

STOP THE WARMONGERS, FIGHT FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

KICK OUT MORRISON



ELECTION

Balance of power
no way to win change

CHINA

Solomons deal and
Australia's own imperialism

LABOR

Do Labor governments
make any difference?

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

Labor's historic task is to move more people into the middle-class, to appeal to small business and if we don't do that Labor won't be successful.

Anthony Albanese, who clearly doesn't have much grasp of Labor's history or the fact that it's supposed to be a working class party

I would say there is no-one in the Parliament who has closer credentials and more friends in senior members of the business community than myself on either side of politics.

Albanese may be delusional, but at least he knows who's side he's on

The more coal and gas we produce, the harder things will be for Putin.

Queensland Nationals Senator Matt Canavan sees war as a marketing opportunity for fossil fuels

Matt Canavan is becoming like that Japanese intelligence officer, Onoda, who refused to accept that WWII was over and hid in the jungle for 30 years

Nationals MP Darren Chester, on Canavan's boast that the Coalition's 2050 net zero climate target was dead because of the Ukraine war

This is why the disability community quite often struggles to make constructive gains is because there is lying underneath it a significant, almost permanent rage machine

Liberal Senator Hollie Hughes on the response to Morrison's comment that he was "blessed" not to have disabled children

She's standing for something really important

Scott Morrison on Katherine Deves' bigoted campaign against trans women in sport

I cannot be clearer than this: If people attempt to come to Australia by boat, they will not make it. Their boats will be turned back or they will be sent to Nauru

Kristina Keneally on how a Labor government would handle refugees

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Right to protest under attack in NSW

NEW LAWS in NSW rushed through on 1 April are an appalling attempt to criminalise activism and protest.

Anyone disrupting or damaging major roads or “a major facility” (including train stations, ports, and other public and private infrastructure) faces fines of up to \$22,000 and two years in jail under the changes.

The legislation gives the government the power to “prescribe” any road or facility under the laws.

It has listed common protest locations including Town Hall, George Street, Oxford Street, Lee Street and Taylor Square as areas affected.

This would criminalise protests that block any of the entrances to Town Hall train station or that block roads commonly used for protest marches.

Shamefully, the changes passed with the support of the Labor Party.

The head of Unions NSW, Mark Morey, called the bill “unacceptable”, and urged on parliament to “pause and reconsider”.

Industrial actions and industrial campaigns, as well as protests outside parliament or an MP’s office, were all excluded from the laws.

But unions are maintaining their opposition.

Protest marches would still be legal where organisers have notified police under existing law in the Summary Offences Act. But the threat to the right to protest is still very real. Protests held at short notice and rallies challenged in court by police would both be affected.

This attack on the right to protest is a right-wing law-and-order response to a series of actions by Blockade Australia at Sydney’s Port Botany that blocked access to the port. One activist involved has already been handed four months’ jail and a \$1500 fine.

The real criminals are the politicians and companies profiting from climate disaster, whose actions are putting millions of lives and entire eco-systems at risk, not the activists trying to stop this.

We can’t accept this attack on the right to protest. The climate movement, unionists and other activists must unite to defend all those charged using these new laws and keep asserting our right to demonstrate and demand change.

Angus Dermody

Gomeri reject agreement with Santos—step up fight against Pilliga coal-seam gas project



By Paddy Gibson

SANTOS HAS begun action in the Native Title Tribunal to seek to over-ride Gomeri Native Title rights and press ahead with its coal-seam gas project in the Pilliga in northwest NSW.

This follows an historic vote at a Native Title meeting in Tamworth where Gomeri people overwhelmingly rejected an agreement with Santos by 162-2. Gomeri man Raymond Weatherall told *Solidarity*: “This strong no vote is a continuation of our long struggle against Santos and the state and federal governments who are trying to desecrate our lands.”

For almost a decade, Santos have been seeking Gomeri consent for the Pilliga (Narrabri) gas project, that would see 850 coal-seam gas wells established in an area with deep cultural significance for the Gomeri.

This project would release an estimated 127 million tonnes of greenhouse gases, threaten many endangered species and contaminate the Great Artesian Basin.

Gomeri man Ian Brown from Moree said: “We are part of resistance to the gas push happening right across Australia. The climate crisis is getting to a point of no return. Our non-Indigenous allies need to get behind us and make sure Santos and the government respect our no vote.”

Gomeri people have a registered Native Title claim over the lands being targeted. While Santos have already received all relevant approvals from state and federal governments to proceed, they still need to deal

Above: Electrical Trades Union members at a rally outside the Federal Court against the Pilliga project

with the “right to negotiate” held by Gomeri under the Native Title Act.

The Native Title system is set up to force Aboriginal people into agreements, with the Tribunal routinely ruling in favour of mining companies if people refuse. This makes the Gomeri vote even more significant.

The strength of Gomeri resistance is building greater opposition to the Pilliga project. The state-wide peak body of the union movement, Unions NSW, has passed a motion opposing the project, as well as agreeing to send a union delegation to visit the Pilliga.

A major meeting of campaigners held in the Pilliga on 12-13 March appealed to the trade union movement to put a “green ban” on the project.

A statement expressing solidarity with the Gomeri and pledging action to fight Santos has now been endorsed by the MUA, the CFMEU Construction Division, the NTEU, NSW Teachers Federation, the Independent Education Union, United Workers Union and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), as well as Amnesty International and the Human Rights Law Centre. The ETU have already said their members will not work on the project.

As Suellyn Tighe, a Gomeri woman from Coonabarrabran, put it, “We will fight attempts by Santos and the Morrison government to sacrifice the Gomeri Nation and our sites for the financial benefit of a global conglomerate, it’s just reprehensible. We will march in the streets, we will camp outside Parliament, I am calling all people across Australia to action—fight to ensure our vote is respected.”

EDITORIAL

Take to the streets to drive out Morrison and start the fight for real change

ANTHONY ALBANESE'S campaign stumbles have led to fears that Scott Morrison might steal election victory, as happened in 2019. With inflation over 5 per cent, we need to hit the streets to seize the chance to drive Morrison out and build the struggle that can win real change.

Polling still shows Labor well ahead, with Newspoll's two-party result unmoved at 53 per cent to 47 per cent.

But Albanese is not inspiring any confidence he can win. Labor's timid small target approach generates no enthusiasm about change. Labor is simply relying on anger at Morrison's failures to get it over the line.

The Coalition has dramatically escalated its warmongering against China after the Solomon Islands signed a security deal in the face of opposition from Australia and the US. Defence Minister Peter Dutton declared that the government must "prepare for war" because "the Chinese", he says, "are on a very deliberate course".

Labor has fed the militarism and nationalist hysteria, accusing the Coalition of "the worst failure of Australian foreign policy in the Pacific" since the Second World War. Morrison responded by accusing Labor of "always taking China's side".

In fact Labor is in lock step with the Liberals over the obscene increase in military spending aimed at confronting China, throwing its support behind the government's plan to spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence each year and the \$170 billion for nuclear subs.

But it is their combined efforts to ramp up confrontation with China that are making us less safe. Australia's aggressive military build-up only encourages Chinese nationalism and its own preparations for war, as the US and Australian governments step up their threats.

Morrison's efforts to engineer a khaki election are not likely to save him. But Labor's response means that billions of dollars that could be spent on hospitals, aged care, or climate action will be poured into weapons of war. And it locks in the danger of military escalation.

Labor is embracing the bulk of the Liberals' policies, and as a result many people can't work out what Albanese actually stands for. His only major announcements so far have been on aged



Above: We need bigger protests and strikes to help create momentum for change

care and childcare.

Ending the shocking neglect of aged care residents would be massively popular. But Labor's promises are modest. While it says it would ensure registered nurses are on site 24 hours a day, improve meals, and increase staff, it is pledging just \$2.5 billion over four years for this.

Labor has also promised to fund whatever wage rise the Fair Work Commission orders for aged care workers. But it has refused to back union claims for a 25 per cent wage increase to end appallingly low wages of as little as \$22 an hour.

Albanese would also go further than Morrison in increasing childcare subsidies.

But neither plan would end the dominance of private providers and profiteering that plagues both aged care and childcare services.

On climate change, Labor is trying to have it both ways, saying it will support renewable energy and create jobs but also backing the Coalition's plans to expand coal and gas mining.

Strikes and protests

Labor's small target approach has kept Morrison in the race, allowing him to argue that with Labor, you don't know what you're getting. But the bigger danger is that, if Labor does win, its approach guarantees a hopelessly right-wing Labor government.

Many people will vote 1 Greens 2 Labor to send Albanese a message that more serious change is needed from

Labor.

But what we really need is to raise the level of struggle on the streets and in the workplaces. We need more strikes and demonstrations to mobilise the anger against Morrison and create greater momentum for change. If Morrison is defeated on the back of a wave of protest, it will also prepare the movements to keep up the fight that will be needed if Labor is elected.

The ACTU has refused to call major pre-election stopwork demonstrations, relying on an even more low-key electoral campaign than at the last election in 2019.

But some unions are starting to strike back. NSW nurses have taken two days of strike action since February, and teachers in NSW will strike again on 4 May, following a 24-hour stopwork in December, as pressure builds to break the state government's pay cap.

Staff at Sydney University are holding a two-day strike on 11 and 12 May. Thousands of aged care workers in Queensland, SA and WA have also voted to strike.

The climate movement is following up its 25 March actions, with an election Climate Strike on 6 May.

Everyone needs to back these protests and strikes and join the push to get rid of Morrison. But the fight won't be over on election day. Action on the streets before the election is also the key to ending the war-mongering and winning the change we need in funding services, climate action, and the real pay rises workers need.

If Labor does win, its approach guarantees a hopelessly right-wing Labor government

Candidate's outright bigotry derails Morrison's transphobic campaign



Above: Rallying for trans rights in Sydney

SCOTT MORRISON has refused to dump Katherine Deves as his candidate for Warringah despite appalling transphobic comments. Morrison tried to brush off criticism of his hand-picked candidate, saying her campaign to ban trans women from women's sport raises a legitimate debate, even after a series of Liberal MPs called for her removal.

Her comments show she is nothing more than a bigot. Deves referred to trans people as "surgically mutilated and sterilised", said she was "triggered" by the rainbow flag and claimed that half of trans women are sex offenders.

Deves is a transphobic feminist who co-founded "Save Women's Sport Australasia". She joined the Liberal Party only last year and was selected for her seat by Morrison.

Her agenda fits with Morrison's efforts to stir up transphobia to appeal to conservative religious voters and continue the backlash against the victory over equal marriage.

Trans kids aged 14-25 are a shock-

ing 15 times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. But bigots like Morrison and Deves want to further ostracise them through banning them from sports at schools and in local community teams.

In February, Morrison backed a similar private member's bill from Tasmanian Liberal senator Claire Chandler.

Sport Australia's guidelines, while stressing the need for inclusivity, do currently allow sporting codes to discriminate against trans people. But there are a whole series of natural advantages that elite sportspeople possess beyond sex and gender attributes.

Attempting to use levels of hormones like testosterone to separate men from women has proven problematic—as the example of runner Caster Semenya, who has naturally elevated testosterone levels, has shown.

The majority of women athletes have expressed no concern about trans women in sport. We can't allow the Liberals to use the issue to increase transphobia and discrimination.

Whoever wins, unions will need to fight to boost wages

WORKERS ARE feeling the squeeze after a decade of low wage growth, in the face of rising inflation. But the Liberals are still determined to attack union rights and undermine workers' ability to win pay rises.

Industrial Relations Minister Michaelia Cash has announced plans to double the fines against construction unions to a maximum of \$444,000 for unions and \$88,800 for individuals who defy anti-strike laws.

The Liberals also want to reintroduce laws to allow six-year agreements on greenfields projects costing \$500 million or more.

This would cut wages and prevent unions from staging lawful industrial action on large mining and construction projects.

They also floated the possibility of allowing cuts to workers' pay and conditions in new agreements, through watering down the Better Off Overall Test, only to rule this out after several days of indecision.

Labor has outlined some limited changes.

Its "Same job, same pay" bill would ensure workers employed through labour hire companies doing the same work as permanent employees get the same pay and conditions.

It would limit the number of consecutive fixed-term contracts that can be offered for the same role to 24 months, change the legal definition of a casual worker and stop bosses unilaterally terminating agreements.

It would also scrap the anti-union Australian Building and Construction Commission.

But it would keep in place the overall industrial relations system that is producing a dramatic decline in the number of workers covered by enterprise bargaining agreements, and which contains some of the worst restrictions on strike action in the developed world.

If workers are going to see an end to stagnant wage growth, we are going to have to fight for it.

Unions will need to defy the law and fight for the right to strike just as much under Labor as under the Coalition.

Labor won't deliver the spending needed on services

LABOR'S SMALL target strategy has seen it limit promises to deliver the spending that we need to fund decent services like hospitals, schools or aged care.

The party has abandoned all the efforts to tax the rich that it took to the last election, including on housing investors and family trusts used to dole out inheritances. Its sole new measure is a tax on multinationals it says the Liberals have also considered.

Shadow Treasurer Jim Chalmers has boasted that, "Our largest commitments will make up only 0.3 per cent of GDP spread over the next four years" whereas Morrison's spending decisions "are larger ... and represent around 1.5 per cent of GDP".

Labor has dumped its plan to review the rate of JobSeeker, planning to keep a poverty level payment. But it would keep the Liberals' stage three tax cuts for the rich, due to begin in 2024. Those earning over \$200,000 would get the most benefit. This will cost an astronomical \$137 billion over six years.

Balance of power politics is no way to win change

By Rory Larkins

THERE IS a chance that both Scott Morrison and Anthony Albanese will fall short of a majority after the election. Independent candidates and The Greens are pushing to hold the balance of power, where their support is needed to form government, saying that this will allow them to extract substantial reforms. But it's no way to win change.

It is welcome to see the Liberals fracture, under pressure from voters in inner city seats over issues like climate change. In a number of these seats, independent candidates stand a chance of winning.

However, these independents are running in some of the wealthiest seats in the country. They share the politics of "moderate" Liberals and are backed by wealthy business figures.

They can't be relied on to support workers' rights. Zali Steggall, an independent who stole the Liberal seat of Warringah last election on a climate platform, was prepared to back legislation that would have allowed the CFMEU's deregistration, and opposed Labor's taxes on rich investors.

The Greens are also banking on a hung parliament where they share the balance of power. They argue that this will "keep Labor on track" and force them to adopt more progressive policies.

But the balance of power has never delivered real change, because it works both ways. While The Greens may be able to broker slight improvements to Labor policies, Labor can put a harsh leash on how far this can go.

The Greens could block regressive legislation, but their power to force Labor to support positive changes would be limited. Labor could simply demand that The Greens take it or leave it, or else risk the Liberals taking power.

The Liberals could also vote with Labor to pass legislation—which happens more often than many realise.

This was made clear in 2010 when Labor was in minority government under Julia Gillard.

Labor needed the support of independents in the lower house and The Greens in the Senate. But this did not push Labor in any way to the left. Gillard reintroduced offshore detention for refugees, cut billions from



Above: Greens leader Adam Bandt says holding the balance of power can deliver change

universities, and cut single parents' payments.

The Greens negotiated the carbon tax with a Labor government that was committed to pro-business policies.

What resulted was a pathetic 5 per cent reduction target by 2020, and a tax which passed costs onto ordinary people rather than the massive polluters, handing the Liberals a free kick which put Tony Abbott into power.

The Liberals are trying to paint Labor as puppets of The Greens, claiming that a Labor government would mean radical reforms.

Instead Labor are backing the bulk of the Liberals' policies, arguing they are a "safe change" in government. Albanese has loudly ruled out "negotiating or doing deals with The Greens after the election". Labor is unlikely to choose to work with The Greens after this.

They are much more likely to pick the most moderate independents to work with, from the six already in parliament or any others newly elected.

Fighting on the streets

The Greens' strategy of winning the balance of power is a dead end. Real change can't come from within parliament but only through social movements and class struggle.

It is not action in parliament that has kept climate change on the political agenda but campaigning and protest outside it, through the bushfires, floods and climate failure of the Morrison government.

The Climate Strikes led by school

students around the country have had far more of an impact than anything in parliament. In 2019, hundreds of thousands in Australia marched under the slogan "system change, not climate change".

These protests put real climate action to the top of the agenda, and united students and unionists around the need for a just transition.

Morrison's lukewarm support for net zero by 2050 is a freefall into the apocalypse. Nor will Labor's target to reduce emissions by 43 per cent by 2030 be enough.

Both parties are solidly behind the immense power of the fossil fuel giants, who make tens of billions of dollars every year from destroying the planet.

Small concessions through using the balance of power are not going to deliver the kind of action we need. If we want to stop climate catastrophe, we need radical change through 100 per cent public renewables by 2030, an immediate just transition, and no new coal or gas projects.

Winning this will require a much more powerful climate movement outside parliament.

Similarly, it is grassroots campaigning for refugee rights that has forced changes such as children off Nauru and the release of all the Medevac refugees from detention. The teachers and nurses' strikes in NSW hold the possibility of forcing an end to understaffing and improving public services.

It is only through this kind of action that we can force a better world.

.....
Small concessions through using the balance of power are not going to deliver the kind of change we need

Still unfinished business after we turn back Morrison

By Ian Rintoul

FOR A while, it looked like refugees were not going to feature much in the election campaign, with the government focused on scaremongering about war with China.

But it wasn't long before Scott Morrison found a chance to boast about being the architect of Operation Sovereign Borders and turning back asylum boats.

The tragedy was that Anthony Albanese's response was to confirm that Labor was also committed to offshore detention and boat turnbacks. Shamefully, Albanese even tried to take credit for re-opening Manus and Nauru under the last Labor government in 2012.

Boat turnbacks became Labor policy in 2015. At the time, Albanese, as part of the Labor left, opposed boat turnbacks.

But he flipped in 2018 in time for the 2019 federal election, telling Sky News that, "The [Morrison] government's policies have stopped the boats."

Morrison drove home Labor's capitulation during the Sky News debate when he asked Albanese why he didn't support turning boats around in 2013, when he re-opened Nauru and Manus.

Meanwhile, Labor has held the line over abolishing Temporary Protection Visas (and SHEVs), a change that will make a huge difference to the thousands of refugees who have been denied permanency, family reunion, and the right to university study and travel for more than ten years.

But then a few days later, out of the blue, home affairs minister Karen Andrews told ABC radio that a re-elected Morrison government would ban any refugees from PNG or Nauru settled in New Zealand from coming to Australia, although she couldn't say how.

Labor's shadow immigration minister, Kristina Keneally, came to her rescue.

Even using the government's language, Keneally announced that Labor would "close that back door by legislation or by regulation" if elected in May.

It was a graphic example of Labor's small target policy in practice. Rather than championing refugee rights, Labor was trying to outflank



Above: We have to keep demanding that the refugees from Manus and Nauru stay in Australia with permanent visas

Morrison from the right.

Unfinished business

The sordid episode focused attention on one of the main pieces of unfinished business for the refugee movement—the New Zealand deal.

The deal will resettle 450 refugees over three years. There are 111 refugees left on Nauru but all but 27 are heading to the US or Canada. Yet refugees in PNG are not eligible for New Zealand.

There are 105 refugees (a little more if you count their family members) in PNG. All the people on Nauru and in PNG could be resettled this year if PNG refugees were included in the deal.

The New Zealand deal was always a way for Australia to avoid protecting the refugees it had exiled to Nauru and Manus. The demands to "Close offshore, bring them all here" are as relevant as ever.

This raises the second bit of unfinished business—permanent visas for all those from offshore in the community on bridging visas. There are still 1179 refugees—from the Kids Off Nauru and the Medevac legislation—living in the community in Australia. Some are in community detention; most have been forced to survive on temporary visas renewed every six months. There are not enough places for all of them in New Zealand—around 500 will be left behind.

And children have been born here; kids have started school. Why should they be forced to go to New Zealand

to gain permanent protection?

With Labor now saying that refugees resettling in New Zealand will not be able to enter Australia, there is one more reason for the refugees from Manus and Nauru already in Australia *not* to be part of the deal. The movement will need to fight for their right to stay on permanent visas.

And then there is the need to lift the government ban on accepting refugees from Indonesia. There needs to be a pathway for the 14,000 refugees there (including 7000 Afghans) to get to Australia. This needs to be connected to an immediate intake of 20,000 Afghans—over and above the annual humanitarian intake.

A two-year protest campaign—inside and outside the prison hotels—finally saw almost all the Medevac refugees released in the dying days of the Morrison government. But the election campaign is a warning.

A Labor government elected on 21 May will scrap TPVs and get the Tamil family back to Biloela, but the shattered lives on and offshore and the Fortress Australia policy are as much Labor's legacy as the Liberals'.

Thirty years ago, a Labor government introduced mandatory detention. A Labor government elected on 21 May will also be committed to offshore detention and to using the navy to turn back asylum boats.

More protests, with the backing of the union movement, will be needed to free all the refugees and finally win the humanitarian policy that the refugee movement has been fighting for.

There are still 1179 refugees—from the Kids Off Nauru and the Medevac legislation—living in the community in Australia

Morrison a climate criminal, Labor backs coal and gas expansion

AUSTRALIANS ARE looking for action on climate change this election. When ABC's "Vote Compass" asks people "What issue is most important to you in this election?" more than double the number of people answer climate change than any other issue.

The Coalition are climate criminals—obstructing global negotiations, funding new gas infrastructure, and undermining, attacking and delaying proposals for stronger climate action.

While Labor does have better climate policy, it has not sought to highlight this during the campaign.

Labor are still trying to do a double act—to appear to be taking action while keeping the coal and gas mining industries on side.

They are paranoid about electoral scare campaigns, giving support to Morrison's "gas-fired recovery" initiatives, including \$600 million to build the Kurri Kurri diesel/gas power station, while nearby gas-fired power stations sit idle. They say they will spend up to \$700 million extra to ensure it can run on green hydrogen, an extraordinary waste of over \$1 billion.

However, the International Energy Agency has said that new coal and gas projects cannot be built if we are to limit global heating to 1.5°C. This is deeply challenging to Australia's ruling class and their profits.

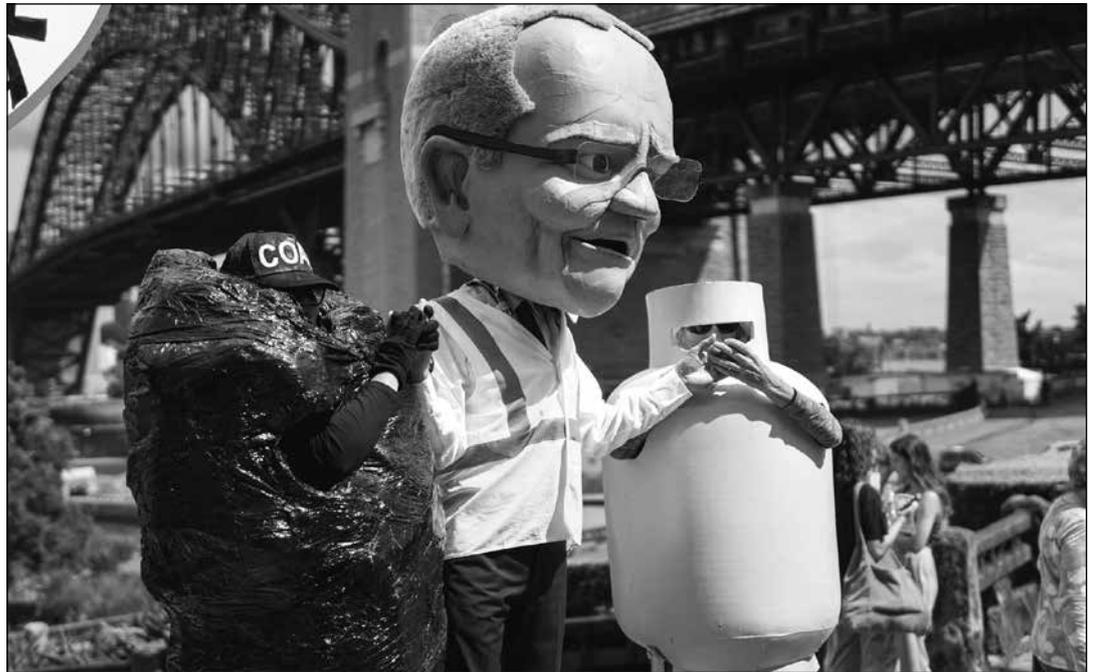
A key issue after the election will be the government's "gas-fired recovery" plan, which seeks to expand current basins and open up new onshore gas basins. It now includes over \$600 million for the Betaloo Basin (NT), \$60 million for the Cooper-Advale Basin (SA and Qld), and \$20 million for the North Bowen and Galilee Basin (Qld).

Opening the Narrabri basin is also part of this plan, but is further advanced. The Gomeroi Traditional Owners oppose it, but Santos are seeking permission in the Native Title Tribunal to proceed regardless.

The government's Future Gas Infrastructure Investment Framework offers financial support in the form of grants or loans.

In March it announced a further \$50 million for seven projects, and invited further Expressions of Interest to hand out even more money. It is highly likely that funding to advance the Narrabri gas project is in the pile of new applications.

Disgracefully, Labor's policy platform includes "support for new gas projects and associated infrastructure"



Above: Scott Morrison is pushing the expansion of coal and gas mining, but Labor has refused to challenge this

and states that "gas has an important role to play in achieving Labor's target of net zero emissions by 2050".

The official Energy Market Operator's latest plan for the electricity system does project ongoing use of gas during power peaks, particularly in winter. But it also says gas could be replaced by alternative technologies—gas is just the cheapest option.

If elected, Labor must be challenged to cancel the gas expansion, and cancel the construction of the Kurri Kurri plant.

Instead, investments should be made in reducing gas demand, electrifying households and industry, and banning new gas connections as existing basins dry up. The Victorian and ACT governments are already doing this.

Public ownership

One welcome development this election is a greater emphasis on public ownership and investment. Labor says it will establish a Rewiring the Nation Corporation to invest \$20 billion in the electricity grid to incorporate renewable energy.

Exactly how it will invest is unclear. The union movement and climate movement will need to make their voices heard to ensure that this public investment results in public ownership and benefits.

The Greens have announced a policy of invest \$40 billion in publicly-owned renewable energy,

built through Commonwealth-owned Snowy Hydro. The company already owns and operates 16 power stations across NSW, Victoria and the ACT. The Greens also say they will require it to sell electricity at cost, and to cancel the Kurri Kurri project.

A just transition?

Workers in fossil fuel industries remain uncertain about their future. The government needs to act to ensure they have secure, well paid jobs in clean industries. Establishing public authorities to carry this out is part of Labor's platform, but they have avoided mentioning it or what it will deliver during the campaign.

The Greens have announced a Job-for-Job policy with a ten year 50 per cent wage subsidy for any coal worker, or 12 years for workers over 55, to subsidise a new job. Job guarantees are supported by unions and have been a key part of energy transitions internationally.

While the Coalition's emissions reduction target of 26 per cent by 2030 is criminal, Labor's target of a 45 per cent reduction by 2030 is still inadequate. The Climate Council says that 75 per cent by 2030 is needed, and The Greens have picked up on this recommendation, arguing to replace every coal-fired power station by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2035.

Whoever forms government after 21 May, the climate movement will still have a big fight on its hands.

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A key issue after the election will be the plan to expand and open up new onshore gas basins

The West prepared to let Ukraine horror drag on

By David Glanz

MILLIONS AROUND the world are watching events unfold in Ukraine with horror. Thousands dead, millions displaced, cities razed.

Russia should halt its invasion and withdraw its troops. But Western leaders are showing no interest in stopping the war.

Earlier, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky proposed that Ukraine would not join the NATO military alliance, which could have provided the basis for a ceasefire.

But instead of leaping at the opportunity, our leaders made it clear that they want the war to go on.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan put it bluntly, telling a US television host: “Our policy is unequivocal that we will do whatever we can to help Ukraine succeed ...

“What we want to see is a free and independent Ukraine, a weakened and isolated Russia, and a stronger, more unified, more determined West,” he added. “We believe that all three of those objectives are in sight.”

It’s a reminder that this is a proxy conflict pitting the US and its allies against Russia, with the Ukrainian people as victims of the rivalry between the two imperialist power blocks.

The US wants to exhaust Russia, whose economy is already modest: fractionally bigger than Australia’s but with six times the population.

This would allow the US to reassert its dominance over Europe and send a message to its main global rival, China, that it can still call the shots—a point Scott Morrison has also been keen to make.

The likelihood that previously neutral Sweden and Finland will join the NATO military alliance is a boost for this strategy.

Specific

Following Russia’s withdrawal from around the capital Kyiv, Zelensky is now arguing that, with Western arms, Ukraine can win. He has withdrawn the idea of Ukraine staying out of NATO.

Hours before meeting US secretary of state Antony Blinken and US defence secretary Lloyd Austin in Kyiv during Orthodox Easter, Zelensky declared: “We are expecting not just presents or some kind of cakes, we are expecting specific things and specific weapons.”



A US soldier with one of the howitzers the US is sending to Ukraine

For its part, Russia now plans to annex the eastern and southern provinces of Ukraine, creating a land corridor to the Russian minority territory of Transnistria in Moldova.

The West’s verbal aggression has been backed by a massive flow of armaments.

In Kyiv, Blinken and Austin announced almost \$1 billion in military financing for Ukraine and 15 allies.

This is on top of eight instalments of military aid provided by the US since Russia invaded two months ago at a cost of \$4.7 billion.

Initially, the US provided items such as anti-tank missiles, rifles and ammunition, worried about provoking Russia by arming Ukraine too heavily.

Ian Brzezinski, a former head of NATO policy at the Pentagon, told the *Financial Times* that the US was now providing heavy weapons. “It is a very clear and profound shift.”

Recent US support includes 72 howitzers, 72 armoured vehicles to tow them, 144,000 rounds of ammunition and more than 120 drones.

Britain has already sent 4800 anti-tank missiles and plans to send another 6000.

And Australia has been quick to add to this, most recently sending 20 Bushmaster armoured vehicles—organised in days while flood victims in NSW and Queensland were left without support.

Resistance

The US and its allies want to avoid direct conflict with Russia, which is why they have refused to implement a

no-fly zone or send forces to Ukraine (although Britain now has military trainers on the ground).

But the West will continue to arm Ukraine even as the war drags on for potentially months or years.

If our rulers have no interest in stopping the war, it makes resistance to the warmongers by workers even more important.

Airport workers in Italy refused to load a cargo plane when they discovered that “humanitarian aid” for Ukraine consisted of weapons, ammunition and explosives.

As their union put it: “We strongly denounce this real fraud, which cynically uses the ‘humanitarian’ cover to continue to fuel the war in Ukraine.”

In Belarus, which neighbours Ukraine and whose dictator is a Russian ally, rail workers sabotaged signalling equipment to prevent the transport of military supplies.

In Greece, rail workers refused to transport US tanks destined for Ukraine from the northern port of Alexandroupoli.

Their union declared: “No participation of our country in military conflicts in Ukraine, which are committed in the interests of the few at the expense of the peoples.”

The likes of Biden and Morrison accept death and destruction as the necessary cost of maintaining military and economic power.

To stop the war, we need to build a movement that rejects the Russian invasion but is also completely opposed to the NATO war machine and its Australian ally that are fuelling it.

This is a proxy conflict pitting the US and its allies against Russia, with the Ukrainian people as victims

Australia's own imperialism behind hysteria over Solomons-China deal

By Tom Orsag

CHINA'S SECURITY treaty with the Solomon Islands has caused hysteria in Australian ruling class circles. Less noted was the significant news that Australia has extended its own military deployment to the Solomons, through the Australian-led Solomons International Assistance Force, until December 2023.

Last November Scott Morrison promised a deployment of Australian troops and police in the Solomons for only "a matter of weeks". Now the military and police will stay for two years, following a political riot in the capital, Honiara.

Any Chinese military presence in the Solomons, however, is presented as illegitimate and a threat.

The pro-establishment journalist, Peter Hartcher, writing in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, said the China-Solomons deal "would give the People's Liberation Army navy an operating base deep within Australia's strategic hinterland".

Any Chinese presence in the South Pacific "would signal a pretty significant failure of Australia's long-term security policy", according to the head of ANU's National Security College, Rory Medcalf.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese echoed these establishment concerns, accusing Morrison of a "strategic blunder" and "foreign policy failure".

The hysteria any time another power has set a foot in the region has been a long term Australian government policy, whether it was France, Russia and Germany in the late 1800s, Japan in the 1940s, or the USSR and even Libya during the Cold War.

This is a policy known as "strategic denial". It is not an issue of defence but of imperialist control.

The US did a similar thing with the Monroe Doctrine for Latin America—insisting that any rival power should stay out because the area was for the US to dominate. Australia has asserted this in similar terms in regard to the southwest Pacific.

Australia, with a population, economy and military power that dwarfs that of nearby Pacific island states, is a bully and exploiter in the region.

This mindset was made explicit by David Llewellyn-Smith, former owner of Australian foreign affairs journal *The Diplomat*, who said Australia should "invade and capture" the Solo-



mons to "engineer regime change in Honiara" in order to overturn the deal.

The Solomon Islands are 2000 kilometres from Australia, hardly on our doorstep. Few countries in the world have the luxury of excluding others from such a large area. It takes a special kind of paranoia, arrogance and entitlement for Australia's rulers to believe they deserve more than a 2000 kilometre buffer from any potential adversary.

Concerns

Even after sending a parade of officials to the Solomons the Australian government could not change Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare's mind about the deal.

The head of ASIO, Paul Symon, and the head of the Office of National Intelligence, Andrew Shearer, both visited to plead "Australia's core security concerns". Australia's Minister for the Pacific, Zed Sesleja, left a hotly-contested ACT Senate race to go to the Solomons for "urgent talks" with its PM.

This has produced concerns among ruling circles that Australia's historic sub-imperial control of the region has been undermined so easily by China.

China clearly wants to compete with Australia for strategic influence in the southwest Pacific. But fears of an imminent Chinese military base in the Solomons are overblown.

Tarciscius Kabutaulaka pointed out in *The Interpreter*, published daily by the Lowy Institute in Australia, that China already has a security arrangement with Fiji dating back to 2011.

Above: Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and his Foreign Minister at a signing ceremony in China in 2019, with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Foreign Minister Wang Yi

Further, Kabutaulaka wrote, "China is unlikely to build a naval base in Solomon Islands. Foreign military outposts are not how Beijing operates. It currently has only one overseas base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa. This is in contrast to the United States, with an estimated 750 bases in 80 countries."

As *The Age* reported, "There is serious concern within Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and Cabinet about the precedent it sets for countries such as Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, which are also being courted by China."

Solomons' Opposition leader Matthew Wade explained why Australia is losing out to China, "The US, Australia and New Zealand have, to varying degrees, been neglectful in the region over the past decade—particularly regarding the existential threat posed by climate change."

Pacific island anger at Australia's attitude to climate change crystallised over a "joke" by Peter Dutton, then Immigration Minister in the Abbott Government, after a Pacific Islands Forum meeting in 2015.

With a meeting running late Dutton sneered to Tony Abbott and then Social Services Minister Morrison that, "Time doesn't mean anything when you're about to have water lapping at your door."

Australia has continually made it clear that it doesn't care about the threat climate change poses to the very existence of some of the Pacific island states. Australia's rulers only ever have their own interests in mind.

Australia, with an economy and military power that dwarfs that of Pacific island states, is a bully and exploiter in the region

Fascists gain ground in French election despite Macron victory

By Chris Breen

EMMANUEL MACRON has beaten the fascist Marine Le Pen to take the French presidency. But Le Pen's vote of 41.5 per cent was a significant increase on her total in the last run-off election.

As president for the past five years, Macron has provided no protection against the far right. Instead his policies have helped them grow.

His racist "separatism" law in 2021 forced dozens of mosques to close and shut down the Collective Against Islamophobia as well as several Muslim charities.

Macron's attacks on pensions and workers' living standards, his repression of the Yellow Vest movement and his backing for killer cops all helped Le Pen.

The fascist vote in elections has continually increased due to the failures of the mainstream parties.

From 15 per cent in the first round in 1995, it reached 18 per cent in 2012, 21 per cent in 2017 and 23 per cent this time. Combined with the vote of the even more virulently Islamophobic Eric Zemmour, the far right vote was 32 per cent.

The election result shows the deep and ongoing political crisis in France. What were until recently the two major parties on the right and the left have both collapsed.

The Republicans on the right received less than 5 per cent of the vote, while the Socialist Party, the equivalent of the Labor Party here, less than 2 per cent.

Left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon received 22 per cent of the vote, coming third overall and topping the poll in many major cities including Paris.

Racism and far right ideas have become shockingly mainstream.

Le Pen supported a complete ban on Muslims wearing the hijab in public, wanted to erode abortion rights, block criminal prosecutions against killer cops by giving them a "presumption of self-defence" and try to break trade union power.

She would also have unleashed her thug supporters, who have already attacked student occupations, to impose her authoritarian fascist project.

Le Pen claimed to be on the side of workers facing a cost of living crisis, winning support by opposing some of Macron's attacks such as



Above: Protesters rejecting both Macron and Le Pen

raising the retirement age from 62 to 65.

But Le Pen blamed immigrants for the crisis and wanted to deny them healthcare and housing subsidies, and remove citizenship rights. Her main slogan was "Give the French their country back".

There has been a consistent failure to recognise the threat that Le Pen's fascist party poses, and that it is not just another right-wing party.

The mainstream parties have continually sought to win over Le Pen's voters through embracing her racist policies. This has served only to legitimise her.

Falling behind Macron

Many on the left called for a vote for Macron in the second round, as they did at the 2017 election, in a mistaken effort to stop Le Pen.

This only plays into the fascists' hands, allowing them to pose as outsiders. It makes it easier for Le Pen to pose as standing up for workers' living standards when the left is supporting Macron, who is widely seen as ruling for the rich.

In practice the call for a vote for Macron is a political alternative to building a movement on the streets. It demobilises the movement against both Le Pen and Macron.

It is a repeat of the Popular Front strategy of the 1930s that saw the left

unite electorally with "moderate" right forces and fail to stop the fascists in Spain.

The past five years have seen powerful strikes and big protests for Black Lives Matter and against police brutality in France.

Students recently organised a surge of university occupations to express their fury at the right-wing presidential election run off.

Anti-racists have protested meetings of Le Pen's supporters and, on 16 April, nearly 40,000 took part in anti-racist protests in Paris and 150,000 across the country.

Special police units set up by Macron fired tear gas at the anti-racist protesters.

Speaking from the Sorbonne university in Paris, history student Marie told the UK's *Socialist Worker*, "We know Le Pen is a fascist. We do not want her as president. But Macron opened the road to her and has assaulted our Muslim sisters and brothers.

"It is a really rotten choice. Democracy is more than the twisted system we are offered. We say neither Macon nor Le Pen and we will protest for our futures."

Le Pen and her fascist street thugs have had a setback at the ballot box but that won't stop their bid for power. Building an anti-racist and anti-fascist movement in the streets and workplaces is an urgent task.

Racism and far right ideas have become shockingly mainstream in France

Time for a reckoning with the system that breeds sexism

The Reckoning: How #MeToo is Changing Australia, by Jess Hill, Quarterly Essay 84, \$24.99

WHEN THE MeToo movement erupted in 2017, the rage was palpable. It gave women the confidence to share their stories of sexual assault and harassment, and finally they were being believed.

More than 200 powerful men were taken down by survivors' testimonies and protesters took to their streets in their thousands for Women's Marches demanding accountability from abusers.

In 2021, the rage was reignited in Australia with the revelations that Brittany Higgins was raped in Parliament House and Liberal minister Christian Porter was accused of a historic rape. The Morrison government's contempt for women drew 150,000 protesters out for the March4Justice rallies.

Jess Hill's Quarterly Essay *The Reckoning* is an assessment of the MeToo movement in Australia. Hill's essay details the downfall of a handful of powerful Australian men, dedicates a whole chapter to praising the Turnbull government and shares the powerful stories of women standing up to their abusers.

But Hill fails to understand or explain the origins of sexism and in doing so leaves the reader with little hope that things can be changed.

"Why is hatred and contempt for women still a default position for so many boys and men?" asks Hill.

Her answer is a "male-ness" that is so traumatising it leaves men unable to be emotional, expressive or vulnerable.



But the problem is not maleness, but rather the experience of life in a capitalist society that is permeated with sexism.

All around us are sexist ideas and institutions that reflect women as merely sexual commodities, caregivers and homemakers. Because without women's unpaid domestic labour and caregiving, the capitalist state would have to fund it—the tune of \$10.9 trillion.

Sexist ideas

Hill rightly points out that things such as pornography influence the perception of women's worth. These sexist ideas are perpetuated by capitalist institutions—from the school system, to advertising, the media and the government.

Men aren't innately sexist or prone to abusing women. They learn these ideas from the world around them. As Karl Marx once wrote, "The ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class."

But the movement with the potential to challenge this and win serious reforms that could transform women's lives is mentioned only once.

The problem is not maleness, but the experience of life in a capitalist society that is permeated with sexism

"Unions work on these issues every day and continue to improve conditions for women in the workplace," writes Hill.

Things like equal pay, permanent jobs, free childcare, abortion rights, funding for women's services and adequate welfare payments give women the confidence and the financial freedom to do something about abuse and harassment—both in the home and in the workplace.

But under capitalism these things must be fought for, and at the height of the MeToo movement, workers took the fight against sexism into their workplaces.

Workers at McDonalds, Google and at hotels in the US staged walk-outs and strikes and won their demands around sexual harassment at work.

And in 2019, workers at Chemist Warehouse distribution centres in Melbourne and Brisbane struck as part of a campaign against sexual harassment and bullying that won permanent jobs and pay rises, while forcing sexist managers to resign.

Despite these inspiring

struggles against sexism, Hill's answer for vulnerable working women experiencing harassment in the workplace is meagre stuff—the Respect@Work report and whoever forms government after 21 May.

Men

The final chapter, titled *Men*, takes a pessimistic outlook on the future of the women's movement. "Do we, ultimately, believe it's possible for them [men] to change?" asks Hill.

This kind of essentialism leaves little inspiration that things could ever change. But history shows us what is possible and the kinds of demands we need to transform women's lives.

Over the course of the 1917 Russian revolution, abortion was legalised and made free, women were paid equally, prostitution was decriminalised, paid maternity leave was introduced and women were liberated from the home through socialised domestic labour provided by the state. This is the kind of world we should be fighting for.

Hill's essay seeks to explain how MeToo is changing Australia. It's true that MeToo has put powerful abusers on notice, that women's rage and protest has forced some concessions from the government and that the movement has given women the confidence to finally share their stories.

But the essay is only useful as a catalogue of MeToo in Australia. Instead of arguing for the radical transformation of society that could end sexism, Hill believes that in a century "women will still be holding signs ... that say 'I can't believe we're still protesting this shit'."

Ruby Wawn

HAS LABOR IN POWER EVER MADE A DIFFERENCE?

Jean Parker looks at why workers have different expectations of Labor governments, and why so many of them have ended up betraying their supporters

LABOR'S RELATIONSHIP to the working class is fundamentally different from the Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party is an out-and-out party of the ruling class and they represent the interests of business, whereas the Labor Party since its formation in the 1890s has been the party of the trade union bureaucracy.

Even today 50 per cent of delegates at the Labour Party conference are union delegates. This means there is a formal organic relationship between the trade union leaders, and therefore between the organised working class, and the ALP.

If the Liberals win again it's going to be disheartening for everybody who wants to see change.

Despite their small target strategy it is still the case that people who are hungry for social change will read their hopes onto a Labor government. There will be a big gap between those hopes and what Labor leader Anthony Albanese is actually going to deliver.

Albanese's Labor are doing everything they can to indicate that they're not going to make a difference with their small target, or no target, strategy.

The most recent example is that they're not even going to review the rate of JobSeeker if they come into power. They don't want to do anything that they feel the media and the Liberals can attack them over.

Aged care is one of the few areas where they have made some promises. Labor says it will address the horrific conditions inside aged care for residents, as well as the low pay for staff.

They have promised to fully fund whatever decision the Fair Work Commission makes on increasing workers' wages, whereas the Liberals are saying they're going to discuss with providers how to split the costs. Labor will also require a registered nurse 24/7 in

aged care centres, as well as improving food and promising a minimum number of staffing hours per resident. But the non-wage component of that pledge is only \$2.5 billion over four years.

At the same time, Labor is committed to keeping the third stage of Morrison's tax cuts, coming in next year, which will see people who earn over \$120,000 get a tax cut, costing \$19 billion per year. That is money that could have gone to funding aged care, health, education, and climate action.

Albanese is not promising to stop climate change. He says he's going to end the climate wars. Their policy got the tick of approval from the Business Council.

Albanese is promising to get rid of the ABCC watchdog on the construction union, but would leave in place the industrial relation system which John Howard created and which restricts the right to strike, with some of the worst laws in the developed world.

Labor's shift

The program that Labor is running with in this election is not a traditional social democratic Labor program. Labor has never been a socialist party. It has always been deeply reformist and committed to capitalism.

But there has been a big shift in Labor due to its embrace of neo-liberalism since 1975.

Until 1975 Labor never had a small target in election campaigns. The party had a platform of full employment, they talked about the socialisation of the economy through slowly nationalising industries, and humanising capitalism.

They talked about extending union rights and building a welfare state that provided public housing and

.....
There has been a big shift in Labor due to its embrace of neo-liberalism since 1975

public education for all.

They didn't look to ruling class newspapers for support because the Labor Party was a vibrant social movement connected to a union movement that had daily newspapers and hundreds of thousands of members with their own capacity to speak to people.

When Whitlam came to power in 1972, after 23 years of Coalition rule, he abolished university and TAFE fees, doubled school funding, and health funding went up 20 per cent.

He created Medibank, the forerunner of Medicare, introduced equal pay for women, no fault divorce, Northern Territory land rights, bilingual education, and withdrew Australia's last troops from Vietnam. The government actually doubled budget outlays.

These things were fought for and won in the streets and in the workplaces in the lead up to Whitlam's election.

In 1970, 120,000 people went on strike in the Vietnam Moratorium against the war. There had been the heroic long-running Gurindji strike and the Tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House fighting for land rights.

In 1969 a general strike smashed the penal powers, similar to today's fines and anti-strike laws, and unleashed workers' industrial power. A high level of industrial action fed the social movements around women's rights, Aboriginal rights and so on.

Whitlam was elected at the very end of the period of massive economic growth of the post-war boom.

But even before his election Whitlam said, "Our program particularly in education, welfare, hospitals, and cities, can only work successfully within a framework of strong uninterrupted growth. This requires... a growth rate of 6 to 7 per cent in each of the next three years. This is the real answer to

the parrot cry, ‘Where’s the money coming from?’ Even at the present low rate of growth, Commonwealth income has nearly doubled in the last six years.”

This commitment to managing capitalism explains why there is also a long history of Labor attacking its own supporters. When there’s a boom and economic growth, Labor has been willing to fund reforms. But when capitalism goes into crisis, they abandon them.

Siding with capitalism

A federal Labor government was elected just before the Great Depression began in 1929.

When the Depression hit Australia, causing massive unemployment and a debt crisis, Labor Prime Minister James Scullin responded by cutting government spending, slashing wages, pensions, and unemployment benefits. He convinced the state governments to agree to budget cuts of 20 per cent.

Labor voters were literally forced into starvation. It was an abject betrayal.

A similar thing happened to the Whitlam government in 1974 with the end of the long post-war boom. For the first time in 30 years, there was a serious economic crisis in Australia.

Whitlam did exactly what Scullin had done. He tried to wind back all his social programs and maintain business profits and economic growth.

Whitlam was scrambling to find a way to attack the working class and deal with the economic crisis. But that process was cut short by Whitlam’s dismissal. The Prime Minister was sacked in order to bring in a government that the ruling class hoped would restore profitability.

This saw the Liberals’ Malcolm Fraser elected. The ruling class looked to him to drive down wages. But Fraser couldn’t do it, because of the strength of the unions and the working class.

In 1979, amid high inflation, workers won a 13.5 per cent wage increase and in 1981 and 1982, they won 16 per cent through militant struggle.

The ruling class realised that there was an impasse. So they turned to the Labour Party under Bob Hawke and Paul Keating to sell an attack on wages and the unions. Labor’s relationship to the working class means they are sometimes able to do this in a way that the Liberal Party cannot.

After Whitlam’s dismissal, Labor concluded he had gone “too far too



Above: Labor Prime Ministers Paul Keating, Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke

fast”. They viewed reforms as impossible until the wages breakouts and inflation were dealt with.

The Accords emerged as an arrangement between the union movement and Labor. It was based on wage restraint in exchange for spending on social programs.

The strength of the unions had been based on delegate structures in the workplaces and the ability to take strike action. Because wage rises were now determined bureaucratically through negotiation with the government, these withered. When Hawke came to power 48 per cent of the workforce were union members. When Labor left office it was only 31 per cent.

Hawke and Keating reconstituted the Labor project and damaged Labor’s membership and support base. Yet for Labor leaders since, imitating them has been an item of faith.

Labor has moved a long way to the right, in the face of ongoing lower rates of business profitability and economic growth than in previous decades.

Kevin Rudd was in the same mould. When he was elected in the 2007 election he ran as a fiscal conservative.

But in that election there was also a strong union campaign around Your Rights at Work, rejecting the worst of the WorkChoices legislation that Howard had introduced. Mass union

demonstrations helped generate a mood for change.

Rudd himself was strong on the symbolism of change. He signed the Kyoto treaty and described climate change as the moral challenge of our times. He apologised to the Stolen Generations, after Howard had refused to. But looking at the fine print, he was as supportive of what Hawke and Keating had done as anyone.

Albanese continues to rely on the same free market policies. But what we need in aged care and childcare is for the state to step in, kick out the private operators and nationalise the services to boost funding and improve working conditions.

Over climate change we need publicly-funded renewable energy. We need an expansion in the services that ordinary people rely on in the crises that we face.

The unions are not running any kind of campaign this time like Change the Rules at the last election in 2019. But there will still be a number of strikes in the lead up to election day.

There have been nurses’ strikes with a further teachers’ strike likely in NSW, strikes are planned at Sydney Uni, as well as another Climate Strike. We want Morrison to go out on the back of struggle—and to prepare people to organise the opposition on the streets that will be needed under Albanese as well.

WOOMERA PROTEST TWENTY YEARS ON: BREAKOUT THAT SHOOK REFUGEE DETENTION

The Woomera breakout saw protesters help refugees escape detention, advancing a movement that won freedom for many others too, writes **James Supple**

OVER EASTER 2002, around 1000 activists converged on the notorious Woomera detention centre in the South Australian desert.

No one had planned to help refugees escape. The aim was to defy the law by protesting inside the prohibited zone around the detention centre, used to keep the refugees isolated from public view.

But 50 refugees seized the chance to stage a mass breakout from detention.

Hundreds of activists took buses from Melbourne and Sydney to camp in the desert for three days outside the detention centre, with others travelling by car from as far as Brisbane and Perth. On the first evening most of us arrived, we decided to march towards the detention centre after a request from the refugees to protest outside, while they held their own protest inside.

A barbed wire fence in our way was brought down easily as dozens of people pulled it to the ground. Soon after we realised we could have walked past it a few hundred metres further on.

The real fence to the detention centre was much more imposing, with barbed wire and an outer fence made of steel palisades. Refugees soon made it to the fence line, shouting out to activists outside and reaching their hands through the fences.

“When we got to the fence we could see women and children screaming. The detainees were chanting and shaking the fence with us,” Kristalo Hryscos from Melbourne’s Refugee Action Collective (RAC) told *Socialist Worker* at the time.

Then some refugees managed to escape, prising open the fence. Some had to climb along the outside of the fence past police, before falling into the crowd of protesters.

“A 10-year-old boy jumped into our arms. He said, ‘Please Miss, don’t

send us back. We’ll die. We are not illegal’,” Kristalo added. “As demonstrators, we could see we had the power to stand our ground. We helped the refugees fight for freedom.”

A tense night followed with the refugees hiding out inside the protest camp. No one had imagined a breakout would succeed, or made plans to assist escapes.

A number of cars set out to try to get escaped refugees away from Woomera. Some were stopped at police roadblocks and sent back to detention, but others managed to make it through.

The government tried to claim that protesters had incited the refugees to escape. But they were more than capable of making their own plans and choices. Many had actually escaped through the back of the detention centre, using the protests elsewhere as a diversion.

Hellhole

Woomera was among the worst of Australia’s remote detention centres. It was literally in the middle of nowhere, almost 500 kilometres north of Adelaide in the central Australian desert. Refugees’ isolation was extreme. For the first six months after its opened, there was not a single telephone detainees could use, even to let families overseas know they were still alive.

The detention camp was opened in 1999 by John Howard’s Liberal government in response to increasing boat arrivals, the majority of them escaping dictatorships in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. The government was determined to stir up racism, demonising refugees as “illegals” and making their lives hell to try to stop them coming.

It was drastically overcrowded, built for 400 people but at its height holding 1500 asylum seekers, including hundreds of children. “The food

.....
The Woomera 2002 protest was one of the most successful civil disobedience actions in recent decades

was so bad that after two weeks I had to stop eating it. I had chronic stomach pain,” nurse Moira-Jane Conahan, who worked in the centre and chose to eat with the refugees, explained.

Refugees would wait at least six months for any response to their asylum claims. Many were rejected or screened out on technicalities, spending years locked up there.

This deliberate torture generated continuous resistance.

Refugees themselves were the first to push the detention issue into the newspapers and TV news with an earlier breakout from the detention centre in June 2000.

Around 400 asylum seekers marched three kilometres into the town of Woomera, not in an attempt to escape but to force attention onto what was happening to them. They stayed in the town for two days, gaining blanket media coverage.

Their protests worked. Within weeks of the breakout, the first visas were granted, meaning some refugees were released from detention. Detention management agreed to distribute phones to representatives of each nationality group, and there were small improvements in conditions.

Direct action

The Woomera 2002 protest was one of the most successful civil disobedience actions in Australia in recent decades. The dramatic events produced a media frenzy.

But far from isolating the protesters or producing a backlash, the action helped win over public opinion and deepen opposition to the government’s refugee policies.

It showed that there were people prepared to break the law to defy the detention policy and help refugees escape. The result was discussion in workplaces and communities nationwide about what was happening in detention and why the movement was

prepared to do this. More and more people were exposed to the arguments against the detention policy and the government and media lies about refugees.

The fact that the civil disobedience protest grew out of a much wider movement was vital.

This meant mass direct action involving hundreds of people, organised and built openly, was possible.

By 2002, the refugee rights movement had already been organising for several years. On Palm Sunday that year, the weekend before the Woomera convergence, 20,000 people marched in support of refugees in Melbourne and 8000 in Sydney.

There were already thousands of refugee rights activists and dozens of organisations prepared to take up the arguments in support of refugees, and to defend those involved in the protest.

And the direct action at Woomera in turn helped to strengthen the wider movement. It drew in new activists, inspired by the determination to fight both of the refugees and the activists who travelled from across the country to Woomera.

The effort to physically interfere with the operations of the detention system, and as activists put it to “dismantle the camps”, pointed to the need to raise the political and social cost of the policy to the government. Letter writing, lobbying or private appeals to politicians were not going to end the torture of refugees. The government would have to be forced to act.

But direct action was never going to be a strategy to free all the refugees from detention.

Further protests targeting detention centres were met with overwhelming police force and mass breakouts became impossible.

From the beginning, the Refugee Action Collective groups around the country made it a priority to pull the union movement and working class organisations into the campaign.

When John Howard won the 2001 election on the back of the Tampa crisis and 9/11, using the politics of border security and national security, the dangers of his racism became clear.

Until then, the Liberals had widely been expected to lose, with anger at their GST, privatisation, anti-union laws, and the efforts to rule for big business and the rich widespread.

But Howard succeeded in winning a section of working class voters for



Above: Protesters at the fence of Woomera detention centre as the refugees escaped

the Liberals on the basis of racism and division. Even right-wing union leaders, like then head of Unions NSW John Robertson, could see the threat. There was a real danger that the working class would be divided, with some workers accepting the government’s lies that refugees were the real threat to their jobs and living standards.

Union involvement also pointed towards the possibility of strikes and industrial action against the detention system, a form of direct action more powerful than any detention breakout.

The movement may not have been able to achieve the scale of workers’ action as during the Vietnam War or against uranium mining in earlier decades. But the Woomera protest was a key moment in a campaign that won real change over refugees.

A year after the protest, Woomera was closed. Howard’s claim in 2002 that the protest would be “counter-productive” and only, “strengthen the resolve of the Australian people to support even more the Government’s policy”, fell flat.

By 2005, public opinion had turned against Howard. From a position in 2001 where 70 per cent supported his actions in keeping out refugees from the Tampa, there was now majority support for allowing refugees to stay.

The government was forced to make concessions on its mandatory

detention policy, releasing children from detention and freeing long-term detainees.

The movement pushed Labor to pledge to scrap Temporary Protection Visas when it won office. In 2008, the new Labor government closed detention on Nauru. Shamefully, Labor reversed itself and re-opened offshore detention on Nauru and Manus Island in 2012.

Since then refugee politics have shifted to the right, with Morrison continuing to boast about his boat turnbacks policy in the current election campaign.

But the movement has kept organising and won important gains. The protest in support of doctors at the Lady Cilento hospital in Brisbane in 2016 stopped the government returning baby Asha to Nauru.

Scott Morrison was forced to bring all the children off Nauru in 2018. And over 1000 refugees who were sent to Manus and Nauru have remained in Australia after arriving for medical treatment.

The fight is not over. But the last 20 years of the campaign for refugee rights have shown that protest works.

The lesson would not be lost on the Woomera escapees. While some were recaptured quickly after the 2002 protest, at least 13 remained free. After several years, supporters won an agreement from the Immigration Department to grant them permanent visas. They were now finally free—and are still living in the community today.

HOW WARS CAN END IN REVOLT AND REVOLUTION

The horrors of war have produced numerous revolts at home—that have ended wars, toppled dictatorships and put a fight for radical change on the agenda, argues **Tom Orsag**

PUTIN’S WAR in Ukraine has produced a wave of anti-war demonstrations inside Russia, even in the face of vicious repression.

Even in the army, there have been reports of conscript soldiers surrendering or refusing to fight. One group of soldiers reportedly ran over their commander with a tank after he sent hundreds of them to die.

Wars in the past have been ended by mass protests and popular resistance.

Working class people, including soldiers and sailors, have risen up in mutiny, mass strikes and even revolution, forcing their own governments to end the insanity of industrial-scale slaughter and give up the war.

The most dramatic examples occurred during the First World War.

The outbreak of that war saw the workers’ movements across Europe silenced by the clamour of jingoism, with the class struggle forgotten as workers queued up to join the “adventure” of imperialist war.

Most of the socialist and Labor-type parties across Europe betrayed their promises to oppose war, backing the rulers of their own nations. Mass parties including the German Social Democratic Party, with over a million members, the French Socialist Party and the British Labour Party all swung behind the slaughter.

Only a tiny minority of socialists, most importantly the Bolsheviks in Russia, predicted that the imperialist war, by exacerbating the internal contradictions of capitalism, would lead to civil war between the classes.

The Russian revolutionary Lenin argued that socialists should not support their own ruling class but instead turn imperialist war into class war. This position on the inter-imperialist conflict was known as “revolutionary defeatism”. He argued that defeat in

the war could also lead to revolution.

This was dramatically proven in March 1917 when Russian workers and soldiers toppled their government after almost three years of war.

Russia’s autocratic Tsarist regime had heaped immense misery on the country’s population when it declared war on Germany. Famine stalked Russia as the economic cost of the war effort lowered living standards. About two million Russian soldiers died on the front.

In February 1917, the regional military commander in the capital, St Petersburg, ordered bread rationing after supplies began to run out. Women rushed to buy bread each day, with stores frequently running out.

On International Women’s Day on 8 March, when there was no bread, protests turned into riots and strikes, with protesters raising the slogan of “Down with the Tsar”.

Two days after IWD, Russian soldiers, previously loyal to the Tsar, refused to fire upon the protesters. Seventy thousand soldiers of the St Petersburg garrison joined the 385,000 workers on strike on the city, bringing down the government. The Tsar abdicated and his ministers were arrested.

But the new Provisional government refused to end the war and in June launched a new military offensive against Germany and Austria.

In November 1917, the working class overthrew the Provisional government and took power, installing a new Bolshevik regime, led by Lenin and Trotsky, that promised “Bread, Peace and Land”.

True to their word, the Bolsheviks signed a peace treaty with Germany, at Brest-Litovsk, in March 1918, despite harsh German terms including, ironically enough, their seizure of Ukraine.

The Russian revolution of 1917 inspired workers and soldiers’ revolt across Europe

The Russian revolution inspired workers and soldiers’ revolt across Europe. In 1917 French armies were hit by mutiny against plans for another suicidal offensive across the trenches.

German revolution

Opposition to the war was also growing inside Germany. Here, too, the mobilisation for war was savaging workers’ living standards and resulting in food shortages. This was not simply due to the Allied naval blockade but to the cutbacks in food production caused by forcing agricultural labourers into the army.

The winter of 1916-17 became known as the “turnip winter” due to the replacement of ordinary foods with turnip bread, turnip marmalade and turnip coffee.

In 1916 revolutionary socialists Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht called a demonstration on May Day of thousands. The next day 55,000 workers went on strike to protest Liebknecht’s jailing for saying “Down with the war!”.

By 1918 it was clear Germany would lose the war. But the government wanted to avoid a complete surrender and negotiate a settlement.

In November, the Admiralty of the German Navy ordered one last roll of the dice against the British Navy, ordering a fleet based in Kiel to set sail for the English Channel. Fleet sailors saw this as suicidal. It was the spark for a rebellion that was already smoldering.

The previous year, the crew of the one ship staged a protest over poor rations in Wilhelmshaven.

Two of the ringleaders were executed by firing squad while others were sentenced to prison.

Sailors, now knowing the high stakes involved in mutiny, formed secret sailors’ councils on a number of

the large ships, awaiting their chance to revolt.

Following the order to set sail in November 1918, they acted.

Within days, the revolt spread to a strike wave of the working class of the city of Kiel itself. By the evening of 4 November, Kiel was firmly in the hands of about 40,000 rebellious sailors, soldiers and workers, as were other port towns including Wilhelmshaven within days.

Events in Kiel laid a pattern that was followed in every German city and town of note, with soldiers and workers fraternising and throwing out the representatives of the Kaiser's government in each city and town.

The Kaiser abdicated and the new government signed an armistice on 11 November.

Portuguese soldiers' revolt

The Vietnam War famously produced enormous protests inside the US and its allies, including Australia. The combination of a mass anti-war movement, serious dissent inside the US armed forces and the heroic Vietnamese resistance saw the US defeated.

There was an even more serious anti-war revolt in Portugal in 1974. Its government had been waging wars against national liberation movements in its colonies in Africa since 1961, mostly notably Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.

The country was ruled by a fascist dictatorship under Marcello Caetano. Political parties, trade unions and strikes were outlawed. Opponents of the regime were imprisoned and tortured by the notorious secret police, the PIDE.

With the colonial wars going badly, the armed forces were draining more than 40 per cent of the central budget and 13,000 soldiers had died, more than the country had lost in any conflict since the Napoleonic Wars.

Veteran junior officers formed the "Armed Forces Movement", the MFA.

The MFA's first meeting was in September 1973, deep in the countryside and ostensibly for a "special farmhouse barbeque", to avoid the scrutiny of Caetano's secret police or the higher ranks in the army.

In March 1974 it led a botched coup attempt. The Caetano regime shrank from harsh reprisals against them so that by April the MFA had built up a network of 300 supporting officers across the armed forces. It even wrote a policy document for Portugal based on free elections, liberal values and an immediate end to the colonial wars.



Above: Workers and soldiers in Portugal celebrate during the 1974 revolution

On 25 April 1974 just after midnight, another coup against Caetano began. The radio and TV stations, the airport and general military headquarters were taken with little resistance. An autocratic regime that was over 45 years old crumbled in less than a day.

Workers came out onto the streets to see what the coup was about and when they realised the MFA was getting rid of Caetano they put red carnations in the gun barrels of the soldiers and by the end of the day jumped onto tanks to celebrate.

The MFA didn't want to run the country, so they called upon a group of eminent generals, headed by General Spínola, a mild critic of the regime, to form a provisional government.

Spínola wanted to modernise Portugal's economy while at the same time dragging out the colonial wars until the national liberation movements agreed to peace terms, to protect Portuguese businesses inside newly independent colonies.

But this did not satisfy Portuguese workers. A week after the coup, workers celebrated the first legal May Day demonstrations in their lives. A hundred thousand workers took over the centre of the capital, Lisbon, with red banners and speeches from left-wing leaders just returned from exile.

A strike wave broke out in major new industries such as electronics and the shipyards as well as newly

expanded older industries such as textiles and construction.

During May, at least 158 workplaces were involved in fierce confrontations with management, including 35 occupations over pay and the sacking of fascist managers and shop floor spies, known as the "saneamento" or literally the "cleansing". This demand became the hallmark of every strike.

Spínola realised there would have to be concessions to workers' economic and political demands in order to preserve Portuguese capitalism. He was forced to immediately end the wars and grant independence to the African colonies.

Any major war results in attacks on workers' wages and living standards at home in order to fund the slaughter, along with increasing numbers of workers dying in the fighting.

As the revolts following the First World War show most clearly, it can also open the possibility of a socialist revolution and a society run under workers' democratic control. Workers everywhere have an interest in opposing war and demanding the wealth of society is used to address inequality, oppression and human need, not funding weapons and war.

It is already clear that Putin's war in Ukraine is far less popular than his previous foreign invasions. Anti-war revolt inside Russia holds the hope of ending the current war and should inspire us to build a serious anti-war movement in Australia.



BILLIONS WASTED ON WEAPONS STOP THE MARCH TO WAR ON CHINA

By Adam Adelpour

THE MORRISON government remains stuck behind in the polls and is relentlessly trying to take us into a khaki election.

In their desperation, Morrison and Defence Minister Peter Dutton have pulled out all stops to whip up anti-China militarism against the backdrop of the bloodbath in Ukraine and growing tensions over China's security agreement with the Solomon Islands.

Dutton's warmongering reached new heights in his ANZAC Day speech in Darwin. He compared Vladimir Putin to Hitler and likened China to Nazi Germany in the lead-up to the Second World War, warning that "The only way you can preserve peace is to prepare for war".

In Ukraine the tensions between NATO and Russia have led to a disastrous and bloody conflict. The Morrison government's push to militarise Australia and the region is adding to already existing imperialist tensions between US and China. The list of new military spending announcements is enormous and growing.

The centrepiece of the AUKUS military agreement with the US and UK announced last year is Australia's acquisition of nuclear submarines, with some estimates putting the after-inflation cost at \$171 billion. In addition, Morrison has now announced plans for a \$10 billion East Coast base for the subs in either Port Kembla, Newcastle or Brisbane.

But the subs are just the beginning. Morrison plans to spend \$38 billion expanding Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel numbers from 60,000 to 80,000, the biggest increase

in the armed forces since the Vietnam War.

In early April, Peter Dutton declared, "There is potential of conflict in our area in a couple of years," as he announced a \$3.5 billion advanced weapons upgrade for the ADF, as part of government plans to establish a domestic missile manufacturing industry.

The plan, under the umbrella of the AUKUS agreement, will see the Australian government "partner" with US defence contractors Raytheon and Lockheed Martin to develop long-range hypersonic missiles that can travel five times the speed of sound.

Weapons for Ukraine

Not content with stoking the flames of war in Australia's immediate region, Morrison has shamelessly used the conflict in Ukraine to push his militaristic agenda.

After a request from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Morrison agreed to send 20 Bushmaster armoured vehicles (costing around \$500,000 each) to Ukraine in addition to the "lethal aid" already sent.

At the end of April the Morrison government also joined the US in pledging heavy weapons for Ukraine for the first time. Australia will provide Ukraine with another \$26.7 million worth of arms, including howitzers and ammunition.

In March, Dutton also announced the ADF's first "space command", saying some countries including Russia see "space as a territory for their taking".

Defence Space Commander Air Vice-Marshal Cath Roberts said space gives Australia "unsurpassed advantage in surveillance and intelligence"

and will be central to future wars that use hypersonic weapons, guided weapons and missiles.

While Morrison wildly boosts military spending, it is workers who are footing the bill for the Coalition's disastrous drive to war. Hospitals, schools and aged care are in crisis with understaffed and overcrowded wards and classrooms. Many teachers, nurses and aged care workers are at breaking point thanks to brutal workloads, understaffing and low pay.

And Morrison has budgeted virtually nothing for renewable energy despite thousands continuing to suffer from unprecedented, climate change induced flooding in NSW and Queensland.

Albanese and Labor have pathetically backed every cent of Morrison's military spending. Albanese told the Lowy Institute he was "proud" of Labor's decision taken in less than 24 hours to support Morrison's AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine initiative. "I think that was an example of the maturity of the Australian Labor Party," Albanese said.

Albanese has matched the Liberals in boosting military spending to over 2 per cent of GDP. Albanese's criticism of the Coalition's military spending is not the amount; just that it hasn't resulted in enough armaments.

The urgent opposition that's needed to fight imperialism and the dangerous drive to war with China won't come from Labor.

It will have to come from the community, unions and anti-war campaigners. We need to fight for money for health, education and renewable energy, not missiles, nuclear submarines and other weapons of death and destruction.

.....
Albanese and Labor have pathetically backed every cent of Morrison's military spending

Solidarity