



# THE ANVIL



**MACCG**

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Free

## NOT A ROAD TO SOCIALISM

The Victorian State election scheduled for 24 November offers workers no advance towards socialism. The incumbent Labor Government, led by Daniel Andrews, appears to have leapt straight from the pages of the latest edition of a neo-liberal textbook written in the bowels of the International Monetary Fund. A few mildly progressive initiatives and some inadequate action on climate change are firmly subordinated to capitalist market relations. Meanwhile, Labor's pretences at being socially progressive haven't stopped it joining in the Right wing media's racist campaign against "African crime gangs".

The alternative government, the Liberal Party, is an altogether less complicated beast. As the official mouthpiece of capital, its economic policies are stuck in 1990s IMF zealotry. There aren't enough capitalists to win elections, so the Libs also need social reactionaries to vote for them. Therefore, the Libs are against taking any action on climate change and they've been working closely with Right wing media in fomenting a general "law and order" campaign, centred around a panic about alleged African crime gangs.

So, who else is running? Let's pass by the assortment of Right wing nut jobs (who



bicker amongst themselves just as badly as the Left does) and single issue parties, whose very existence is a statement that "Everything about this society is pretty well OK, except for this *one particular* issue". The biggest challenge comes from the Greens. They are certainly committed to better environmental and social policies than either major party. They are fundamentally handicapped, though, by their delusion that a just and sustainable capitalism is possible. Grassroots activists have described them as "neo-liberals on bikes" and it's difficult to disagree.

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This time, we also have the Victorian Socialists, who are running in a number of upper and lower house seats. They are seriously trying to win an upper house seat in the Northern Metropolitan province. And because this is not just a flag-flying exercise, they have to pass a strict test. We oppose running for elections because, although it's possible to enter a capitalist Parliament on a principled basis, we think it's a waste of time and effort to do so. The energy required for the election campaign can be far more usefully directed towards building grassroots struggles. Nevertheless, the question arises of how to respond if a State Socialist group decides to waste its resources that way.

Firstly, the party has to be standing clearly for Socialism and against capitalism. The Vic Socialists are doing this. If the election campaign is just a flag-flying occasion, that's basically enough, provided the party hasn't disgraced itself in front of the whole working class like the British SWP has with its rape apologism (put "Comrade Delta" into your favourite search engine). Second, the party has to advance strong progressive positions on the issues of the day. The Vic Socialists do this, too. There's room for argument about their adequacy in this or that area, but it's not litmus test material for a State upper house. Third, the party has to promise to take the side of workers and oppressed groups in struggle. They tick that box, as well.

Unfortunately, the Victorian Socialists fall at the last hurdle. In the absence of argument to the contrary, the act of a

Socialist running for Parliament serves to raise illusions that a parliamentary road to socialism exists. Potential voters will see their vote as the vehicle for attaining Socialism, through the election of sufficient Socialists to Parliament. It is therefore the duty of principled Socialists to explain that, while Parliament may be able to deliver some worthwhile reforms, Socialism can only be achieved by the revolutionary action of the workers themselves. The Victorian Socialists are conspicuously silent on this point.

To vote for a Socialist who has no hope of winning is simply to say "I'm against capitalism and for Socialism". In lower house seats and in seven of the eight upper house provinces, this is the meaning of a vote for the Victorian Socialists. And there's no harm in that. If the Socialist has a chance of being elected, though, we need to look at the situation more deeply. A Victorian Socialist in the Legislative Council of Victoria might make stirring speeches in support of grassroots struggles and might fight hard to get reforms out of this neo-liberal Labor Government, but if they don't explain to the working class that this isn't how we'll win Socialism, they'll be leading workers in the wrong direction.

On this basis, the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group says that it is not possible to lodge a principled vote in the Victorian election on 24 November in Northern Metropolitan, the one constituency where they have a slight chance of winning. None of the candidates offer a road to Socialism.

**BUILD MOVEMENTS NOT ELECTIONS**

## ARMISTICE DAY

One hundred years ago this month, the guns of World War I fell silent. Ever since then, 11 November has been used to mark the end of that war and an intense political struggle has been waged over its meaning. The war was a devastating event of unprecedented savagery. Millions died and people naturally want to know why. The capitalist media won't tell you why it started and they won't tell you how it ended.

World War I began because two great rival imperial alliances had formed, contesting over who was going to be master of Europe. It was a war for conquest of territory, colonies and markets. It had almost started two years earlier, in 1912, but diplomacy headed it off. If diplomacy had prevented the assassination of an Austrian Archduke from starting the war in 1914, it would have happened later on, triggered by something else. The showdown was inevitable.

By chance, the war started when the state of military technology favoured defenders over attackers. With the aid of trenches, sandbags and machine guns, a platoon could hold off a battalion. Given that the two rival alliances were of roughly equal strength, the scene was set for a military stalemate. Governments and generals, as contemptuous of the human life of the lower orders as ruling classes always have been, and as stupid as can be expected in systems built on inherited privilege, proceeded to waste millions of lives of soldiers and others in a vain attempt to break the stalemate. To cut a long story short, the pointless slaughter

generated increasing opposition throughout all belligerent countries. The chain broke at its weakest link, with revolution breaking out in Russia in 1917. The February Revolution overthrew the Czar and the October Revolution brought the Bolsheviks to power, on a promise of peace. They negotiated the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which got Russia out of the war in March 1918, while discontent continued to build in the rest of Europe and in the Ottoman Empire.

Developments in military technology (most importantly the tank) and the entry of the United States into the war had broken the stalemate. Germany and the other Central Powers were under increasing pressure and had reached breaking point. In a last ditch effort, on 24 October the German Admiralty ordered the Navy to sea in order to take on the Royal Navy and break the blockade. The German sailors rightly considered this a suicide mission and mutinied, first at Wilhelmshaven on 29 October, followed by a larger mutiny at Kiel on 3 November. The attack was cancelled, but it was too late. The sailors' revolt had sparked a revolution. Revolts spread throughout Germany in the early days of November and workers in city after city formed workers' councils. By 9 November, the Kaiser had been forced out and a republic proclaimed. The new government, centred on the Social Democratic Party, signed the Armistice on 11 November.

Germany's allies had also collapsed. Bulgaria had capitulated on 29 September, while the Ottomans signed

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## Armistice Day

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an armistice on 30 October. Instability within their borders had combined with military reverses to force this. The Hapsburg Empire of Austria-Hungary signed an armistice on 3 November, but it was already falling apart by then, with independence proclamations issued in several cities. The Armistice on the Western Front, therefore, marked the end of the entire war. Discontent in the armies of the British Empire, slower to develop, peaked after the Armistice and focused on demands for demobilisation.

World War I was ended by social revolution. The population of the Central Powers, under the pressure of intense privations brought on by the war, and with the example of Russia to their East, withdrew support from the belligerent regimes. The fall of the Kaiser, the dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire and the dismemberment of the Ottoman one were the result of workers, peasants and soldiers who had had enough. If the Central Powers' morale had held, the war would have continued for some time.

REVOLUTIONS  
STOP WARS



### **What is Anarchism?**

*Anarchism is a social philosophy based upon the principles of liberty, equality and solidarity. It is the political dimension of a free society.*

### **What is Communism?**

*Communism is the principle of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need". It is the economic dimension of a free society.*

### **What is the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group?**

*The MACG is an organisation of class struggle revolutionary anarchists who share political positions, articulated in theory, strategy and tactics.*

*We aim to encourage struggle by the working class for its own interests and, within that struggle, we aim to advance Anarchist ideas as its necessary philosophical basis.*

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