed rail, replace appliances using gas for heating and cooking, and retool manufacturing to run on zero carbon energy sources like hydrogen.

Biden's plan is designed to avoid challenging the power of fossil fuel companies and to promote only changes that business will support. His spending is as much about positioning US companies to overtake China in new technology industries as it is about tackling global heating.

So he plans to spend more to promote the use of electric vehicles through installing charging stations and offering subsidies on car sales

than on public transport.

But Biden has not proposed any date to ban new petrol-power car sales.

This fits with the plans of a number of US manufacturers to gradually expand production of electric vehicles, such as GM, which says it aims to have production all electric by 2035.

This is based on the hope that, by then, electric vehicles will be cheaper than petrol cars. But there is no guarantee of such dramatic change, with fewer than 2 per cent of new car sales currently electric.

Biden's plan to have 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2035 is similar. While the government will pay for a new transmission grid, paying to build new solar and wind power itself will be left to corporations. He is simply hoping that the falling cost of renewable energy will push out fossil fuels.

But without rules forcing the closure of coal and gas-fired power stations, many could still be operating in 2035.

A study from December showed that 30 per cent of all existing fossil fuel power plants would have to close before their expected lifespan ends to meet the target.

And his approach of leaving business to fund the transition risks leaving working class communities behind instead of itself guaranteeing well-paid jobs to workers currently in the fossil fuel industry.

As Tooze put it: "Biden's climate programme appears hobbled by constraints, lacking in focus and inadequate in ambition. And this is before the Jobs Plan has even been submitted to the gruelling process of Congressional bargaining."

The action needed will require challenging the profits of the fossil fuel corporations. Oil, gas and coal companies will have to go out of business.

But when Biden was tested on this during his election campaign he failed, declaring himself a supporter of gas fracking and offering to ban it only on federal land.

This was a sleight of hand since 90 per cent of fracking takes place elsewhere.

### **Emissions still growing**

After the decline in global emissions due to the pandemic in 2020, they are again rocketing back as lockdowns ease and economies restart.

The International Energy Agency



**Above: US President Joe Biden at his climate summit in April**

(IEA) says we are on track for the second largest increase in emissions in a single year in history, with emissions this year set to be almost back to the level of 2019.

Before the pandemic, global emissions were still rising, with the figure in 2019 the highest ever recorded.

The world is still hurtling towards catastrophe. The UN Production Gap report in December found that despite talk of a green recovery, the G20 grouping of the world's largest economies committed \$230 billion in COVID-19 related spending into fossil fuel production and consumption, 50 per cent more than into clean energy.

The world's nations are planning to actually increase fossil fuel production by 2 per cent a year, which would result by 2030 in more than double the level that is needed to keep heating to 1.5 degrees.

These production plans and projects are far beyond what their climate pledges implied.

The fossil fuel business remains hugely profitable. The big oil companies have gone back to making huge profits after a stutter during the pandemic, with Exxon Mobil reporting \$3.5 billion profit and Chevron \$1.8 billion in the first three months of 2021.

Demand for coal is also tipped to grow strongly, approaching the all-time high set in 2014 this year, the IEA says.

This is reflected in Australian companies' plans to keep exporting coal well past 2050, the date when the Paris Agreement says the world has to be at net zero emissions.

In the three decades since world leaders first agreed to tackle global heating at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, global emissions have increased by 65 per cent.

While some countries have begun to reduce their emissions, all this has done is slow the continuing increase at a global level.

As the last IPCC report put it: "Far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" are urgently needed to stop catastrophe. The past 30 years have shown that world leaders are too committed to the profits of the fossil fuel giants and huge corporations to take the action needed.

Fighting for climate action on the scale needed means challenging capitalism.

We will need to step up our efforts and build a climate movement with the power to force action if we are going to avert disaster.

# THE PILBARA STRIKE

## HOW ABORIGINAL WORKERS DEFIED FORCED LABOUR AND EXPLOITATION

A historic strike by Aboriginal workers in Western Australia 75 years ago against brutal oppression and forced labour won dignity and improved conditions writes **Paddy Gibson**

THIS YEAR marks the 75th anniversary of a historic strike of Aboriginal pastoral workers in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, which began on 1 May, International Workers' Day, in 1946.

The strike was a profound act of self-emancipation, winning significant freedoms for Marrngu (local Aboriginal people), who had been held in bondage on stations for decades suffering extreme exploitation, poverty and violence.

The colonial invasion of the Pilbara began in the late 19th century, unleashing genocidal violence on Aboriginal people. In the far north of WA, police massacres continued into the 1920s.

By World War Two, a series of huge stations were well established in the Pilbara, stocked with two million sheep over an area the size of Great Britain.

Wealthy pastoralists ran the region as a virtual dictatorship over Marrngu, whose labour provided the backbone of the industry. Marrngu were rarely paid cash and those that were paid received well below award wages.

Police were the local enforcers of the Native Administration Act that compelled Marrngu to stay on particular stations. Bashings, neck chains and exile were all used against Marrngu who stepped out of line.

A Royal Commission into the pastoral industry in 1944 made the crucial importance of Black exploitation plain when it argued: "There is an advantage in native labour ... they are not sufficiently advanced to appreciate white conditions."

In reality, Marrngu were acutely aware of how badly they were being exploited and, by 1944, preparations were already beginning for a strike.

### 'McLeod gave us a hint'

A key character in the strike was Don McLeod, a white prospector who had

been radicalised during the war when he joined the Anti-Fascist League in Port Hedland, which had both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members.

McLeod became close with the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and also began to speak with Aboriginal people he met while working on stations about the terrible conditions.

McLeod argued that the reliance of Pilbara stations on Aboriginal labour made them particularly vulnerable to a strike. Clancy McKenna, a key Aboriginal organiser of the strike, said these conversations provided an important strategic orientation for Marrngu, who had been discussing the need to challenge their conditions for many years. "McLeod gave us a hint about the strike and we took it up."

Sometime during the war a major meeting was held far from the reach of police, at Skull Springs, to plan for a strike. McLeod described this meeting as a "mini United Nations", with speakers from 23 Aboriginal language groups.

This meeting was an example of the way Marrngu kinship networks and patterns of ceremonial life fused with collective workers' action during the strike.

The pastoralists' paternalistic contempt for Aboriginal people led to a fatal under-estimation of the Marrngu. As pastoralist Edith Miller reflected: "We had always said that they could never be conscripted or get together in a crowd ... we were wrong."

At Skull Springs, McKenna and Dooley Bin Bin were elected as the main strike leaders. Along with demanding proper pay and freedom to leave stations, a key demand was for Don McLeod to be recognised as a representative of Marrngu in negotiations with pastoralists and the government.

During April 1946, Marrngu on a number of stations started striking

### Marrngu had proved capable of spreading their strike and hitting station profits

early, taking advantage of the pressing need for their labour during shearing season. On some stations, wage increases were granted immediately.

On 1 May the action generalised, with 800 Marrngu refusing work on stations. There was also a widespread strike of Aboriginal workers in shops and industry in Port Hedland and Marble Bar.

On 3 May, Bray, the Commissioner of Native Affairs, telegraphed: "Native labour situation now very disturbed because of McLeod's anti-fascist communist activities ... press for full term imprisonment."

McLeod, McKenna and Dooley were arrested under the Native Administration Act, which made it illegal to encourage Aboriginal workers to leave their employer and for whites to congregate with Aboriginal people. In the towns, threats of arrest forced people back to work and on the stations a mix of concessions and repression disoriented the campaign.

In Perth, news of the strike was ignored by the mainstream press, which was controlled by pastoralists. The CPA newspaper *Workers Star*, however, carried detailed accounts of the action sent by McLeod.

These reports inspired a demonstration on 19 May calling for freedom for the arrested strikers and then a mass meeting on 28 May that formed a Committee for the Defence of Native Rights (CDNR).

The CDNR united communists and other union militants with local Nyoongar people, feminists, humanitarians and left-wing clergy. They began to raise significant funds for legal defence and agitated for resolutions of protest, which began to be sent to WA political leaders from a broad range of organisations.

McLeod was granted bail and travelled to Perth to build solidarity with the continuing strike.

On 25 June, McKenna and

Dooley were released early, too, with the *Workers Star* arguing: “This is a direct result of the pressure of the unions and the people, roused to anger by the injustice of the arrests and violation of the fundamental right of every worker to organise to better his condition.”

### Defiance

With their imprisoned leaders now free, the strikers regrouped at the Port Hedland race meeting in July 1946, a major event that brought people together from across the far-flung stations.

Hundreds of Marrngu established a camp at “Two Mile”, on the outskirts of Port Hedland, against explicit instructions from police that they camp outside the town limits. When police attempted to make arrests, people surrounded any threatened striker. Unable to break up the camp, police instead arrested McLeod once again.

Marrngu marched to the Port Hedland police station demanding McLeod’s release. This protest was an unprecedented expression of Aboriginal collective power in the segregated town, where shops immediately closed in fear.

In the wake of the Port Hedland race meeting, Marrngu established two major strike camps and subsisted by hunting, harvesting pearl shell and animal skins and small-scale mining. They made periodic moves to pull more Aboriginal workers off stations at strategic times in the shearing season.

The fact that Marrngu had proved capable of spreading their strike and hitting station profits provided a check on police powers. The hated practice of forced removal of children, for example, which continued apace across WA in this period, ceased in the Pilbara once the strike began.

### Workers’ solidarity

Solidarity from the broader labour movement was crucial. The CDNR kept unionists across Australia updated on developments in the Pilbara and there was a constant stream of protest resolutions and donations.

In the Pilbara itself, despite the Native Administration Act imposing segregation, the co-operation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers was required to keep the wheels of the pastoral economy turning and this provided a basis for solidarity.

At key moments in the strike, multi-racial working-class action that



**Above: Aboriginal pastoral workers during the strike**

recognised pastoralists and police as the enemy of organised labour challenged the racist white Australian nationalism relied upon by the pastoralists to maintain their system.

The right-wing leadership of the Australian Workers Union (AWU) was deeply racist, but the Port Hedland AWU branch declared support for the strike almost immediately. Railway workers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, defied attempts by the railway authorities to impose a ban on Marrngu strikers riding the rail.

In 1947, AWU members working at Port Hedland wharf resolved to strike to demand an end to racist regulations that stopped Marrngu from taking vacant wharf jobs. Although this decision was eventually overturned by the AWU leadership, it was solidarity from maritime unions in 1949 that eventually forced the major concessions that ended the strike.

Early in 1949, Marrngu began appealing for workers remaining on the stations to join the strike camps before the start of the shearing season. Police arrested 46 strikers.

In response, the WA branch of the Seamen’s Union of Australia (SUA), led by communist Rod Hurd, threatened to ban shipments of wool from Port Hedland. Some strikers were acquitted almost immediately. But the SUA insisted that key demands of the strikers were met before they lifted the ban.

Despite official AWU opposition, AWU members at Port Hedland refused to load wool.

Faced with a paralysis of the lucrative wool trade, a Department of Native Affairs official, Elliot-Smith, was forced to negotiate a settlement with McLeod which granted most major Marrngu demands.

After the wool ban was lifted, Native Affairs reneged on the deal. But the system of Aboriginal workers being bonded to stations was over and so was the official strike. Native Affairs recognised the rights of workers to contracts with individual pastoralists and to move freely between stations.

Large numbers of Marrngu never returned to work on the stations. They established mining co-operatives and managed to save enough money to buy back stations outright.

Their actions were an inspiration for Aboriginal activists and their supporters across Australia, laying foundations for demands for self-determination and return of lands that would become increasingly prominent in coming decades.

The Pilbara strike took extraordinary courage from Marrngu workers and their families, who faced intense colonial violence and oppression. The strike shows clearly that working class power and organised defiance of the law can effectively break a racist regime, a crucial lesson for all struggles for justice.

# MCALEVEY'S ORGANISING MODEL FOR UNIONS DECENTRES RANK-AND-FILE ACTIVITY

**Marcus Banks**, NTEU delegate at RMIT university, looks at the organising model developed by union organiser Jane McAlevey

JANE MCALEVEY—a US union organiser-turned-academic—is growing in popularity as a source of ideas to revive the union movement in Australia.

In the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) for example, both rank-and-file activists and the union leadership claim to embrace McAlevey's ideas.

McAlevey's argument about the need for all-out strikes democratically driven by rank-and-file involvement strikes a chord with many active unionists. In her book *No Shortcuts* McAlevey even defines "the cause of the union: class struggle".

She outlines a detailed, momentum-building, organising plan to build union power in workplaces: research into who holds power in an industry; mapping workplace union density and social relationships; worker-leader identification and tapping into workers' community connections.

When all done, this provides the basis for an escalating series of "structure tests" to gauge members' willingness to take bigger and riskier workplace actions building towards an all-out "super majority" strike.

It should be common sense that what centrally matters in rebuilding union power is how well workers organise at the coalface.

The workplace is both the source of profits and the central point of resistance to the capitalist system. Taking serious and widespread strike action has the potential to trump all other key sites of capitalist and corporate power—bosses, parliament, courts, the state and media.

At first glance, McAlevey's approach to rebuilding the union movement appears to articulate an alternative to the dominant top-down approach to organising that prevails in our unions. Yet despite her many useful insights, tips and advice there are three reasons why unionists seeking to build rank-and-file power should

treat McAlevey's guide for action with caution.

## Unions and union officials

First, McAlevey mistakenly argues that in the best and most effective unions there are not three sides (union officials, workers and bosses) but only two: workers and employers.

Why does this matter? Rank-and-file activists will have their campaigning derailed if they think McAlevey is right. Even the best unions are never simply conduits championing worker demands.

Full-time union officials face a series of pressures due to their role as brokers between employers and employees that push them in a conservative direction. Unions operate within the legal and administrative framework set by the state, so deals negotiated by the officials are struck within the industrial relations rules imposed on them.

Officials on the left can sometimes be more open to action than those on the right, but all officials are extremely reluctant to risk "their" organisation (or their careers that depend on it) to challenge the legal rules strangling the capacity for union members to strike (outside the small enterprise agreement window they've been allotted once every few years).

Officials do not share the same conditions as the workers they represent. They are at one remove from the experience of workplace self-organisation that makes workers so potentially powerful.

None of the 100 or so paid staff of the NTEU, for example, are employed by a university. So, in the past 12 months, none directly experienced the day-to-day fear and anger workers in the sector faced of being kicked around by management, taking on massive workloads or joining 20,000 colleagues who lost their jobs.

Senior officials are not workers at all—occupying class positions that

## Union officials are at the centre of McAlevey's guide for action

more align with those held by top HR managers.

There are contradictory pressures on union officials. On the one hand, their position depends on maintaining the union as an institution and the officials must keep the institution they are managing ticking over. The actual union offices (and sometimes buildings), the cars, the phones, the bank balance, their relationship with other officials, are all needed for the official to function.

On the other hand, the officials need the rank-and-file. They need a membership that pays union fees, and they need members to elect them to maintain their position.

To maintain their role as brokers, and be taken even a bit seriously by university management, officials do need to respond to the membership and represent the workers at some level.

It is this basic material and political tension between trade unions as a "movement" of rank-and-file members and as an "institution" that throws up the burning need for rank-and-file activism, organisation and leadership.

Part of the art of building strong rank-and-file activism is to be able to simultaneously work with and push union leaders to build the union's strength and capacity to take action, while also organising independently of them when they are not willing to act for their members or are even hostile.

Breaking the IR rules by calling for a walk-out or unlawful strike—as happened last year among a group of Sydney University staff facing job losses—threatened the officials because of the threat of fines that could damage the union as an institution, yet it energised members.

Rank-and-file campaigning succeeded in winning back a number of jobs. Even stronger member-led workplace organising could have pushed against the officials' hesi-

tancy to support the action and their insistence that the action be only called a “protest” (and not a strike) and pressured these officials to hold a university-wide mass meeting to widen the fightback. Or been able to call a university-wide union meeting themselves.

The more successful rank-and-file campaigning is, the more likely it is that officials will be pushed to support the campaign, or the rank-and-file can organise the action themselves, if that is what is needed. This strategy of bottom-up pressure is alien to McAlevey’s model.

Second, union officials are at the centre of McAlevey’s guide for action—strengthening rank-and-file power is dependent on what the union organiser does. These paid professionals are the ones tasked to develop and run the plan, to organise “their” workers to build workplace power, to facilitate the structure tests, to “train” emerging leaders, to set up big bargaining groups and to run members through their “roles”.

The experience of rank-and-file campaigning—for example, the stunning wage theft victory at Melbourne University by casual members of the NTEU—shows that McAlevey’s organising model needs to be turned upside down. The role of paid organisers has not been critical to staff winning \$15 million in backpay so far—it is casual members on the ground who are initiating, organising and leading the campaign.

### Demobilising

Third, McAlevey’s model is designed to build towards a big event, what she terms a Moment. In the United States this is either to achieve union recognition in a workplace or for an all-out strike to secure a new union contract.

For McAlevey: “The craft of organizing helps people connect the dots between the critical, solidarity-affirming moment and the larger system it challenges.”

NTEU members, for example, often take from this that the university-wide enterprise agreement disputes in the next 12 months will be their “solidarity-affirming moment” of serious strikes based on ambitious claims.

However, McAlevey’s notion of “the moment” is often used here in a conservative way to demobilise union members, by arguing that it is impossible to take any kind of action until the union is strong enough to pull off an all-out “supermajority” strike.

Recent campaigning at Melbourne



University shows that linking organising with mobilising through protests and occupations involving even a small minority of members can yield spectacular results, and build union confidence and organisation to take into future fights.

The hundreds of new NTEU members at Melbourne University were inspired, energised and organised by a series of petitions, protests and occupations over very concrete industrial issues over the last two years: payment for the \$135 Working with Children Check required to teach students; COVID leave for casuals; backpay for each hour of essay marking.

Workload issues were raised as a way of linking ongoing and casual staff into joint campaigns. The casuals network also supported political protests for trans rights and the release of refugees from detention.

Protests and occupations are criticised in McAlevey’s *No Shortcuts*—not as wrong in themselves (since, if properly built by members, they can be powerful “structure tests”)—but only where they are more commonly bureaucratic stunts rolled out from the top down that are simply “mobilising the already committed”.

The rank-and-file experience of building successful campaigns at Melbourne University shows that being ambitious in organising protests is the key. Rather than one Moment, there are multiple “moments” from which union membership and member power can be built through the interplay of rank-and-file actions and organising around a series of very concrete

**Above: Jane McAlevey uses examples from US teachers’ strikes, yet the West Virginia revolt was driven from below by rank-and-file workers**

demands.

Postponing action until the “moment” of a protected bargaining period and enterprise agreement negotiations arrives is ultimately a limited and demobilising strategy.

Organising wage theft and casuals’ campaigns, calling for a strike even of a minority (as in the case with Medical Sciences at Sydney University) is the best way to build the strength and confidence of the rank-and-file and prepare the ground for the strike action that will be needed in the enterprise bargaining negotiations. It’s not one or the other.

The unwillingness of the officials (both state and branch) to challenge the industrial laws during the Medical Sciences dispute at Sydney University carried important lessons for the kind of organising that will be needed if the upcoming enterprise bargaining round is going to be as successful as it should be.

On each of these three issues: the nature of the union bureaucracy, the decentring of rank-and-file self-activity in favour of paid organisers, and the too-prescriptive step-by-step plan to one Moment, McAlevey is found wanting.

Building rank-and-file organisation means putting pressure on officials to support campaigns and building capacity to act independently when they don’t.

Organising from below involves protests and other actions around often small, concrete issues. It is through these moments that member power is built.



# STOP MORRISON'S FOSSIL FUEL EXPANSION CLIMATE JOBS, NOT GAS

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By Dylan Goldsworthy

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US PRESIDENT Joe Biden's virtual summit exposed Scott Morrison's failure to adopt any serious climate policy. Morrison is trying to distract from this by promising investment in low carbon technologies like hydrogen—but a closer look shows his plans are just another effort to continue support for fossil fuels.

The Federal Budget was silent on climate jobs, environmental protection, or climate action. Instead of funding and investing in renewable energy technology, environmental restoration, public transport, climate jobs, or a national just transition body (to name a few), the Morrison government has decided to throw more public money at carbon intensive industries.

The government increased public funding for fossil fuels by committing another \$58.6 million to "advancing Australia's gas-fired recovery" and allocated nearly \$1.2 billion to develop hydrogen and carbon capture and storage (CCS). It also wants to change the Australian Renewable Energy Agency's rules to allow it to fund them.

Morrison claims that hydrogen and

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**The Morrison government's hydrogen production hubs are simply another effort to extend the life of fossil fuels**

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CCS are technologies needed to cut emissions, yet the government refuses to support zero emissions technologies such as solar, wind and hydro power that are already available.

Green hydrogen, produced using electricity from renewable energy, could play a role in zero emissions manufacturing and freight transport.

But there is a marked difference between "blue" hydrogen, which is made from methane, gas, or coal and creates carbon emissions, and "green" hydrogen, which is made from renewables and releases only oxygen, and is therefore climate friendly.

The Morrison government's five hydrogen production hubs will be located near coal and gas reserves, indicating that it aims to produce "blue" hydrogen, and is simply another effort to extend the life of fossil fuels.

### Gas expansion

The government has also provided \$30 million for a gas power plant at Port Kembla, on top of a \$5 million contribution to another nearby gas plant Tallawarra B in Wollongong that has received \$78 million in NSW government funding.

And it has now announced up

to \$600 million to build a gas power station at Kurri Kurri near Newcastle entirely with taxpayers' money. An Environment Impact Statement revealed it was likely to run on more polluting diesel fuel for its first six months of operation, until gas pipelines are completed.

Other new measures include \$38.7 million for targeted gas infrastructure projects at Golden Beach and Iona (in Gippsland, Victoria), the expansion of a South West Victorian Pipeline, and an import gas terminal at Port Kembla (in Wollongong, NSW).

These projects expand the Morrison government's plans for a "gas-fired recovery" from the COVID crisis, including unlocking five gas basins, notably the Beetaloo Basin in the Northern Territory and the Galilee Basin in Queensland, and shoring up other pipelines and "critical" infrastructure.

It justifies its commitment to gas as necessary to provide cheap and reliable electricity as well as jobs. This rests on claiming renewable energy can never be reliable enough to meet all our energy needs. This is untrue, as batteries are capable of providing the capacity to store renewable generated power.

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**Solidarity**