

WORKERS LOSE AT LABOR'S JOBS SUMMIT

STRIKE FOR A REAL PAY RISE



UNIONS

Rise in strikes as cost of living bites

CLIMATE

Labor backs fossil fuels despite new target

QUEEN'S DEATH

Billionaire parasites—abolish the monarchy

Solidarity WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

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

Workers power and socialism

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

What about elections and parliament?

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

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

We are internationalists

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

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

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

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

Oppression and liberation

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

Linking up the struggles

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

Educate, agitate, organise

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

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

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

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

National

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

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Things they say

We want the system to work for small business.

Sally McManus on changes to enterprise bargaining negotiated at the Jobs Summit

The business community is central to our journey to the better future that was the theme of our campaign and the objective of our government.

Anthony Albanese at the Jobs Summit

Consumer concern has moved from something that is abstract to something that is extremely real and is based on actual bills.

Energy Consumers Australia CEO, Lynne Gallagher, states the bleeding obvious, as consumer confidence in Australia's energy system suffers a record decline in August

I was at Wimbledon this year and nobody even spoke to me.

Tennis veteran and pentecostal bigot Margaret Court complains about Serena Williams giving her the cold shoulder

Andrew you're a sick old man

Heckler at Prince Andrew as he followed the Queen's coffin. Shamefully he was arrested for his trouble

Make sure music in stores is appropriate and ensure that things are consistent with the national mood.

Advice on the gov.uk website to businesses in Britain following the Queen's death. Supermarket chain Morrisons has turned down the beeps on its checkout machines

They're rioting but we came up last time they did this, and smashed the whole community. So this time as soon as we arrived, they started behaving.

NT police officer Zachary Rolfe, acquitted of murdering Kumanjayi Walker in Yuendumu, in a text message on being sent to Borroloola

I'm all for that shit. I've done the same thing to you more than once before. I'm always ready to make my camera face the other way, and be a dramatic c* in the film, ha ha.**

Rolfe again

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Politicians' property empires revealed

FEDERAL MPs own or co-own 447 houses between them, the updated register of interests says.

Karen Andrews, Liberal Shadow Home Affairs Minister, has six investment properties in addition to the home she lives in, Labor's Tony Burke has houses he uses in Canberra and Sydney plus four investment properties, while the Nationals' Andrew Willcox has five investment properties on top of his residence.

MPs are allowed to claim \$299 a night travel allowance when in Canberra, and 38 of them have used this to buy a house in the capital or nearby Queanbeyan. Anthony Albanese is one of them, owning a Canberra unit alongside a house in Marrickville and one in Dulwich Hill.

Greens MPs Nick McKim, Mehreen Faruqi and Elizabeth Watson-Brown all own multiple properties, while David Shoebridge's partner has three investment properties.

No benefit to Victoria's \$2 billion extra for police

VICTORIA POLICE have been unable to point to any reduction in crime or benefit from the dramatic increase in funding that saw Dan Andrews' government hire 2729 new police at a cost of \$2 billion in 2016.

The police force did not bother to gather any information to justify the expansion, an Auditor-General's report has revealed.

Police requested an extra 2300 staff in this year's budget process, but the report found that the request for 1030 of them was either not substantiated at all or relied on outdated information.

Victoria has the country's largest law enforcement organisation after Dan Andrews' government has engaged in a law and order campaign over the last decade. Spending on police, courts and prisons has grown at double or triple the rate of other states and territories.

Last year's Victoria's police budget was \$4 billion and the state had more officers than NSW, despite having 1.4 million less people over a far smaller area.

Queen's obscene hoard of stolen wealth



The Koh-i-Noor Diamond, stolen from India

QUEEN ELIZABETH II was a parasite born into a life of privilege, with a household of more than 400 staff and tens of billions in assets.

The Crown Estate controls a \$26 billion property portfolio including prime real estate in London, Buckingham Palace, the royal art collection and the seabed out to 19 kilometres from the coast, including the right to lease it to offshore wind or mining projects. While the British government now takes revenue from the estate, it pays the Crown an annual payment in return, currently set at \$172 million a year.

That doesn't include the cost of royal visits or special events, such as the \$47 million spent on the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations earlier this year in Britain. Her last visit to Australia in 2011 cost taxpayers \$1.74 million.

A separate financial empire, called the Duchy of Lancaster and held since 1399, is valued at \$1.1 billion and covers 18,000 hectares of farmland and property including the Savoy Estate buildings in central London. Last year it earned the Queen \$40 million. In 1990 the Queen graciously agreed to pay tax on the proceeds, but negotiated a deal with the British government allowing the Duchy to be inherited by her successors untaxed.

A third fortune is held in the Duchy of Cornwall, valued at \$1.7 billion and managed by the eldest son of the Monarch.

On top of all this the Queen privately owned the palaces of Balmoral in Scotland and Sandringham in Norfolk. Then there are the Crown Jewels, including the Koh-i-Noor Diamond, one of world's largest diamonds, stolen in India under the British empire. It's about time all of the Royals' filthy loot was taken back.

Royals encouraged Whitlam sacking

DESPITE HER supposedly completely symbolic role, Queen Elizabeth II helped encourage the undemocratic sacking of Australia's Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1975.

The "Palace Letters", released to academic Jenny Hocking in 2020 and sent by the Queen's private secretary Sir Martin Charteris, reveal that Governor-General John Kerr discussed his options with the Palace in elaborate detail.

The Liberals under Malcolm Fraser had blocked supply in the Senate, ruthlessly disregarding convention in an effort to force Whitlam out. The Palace told Kerr in a letter on 24 September 1975, that "if supply is refused this always makes it constitutionally proper to grant a dissolution", helping encourage him to act. Our new King Charles also spoke to Kerr about his options prior to the Dismissal and wrote to him afterwards praising his actions, telling him, "What you did last year was right and the courageous thing to do". What outrageous contempt for democracy.

Inquiry reveals sexism runs through Queensland cops

A COMMISSION of inquiry into domestic violence and the Queensland police has unearthed shocking examples of sexism, abuse and breach of procedure. Even Police Commissioner Katrina Carroll was forced to admit there was misogyny, racism and sexism within the force.

Thirty-eight officers have been hit with domestic violence orders in the first six months of this year alone.

Barrister Anna Cappellano told the inquiry of a number of outrageous breaches of domestic violence orders by police. One officer who was subject to a police protection order breached it just 33 minutes later. Over his career he has been the subject of 17 complaints including over sexual offences and strangulation.

Another serving officer used the police database to try to find the shelter where a woman who lodged a domestic violence complaint against him was staying.

A survey by former police officer Mark Ainsworth found 98 per cent of police thought domestic violence training was a "tick the box exercise". He was told that within six months, new officers "learned how to manipulate aggrieved persons at DV matters in order to avoid doing DV orders". Some officers avoid dealing with domestic violence "at all costs", he was told, shutting "their eyes as much as they can".

A senior police officer told a co-worker that he refused to investigate suspicions about one domestic violence case because those involved were a "pair of scumbags who live in a shit area in a shit house".

The rot goes right to the top. Deputy Commissioner Paul Taylor has been forced to resign after he made a sexist comment at a senior leadership conference in April, describing a friend as a "vagina whisperer". Another senior officer yelled out "did she shut her legs on you?" after the MC joked that cuts to his face were the result of a "rough promotional process" at a conference in March. He was promoted to Chief Superintendent four months later.

EDITORIAL

Strikes needed to push up pay after Labor's Jobs Summit ignores cost-of-living crisis

ANTHONY ALBANESE'S response to the Queen's death brought out his caution and subservience to the establishment.

His decisions to suspend parliament for 15 days, declare a "national day of mourning" and claim that "Her Majesty had a special claim in our hearts" saw him bending over backwards to the most conservative elements in society.

This approach mirrors Labor's general reluctance to launch any more serious social change.

After passing a weak 43 per cent climate target, Labor is making things even worse through backing mining company plans for dozens of new gas and coal projects.

This will see Australia's emissions rise, blowing any chance of getting emissions down even by 43 per cent. But as the climate disasters across Pakistan, Europe, China and North America show, we need urgent action to avoid climate catastrophe.

Much of the media gushed over Labor's Jobs Summit as an effort to bring together employers, unions and experts together to help solve the nation's problems.

But if the outcomes were thin the aims were clear. The summit's focus was on the needs of business and Australian capitalism—and Labor's effort to serve their interests.

Women were described as an untapped economic resource who could be working more to boost the economy. More skilled migration was urgent to deal with companies' labour shortages. And there was furious agreement about boosting workers' productivity.

The immediate cost-of-living crisis facing workers was barely mentioned.

The Reserve Bank has now increased interest rates for the past five months and signalled that further increases are ahead. That means the cost of an average mortgage is already up \$570 a month since May. Inflation is set to keep rising.

Gas and coal mining companies' profits are soaring due to higher international prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Mining profits were up 17 per cent between April and May to \$83 billion. Yet Albanese was quick to reject calls for a super profits tax.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has also repeatedly defended the stage-three tax cuts, costing \$30 billion by the end of the decade and flowing overwhelm-



Above: Early childhood educators walked out of work in September to demand higher pay

ingly to people earning over \$120,000.

Union leaders, intoxicated by their new seats at the table, embraced the rotten logic of consensus and collaboration with the bosses.

Before the election, ACTU Secretary Sally McManus denounced Scott Morrison's suggestion of changes to the Better Off Overall Test as "plans to cut wages and undermine the rights of working people". But the ACTU will now support watering down the BOOT in exchange for some form of multi-employer bargaining.

This is likely to operate only in limited areas, such as low-paid work like aged care, childcare and small business.

Unless unions win greater rights to strike, workers won't have the power to win serious gains. Yet there has been no suggestion that Labor will remove any of the restrictions on strike action under the Fair Work Act.

For three decades most union leaders have sought consensus with the employers. This has delivered a decline in union membership and industrial power, resulting in falling wages even as companies post higher and higher profits.

Fightback

It's clear we will have to fight to get any relief from the rising cost of living.

Some groups of workers have started to win decent pay rises—taking advantage of labour shortages that mean employers are desperate to keep

their staff.

Certis security and baggage screeners at Sydney airport won a 7 per cent pay rise each year. Dnata, which employs baggage handlers on international flights, agreed to an immediate pay rise of 12.6 per cent plus 4.6 per cent next year.

Official strike figures showed a significant increase in the three months to June from a very low base, to the highest in one quarter since 2004.

The bulk of this is the public sector strikes in NSW, with nurses, teachers, public servants and rail workers all staging industrial action against the state Liberal government's 3 per cent pay cap and staff shortages. Nurses staged another 24-hour strike on 1 September, while teachers are likely to strike again next month.

A public sector-wide strike could escalate the industrial campaign and break Liberal Premier Dominic Perrottet's pay cap. But instead union leaders have adopted a strategy focused on the NSW election next March, in the misplaced hope that electing a Labor government is the answer.

Stepping up the strike action is the way to fight. With Albanese sticking to the small target policies, and kow-towing to business and the establishment, it is going to take a fightback outside parliament to deliver the wage rises, climate action, jobs for nurses and teachers and the real social change that is badly needed.

.....
Some groups of workers have started to win decent pay rises

One third of Pakistan under water as climate disaster brings extreme flooding

By Caitlin Doyle

EXTREME FLOODING has devastated Pakistan after ten consecutive weeks of heavy rainfall. Nearly one third of the country is still under water, an area larger than the state of Victoria, with 33 million people affected and at least 1300 dead, according to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority.

More than half a million people are now living in displacement camps and thousands more have lost their homes. Hospitals and infrastructure have been destroyed, leaving tens of thousands of people without access to medical care, clean water and food.

Pakistan's Climate Change Minister, Sherry Rehman, has called the floods a "climate catastrophe". According to the United Nations, this year has seen the highest rainfall in Pakistan since records began. Rainfall in August alone was 780 per cent above average.

Climate disasters are multiplying. This year Europe has also seen its worst drought in 500 years, China endured the worst heatwave in human history, and extreme heat in western North America broke over 100 temperature records in a week.

The devastating floods in Pakistan have been caused by the same process of global warming that led to the floods along the east coast of Australia this year. Higher temperatures mean more water in the air: for every degree of warming, the atmosphere can hold 7 per cent more moisture.

The flooding follows a slew of abnormal weather events in Pakistan over the last year. Since last winter, there have been four heatwaves, leading to what locals called a "year without spring" and scorching crops across the country. With large swathes of farmland and silos now under water, a severe food shortage is anticipated.

Adding to the extreme monsoon weather has been the melting of glaciers in the north of the country. Pakistan has the highest number of glaciers outside of the Arctic and Antarctic. According to Ulrich Kamp, Professor of Earth and Environment at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, in the period between 2015-2019, an additional 70 billion tons of ice from Pakistan's glaciers melted every year, compared to 2000-2004.



Above: Whole villages in Pakistan are now under water

There is widespread anger amongst Pakistanis at the government's slow response to the catastrophe. Maula Bakhsh Mala, a fisherman from Lake Manchar, says, "we are drowning due to administrative negligence". Some of the poorest and politically repressed regions have been the worst hit, such as Southern Punjab and Balochistan, where an armed insurgency against state repression is ongoing.

Even before the floods, the Pakistani economy was in crisis. In July, inflation stood at 24.9 per cent. The cost of electricity and food has soared.

But responsibility for the devastating floods doesn't only lie with the Pakistani government. While Pakistan contributes less than 1 per cent of emissions globally, it is one of the ten most vulnerable countries to its impacts. The new fossil fuel projects in Australia that have the support of the Albanese government will only make things worse.

Rich countries have still not delivered the US\$100 billion a year in climate finance for the Global South that they agreed to 13 years ago at the Copenhagen summit. A bailout of \$1.1 billion from the International Monetary Fund was approved for Pakistan in late August. But in the last year Pakistan has paid around \$15 billion in debts to mostly wealthier countries.

To avert more of these catastrophes, the climate movement will need to mobilise in massive numbers for real, drastic action on climate change.

By James Supple

EVEN AFTER pushing its 43 per cent climate target through parliament, the new Labor government has made it clear that it's still open season for gas and coal projects.

Anthony Albanese attended the Minerals Council's annual dinner in early September, reassuring mining company bosses in a speech that Labor would support their criminal plans for new fossil fuel projects across the country.

The message was, "Albanese backs coal and gas export boom", as the *Financial Review* put it.

A week earlier, the government approved ten new areas for oil and gas exploration off the coasts of WA, the NT, Victoria, and Ashmore and Cartier islands.

The approval of exploration across almost 47,000 square kilometres "supports ongoing investment in the nation's petroleum sector", Resources Minister Madeleine King declared.

The same day she announced the approval of the first two offshore carbon capture and storage projects since 2014, backing an oil and gas company effort to greenwash their ongoing increase in fossil fuel emissions.

In alarm, 100 scientists signed an open letter calling on the government to take climate impacts into account on project approvals, warning, "Any new coal or gas projects will dangerously worsen climate change."

There is a surge in fossil fuel projects taking place nationwide as mining companies look to cash in on high export prices.

Woodside's profits soared five-fold to \$2.4 billion in the last year, Whitehaven coal made \$3 billion while Santos made \$1.9 billion in the last six months alone.

This includes opening new gas fields in the Beetaloo in the NT, the Bowen and Galilee Basins in Queensland and the massive Scarborough carbon bomb in the Burrup Hub in WA, with domestic emissions alone equivalent to opening five new coal power stations.

Traditional owners in the Tiwi islands are also challenging Santos' \$5 billion Barossa gas project, which is almost half complete.

Santos has all other approvals for the project finalised and claims that a series of emails it sent to the Tiwi Land Council were enough to tick off requirements for consultation.

Santos has also bought the

With large swathes of farmland and silos now under water, a severe food shortage is anticipated

Labor backs fossil fuels as new gas and coal projects get the go ahead

company building the Hunter Gas Pipeline, in an effort to fast track delivery of gas from its proposed Narrabri Pilliga coal seam gas project.

This fossil fuel expansion threatens to make even Labor's inadequate 43 per cent reduction target by 2030 impossible. But the International Energy Agency has warned that no more coal or gas projects are possible if warming is going to be kept to 1.5 degrees.

There are at least 114 new fossil fuel projects in the planning stage nationwide.

Albanese says he wants to end the climate wars.

But he is still waging a reckless war on the planet's future. We need to build a fight to stop his efforts to pump out more fossil fuels.



Labor backs fossil fuel companies' carbon capture scam

By Angus Dermody

DESPITE THEIR talk of climate action, the Labor government has approved two new offshore areas for Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) projects. CCS is a failed idea pushed by the fossil fuel industry and Scott Morrison as a supposed climate solution.

Yet new Minister for Resources, Madeleine King, is backing it by claiming, "CCS is a safe, key proven technology that can support the petroleum sector in its low carbon transition."

CCS is the process whereby carbon is captured before it enters the atmosphere and stored underground. CCS has been promoted by the oil and gas industry for decades as a supposed solution to massive greenhouse gas emissions.

It was also a favourite scheme of Scott Morrison and the Coalition government. In late 2021, the Morrison government announced \$500 million for "low emissions technology" including CCS. This was a major plank of his farcical plan for net zero by 2050 which relied heavily on the hope of future "technology breakthroughs".

In reality, it was a distraction to

allow the continued expansion of fossil fuel projects—a fact made explicit when Morrison stated that his plan "will not shut down our coal or gas production or exports".

Kevin Gallagher, the head of oil and gas company Santos, has consistently been one of the most vocal supporters of CCS, calling Australia a potential "carbon storage superpower". Santos is the company behind the Narrabri Pilliga Gas Project, which would involve opening 850 coal-seam gas wells on Gomeri land in northern NSW.

But the failures of CCS are on clear display. One of the world's flagship CCS projects is at Chevron's Gorgon LNG plant in Western Australia. The plant was approved by the WA government in 2006 on the condition that 80 per cent of CO₂ released would be stored underground.

Continuous technical problems have meant that in the first five years of its operation, however, it managed to store only 32 per cent, releasing almost 7.5 million extra tonnes of carbon pollution.

Aside from drastically under-delivering, the Gorgon project has been hugely expensive. The injection of CO₂ had cost \$3.2 billion as of mid-2020, making it far too expensive

to roll out the technology elsewhere on any large scale. The public failure of this flagship project shows that CCS is still no solution to the climate crisis at all.

These problems are not a one-off. CCS has been considered a magic solution by oil companies like Shell and Chevron for the past 20 years. The Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute reports 29 CCS facilities active around the globe. However, numerous studies have rejected it.

One study in *Environmental Research Letters* concluded that "the record of CCS project development is overwhelmingly one of failure", with at least 80 per cent of commercial projects failing—a key factor being lack of technological readiness.

Another recent Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis paper examined 13 flagship projects worldwide, with author Bruce Robertson concluding "many projects have failed and continued to fail, with only a handful working".

CCS is a scam designed to prolong the mining and use of fossil fuels. Installing renewable energy on a mass scale would be far cheaper and far better for the climate. Labor's support for CCS is reflective of its continued loyalty to the fossil fuel industry.

It was also a favourite scheme of Scott Morrison and the Coalition government

Cashless Debit Card to go, but racist controls on NT Aboriginal communities continue

By Paddy Gibson

ON 28 July, Labor introduced a bill to abolish the draconian Cashless Debit Card (CDC).

The bill was set to pass through the Senate in September, before parliamentary sittings were cancelled following the death of the Queen.

This means that about 18,000 people with Centrelink payments quarantined on the CDC, in six “trial sites” across Australia, will likely remain on the card until close to 31 December, when the CDC was already to expire under existing legislation.

The CDC controls 80 per cent of the income of Centrelink recipients, denying any access to cash and restricting purchases. \$170 million has been spent on administration, an outrageous sum for such a small cohort of people.

Labor has rightly denounced this scheme as humiliating and completely ineffective in meeting its stated goals of stopping gambling, alcohol and drug abuse and related social problems.

But Labor currently has no timetable for reforms to free more than 22,000 people still forced onto the BasicsCard, another form of welfare quarantining introduced with the racist NT Intervention and first rolled out by the Rudd government. Ninety-three per cent of people on the BasicsCard live in the NT and more than 80 per cent are Aboriginal.

During the federal election campaign, Labor politicians such as Linda Burney criticised all forms of compulsory welfare quarantining and promised that the BasicsCard would be made voluntary.

This promise is looking very shaky. Amanda Rishworth, Labor’s Minister for Social Services, has clearly left the door open to continuing to compel people onto the BasicsCard, if this is a recommendation from planned “community consultation”.

Over the past 15 years, stage-managed consultation sessions have played an important role both for Labor and Liberal governments attempting to justify welfare quarantining.

All forms of welfare quarantining have roots in the paternalistic, apartheid-style systems of control over incomes operated by Aboriginal Protection Boards for much of the 20th century.



Above: Opposing the extension of the BasicsCard under the last Labor government in 2012

The Protection system was reborn with the Intervention, when John Howard argued Aboriginal people were incapable of self-determination.

The Intervention suspended the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) to allow for all Centrelink recipients living on Aboriginal lands in the NT to have 50 per cent of their income controlled under a system called Income Management.

Aboriginal communities in Cape York were also targeted by Income Management, through referral by a local “Family Responsibilities Commission” rather than the blanket approach of the NT.

When Labor took office in late 2007 they extended and deepened Income Management, introducing the BasicsCard as the main way that targeted people could access quarantined funds.

The BasicsCard is more restrictive than the CDC and can be used only to buy essential items such as food, clothes and medicines, at government-approved stores.

In 2012, Labor expanded Income Management to the entire NT and a number of low-socioeconomic “trial sites” in other states. While this meant it was no longer only Indigenous communities affected, allowing Labor to reinstate the RDA, it has continued to be predominantly Indigenous people targeted. Less than 2 per cent of Indigenous people who have applied for an exemption from Income Management have received one.

Abolish all welfare quarantining

The CDC was first introduced in 2016 by the Abbott government, with the support of Labor. The card can be

used anywhere Visa debit cards are accepted, with some products like cigarettes available for purchase on the CDC that are not available on the BasicsCard.

Like with Income Management, it has been predominantly poor communities with large Aboriginal populations that are targeted by the CDC. But the fact that a small majority of recipients are non-Indigenous has given increased political clout to local opponents of the CDC.

Labor recognised the political opportunity and campaigned hard on abolition of the CDC through the federal election. Whereas the BasicsCard has been justified by racist, paternalistic ideas about Aboriginal incapacity, Labor ran a scare campaign that the CDC would be expanded to groups of “deserving poor” such as age pensioners.

In recent years, BasicsCard recipients in the NT and parts of Queensland have been given the option of transferring onto the CDC.

Under Labor’s current bill, however, this mostly Aboriginal cohort will be forced back onto the BasicsCard once the CDC is abolished.

The blatant hypocrisy and racism of this approach was criticised by many community leaders and policy experts during recent Senate Committee hearings.

Labor needs to keep its election promises and break completely with any support for welfare quarantining.

We cannot tolerate a situation where one form of Centrelink controls, mostly affecting non-Indigenous people, is deemed unacceptable while Aboriginal people in the NT continue to face the regime of racial segregation established by the Intervention.

Labor has clearly left the door open to continuing to compel people onto the BasicsCard

Strike days up: now fan the flames of resistance

By David Glanz

THE NUMBER of strike days between April and June increased sharply, with 73,700 workers on strike for a total of 128,100 working days “lost”—the highest number of strike days since 2004.

Over the year to the end of June, there were 154 disputes, 54 more than in the previous year.

In total, there were 234,600 strike days, 176,900 more than the previous year.

The increase comes off a low base—strike figures have been meagre since the introduction of anti-strike laws and enterprise bargaining by Labor in the early 1990s (see graph).

But it’s an indication that rising inflation is pushing more workers to fight back.

The end of COVID-19 lockdowns has also opened the way for unions to move on a backlog of deals as well as making it easier to organise for many workers previously working from home.

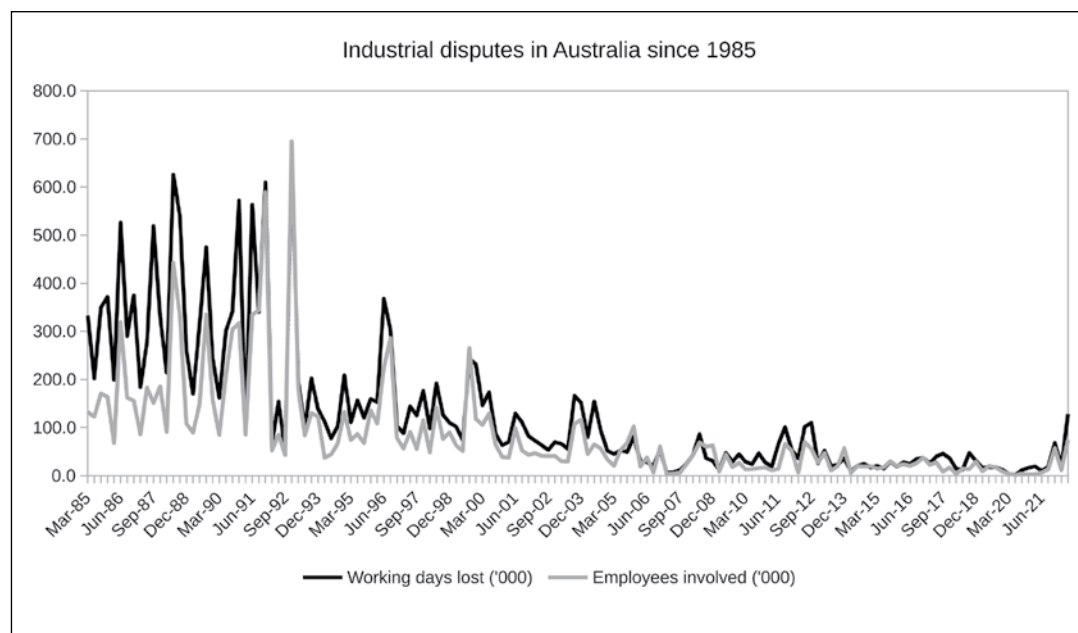
The bulk of the strike days (91 per cent) were racked up by education and health workers, with a major factor being mass strikes by nurses, teachers and public servants in NSW revolting against a 3 per cent wage cap.

University of Sydney labour law professor Shae McCrystal told the *Financial Review*: “What we’re seeing there is the impact of public sector wage policies from state governments, which systemically suppressed wages to the extent they’ve all had enough, and the chronic understaffing through the pandemic.

“Is anyone surprised at a time when these frontline workers have coped years of difficulty that they’re doing the only thing within their power to challenge their conditions?”

The fightback hasn’t stopped. Since the end of June there’s been a public service strike in WA, a nationwide walk-out by early educators, rail stoppages in Sydney and another 24-hour strike by NSW nurses. NTEU members are taking action across a number of NSW and Queensland campuses.

Anger is bubbling in Tasmania, too. The ABC reported: “The list of public servants taking strike action seems to be swelling by the day and encompasses some of the state’s most



Above: The number of strike days picked up in the three months to June, but off a very low base

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Industrial Disputes, Australia June 2022

crucial front-line workers: teachers, paramedics, nurses, child protection officers and firefighters.”

The big exception is Victoria, where union officials with a close relationship to the Andrews Labor government have overseen derisory increases.

The Australian Education Union rammed through a 1.7 per cent agreement for teachers in March, when inflation was already at 3.5 per cent. There was unprecedented pushback from members, with 39 per cent rejecting the deal.

Now the rank-and-file group MESEJ is campaigning for the union to fight for an additional rise.

Mixed picture

Strikes in the private sector have been fewer but there are some encouraging signs there, too. At Lactalis in Perth, workers finally got rid of a “zombie” deal and won 12 per cent over two years, plus a raft of improvements to penalty rates and so on.

Airport baggage handlers employed by dnata have taken advantage of extreme staffing shortages to win 12 per cent upfront and 4.5 per cent next year.

Member of the manufacturing union AMWU at Crown Equipment in Victoria and Tasmania won 13.5 per cent over three years, frontloaded with an inflation-busting 7.6 per cent. Also in Victoria, AMWU members have won strikes at two Downer sites, although the win on pay fell just short

of inflation.

But the picture is mixed, with big contingents of workers continuing to fall behind. At Telstra, a new agreement concedes just 2.5 per cent now and 3 per cent next year.

The MEAA has just settled for 4 per cent and 3.5 per cent next year at Nine Publishing.

Private sector wages rose in the June quarter by the highest seasonally adjusted rate since September 2013, but the average increase still amounted to just 2.7 per cent on an annual basis.

This is not surprising given the low level of struggle that has characterised the workers’ movement for a generation.

Recovery is unlikely to be immediate and it will be uneven. But inflation is creating pressures that can crack open business as usual.

Workers need to be arguing for a serious fight for wage outcomes higher than inflation and shorter deals to avoid being locked into future wage cuts.

Union officials are under some pressure—the NSW nurses’ vote to stick with their 7 per cent claim despite the union’s backsliding is a sign of growing discontent from below.

That pressure can result in more mobilisations, which in turn raise workers’ confidence and give them the experience of taking action that has been missing for so long.

The latest strike figures are promising. Now the task is to widen and deepen that spirit of resistance.

It’s an indication that rising inflation is pushing more workers to fight back

NSW nurses strike again as pressure builds on Perrottet

By Rory Larkins

NURSES ACROSS NSW walked off work for 24 hours on 1 September in their fourth day of strike action this year. The action came after a week of industrial action that crippled train and bus services across Sydney, as public sector workers continue to fight the NSW Liberal government and Premier Dominic Perrottet over understaffing and their insulting, below-inflation 3 per cent pay cap.

The nurses' action was the first this year to involve a 24-hour strike by all branches, after some branches stopped work for four or 12 hours in previous actions. More than 65 rallies were held outside hospitals across the state.

At Westmead Hospital in western Sydney, several hundred nurses formed a 24-hour picket line. Some nurses brought sleeping bags, preparing to camp out the night in protest.

"The last few years have been tough on everyone and it's getting worse and worse," with more and more nurses quitting their jobs in disgust and leaving the health system, Andre, a nurse at Blacktown hospital, told the crowd.

"Nurses are redeployed every day, making their own wards short because other areas are so understaffed they are considered unsafe ... Nurses feel like no one's listening to us."

About 200 nurses also rallied outside Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Camperdown. Cherie, the former branch president of the union there, explained outside the hospital that, "Ambulances will wait up to four hours to offload a patient ... we don't have the staff."

Michael Whaites, the union's new Assistant General Secretary, promised further strike action, telling nurses, "We are going to have to be out here again; again and again, until they deliver ratios across the state."

The strike was the first to follow a vote from members to demand a 7 per cent pay increase to account for the rising cost of living, rejecting the NSW Liberals' public sector pay cap.

But NSW Nurses and Midwives Association (NSWNMA) officials mainly emphasised the need for safe staff-to-patient ratios in hospitals, rarely mentioning the pay claim.

This, alongside the union's decision to hold decentralised rallies rather than the much stronger united strike rallies of up to 5000 nurses it held



Above: Nurses picket outside Westmead Hospital during the 1 September strike

during strikes earlier this year, shows that the officials want to slow down the strikes and redirect the campaign towards the state election in March, with the aim of electing a state Labor government.

But Labor has refused to commit to the nurses' demands over staff-to-patient ratios or pay. Winning these depends on escalating the strike action.

Public sector-wide strike action

could ramp up the pressure on Perrottet to act.

Teachers, bus drivers and public servants have all staged strike action in recent months. If public sector workers all strike together, it could deal Perrottet a decisive blow.

Nurses, teachers and other public sector workers need to push union leaders to call united action. This is the kind of power that can stop Perrottet.

Can industry bargaining make a difference?

FOR DECADES, industry-wide bargaining was the bedrock of Australia's industrial relations system.

The system of industry-wide Awards that set wages and conditions allowed unions to stage co-ordinated strikes and industrial campaigns on an industry-wide basis. There were strikes that shut down the entire metal working industry, the whole public transport system, and national port strikes.

Unions were able to use their membership strength at large workplaces to push up wages and conditions across smaller workplaces in the same industry.

It was industry-wide action that won some of the major gains for workers of previous decades, like weekend penalty rates, the five day working week and annual leave.

In 1946-47, six month of industrial action by 20,000 Victorian metalworkers, alongside industrial action in other states, forced the Arbitration Court to reduce working hours to a 40 hours a week, as well as deliver a major wage increase in the nationwide Award.

This set a benchmark that soon

flowed on to workers in other industries.

Similarly, in the early 1960s left unions staged rolling industrial action that pushed the Arbitration Commission to deliver workers three week's annual leave in 1964.

Unions were still able to organise industrial action in pursuit of industry-wide conditions until the 1980s. In 1981 a national strike saw 500,000 metalworkers stop work for 48 hours at around 7000 factories, as part of a campaign that eventually won a shorter 38 hour week.

Current industrial rules ban industry-wide "pattern bargaining", where unions stage industrial action to demand common wages and conditions across an industry.

The proposal for multi-employer or sector bargaining may loosen this, but likely only for some industries not currently part of enterprise bargaining, like childcare, aged care or other low paid workers.

To seriously improve wages, unions need to bargain industry-wide across every industry—backed with a campaign of militant, defiant strike action.

If public sector workers all strike together, it could deal Perrottet a decisive blow

Jobs Summit trade-offs won't deliver pay rises we need

By Chris Breen

LABOR'S JOBS Summit has delivered a deal between the government, business and unions to trade off watering down the Better Off Overall Test (BOOT) for a highly restricted version of multi-employer bargaining.

Unions are essentially trading off the rights of some low paid workers, who may now end up worse than under the Award, in an attempt to boost the wages of other low paid workers in areas like childcare and aged care.

The Jobs Summit was modelled on Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke's 1983 National Economic Summit that delivered the Accord between union leaders and the government. The Hawke-style consensus politics that was a trap for unions then is just as much of a trap today.

Karl Marx said that history appears the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. This is certainly the case with the Jobs Summit.

The original Accord saw a still powerful trade union movement agree to collaborate with the employers through preventing strike action and accepting wage cuts.

This was sold as having increases in the "social wage"—the redistribution of taxes through Medicare and welfare. At the time, that was mostly a mirage. The Accords decimated the unions' membership and ability to fight for wage rises.

But they did deliver a historic lift in business profits. This time around the outcomes are far more modest.

The idea of the social wage has disappeared completely.

No increase to JobSeeker is even promised. Labor says it can't afford new spending because of the Liberals' trillion dollar debt, yet the stage three tax cuts for the rich are still going ahead, as is \$170 billion of spending on nuclear subs.

Concessions

Business has been demanding a softening of the BOOT since the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union began successfully using it to strike down Enterprise Bargaining deals that paid casual and part-time workers at companies like Coles, Woolworths, McDonalds and Domino's Pizza millions of dollars less than the Award.

Currently it requires all existing and future workers be better off than under the Award for the relevant



Above: ACTU leaders Sally McManus and Michele O'Neil with Albanese at the Jobs Summit

industry. Awards are now threadbare safety nets that are far below the conditions in most Enterprise Bargaining Agreements, yet the BOOT still uses them for comparison.

The changes will allow a more "flexible" interpretation, likely allowing deals that leave a minority of workers worse off than the Award in exchange for improvements for the majority. The BOOT will also no longer need to consider conditions for future workers or potential changes to work rosters.

When former PM Scott Morrison wanted to scrap the BOOT with his omnibus bill, Labor's then Shadow Industrial Relations Minister Tony Burke opposed this, saying it meant "every loading, every shift penalty, every overtime rate can be cut".

Morrison backed down, but it is now Burke (with the support of the ACTU) who will be watering down the BOOT.

Union leaders have promoted multi-employer agreements as a way to boost wages, in particular in female-dominated low paid industries. The ACTU's Michele O'Neil says they "would give millions of workers, most of them women, meaningful access to bargaining for the first time".

While the details of the changes are yet to be finalised, it is already clear they will be modest.

Even union leaders are proposing they apply only in some industries, with ACTU Secretary Sally McManus saying, "Multi-employer or sector

bargaining makes sense for funded services, small business and other employers who have been effectively locked out of a system designed for large enterprises."

Business groups have declared that any increase in unions' ability to strike across multiple employers crosses a "red line" for them.

Labor has already promised detailed consultation and has no appetite to push through anything business doesn't agree to.

McManus, who once said that restrictions on the right to strike had gone too far and that bad laws needed to be broken, was singing a different tune at the Jobs Summit. She told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that, "industry-wide bargaining had produced pay rises, not industrial action, where it had been implemented overseas".

But it is precisely the decline in union industrial action that is responsible for the inability to win serious wage rises.

Ultimately the Jobs Summit was a pantomime that will have little effect on cost of living or the real battles playing out for wage increases. To win the wages rises we need there will have to be more industrial action like that seen recently from nurses, teachers and transport workers in NSW.

Unions need to stop handing bosses unnecessary concessions and mobilise and strike, particularly in areas where they still have high density, to fight for wage rises that keep pace with inflation and the cost of living.

.....
Labor has no appetite to push through anything business doesn't agree to

Not our Queen: royals a symbol of rotten system

By Tom Orsag

THE DEATH of Queen Elizabeth II has produced a mountain of deference and drivel from the media and mainstream politicians. Anthony Albanese has led the chorus, saying her death was, “a loss we feel deeply in Australia”.

Elizabeth was one of the world’s richest people yet still managed to draw at least \$140 million from the British government every year.

While the media says she was “dedicated to a life of duty”, her real job was to serve her family fortune and the ruling class.

Throughout her 70-year reign, the royal family has buttressed reactionary ideas—that some are born to rule and others to be ruled, and that the family is imperfect but central to society.

The idea that the royal family is “above politics” has been used to unify people around the interests of our rulers. Today, union leaders have called off strikes in Britain out of “respect”.

The more people revere their supposed betters, the less likely they are to take action against the unfair and unequal society they live in.

Nazi sympathiser

Born on 21 April 1926, there seemed little chance that Elizabeth would be Queen as she was third in line behind her uncle, King Edward VIII.

But Edward was a Nazi sympathiser, as was the woman he went on to marry, Wallis Simpson. Later, footage came to light of the young future Queen and family members being schooled in Nazi salutes.

Edward’s support for Hitler put him at odds with the overall interests of the British ruling class and their empire and he was forced to abdicate. The throne went to Elizabeth’s father, George.

While she was on a trip to Kenya in 1952, King George VI died and Elizabeth became Queen.

Throughout her reign she was to be used as a voice for colonial and imperialist policy.

The year she visited Kenya, British troops were brought in to crush the Mau Mau rebellion, instituting a reign of terror that led to the brutal murder and torture of tens of thousands of Africans fighting for their independence.

It was another 50 years after it won independence in 1963 before



Britain formally apologised for its atrocities.

Family of nations

Britain’s once vast empire was crumbling, with former colonial states winning independence. To cling to their influence, the British ruling class re-badged the empire as the Commonwealth, a “family of nations”, with the Queen at its head.

The Commonwealth became useful as Britain suffered a labour shortage, with mass migration from south Asia, the Caribbean and Africa to fill its most lowly jobs.

It was also an attempt to erase the brutal legacy of empire and to maintain their influence between former colonies, the monarchy and the “motherland”.

The young Queen played an important role stabilising society in Britain, too. In 1953, only eight years had passed since the end of World War Two. Britain was bankrupt and major cities were still in ruins with many food items still rationed.

With Britain in the grip of austerity, the ruling class thought the glamour of a coronation was an excellent opportunity to ramp up nationalist feeling and create a false sense of unity. That unity did not extend to the fabulous wealth acquired by the royals over the years. Royal weddings and palaces have cost ordinary people dear.

Prince Charles and Diana’s wedding alone cost the taxpayer over \$160 million in today’s money.

As scandals tarnished the royal im-

Above: The Queen’s gold state coach, built for the equivalent of \$6 million in today’s money

age, the Queen tried to recast the royal family as just like ordinary people.

But it’s a family that owns 20 properties, ranging from the 1000-room Windsor Castle to the more modest 20-room Kensington Palace.

Until the late 1960s, “coloured immigrants or foreigners” were barred from taking up clerical jobs in royal households. To this day, Buckingham Palace is allowed to ignore race and sex discrimination laws.

Australian sycophants

The dispossession of Indigenous people that underpinned Australia’s origins as a colonial settler-state happened in the name of the King. More than 230 years since invasion, Charles is the new King of Australia.

While Labor talks about a referendum on the republic in its second term, Albanese is flying to London to attend the royal funeral. It is a sign of loyalty to the system.

But many in the ruling class realise that Australian nationalism has to be revamped to incorporate the many new migrants who have no loyalty to a British crown.

By the early 1980s about one million immigrants had chosen not to become Australian citizens given they had to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen. So many are open to a future republic.

The Queen will be missed by her class of the powerful and wealthy.

But workers have nothing to gain by revering a family that exists to celebrate inequality. Our motto should be, roll on the red republic.

The idea that the royal family is “above politics” has been used to unify people around the interests of our rulers

Dangerous new chapter in Ukraine war

By Adam Adelpour

THE BLOODY war in Ukraine has taken a new turn as Ukrainian forces equipped with US-supplied weaponry have routed Russian forces south-east of Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city.

The swift advance has fuelled the Ukrainian government's aggression. Olesky Danilov, senior adviser to President Volodymyr Zelensky, ominously stated, "Our task is to make Russia into the kind of country that does not even have the desire to think that it can attack its neighbours."

There is little sign the war will end any time soon, with fighting likely to slow in the northern winter. As it grinds on, it only becomes more clearly a proxy war between NATO and Russia.

Since Russia's unjustified invasion in February, Putin has been forced to abandon his attempt to launch a full-scale occupation of the country. Russia's efforts are now focused on holding the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in what has become a Second World War-style ground war.

The recent Ukrainian success will only entrench the view among the US and NATO states that Russia can be humiliated.

The war is part of a wider imperialist power struggle. The US thinks that arming Ukraine to the teeth, inflicting brutal sanctions and prolonging the war can seriously weaken Russia. They believe this can send a deadly warning to China, which the US (and NATO) regard as the biggest threat to the West.

To this end, the West has torpedoed peace talks, dumped extraordinary quantities of weapons into Ukraine, provided critical intelligence to Zelensky and trained Ukrainian forces.

Escalation in Crimea

The dangers involved are immense given the US and Russia are both nuclear-armed states.

Increased supplies of high-tech weapons are boosting Ukraine's efforts on the battlefield. It now has state-of-the-art artillery which allows it to launch precision attacks deep inside Russian-held areas. These include the HIMARS rocket system that has a range of up to 80 kilometres, more than twice the range of the



howitzers the US previously supplied to Ukraine.

A top adviser to Zelensky said, "Our strategy is to destroy the logistics, the supply lines and the ammunition depots and other objects of military infrastructure. It's creating chaos within their own forces."

In August it also became clear that the West was urging Ukraine to re-take Crimea. This would mean a deadly escalation and expansion of the war.

Russia seized Crimea in 2014 following the ousting of Ukraine's pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich. Crimea is home to a strategic port on the Black Sea where Russia has had an important naval base since the days of the Tsarist Empire.

The US has removed any doubt that Ukraine can use its Western supplied firepower to bombard Crimea. A top US official has said any target in Crimea is "by definition self-defence".

There have now been drone strikes on the headquarters of the Russian Navy in Crimea at its Black Sea base in Sevastopol and explosions at other military sites including the Saki air base, which reportedly destroyed nine Russian warplanes.

The reality of the war is one of increasing brutality. While Russia's war crimes are broadcast in the Western media, the ugly side of the Ukrainian forces' tactics are comparatively hidden.

An Amnesty International report in August said that Ukrainian forces had put civilians in harm's way by systematically setting up military bases in schools and hospitals when

Above: Ukrainian artillery in action as part of the counter-offensive

"viable alternatives were available that would not endanger civilians".

No war for democracy

The narrative we hear about the war in Ukraine is that the US and NATO are defenders of democracy.

But the escalation of imperialist conflict has been accompanied by vicious attacks on the democratic rights of workers in Ukraine. On 17 August, Zelensky ratified Law 5371.

The law means 70 per cent of workers in Ukraine have been stripped of the rights that come with collective union agreements and are now forced to negotiate contracts individually. There was an attempt to introduce the law in 2021—the war has created a justification for its adoption.

Ukraine's supposed allies are also circling the economically stricken nation like vultures, keen to take full advantage of Zelensky's neoliberal policies and gain further market control for US and European companies.

Western governments met for a "Ukraine Recovery Conference" in July. The conference issued a statement advocating "privatisation of non-critical enterprises" and "finalisation of corporatisation of SOEs" (State Owned Enterprises) as well as the slashing of labour rights.

This war has nothing to do with democracy. It is part of an increasingly dangerous escalation in imperialist tensions across the globe. The Australian government is right behind US imperialism against both Russia and China. We need to build an anti-war movement to stop them fanning the flames of war.

.....
Increased supplies of high-tech weapons are boosting Ukraine's efforts on the battlefield

WAGES AND THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

WHY ENTERPRISE BARGAINING FAILS WORKERS

Falling wages are a product of the way enterprise bargaining was designed to benefit employers and restrict the right to strike, writes **James Supple**

LABOR'S JOBS Summit has been widely praised for bringing together unions, employers, academics and government to discuss the country's long-term problems.

Modelled on Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke's economic summit, held shortly after he took power in 1983, the exercise was an effort to revive Hawke's "consensus politics".

The results this time were far less grand. But the whole approach of seeking consensus between unions and employers is a dead end for workers.

The earlier era of consensus politics under the Hawke and Keating Labor governments in the 1980s and 1990s delivered years of sacrifices and attacks on workers' living standards—with a rotten legacy that continues today.

Workers are facing a cost of living crisis, with a likely wage cut this year of around 5 per cent after inflation. Average wage rises are at 2.6 per cent and inflation is set to rise to almost 8 per cent by the end of the year.

This comes after a decade of stagnant wages. Yet business has been doing very well indeed. Total profits rose 55 per cent in the last year alone, a CommSec review of company reports found. The profit share of the economy has surged to its highest point in the post-war period, with the wages share its lowest on record.

Bosses are complaining of labour shortages across the economy. This would normally increase workers' bargaining power and allow unions to push up wages. But that hasn't happened.

Why? According to ACTU's Sally McManus, "The main reason why wages have collapsed is because collective bargaining has collapsed."

There has been a drastic decline in the number of workers covered by an enterprise bargaining agreement, with the number of agreements dropping from 23,500 to 10,000 since 2013.

Just 11 per cent of workers in the private sector are now covered by enterprise bargaining deals.

The ACTU is pushing industry-wide bargaining as the solution. But what's proposed is only a modest change to the system. The problems with enterprise bargaining run much deeper.

Enterprise bargaining was introduced as the end point of the neoliberal restructuring of industrial relations imposed under the Hawke and Keating Labor governments.

When the Labor government took office in 1983, it set out to cut wages and restore corporate profits. This, they claimed, would eventually benefit workers through creating jobs and allowing companies to increase pay.

Union leaders bought into the idea of consensus between the government, employers and the working class.

This resulted in the Prices and Incomes Accords, designed to halt strike action and impose wage restraint in exchange for increases in the "social wage", such as the introduction of Medicare and higher welfare payments.

Wages increases were set through a series of National Wage Cases, based on the Accord negotiations. But over time workers took serious wage cuts, with the social wage never compensating for what they lost.

Yet profits boomed by 10 per cent a year between 1985 and 1990. The government also slashed the rate of corporate tax from 49 to 33 per cent. Consensus delivered big gains for business profits but endless sacrifice for workers.

Union strength also began to decline, with strikes and rank-and-file organisation no longer needed to win pay rises, which were simply negotiated from the top down. Trade union membership began to fall.

There was a further shift from

The system made wage rises dependent on increased productivity, forcing workers to "trade off" workplace rights and conditions

1991. A national wage increase was delayed and Awards declared only a "safety net". Future wage rises would depend on what workers could negotiate at a company level through enterprise bargaining.

The new system also made wage rises dependent on delivering increased productivity, forcing workers to "trade off" workplace rights and conditions.

Keating made this explicit, saying he wanted to allow companies to get "the great productivity advances available from changing workplace arrangements and conditions".

Many early agreements saw workers trade away penalty rates or accept hundreds of job cuts. Companies extended the span of "ordinary hours" when penalty rates would no longer apply.

In 1994 the Commonwealth Bank and Advance Bank were allowed to abolish penalty rates for work on evenings and weekends. Email Appliance factories began paying ordinary rates for any work between 6am and 6pm.

Wage rises came at the cost of working harder and longer.

About 60 per cent reported an increase in work effort, and between 50 and 60 per cent said work had become more stressful, according to government surveys collected in the first two years of the new system.

Enterprise bargaining saw unions accept the role of delivering what business wanted through accepting productivity trade-offs in the same spirit of class collaboration as the Accords.

Workers hated it. By the time of the 1996 election Labor Senator Nick Sherry recalled that talking about "productivity" and "efficiency" around workers was "a good way to end your life".

The result was that union membership plummeted further, dropping from 40 per cent in 1992 just after

enterprise bargaining began to 31 per cent just four years later when Labor lost office. Today this is down to just 14 per cent.

Today's failure of enterprise bargaining to deliver wage rises that keep pace with the cost of living is exactly what the system was designed to deliver. It ended the principle that wages rises should be based on the cost of living.

As then Prime Minister Paul Keating put it in 1993, the idea was to keep wage costs down through ensuring "unit labour costs will remain competitive".

Restricting strike action

Enterprise bargaining has worked to drastically weaken union power.

It has split up workers, with areas where there is strong union membership and organisation able to win some improvements to wages and conditions, while others are left behind. This has taken place both between industries, for instance in high-paid construction versus low-waged aged care, as well as within industries, so that small non-union construction jobs often have wages drastically below the big sites.

It has gone hand in hand with laws against strikes and industrial action that restrict workers from using their most powerful weapon against the bosses. These are further evidence of how much the system was intended to benefit the employers.

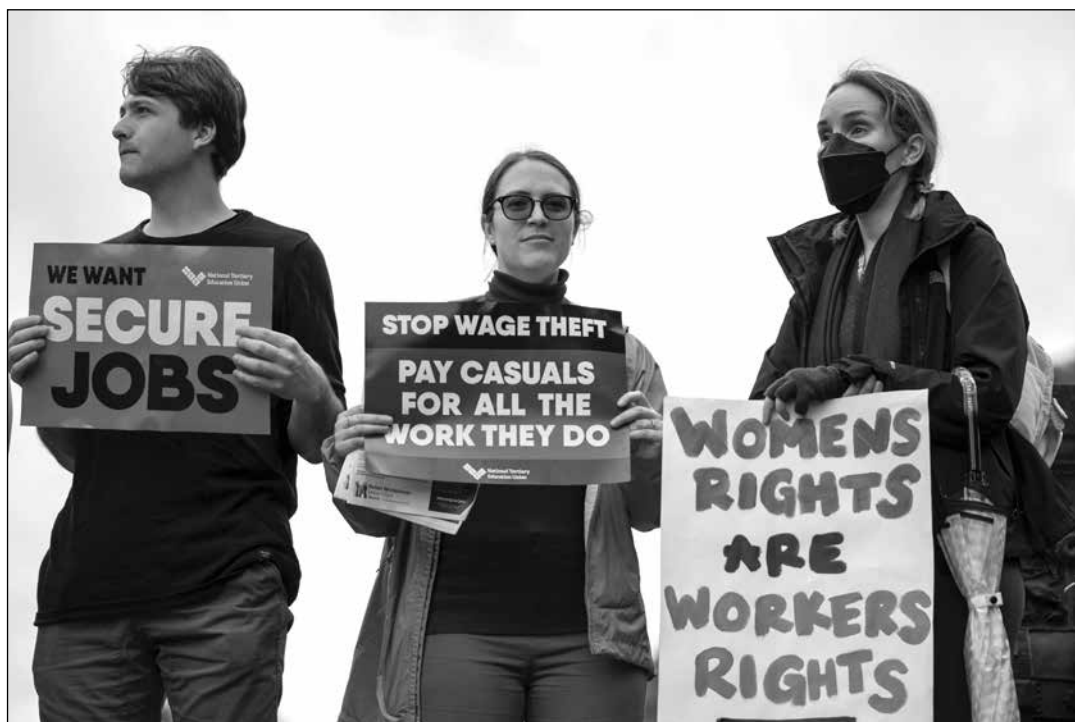
Enterprise bargaining was entrenched with Keating's introduction of the Industrial Relations Reform Act in 1994.

This limits lawful strike action to the narrow "bargaining period" when a new agreement is being negotiated every three or four years. After a new enterprise agreement is finalised, bosses can sack hundreds of workers or introduce other workplace changes but unions are banned from using industrial action to fight it.

Pay rises set in new agreements cannot be re-negotiated for several years, locking in pay cuts when there is a sudden surge in the cost of living like that over the last year.

Even legal "authorised" industrial action has all sort of restrictions. Unions must hold a drawn-out postal ballot of members and then notify the employer before they call action.

The Fair Work Commission can also order a halt to industrial action deemed to "damage the economy" or "endanger the welfare" of the population.



Above: Union members at Sydney Uni on strike during Enterprise Bargaining earlier this year

This saw a 24-hour rail strike banned in 2018 on the grounds it would harm the NSW economy. In other words, the strike would have been too successful.

Efforts at "pattern bargaining", where unions demand the same claims at different companies across the same industry, are also banned.

In 2018 crane drivers in NSW at WGC Cranes and Boom Logistics were banned from striking for three months after their union, the CFMEU, presented bosses with a template agreement designed to establish common conditions across the crane industry.

Right to strike

But it is possible to defy the law and wage a serious fight against the bosses. The crane drivers eventually won big pay rises through illegal hard pickets and other unlawful action.

CFMEU members joined repeated stopwork rallies in 2017 and 2018 outside official bargaining periods, defying letters from their employers threatening individual \$34,000 fines.

"We're all breaking the law here at the moment," Victorian construction union secretary John Setka told a crowd of 10,000 workers at a Melbourne stopwork in 2017.

In 2012 Victorian nurses defeated the state Liberal government after an eight-month industrial campaign. They defied Fair Work orders banning strike action and threats of \$6600 fines against individual

nurses and up to \$33,000 against the union.

Teachers and nurses in NSW have also repeatedly defied strike bans ordered this year by the state Industrial Relations Commission, where the penalties are lower.

Even limited defiance can win gains when backed by a commitment to serious strike action.

United Workers Union members at Country Road in Melbourne won pay rises and new permanent positions late last year after 12 days on strike. An unlawful hard picket was lifted after the first day following a court injunction.

In 1969 unions defeated previous anti-strike laws, the penal powers, following a concerted campaign of refusing to pay the fines. This forced a confrontation where union leader Clarrie O'Shea was jailed before a nationwide general strike won his freedom.

A similar campaign of defiance is needed today to break the restrictions on the right to strike.

The unions have been seriously weakened since the 1980s. But too many union leaders have responded by accepting the limitations of enterprise bargaining and ended up collaborating with employers over cuts to workers' conditions.

Seeking consensus with the bosses or the Labor government won't deliver the change that's needed. Workers and our unions are going to have to fight for it themselves.

A BRUTAL ISRAELI WAR CRIME SABRA AND SHATILA 40 YEARS ON

The massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon was one of Israel's most shocking war crimes against the Palestinians, writes **Ella Haber**

ON 16 September 1982, four months after Israel invaded Lebanon, the far-right Lebanese Phalange militia stormed the two densely populated refugee camps in Beirut. Israeli soldiers were ordered to allow them into the camps and to seal the exits so no one could escape.

Israel's Defence Minister Ariel Sharon and a team of senior officers in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) approved the decision. IDF chief of staff Raphael Eitan had even flown directly to the Phalangists' headquarters the previous morning to instruct them to carry out the attack.

The first unit of 150 Phalangists entered the camps at 6pm, while Israeli forces fired illuminating flares into the night sky so the killing could continue through the night. For 38 hours, a barbaric massacre unfolded, claiming the lives of 3000 to 3500 mostly Palestinian civilians—men, women, children, and the elderly, along with some Lebanese civilians seeking refuge from Israel's shelling of South Lebanon.

Robert Fisk, one of the first journalists on the scene, wrote that: "[The dead] were everywhere, in the roads, in the laneways, in backyards and broken rooms ... women, young men, babies and grandparents—lying together in lazy and terrible profusion where they had been knifed or machine-gunned to death."

On the morning of 18 September, under pressure from US diplomats following growing publicity about the massacre, the Israeli Army ordered the Phalange to halt their operation. Israel then supplied bulldozers to dig mass graves that would hide the horrifying evidence.

The United Nations General Assembly declared the Sabra and Shatila massacre to be an act of genocide,

while the United States and Israel stood alone in refusing to condemn it.

The Kahan commission, an Israeli government inquiry, provided mountains of evidence that the Israeli command were aware that a massacre was taking place, and allowed the Phalangists to proceed. On the second day, after hearing details of deaths of women and children, Defence Minister Ariel Sharon claimed they were "terrorists" who "need mopping up", saying "if you don't want the Lebanese to kill them, we will kill them".

What was the motivation for such a brutal attack on civilians? Sabra and Shatila had been two of the main training camps and operation bases for the resistance fighters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The last Palestinian fighters had been evacuated from Beirut under a ceasefire agreement the previous month, and the unarmed Palestinian civilians of the camps posed no military threat. But as Israeli journalists Schiff and Ya'ari wrote in their book *Israel's Lebanon War*, the Israeli government wanted "to eradicate every last trace of the PLO in Beirut".

The PLO had its strongest base of support among the Palestinian residents of the camps, many of them refugees expelled from their homes during the Nakba in 1947. Unleashing terror on these unarmed Palestinian civilians was Israel's way of sending a message that any support for the PLO would be punished with brutal force.

Lebanon war

Israel invaded Lebanon on 6 June 1982, aiming to drive the PLO out of the country and end to its ability to launch attacks on Israel over the border. They proceeded with a full-scale military offensive throughout the country, laying siege to the PLO's

For 38 hours, a barbaric massacre unfolded, claiming the lives of 3000 to 3500 mostly Palestinian civilians

positions in West Beirut with relentless bombing.

The invasion came during the Lebanese civil war that had begun in 1975, in which Israel supported Christian Maronite forces including the Phalange.

Although the invasion was launched following the attempted assassination of Israeli ambassador Shlomo Argov, Israel had planned it for some time.

Ariel Sharon had gained the support of the US Defence Secretary in the early months of 1982 for action in Lebanon, and secured record-level surges of military supplies and weapons from the Pentagon direct to IDF bases near the Lebanese border.

The Israeli paper *Ha'aretz* wrote in March 1982 that, "Behind the official excuse of 'we shall not tolerate shelling or terrorist reactions' lies a strategic view, which holds that the physical annihilation of the PLO has to be achieved. That is, not only must its fingers and hands in the West Bank be amputated (as is now being done with an iron fist), but its heart and head in Beirut must be dealt with."

There were at least 19,000 killed and 30,000 wounded in the invasion. In South Lebanon, Israeli jets flew numerous missions against PLO targets. One such attack used a US-supplied "smart bomb" which destroyed an entire building and killed 100 people in a failed effort to assassinate PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Sharon met several times with Bashir Gemayel, the leader of the right-wing Christian-based Lebanese Forces, a political party that ran the Phalange militia, to agitate for a united military offensive on the Palestinian camps.

The Lebanese Forces accepted a great deal of political and military support from the IDF. On 23 August,

Gemayel was elected President of Lebanon with the assistance of Israel's intelligence agency Mossad.

The IDF began to co-ordinate their efforts with the Phalange on the basis of a common interest: to crush the Palestinian resistance movement and maintain the integrity of the Christian Maronite-dominated ruling class in Lebanon.

Palestinian camps were razed to the ground by Lebanese troops under Israeli command—populations were displaced, and men suspected of fighting for the Palestinian cause were imprisoned in internment camps.

For over two months PLO fighters held out in the capital Beirut, but as they became isolated, the PLO agreed to leave the country under an American-brokered ceasefire deal that involved sending in a multinational force to oversee their evacuation.

Israel broke the ceasefire on 14 September, using the assassination of Gemayel to unleash them on the camps of West Beirut. The peacekeeping force withdrew as soon as the PLO fighters were evacuated, and Palestinian civilians were left to the mercy of the new Phalangist-Israeli alliance with a licence to kill.

PLO strategy

The PLO was formed in 1964 as a political and armed resistance force dedicated to the liberation of Palestine.

Fatah—a left-wing Palestinian nationalist party—gained tremendous support among Palestinians across the refugee camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon after it launched a guerrilla struggle under the leadership of Arafat.

Fatah became the largest faction in the PLO and the dominant political force in the Palestinian resistance movement. However, as Arab leaders grew anxious over the movement's potential to destabilise the region, Fatah made promises to not interfere in the domestic affairs of Arab regimes.

Fatah saw the Palestinian armed struggle as a lever to pressure the Arab rulers of states such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan to take up the struggle for a Palestinian state—and in doing so, ignored the revolutionary potential of Arab workers and peasants.

But the approach had a fatal flaw—the Arab regimes had increasingly made their peace with Western imperialism's domination of the region.

Wherever the militancy of the PLO was perceived as a threat, it would be ruthlessly suppressed by



Above: Dead bodies in the Sabra refugee camp following the massacre

the Arab regimes with the financial backing of Israel and the US. When Fatah's strength in Jordan became a threat to the regime of King Hussein in 1970, the Jordanian ruling class launched an Israel-backed military offensive on the PLO called "Black September" that claimed thousands of Palestinian lives.

Despite the promises of support from neighbouring Arab regimes, Syrian and Iraqi forces stood aside and the whole Arab world looked on.

The PLO established a new base in Lebanon in 1971, with an even more rigid insistence that the movement must respect Arab rulers.

The rapid development of the Gulf oil economy in the region had produced an increasingly impoverished, urbanised working class in Lebanon—and the 200,000 Palestinian workers living in the camps made up 8 per cent of the population.

The Palestinian resistance movement had begun to radicalise workers in Lebanon and, as the country slid towards crisis and repeated mass strikes in 1973, a military front of secular leftist and pan-Arabist groups sought to challenge the Christian Maronite-dominated ruling class in Lebanon.

The struggle for Palestinian liberation threatened to merge with struggle of Arab workers against their rulers. Fatah, however, instructed all Palestinian forces to abstain from activity in domestic affairs.

Civil war erupted in 1975 and Maronite Christian militias trained and armed by the IDF—including

the Phalangists—brutally attacked the Palestinian populations in the Beirut camps. Syria sent in 40,000 troops to crush the popular resistance. Once again, the PLO's refusal to challenge the Arab regimes led to their defeat.

Lessons

Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon shows that the struggle for Palestinian liberation can succeed only as part of a struggle against imperialism's control of the whole Middle East.

Arab rulers have continually betrayed the Palestinian cause because their wealth and power relies on collaboration with the US and Israel.

But among ordinary people across the region, Palestinians have massive popular support. In the 2020 Arab Opinion Index, three-quarters of the population across the Arab world agreed that the Palestinian cause concerns all Arabs.

Yet regimes like Egypt and Jordan have economic agreements and co-ordinate militarily with Israel to suppress both Palestinian resistance and their own populations.

As we saw in the Arab revolutions in 2011, mass struggle from below has the potential to topple regimes and spread a wave of revolution across the region.

The liberation of Palestine from the brutal Zionist occupation can succeed only as part of a broader struggle for the liberation of workers and peasants across the Arab world, against both their own corrupt rulers and the imperialist powers that back them.

GORBACHEV, STALINISM AND THE END OF THE USSR

The death of the last Soviet Union leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, was met with a mixed response—and a series of myths. **Isabel Ringrose** examines the impact of his rule

THE DEATH of Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet Union leader, has opened old wounds for some and stirred fond memories for others. From US President Joe Biden to the Dalai Lama, Gorbachev was mourned as a “radical social transformer” who “made the world safer”.

Anthony Albanese labelled the former Communist Party general secretary as “one of the true giants of the 20th century”. Meanwhile Chinese political commentators remembered a man who brought “disaster” by “selling out the interests of his homeland”.

For his supporters and haters, he is the man who split up a socialist state—creating Russia and 14 other independent states in 1991.

Gorbachev’s drive for free market economics left him venerated by Western big business. His shift represented a victory for capitalism in its battle against what was described as Communism in Russia.

On the flip side, the collapse of the Soviet Union and its power in the Eastern Bloc was the nail in the coffin for Stalinism.

This made him loathed by sections of the left, in Russia and beyond. They claimed he abandoned communism for Western capitalism. To hard-line Stalinists, he betrayed the highest form of socialism. But neither account is accurate.

In truth socialism died long before Gorbachev came along.

Revolution

The October revolution of 1917 in Russia was a genuine socialist revolution that saw the working class take power, overthrowing capitalism in a major country for the first and so far only time in history.

But the revolution failed to spread to the more developed areas of Western Europe and was isolated. Although

it survived foreign intervention and a terrible civil war, this was at the cost of the destruction of the working class that had made the revolution.

Joseph Stalin led a counter-revolution following the isolation and bureaucratisation of the revolution that saw a shift to state capitalism. The economy was completely state owned, but effectively controlled by a new ruling class of Communist Party bureaucrats.

The new dictatorship exploited workers and peasants as brutally as any other regime, driven by the same desire to accumulate capital and wealth as the free market capitalist ruling classes in the West.

But the eventual collapse of the regime—both at the hands of warring bureaucrats and pressure from below—didn’t improve society or ordinary people’s lives.

As British Marxist Tony Cliff, the founder of the International Socialist Tendency, wrote in 2000, “The years 1989-91 were not a step backward or a step forward for the people at the top, but simply a step sideways.” Russia moved from state capitalist to a capitalist-friendly market system. It was ruled by a capitalist class before and after, but under a different form of capitalism.

Gorbachev was appointed the Soviet Union’s effective leader in 1985, and set out to deal with the contradictions caused by the organisation of the state capitalist economy.

Russia was unable to compete with the West economically and militarily.

A slowdown in production triggered repeated economic crises. Gorbachev’s solution was to clear out the bureaucracy, let privatisation rip and open up to the world market—even at the cost of immense suffering for ordinary people.

Gorbachev’s solution was to clear out the bureaucracy, let privatisation rip and open up to the world market

In the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc surrounding it, workers had no say. The state was entirely controlled by bureaucrats and driven by competition on the global stage, pouring money into arms as it competed for control of the world with the US.

The pressure of the Cold War arms race burdened the economy. Russia again and again came up against the limits of capital accumulation set by its national economy.

The Soviet economy was organised through the Five Year Plan. Huge industrial projects were sometimes “frozen”.

Investment was suddenly redirected, causing mayhem for production and different branches of the economy. By the 1970s, Soviet state capitalism was suffering from deep stagnation.

Stalinist regimes in Poland, East Germany and Hungary had begun to integrate into world capitalism to overcome the issues of accumulation in their national economies. But loans and trade with the West made them more fragile during global shocks.

Economic crisis

The Soviet Union’s reliance on oil exports meant when prices dropped in the mid-1980s the economy crashed. Between 1981 and 1985 there was “practically no economic growth” as “production of 40 per cent of all industrial goods actually fell”. The crisis caused splits within the bureaucracy between “reformers” and “conservatives”.

The reformers wanted more market measures to improve state capitalism’s efficiency. And the more radical wing wanted a transition to full market capitalism.

The conservatives wanted to consolidate power and protect their system by blocking change, also

fearing revolt from below. Gorbachev, a moderate reformer, took power in 1985. His two main pillars of change were perestroika—restructuring—and glasnost, meaning openness.

He pushed for reorganisation in industry and agriculture and criticised corrupt local leaders and managers. Gorbachev became popular in the West for bringing in so-called freedom and justice. Reform to the electoral system meant more than one candidate on some occasions. Secret ballots were introduced in internal party elections and workers could vote for managers.

In reality these measures were a cover to help ram through more market mechanisms. By 1987 just 5 per cent of constituencies had a choice of candidates, and there was no open campaigning over policies. Only 16.7 per cent of people in key positions in local party cells were workers.

When it came to voting for managers, workers could not determine the short list. And successful candidates were approved by all employees—including other managers and supervisors—and signed off by bosses.

Workers' performance was monitored by factory councils—elected, but under campaigns based on their record of promoting efficiency and productivity. The party organisation was given power to “direct the work of the organisation of collective self-management”.

Gorbachev's reforms really meant making Russian industry more efficient. In 1984-86, he focused on reform by changing people in top positions. During the first ten months of 1987 he urged for rapid change in speeches and his book *Perestroika*.

By October, he shifted back to more conciliatory methods after radical reformists were attacked by the Central Committee. Rather than speed-up perestroika and glasnost, he stressed the “dangers” of “going too fast”.

And workers—instead of defending Gorbachev's reformers or the conservative Stalinists—fought back. In Poland in 1988 workers' action erupted in the mines, giving the ruling class a taste of the discontent from below.

By July 1989 a huge wave of miners' strikes swept across Russia. This terrified Gorbachev—who called them “the worst ordeal to befall our country in four years of restructuring”.

Miners later struck again in 1991 to call for his resignation. In Czechoslovakia in 1989 three million workers took part in a two hour general strike while half a million demonstrated in



Above: Mikhail Gorbachev with US President Ronald Reagan in 1986

the capital.

In Romania an armed insurrection toppled the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. The fragility of the bureaucracy's hold was evident from the shockwaves the strikes caused.

Gorbachev's attempts at reform were not enough. His inability to solve the crisis caused more splits. After a failed coup in August 1991 by conservative bureaucrats, which crumbled after three days, the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc fell and Gorbachev resigned as president on 25 December 1991.

The market transition and privatisation caused a social crisis and weakened the state. GDP plummeted and ordinary people paid the price through unpaid wages, unemployment and poverty.

Meanwhile the old ruling class managed to maintain its class power, despite the failures of its long-ruling party. They continued to control the economy, society and politics.

Chris Harman, former editor of *Socialist Worker*, argued in 1990, “The old people at the top raved about betrayal and even on occasions fantasised about telling their police to open fire. But key structures below them were already run by people who, at least privately, accepted the new multinational capitalist common sense.”

Social relations between bosses and workers didn't change. Communist politicians become “democratic” politicians.

The managers of state-owned companies became managers or owners of newly privatised companies, which saw a layer of oligarchs emerge able to reap billions.

In some countries opposition movements and capitalist newcomers were included in private banking and the media. But the logic of global capitalism was welcomed.

It seemed possible for a time that Russia could work with the West. Rather than be subordinated to its rule, Russia could be part of the same system.

But growing rivalry, economic competition and Nato expansion ended that. The vision failed as the US grabbed more opportunity to expand and dominate militarily.

In the end, Gorbachev was neither the hero that saved Russia nor the betrayer of socialism. Pressure from below and unamendable splits in the bureaucracy triggered by crisis and partial reform led to the death of the Soviet Union.

And the state capitalism born from Stalinism proves Russia's only experience of true socialism was during the revolutionary years after 1917.

Socialist Worker UK

LABOR'S DELAYS LEAVE REFUGEES IN LIMBO



Above: Refugees join a protest of 1500 outside Parliament house

By Ian Rintoul

MORE THAN 1500 refugees and asylum seekers rallied at Parliament house, Canberra, on 8 September to demand permanent visas for all refugees and asylum seekers still in limbo on temporary protection, safe haven and bridging visas.

Labor has long promised that those on TPVs and SHEVs will be granted permanent visas but there is no timeline for this. Immigration Minister Andrew Giles repeated Labor's promise from inside Parliament house as the rally became more restless and increasingly angry.

But Giles still offered no timeline, simply a pledge to "meet our commitment as soon as possible."

It took the Rudd Labor government five months to announce permanent visas to those on TPVs in 2008. It should have been easier this time. But Albanese's five months is up in October.

Predictably, the Opposition immigration spokesperson, Karen Andrews, has accused the Labor government of "removing a key pillar of Operation Sovereign Borders".

Labor should have smashed that idea but they are held back by their own timidity, and by their commitment to the same deterrence policies.

Labor is delaying the announcement because they are paranoid that more asylum boats will arrive after they dump TPVs and the Coalition will once again go on the offensive about border security.

In 2008 after boats started arriv-

ing, the Rudd government began the demonisation of people smugglers and went on to re-open the detention centre on Christmas Island, which at the time was a designated "excised offshore place" that allowed it to be operated as an offshore detention facility just like Manus Island and Nauru. (Labor re-opened Manus and Nauru in 2012.)

It's why Labor is now turning boats back with gusto. New Home Affairs Minister, Clare O'Neil, ignored the social upheaval that toppled a Sri Lankan dictator and visited Sri Lanka immediately after Labor was elected to provide \$5 million to the government to place 4200 GPS trackers on fishing boats.

It's why the new government is also providing scarce fuel, sourced in India, to the Sri Lankan navy patrol boats. It's why Labor is going ahead with a multi-million dollar contract with MTC, a private US prison and detention centre operator with an appalling record of human rights abuses, to run refugee matters on Nauru.

Albanese's pre-election media grab that "You can be strong on borders without being weak on humanity" is an increasingly empty phrase. Labor's grand compassionate post-election gesture was providing permanent visas to the high-profile Nadesalingam family from Biloela. But for hundreds of other families already in Australia, there is no such compassion.

TPVs holders are still being denied permission to travel. Many have their futures on hold as they have been left waiting for months, and in

some cases years, while their visa reapplications are being considered.

Compare the treatment of refugees eking out an existence in the community with Labor's Job Summit announcement on 2 September that it will "tackle the skills crisis" by increasing permanent migration by 35,000 places.

There are 10,000 asylum seekers who have been rejected under the Coalition's "fast track" assessment system, living even more precariously on bridging visas or unlawfully on expired bridging visas. Another Labor promise is the fast track system will be scrapped.

However, while Labor recognises the injustice of fast track there has been no commitment to re-assess the rejected 10,000 cases.

Adding to the concerns is the possibility that the Home Affairs and immigration department bureaucracy are resisting any change in policy. The fact that Labor has left Mike Pezzullo, Morrison's hard man, as secretary of Home Affairs was always an indication that Labor did not want to rock the immigration boat.

Meanwhile, the machinery of detention grinds on. Electric fences are being erected between compounds in the Christmas Island detention centre. Refugees in Nauru and PNG are still in offshore detention limbo.

Labor's compassion is strictly subordinated to its commitment to Operation Sovereign Borders. That's what was important about the rally in Canberra on 8 September. It is the struggle outside Parliament that is needed to free the refugees.

Labor has long promised that those on TPVs and SHEVs will be granted permanent visas but there is no timeline

Solidarity