

Solidarity

Issue No. 124 / March 2019

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CLIMATE JUSTICE, UNION RIGHTS

IT'S RIGHT TO STRIKE



UNIONS

Sally McManus and
fighting unfair rules

INTERVIEW

Islamophobia and the
far right in France

CLIMATE CHANGE

Why we need to
change the system



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SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

Solidarity is a socialist group with branches across Australia. We are opposed to the madness of capitalism, which is plunging us into global recession and misery at the same time as wrecking the planet's future. We are taking the first steps towards building an organisation that can help lead the fight for an alternative system based on mass democratic planning, in the interests of human need not profit.

As a crucial part of this, we are committed to building social movements and the wider left, through throwing ourselves into struggles for social justice, against racism and to strengthen the confidence of rank and file unionists.

Solidarity is a member of the International Socialist Tendency. Visit our web site at www.solidarity.net.au/about-us for more information on what we stand for.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown
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Things they say

We turned our back on left-wing ideology and right wing ideology... Our country invented the 'third way' before anyone else coined the phrase... We invented our own way, the Australian way.

This isn't a matter of winding back the clock to 1983... We need to breathe new life into the Australian way... We need a system that makes negotiation worthwhile for employers and employees.
Bill Shorten talking to the Financial Review, hankering for the Australian way and the Accord! We have been warned.

There is a lot of misinformation and frankly lies that are being put around.
Scott Morrison about the Medivac bill.

Person of both high intelligence and exemplary character
Former Liberal PM John Howard's character reference for Cardinal George Pell, convicted paedophile

It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies invest in and produce the oil-capabilities in Venezuela.
John R. Bolton, Donald Trump's national security adviser and long term Republican neo-conservative apparatchik

So I think that this idea of a guaranteed minimum is not something most people want.
Ivanka Trump on the idea of a minimum wage

Israel is not a state of all its citizens. According to the basic nationality law we passed, Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people—and only it.
Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

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KEEP LEFT 2019

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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

Profits soar for power company

ENERGY AUSTRALIA, one of the country's three big power companies, saw its profits soar 24 per cent to \$566 million last year as a result of higher wholesale power prices.

The company owns the two huge coal-fired power stations Mt Piper in NSW and Yallourn in Victoria as well as a series of gas plants and a wind farm. It is also an electricity and gas retailer that sells power directly to households.

Despite the profit it described the period as "a frustrating and difficult time" due to policy uncertainty—even as it continued to charge increased power prices to the public.

Households are paying \$200 a year each to cover sales and marketing budgets of the privatised energy companies, an Australia Institute report found in January.

Ocean plastic patch larger than Queensland

A HUGE patch of plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean is even larger than feared, a new study confirmed this month. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, as it is known, is now almost the size of Queensland or 1.6 million square kilometres. It contains 80,000 tonnes of floating plastic, according to the study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

It estimates there are 1.8 trillion pieces of plastic in the patch. The waste has accumulated in the area due to ocean currents—and continues to grow as more plastic waste reaches the oceans.

Child arrested for refusing to pledge allegiance

AN 11-YEAR-OLD boy was arrested in Florida in February after refusing to stand for the US pledge of allegiance. Even though students are allowed to opt out of reciting the pledge, his substitute teacher objected when he refused.

The teacher argued with him and then called the school's administration office. Police were called and the boy was arrested for creating a disturbance in the classroom. He refused to stand, he said, "because the flag of this country was racist" and he considered the US national anthem was "offensive to black people".

Retiring MPs pocket obscene pensions



THREE MORE rats abandoned the Liberals' sinking ship this month, as Ministers Chris Pyne and Steve Ciobo along with former Deputy Leader Julie Bishop made for the exit.

Pyne's pension was surely at the front of his mind when he decided to retire. Resigning from parliament while he was still a government minister ensured a pension of 75 per cent of his ministerial salary. This means Pyne will pocket around \$220,000 a year, every year, for the rest of his life.

Fellow Minister Steve Ciobo, aged just 44, will receive \$187,000 a year. And he will keep getting the money even if he gets another job, unless it's a government appointment to a court or a diplomatic post.

Julie Bishop and Labor's Jenny Macklin and Wayne Swan will have their snouts in the trough for over \$170,000 a year each. All are paid at the higher rate of the old parliamentary pension scheme, which was modified in 2004.

One estimate in 2015 calculated taxpayers are charged \$45 million every year to cover the pensions of former MPs.

Billionaires bunker down to escape mess they've created

AMERICA'S BILLIONAIRES are buying up space in luxury bunkers, in the hope of surviving social breakdown due to political turmoil, climate change and apocalyptic disasters.

Robert Vicino owns a company that has built three "bunker communities" in the US over ten years, and is opening new facilities in South Korea and Germany.

"For the elite, it's life insurance for their heirs. Not doing so would be reckless," he told the ABC. "Our locations can hold up to 10,000 like-minded people all carrying guns in an area three-quarters the size of Manhattan".

Larry Hall, owner of Survival Condos, said, "Our luxury nuclear hardened bunker full-floor unit is the most requested offering. This is a 1840-square-foot condominium that has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and luxury finishes that sells for \$US3 million."

Billionaire LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman estimated in 2017 that half of Silicon Valley's billionaires had bought into similar facilities.

Send suggestions for INSIDE THE SYSTEM to solidarity@solidarity.net.au

Segregated hotels in Alice Springs

A HOTEL in Alice Springs has been exposed as segregating Aboriginal guests into second-rate rooms and excluding them from the rest of the hotel.

The Ibis Styles Alice Springs Oasis charged Aboriginal people the same rate of \$129 a night as other guests, but placed them into six designated rooms that an ABC investigation found were dirty and contained stained sheets and towels.

Staff were emailed by management instructing them that, "These rooms are to be referred to as community rooms and we will try to limit them to just that, those coming from the communities." This was a term used to refer to people from local Aboriginal communities.

Sophie Trevitt, a lawyer with the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, said that Aboriginal guests faced similar treatment in hotels across the NT. "It's effectively a form of segregation within hotels and hostels", she said.

Corruption scandal exposes Packer

BILLIONAIRE JAMES Packer delivered troubled Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a "conveyer belt" of gifts, details of the corruption case against the politician shows.

Packer allowed the Netanyahus free use of his villa in Caesarea, which is next door to their own. His family also received around \$63,000 worth of gifts, made up of around \$40,000 worth of cigars and \$23,000 worth of champagne.

"These gifts were generally made in response to demands by Sara Netanyahu while (Benjamin) Netanyahu was aware of their receipt in significant volume... and sometimes in response to Netanyahu's own demands," documents from the attorney general's office state. Netanyahu is accused of receiving similar gifts from another billionaire, Arnon Milchan, as well as a raft of other favours.

EDITORIAL

Strike back against Morrison—build the fight for change

SCOTT MORRISON is staring down the barrel of defeat. Nothing he's tried has lifted the government in the polls.

Already under pressure over sexism in the Liberal Party, Morrison revealed his own sexist blinkers when he implied that opening opportunities for women would come at the expense of men, by saying on International Women's Day that, "we don't want to see women rise only on the basis of others doing worse".

Labor is gaining momentum for the NSW state election on 23 March, with a similar tack to the left to Labor federally, promising free TAFE for 600,000 students, 5000 more teachers in its first term, and free public transport for kids.

Polling shows that Labor has a real chance of beating the NSW Liberal government. If the Liberals lose NSW it will be a dramatic sign Scott Morrison is headed for a colossal defeat at the May federal election.

Morrison is so unpopular he was not even allowed to speak at the NSW Liberals' campaign launch.

The NSW Liberals' record of privatising over \$50 billion worth of assets, and cutting over \$130 million and 4000 jobs from TAFE, is shocking. They hoped to coast back into power by spending big on new infrastructure. But the light rail is nowhere near finished and the trains are a disaster.

NSW Labor leader Michael Daley's on-air threat to sack shock-jock Alan Jones from the Sydney Cricket Ground board earned Daley a lot of cred and gave Labor's popular call for "money for schools and hospitals not stadiums" a huge boost. The Liberals are wasting \$2 billion to rebuild Allianz Stadium and upgrade the stadium at Olympic Park.

Labor is also promising mandated nurse to patient ratios in hospitals and 5500 more nurses, funded largely by hitting the "wealthiest in society" with a tax on luxury cars and yachts.

But Daley has also told the *Financial Review* "we will be economically conservative" and has committed to running budget surpluses like the last NSW Labor government.

Climate tricks

Morrison's complete lack of any credible climate policy has blown up in his face. Even in formerly safe Liberal seats, there are Liberal-lite independents challenging Tony Abbott and



Above: The ACTU has called further Change the Rules stopwork rallies for April

Josh Frydenburg.

The government's only solution is to pour more money into the Tony Abbott-era fund paying businesses to supposedly reduce emissions. But the scheme funds projects which would have happened anyway, and it has done nothing in six years to reduce Australia's overall emissions.

It also emerged that the government's claim it can meet its Paris climate target relies on dodgy accounting tricks through carrying over credits from the Kyoto agreement period.

The Coalition has nothing left but scare campaigns on every front. They have attacked Labor's plans to lift Australia's emission reduction target to 45 per cent by 2030 as a major threat to the economy.

Morrison is scaremongering that a Labor government would push the economy into recession. But the economy is already slowing thanks to the Liberals.

Living standards have fallen in the last three years due to stagnant wage growth. Research from ANU's Ben Phillips has shown the fall in living standards was the largest in 30 years, "greater than during the last recession in 1991-92".

Labor's response, to declare the federal election will be "a referendum on wages", has struck a chord and the ACTU is calling for national stopwork rallies.

So far, Brisbane is striking on 27 March and Melbourne on 10 April.

Labor has tacked to the left and is promising to scrap the penalty rate cuts, increase the minimum wage and change some of the rules around industrial relations. But they are not committed to giving unions the right to strike or introducing industry wide bargaining.

The union rallies can help put the movement on the front foot, with demands that can go past the federal election.

The 15 March student Climate Strike has galvanised the deep anger at Morrison's refusal to act on climate change. But we need to build an ongoing climate campaign if we are going to stop capitalism destroying the planet.

The Palm Sunday national rallies for refugees on 14 April are also an important chance to push back Morrison's scapegoating and fear campaign. Large demonstrations calling to get all asylum seekers and refugees off Manus and Nauru and ending offshore detention will also send a message to federal Labor.

The demonstrations for climate action, refugees and rights at work can shape the period ahead, to both finish off the Liberals, and to build the movements from below that we need to fight for real change.

Most of all we need a socialist movement to link the struggles together and fight for a society that protects the environment, and produces for human need and not for profit.

.....
The Coalition has nothing left but scare campaigns on every front

Climate campaign must fight for jobs, not just target Adani

By Adam Adelpour

IF THE Adani Carmichael mine goes ahead it will be one of Australia's biggest coal mines, despite December's announcement scaling it down.

The Liberals and Scott Morrison support Adani and Labor has refused to come out clearly against it.

The campaign to stop the Adani mine has been the most prominent environmental campaign in Australian politics in recent years.

For those concerned about stopping runaway climate change, stopping Adani has become a common sense demand.

The mine should be stopped. It would destroy the environment that surrounds it, trample on Indigenous rights and create a huge amount of emissions. But there is a big gap between Stop Adani and the kind of platform of demands we need to stop runaway climate change.

Last November's phenomenal school strike for climate opened up space to discuss what a more comprehensive platform of demands for climate action would like. Not only was the strike a massive success that humiliated the Liberals, it put forward the demand for 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030.

In and of itself campaigning against Adani's plan to export coal from the Carmichael basin doesn't get us any closer to reducing Australia's domestic emissions or to 100 per cent renewable energy.

Yet this is what will determine whether Australia meets its international targets and plays any part in forging a global response on climate change.

Australia's existing emissions are disastrously high. In February Environment Minister Melissa Price tried to paint a picture of falling emissions. She pointed to a decline in the last three months, driven by declining electricity emissions. But the same report shows that emissions increased over the last year, continuing the pattern of increases over the last five years.

On an annual basis emissions from stationary energy rose 5.8 per cent over the year. This includes industrial combustion of fossil fuels, for example in the steel industry. Fugitive emissions from coal mines and gas facilities also rose 7.3 per cent. A massive 20 per cent increase in LNG



Above: A protest against Adani's coal mine

exports helped drive these increases.

The overwhelming focus on Adani—an Indian company planning to extract coal for export—can also give legitimacy to the idea India and China are to blame for climate change. Western leaders promote this idea to avoid taking action themselves. Australia is not doing anywhere enough to transition and has some of the highest per-capita emissions in the world.

A climate campaign has to be focused on demands against our own polluters if we are going to cut carbon emissions in Australia to the necessary levels.

Jobs

Another major problem with the overwhelming focus on Adani is that it locks supporters of climate action into an anti-jobs position. A movement that says "Stop Adani" but is not committed to fighting for jobs won't get a hearing with organised workers.

Most of the Adani campaign materials focus on how few jobs the mine would create. But even if the lower estimates of around 1500 jobs are right, those who want climate action shouldn't be indifferent on this question.

In central Queensland mining—and associated services and manufacturing—are a core area of employment. The Queensland mining division of the CFMEU has unfortunately come out in support of Adani on the basis that it will provide jobs for miners.

The climate campaign needs to

be a campaign for jobs. One CSIRO study estimated that the action needed to cut carbon emissions could generate between 230,000 and 340,000 additional jobs. The movement for climate action needs to take working class demands and issues like electricity prices, living standards and jobs seriously.

To extend the climate movement beyond schools and universities we need to win support. Workers' strike action will be necessary to win climate action.

We should demand government investment to build renewable energy generation, massively expand public transport and retrofit buildings to improve energy efficiency. And we should tax corporations and the rich to pay for it, instead of pushing the burden onto ordinary people. The discussion in the US around a Green New Deal has put demands like this on the agenda—and linked them to creating well-paid jobs.

There is certainly a need to keep coal and fossil fuel deposits in the ground. According to research by Oil Change International, "The potential carbon emissions from the oil, gas, and coal in the world's currently operating fields and mines would take us beyond 2°C of warming", far beyond the much safer 1.5 degree target.

To avert climate disaster we need an immediate, just transition to 100 per cent renewable energy through massive government investment. And we need a movement that demands it, backed up by working class power.

A climate campaign has to focus on our own polluters if we are going to cut carbon emissions in Australia

Putting government investment in renewables on the agenda

By James Supple

THE WORLD is facing a climate emergency, with the need for a completely zero carbon economy within 30 years.

We are already seeing extreme weather events. Roebourne in Western Australia has recorded its highest ever March temperature of 48.1 degrees and much of the country is still in drought.

Scott Morrison's only response is a pathetic \$2 billion over ten years for the Tony Abbott-era plan to pay farmers and businesses to reduce emissions. Morrison even faces demands from the Nationals to fund a new coal power station.

The high school Strike for Climate has inspired enormous support. Over 20 unions have now endorsed it and, in some places, workers will be walking off the job to attend.

Student activists at Sydney Uni passed motions in over 45 classes and lectures to either support the strike or walk out of class. NTEU staff expressed their support and voted not to penalise students for striking. And in response to the pressure, university management sent an email to all staff giving them permission to walk out of work to join it.

As Sydney Strike for Climate activist Aisheeya Huqwe told a meeting of NTEU members, "school strikers know that one of the groups we need to work with, are unions." The movement needs, she said, "to organise power."

"That we don't have enough of. You talk about organising, about how you don't have deep enough power in your workplaces. We, too, do not have deep enough power in our schools."

Solutions

The most straightforward way to begin cutting emissions is to replace all the coal and gas-fired power stations with renewable energy.

Already new solar and wind power projects can provide cheaper power than a new coal power station. The existing coal power stations, with the cost of building them already paid for, remain cheaper to run.

But a rapid transition to 100 per cent renewable energy is now straightforward.

In the lead up to the state election, the NSW Labor Party has released a plan for a significant ramp up of



Above: The NSW Labor Party is proposing a state owned company to build renewables—but only for a small minority of the energy generation needed

renewable energy, with the aim of installing 9000 megawatts by 2030.

Their plan to establish a new State Owned Corporation to directly build 1000 megawatts of renewable energy and storage has captured particular attention. This shows that it's possible for governments to directly build and run renewable energy—exactly what's needed.

But the bulk of the new renewable energy NSW Labor is proposing will be built by the private sector, and the cost recouped through ordinary people's power bills. NSW Labor has the same aim as Bill Shorten federally of 50 per cent renewables by 2030.

New power generation is needed because a number of coal power stations in NSW are close to retirement age. But Labor's plan would mostly leave it to the market to replace them.

This falls far short of what's needed.

Labor leader Michael Daley has said that, "there still will be a place for coal in New South Wales for decades to come" and pledged that existing coal power stations "will see their lives to an end". The NSW power station at Mt Piper is not scheduled to close until 2043.

And there would still be gas-fired plants operating to back up renewables—which also use fossil fuels.

Since 2014 the NSW state government has sold off coal power stations for \$2.6 billion and the electricity grid that services them for \$34 billion.

Labor is not prepared to force them to close immediately, or to renationalise them. It accepts the idea that corporate investors should be allowed to keep them running to make profits.

The Student Strike for Climate and the NSW Greens have both backed the aim of 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030. The Greens are rightly saying that new renewable energy should be built under public ownership. This is the best way to guarantee cheaper power prices and plan a transition.

The Greens are also proposing a new state-owned electricity retail company to sell power to the public at cheaper prices. Privatisation has pushed up prices and should be reversed completely. An Australia Institute study in January showed that it is costing households \$200 a year in extra sales staff and advertising budgets as privatised retail companies compete for customers.

We can't afford to have increases in power bills. This is what allowed Tony Abbott and the Liberals to attack the carbon tax and undermine support for climate action. The carbon tax was designed to force the cost of the transition onto ordinary people's power bills. To ensure 100 per cent renewable energy delivers cheaper power, government needs to pay for and build it.

Demands like this are capable of winning the support we need to force change—in unions and the working class.

The Strike for Climate and the NSW Greens have both backed the aim of 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030

Hypocrisy of the system surrounds George Pell

By Ian Rintoul

CHILD ABUSE has been the allegation of choice used by the Coalition government to demonise refugees.

Scott Morrison stressed child abuse and sex crimes when he re-opened Christmas Island, “We can’t have those suspected of violence, sexual crimes and abuse, including against children, walking the streets in Australia.”

Only a few days before, the conviction of Cardinal George Pell on five counts of child sexual assault had sent shock waves through the Catholic Church and the Australian establishment.

But don’t expect Government Ministers or the media to vilify the Catholic Church. The list of those supporting Cardinal Pell, a convicted paedophile, reads like a conservative Who’s Who of the political and media establishment.

In court, following his conviction, former Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer shook the cardinal’s hand.

Among other supporters were two former Liberal Prime Ministers John Howard and Tony Abbott, Vice-Chancellor of the Australian Catholic University Greg Craven, Murdoch journalists Miranda Devine, Paul Kelly, and Andrew Bolt as well as Lyle Shelton from the Australian Christian Lobby.

The liberal Jesuit priest Frank Brennan, a long-time defender of the Church, once wrote, “Clearly the Church cannot be left alone to get its house in order.” But in light of Pell’s conviction, Brennan has thrown his lot in with the worst defenders of the system, with his very public questioning of the verdict.

In 2007, Howard and Abbott used false allegations of child abuse to launch the Northern Territory Intervention against Aboriginal communities. Even after investigations by the Australian Crime Commission found no evidence for the existence of “paedophile rings”, they refused to relent.

In contrast, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been dominated by abuses perpetrated in the Catholic Church.

The scale and nature of abuse uncovered in Catholic institutions is staggering. Between 1980 and 2015, 4444 people reported allegations of child sexual abuse to Catholic authorities. There were 1880 Catholic leaders



Above: Cardinal Pell enters the court

subject to allegations of abuse in over 1000 separate institutions. In total, 7 per cent of Catholic priests in Australia between 1950 and 2010 were accused of child sexual abuse.

If the Royal Commission and the scale of abuse that has been revealed tells us anything, it is that we should expect high officers of the Church to be guilty of child abuse.

Between 2000 and 2012, the Catholic Church admitted that, “about 620 cases of criminal child abuse have been upheld by the Church in Victoria”. In the Archdiocese of Melbourne alone, 301 complaints have been upheld between 1996 and 2012.

Pillar of the system

But it is not Pell himself that the Murdoch journalists and the former Liberal Prime Ministers are rushing to defend so much as the Catholic Church itself. Despite the declining church attendances (only 12.5 per cent of Catholics regularly attend mass), the Church remains a pillar of Australian capitalism.

The Catholic Church is the biggest private employer in Australia with 180,000 employees. It is estimated that it owns \$100 billion worth of properties and other assets and makes \$15 billion a year from its businesses (particularly education, health and welfare services).

This position underpins the ideologically conservative role over gender, contraception, homosexuality and marriage that it plays within Australian capitalism. That role has been

most recently seen in the Church’s campaign against equal marriage. The Church is now resisting changes to anti-discrimination legislation that would end their ability to continue to discriminate against LGBTBI staff and students on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity.

Only a few days after Pell’s conviction, a French archbishop, Cardinal Philippe Barbari, was found guilty of covering up child sexual abuse by a priest in his diocese in yet another crushing blow to the Catholic Church’s credibility.

In Ireland, the succession of scandals and official inquiries that uncovered sex abuse by priests and abuse of single mothers has seen a dramatic decline in the Church’s influence. Against the opposition of the Church, in 2015, a referendum on equal marriage was overwhelmingly carried and in May 2018, 66.4 per cent voted to repeal a constitutional amendment that in effect had banned abortion.

Pell’s conviction is global news. Millions more will be disillusioned in the institution they once looked to for solace. Calls for the equality of women in the church have started to get a hearing again. For some, Pell’s conviction is reason to celebrate Australian democracy and is evidence that we are all equal before the law.

But a closer look reveals the deep hypocrisy of capitalism’s guardians. The victims of abuse are just so much collateral damage in their unseemly rush to protect the powerful and defend their system.

.....

It is not Pell himself that the former Liberal Prime Ministers are rushing to defend so much as the Catholic Church itself

How the last security scare over refugees turned out empty

By Matilda Fay

IN RESPONSE to the medical evacuations bill, the Liberals are using every opportunity to scaremonger about asylum seekers posing a threat to national security.

Scott Morrison has announced a plan to transfer sick refugees that the government considers “a risk” to “high security detention facilities” on Christmas Island. The government is claiming there are 57 refugees of “adverse character” on Manus and Nauru it has identified.

This is despite Labor having conceded to Morrison’s scaremongering by introducing an amendment to deny medical transfers to those with a criminal record as well as anyone given ASIO negative security assessments.

But we have heard the same scaremongering about refugees being a risk to “national security” many times before. These claims almost never stack up. ASIO’s national security assessments of refugees are notoriously shaky.

There were 50,000 asylum seekers who arrived by boat over six years after 2009. A total of 57 refugees were given negative security assessments by ASIO in this period.

By 2017, independent reviewers had contradicted ASIO’s negative assessments in all 57 cases reviewed. All 57 of these negative assessments have since been revised by ASIO. This raises questions about the validity of ASIO assessments to this day.

Under the ASIO act, “security” refers to protection from matters including “sabotage”, “espionage”, “politically motivated violence” and “the protection of Australia’s territorial and border integrity from serious threats”. The act also extends to “the carrying out of Australia’s responsibilities to any foreign country in relation to” these matters.

There is a deep problem with the lack of transparency of these assessments. Refugees deemed ASIO-negative are not provided with reasons for the negative assessment, and there is no process that compels ASIO to make this information available, or for refugees to challenge it.

In any case, it is worth examining what the grounds for negative assessments can be. The inclusion of “border integrity” means that links to people smugglers can be a reason for



Above: Ranjini, who was kept in detention for over three years on the basis of ASIO advice, and her husband Ganesh at their 2011 wedding

a negative clearance. This presents a telling conflation of “border security” and “national security”. Someone can be considered a threat just for helping to crew a vessel carrying refugees.

Many of the refugees who have had their negative assessments overturned since 2012 were allegedly involved with the Tamil Tigers (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) in Sri Lanka.

The Tamil Tigers pose no realistic threat in the Australian context: they are not classed as a terrorist organisation by the Attorney-General’s Department, and have never been involved in acts of political violence in Australia. That casts serious doubt upon ASIO’s assessment of a person’s capacity for political violence.

ASIO has admitted to relying on information from foreign security services in the past. The Sri Lankan state is accused of genocide against Tamil people and should not be a source of information for such assessments.

Indefinite detention

A High Court decision in 2012 ruled that the government could not deny a person refugee status based on a negative security assessment. Having been deemed a refugee, they then cannot be forcibly sent back to their country of origin under international law. In these cases the government could allow them into the community despite an ASIO assessment, but has instead opted to keep people in detention indefinitely.

One such case was that of Ranjini, a former member of the Tamil Tigers detained in Villawood until 2012. After more than three years in detention, ASIO withdrew her negative assessment and she was released. At no point did ASIO provide her with any reasoning for the negative assessment or what had changed to cause it to be withdrawn.

Needless to say, the devastating impact of indefinite detention is brought into sharp focus by the deaths by suicide of two men detained in Villawood in the last six weeks.

Mistaken identity

One case revealed in the 2017-2018 ASIO annual report is particularly damning evidence as to the validity of ASIO’s assessments. The asylum seeker in this case was assessed to be a member of the Islamic State because his name was similar to that of another person. That negative assessment was overturned in court.

With very little left to run on, it is quite clear that the Liberals will continue to rely on rhetoric about national security in the lead up to the election. Amid this, it is useful to keep in mind that ASIO has proven itself entirely untrustworthy in assessing any supposed threat posed by asylum seekers.

It is as clear now as ever that the government’s scaremongering around “national security” has absolutely nothing to do with concern for peoples’ safety and has everything to do with racist scapegoating of asylum seekers.

.....
Independent reviewers contradicted ASIO’s negative assessments in all 57 cases reviewed

Aboriginal communities demand water to save the rivers

By Paddy Gibson

ON 3 March, Aboriginal people led demonstrations across Western NSW, demanding urgent action as rivers forming the Murray Darling system are killed by corporate greed. Communities there are facing an environmental and humanitarian crisis.

Rallies were organised by Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) at Bourke, Dareton, Dubbo, Menindee, Walgett and Wilcannia.

Michael Kennedy, Chairperson of the Wilcannia LALC explained to SBS that his Barkandji people take their name from the river, and are feeling extreme anguish as the source of their identity and livelihood is destroyed.

“This river means everything to us... when the river is sick like this, we are all sick. This river system must be put first before anything—greed, cotton, any sort of irrigation”. The Barkandji are threatening to blockade the Barrier Highway unless they see action.

Many of these communities have been protesting for years, watching the Barka (Darling) River drop to catastrophically low levels as huge cotton growing companies to their north have pumped it dry.

The recent kill of more than one million fish in the Menindee Lakes made national headlines, but for the roughly 1000 kilometres of dry river bed from Menindee to Bourke there are no fish at all.

Many communities are relying on bottled water, often trucked in by volunteers. The river water is non-existent or putrid, and bore water has dangerous levels of salt and minerals. Poor black families are hit hardest, unable to afford costs of up to \$100 per week to buy bottled water.

Climate change has exacerbated this crisis, as communities swelter through record breaking temperatures, in overcrowded houses without consistent air conditioning.

The Wentworth Group of scientists released research in February showing that long before the drought water flows at key sites on the river were either unchanged or worse than before the Murray-Darling Basin plan was implemented in 2010. Much of the \$13 billion allocated for the plan has instead fed corporate profits.

A central demand of the rally was for an end to trading in water. A market system currently sees rights allocated and traded between commercial



Above: Protesting the theft of water from the Barka (Darling) River in Wilcannia

interests. Aboriginal people have been cut out of this system entirely, despite having recognised Native Title rights which should extend to the river waters.

Any solution to the crisis must involve direct regulation. Agribusiness

should be forced to release water, the cotton industry should be shut down and Aboriginal people given a central place in a new planning regime based on the needs of the river, its communities and the surrounding environment.

Fight against LGBTI discrimination in schools far from over

ON 9 February up to 100 people rallied in Melbourne to oppose discrimination in schools against LGBTI teachers and students.

Existing exemptions to anti-discrimination laws mean non-government schools can discriminate against staff and students on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity. In October, the Ruddock Review, commissioned by the Liberal government in the aftermath of the survey on marriage equality, recommended that the government further institutionalise this discrimination.

The community was rightly outraged to learn that teachers can currently be sacked and students expelled simply for being gay or trans. The outrage was very present on the day of the rally, in spite of the heavy rain a fiery crowd showed up proudly wearing their union t-shirts and ready to fight for LGBTI rights.

It was a modest first step in building some politics into the LGBTI movement that can fight for Safe Schools and trans rights and that goes beyond the lowest common denominator “love is love” politics that dominated the marriage equality campaign and particularly the Yes campaign in 2017.

The rally brought together a broad platform of Labor, The Greens

and unions. Luke Creasey, Labor’s candidate for Melbourne spoke alongside Greens Senator Janet Rice and Chris Dite, a teacher and Independent Education Union member.

But the fight to end discrimination in schools is far from over. In 2018 community outrage forced Scott Morrison to commit to ending discrimination against students.

Disappointingly, just days after the rally a Senate inquiry instead recommended a bill to protect students be referred to the Australian Law Reform Commission, in yet another delay. Morrison’s refusal to act immediately to end this discrimination is yet another example of the Liberals’ homophobia and transphobia.

Labor’s national conference in December committed to ending discrimination in schools against students and teachers. In a testament to Rainbow Labor’s work, the right-wing ALP figures who wanted loopholes for “school ethos” are on the back foot.

However Victorian Labor Premier Daniel Andrews could end the state based religious exemptions that allow LGBTI discrimination in schools right now. Every day that these laws remain in place is another day that LGBTI teachers are forced to stay in the closet. We need equality now.

Geraldine Fela

.....
“This river system must be put first before anything—greed, cotton, any sort of irrigation” — Michael Kennedy

Islamophobia, the far right and anti-racism in France

Jad Bouharoun will visit Australia in April to speak at the Keep Left conference. Jad spoke to *Solidarity* about the fight against racism and the far right in France

French sportswear company Decathlon was attacked recently for selling a sports hijab, can you explain what happened?

It's an example of collective hysteria about the hijab in France. Decathlon didn't really advertise it you just had the option of buying it online. This was picked up by far right activists on social media, masquerading as defenders of secularism, and then you had even government ministers condemning Decathlon for selling it. And it ends up making headline news in the mainstream media.

We had the same thing a year and a half ago when a student union rep was interviewed during a student strike movement, and she happened to be wearing a hijab. It started a very similar online witch-hunt which ended up making headline news.

France is really at the vanguard of Islamophobia. In 2004 young women were banned from wearing the hijab in public high schools. The left reacted very badly to this, and since then Islamophobia has become the dominant form of institutional racism in France.

France has one of the largest far right parties in Europe, the National Front led by Marine Le Pen. Are they benefiting from this racist atmosphere?

Marine Le Pen said in 2017 that 'whatever happens, we have already won the ideological battle'. There is a hint of truth in that.

For the last 15 years Islamophobia has not only been terrible for Muslims and Muslim women themselves but it's also legitimised the National Front. Before this the National Front was considered to be quite outside the democratic political game.

In 2002 Jacques Chirac got to the second round of the presidential election alongside [then National Front leader] Jean-Marie Le Pen. Usually there is a TV debate between the two candidates, but he refused to debate him because he did not want to legitimise their ideas.

In 2017 Macron did debate Marine Le Pen. The racism of the French main-



Above: Jad Bouharoun

Top: An organisation of undocumented migrants on an anti-racism rally in France

stream has allowed the National Front to appear as a normal democratic party. Islamophobia is the main way they have got electoral and ideological legitimacy—and ten and a half million votes in the presidential election in 2017.

What is the state of the anti-racist movement?

It's been an uphill struggle to get even the left to recognise Islamophobia as a form of racism. This is getting a lot better, partly for generational reasons. It's become obvious in the last period how often racism is used as a tool by France's rulers in order to divide us.

The anti-racist movement in France has two components. The first is undocumented migrants who are self-organising, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa. The second is the movement against police violence. The main problem is to get the radical left to recognise we really have to organise and fight on this issue as a political priority.

What is planned for 16 March protest? Why is the issue of police violence so prominent in this and how has this been received within the yellow vests movement?

We think our protest will be quite big but it is also a big day for the Yellow Vests because it is the end of Macron's three month "national debate" [held in response to the protests]. So they are going to Paris to celebrate.

We think our protest will be bigger than last year and the year before. One

of the things that we're building on is a protest in December specifically for undocumented migrants. This had 10,000 people on it in Paris alone, including trade unions.

Police violence is prominent because the French police kill blacks and Arabs every year. The French police are extremely violent, certainly the most violent in Europe.

Working class neighbourhoods with high proportions of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa or North Africa have been organising against racism through the families of victims of police violence.

The level of police violence the Yellow Vests were confronted with has created a favourable terrain for the anti-racist movement and the Yellow Vests to meet. In December high school students came out for their own demands against neo-liberal reforms that seek to restrict access to university. They were severely repressed, especially in black and Arab neighbourhoods.

In one particular neighbourhood, about 100 high school students were rounded up by the cops and made to kneel for three hours. This was days before a Yellow Vests protest in Paris, where you saw a predominantly white working class protest kneeling in solidarity with Arab and black students.

The families of victims of police violence also joined the Yellow Vests protests in December, because they said, these are working class protests against poverty, unemployment, and the lack of public services and we in the immigrant neighbourhoods have known all this for 30 or 40 years.

Does Venezuela's crisis show socialism can't work?

By Miro Sandev

VENEZUELAN LEADER Nicholas Maduro is hanging onto power in the face of US efforts to support self-declared interim president and opposition leader Juan Guaidó.

The US has imposed sanctions targeting the state-owned oil company and is aiming to deny the Maduro government \$11 billion in export revenue. It hopes to direct this money into the hands of Guaidó. These efforts by imperialist powers to impose regime change in Venezuela must be opposed.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves. The "Bolivarian revolution" begun by former President Hugo Chavez in 1999 and continued by his successor Maduro since 2013 took state control of the oil industry in order to increase royalties and use that income to redistribute wealth.

Chavez increased government expenditure on social services in the interests of workers and the poor, initially lifting many people out of poverty.

The US wants to put back in power the old capitalist elite who spent decades plundering the country.

But Venezuela's economy is now at breaking point, crippled by runaway hyperinflation.

This crisis is not a demonstration of the failings of socialism, as some have claimed.

It shows what happens when there is a challenge to the rich, but they are allowed to stay in control of key areas of the economy and society. It is not an example of too much socialism, but rather not enough.

Chavez's "Bolivarian revolution" was centred on the idea that socialism can be delivered from above through a capitalist state.

But in 2014 world oil prices crashed and much of the government's revenue disappeared. Oil production has also dropped due to lack of investment. As a result, many Venezuelans have slipped back under the poverty line.

Chavez—despite all of his radical rhetoric—never took on the bosses and tried to wrest ownership of the rest of the economy away from them. His regime allowed Venezuelan capitalists to continue making huge profits. This means they can now wield their economic power to undermine the Maduro government and create chaos in the economy. They have done this



Above: Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro with supporters of the PSUV

in the past when they tried to shut down production in 2003. More recently they have been hoarding goods in order to push up prices.

Between 2006 and 2007 Chavez nationalised parts of the strategic sectors of the economy: electricity generation and distribution, telecommunications, cement, aluminium, steel, banking and mining. Crucially, the enterprises in these sectors were not confiscated from their capitalist owners as they should have been—instead the state bought them, often at inflated prices. This cost over \$23 billion.

Despite the nationalisations, from the time Chavez came to power in 1999 to 2011, the private sector's share of economic activity actually increased from 65 per cent to 71 per cent.

Political power

Some people claim that the problems in Venezuela started with Maduro, who has begun implementing anti-worker policies like increasing consumption taxes. But the rot started under Chavez because he refused to allow workers to participate in the struggle for socialism and aimed at doing it on their behalf.

Workers and the poor mobilised in 2002 when Chavez was attacked in a right-wing coup. Hundreds of thousands of people took over the streets and beat back the coup plotters.

Despite the huge outpouring of support for Chavez, there was never widespread workers' control over enterprises or democratic control of

state structures.

The nationalisation of the main oil company PDVSA in 2003 turned it into a sort of shadow state, not open to any public audit or oversight. In the absence of mass democratic control over its operations corruption became rife. A new privileged layer of bureaucrats around the government emerged.

Oil revenues were increasingly channelled through a fund directly under presidential control. In total \$69 billion in oil revenues raised between 2003 and 2012 has been squandered, much of it on imports.

There was talk of diversifying the economy but this never eventuated.

After winning the election in 2006, Chavez launched the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Nearly six million people joined within weeks. However, internal elections were controlled from above by appointees, not from below.

The party was based on the model of the Cuban Communist Party, which is highly authoritarian and admits no serious critical opposition. Delegates to its party congresses as well as the lower level state and party institutions are nominated by the party leadership. This leaves no room for ordinary workers to participate democratically and directly hold the leadership to account.

If we want to break the hold of the bosses and build socialism, we have to build democratic workers' organisations that assert their own control of society, not rely on a state bureaucracy to do it for us.

The proud union history of defying the law—more needed now than ever

On Fairness
By Sally McManus
Melbourne University
Press, \$14.99

“OUR MOVEMENT’S most important achievements were won by breaking unjust laws, because it has nearly always been illegal to take strike action”, writes ACTU Secretary Sally McManus in her new book.

On Fairness is a celebration of the true history of our union movement, which built itself by breaking laws, standing in solidarity, and challenging state repression.

It is a short pamphlet, and very accessible—every trade unionist should read it.

McManus argues to embrace the rebellious spirit of trade unionism: “timidity comes at a cost far greater than a bit of external consternation.” From early British trade unionists who swore secret allegiances, to the 1976 general strike which saved Medicare, much that is celebrated today was illegal in its time.

This is the attitude the union movement needs to effectively challenge rising inequality, corporate tax avoidance, and insecure work.

On Fairness lambasts the lie of trickle-down economics. In Australia, CEOs earn 78 times the average wage. Seven hundred and thirty-two of the biggest companies pay zero tax. And enterprises such as 7-Eleven have business models based on systematic wage-theft.

The Liberals peddle the line that corporate tax cuts will create jobs—but a secret Business Council of Australia survey showed 80 per cent of



Above: Sally McManus speaking outside the unFair Work Commission

businesses would use tax cuts to increase shareholders’ dividends or capital investment, not wages.

Corporations claim to stand for the free market and against regulatory “red tape”. But they want even more red tape to tie up unions. The laws in Australia are already some of the most restrictive in the developed world. McManus explains the penalties for workers’ walking out to protest the actions of employers: “They’d face the loss of a minimum of four hours’ pay—even for a 10-minute stoppage—as well as fines of up to \$12,600 each. In addition, their union would face fines of up to \$35,000...”

McManus also argues that pandering to media fearmongering is a dead-end.

Recalling her interview on 7.30, when ABC journalist Leigh Sales challenged her to distance herself from the “law-breaking” CFMEU, she writes, “When union leaders are asked whether we support the ‘rule of law’,

we’re being challenged to abandon and condemn our own history... Disavowing the right to strike weakens every worker’s rightful claim to it.” She is absolutely right.

On Fairness offers a powerful diagnosis of the problems, but it stops short of spelling out the logical conclusion—that we need an industrial campaign to overturn the restrictive anti-strike laws.

Labor is not going to change the rules that most fundamentally limit the right to strike

And we need a movement to support unions in breaking the laws, because Labor is not going to change the rules that most fundamentally limit the right to strike.

Labor

McManus puts the blame for curtailing our right to strike on John Howard’s Coalition government, but it was the Labor Party in the 1990s, under Paul Keating, that did the most to restrict this right.

Keating introduced enterprise bargaining in 1993. Instead of industry awards, workers in different enterprises would have to bargain separately, and industrial action would only be allowed during a specified “protected period”. There were harsh penalties for striking in an “unprotected” period, which meant almost all the time.

The background to this was the introduction of the “Accord” by Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who convinced unions to restrict industrial action, and peg wage rises to produc-

tivity gains in return for a better “social wage”. But this simply tied our hands.

After the Hawke-Keating years, John Howard introduced the Workplace Relations Act, which increased the penalty for unlawful strikes, and introduced individual contracts.

In 2005, the union movement fought back with the “Your Rights at Work” campaign.

But the ACTU leadership settled for a watered down WorkChoices-Lite under the Rudd Labor government, enshrined in the 2009 Fair Work Act. Today it is these laws, and the enterprise bargaining system, that hold back workers at every turn. It would have been illegal for workers to strike when the Fair Work Commission cut penalty rates, because it was not “protected action”.

The union movement must not make the same mistake of relying on a Labor government yet again.

On Fairness dodges this hard question and the past mistakes of the ACTU. But the willingness of the unions to fight under a future Labor government is going to be critical.

The final chapter of *On Fairness* is still to be written.

It is up to rank-and-file unionists to make sure the Change the Rules campaign does not end with the election, but with the emergence of a fighting union movement true to its historic roots of resistance, willing to defy bad laws. Real fairness will only be won when we have the unrestricted right to strike.

Erima Dall

CAPITALISM VS THE CLIMATE WHY WE NEED SYSTEM CHANGE

The action needed to avert climate catastrophe means fighting the logic of capitalism and profit, argues **James Supple**

CLIMATE CHANGE is the most drastic threat human civilisation has ever faced. It could see large areas of the planet rendered uninhabitable, and trigger catastrophic sea level rise, floods, fires and food shortages.

But despite ever more urgent warnings of catastrophe, world leaders have comprehensively failed to act.

In recent years climate scientists have reported with increasing panic about what is happening to the planet. In December the climate report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said there were just 12 years left to keep climate change to a level that avoids potentially catastrophic consequences. It warned that warming needs to be kept to 1.5 degrees—when we have already seen just over a 1 degree temperature increase.

“We’re not on track”, Professor Mark Howden, Director of the Climate Change Institute at the Australian National University, explained, “We’re currently heading for about 3 degrees or 4 degrees Celsius of warming by 2100.”

But the problem has been known about—and discussed at the highest international levels—for decades. The first global agreement promising action to reduce carbon emissions was made almost 30 years ago, at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio.

Far from showing any decline, global emissions are still increasing, with levels in 2018 at an all-time high. Oil company ExxonMobil “plans to pump 25 per cent more oil and gas in 2025 than in 2017”, *The Economist* reported last month. “All the [oil] majors, not just ExxonMobil, are expected to expand their output.”

Australia, with its massive reserves of coal and gas, is widely recognised in global circles as dragging its heels. But even Germany, despite much higher levels of renewable en-

ergy, is nowhere near on track to meet its emission reduction targets.

And the world’s biggest economy is now run by Donald Trump, a climate denier who has torn up US support for the global agreement on climate change.

But in outright denial of the problem Trump is an exception among the global ruling classes. Most governments acknowledge the seriousness of the problem. But they have been incapable of taking the kind of action required.

This is because fossil fuel use is deeply embedded in the world’s industrialised economies. It’s not just the mining and power companies that are the problem. Every sector from manufacturing to heating, transport and agriculture is massively reliant on coal, oil and gas.

As the IPCC report put it, “far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” are needed.

This means that individual action to reduce consumption, through driving cars less or using green energy, will make little difference.

Residential use of electricity in Australia makes up only 21 per cent of total use. Industry uses almost 75 per cent.

Transport is another big source of emissions, 18.9 per cent of the total in the year to September. Enormous amounts of this are not in personal car use but in the transport of goods to supermarkets, export terminals or for use in manufacturing. Diesel, used overwhelmingly in freight transport and agriculture, produces far more emissions than petrol use, according to Environment and Energy Department figures.

This means we need to make major structural changes to how production is organised and energy is produced across the economy.

The problem is not that we lack

.....
Reordering our society to strip out the use of fossil fuels will hit corporate profits
—————

the technology to transition to renewable sources of energy. It is that taking action means a challenge to the way capitalism operates.

The operation of the capitalist market means that investment takes place based on what is most profitable in the short term. The needs of ordinary people and the planet are irrelevant—what counts is whether they can be commodified and sold for a profit. But reordering our society to strip out the use of fossil fuels will impose significant costs and a hit to corporate profits.

It means retiring still profitable coal and gas power plants and meeting the costs of replacing them with renewable energy. It means replacing fleets of trucks with a rail freight system run off renewables. It means increasing the cost of construction through better energy efficiency standards for buildings. And it means transforming manufacturing processes through using electricity instead of the direct use of fossil fuels.

Taking action also threatens the profits and investments of the world’s wealthiest and most powerful corporations.

Reining in carbon emissions means oil, coal and gas companies will need to be shut down—threatening literally trillions of dollars in investments.

Fortune magazine’s list of the world’s ten biggest companies for 2018 includes five oil companies, two car manufacturers and a power company. The minimum to make the list was revenue of \$340 billion.

The same is true in Australia, with mining companies BHP and Rio Tinto both among the ten largest companies. Australian exports of coal, oil and gas were worth \$230 billion last year. A rapid expansion of offshore gas drilling is expected to see Australia become the world’s largest gas exporter

this year or next.

And Australia remains overwhelmingly reliant on fossil fuels for power generation, with coal providing 60 per cent of power and gas another 20 per cent.

The four big banks are also deeply implicated, with campaign group Market Forces estimating they have lent \$88 billion to fossil fuel projects in the last ten years.

The other problem is that capitalism is based on competition between rival companies. A transport company that decided to reduce its emissions by using more expensive electric vehicles, as opposed to trucks run by petrol or diesel, would have to put up its prices and would quickly go out of business.

Economic competition also means that each national government wants to avoid disadvantaging its economy compared to overseas rivals.

They want to make sure that the costs of action on climate change do not leave local corporations at a disadvantage, as this could lead to lost sales, factory closures and lower profits.

This is why Prime Minister Scott Morrison's excuse for not acting on climate change is always that serious action would mean, "taking a sledgehammer to our economy".

The Labor Party share the same underlying approach. When Labor's Kevin Rudd was Prime Minister he declared, "I have said consistently, Australia will do no more and no less than the rest of the world".

This explains why global climate talks have failed to deliver. *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Marian Wilkinson has compared global negotiations to, "an elaborate game of chicken with the players waiting to see who will blink first."

They are gambling with the future of the planet.

Class power

The scale of the wealth and profits of the fossil fuel companies give them enormous power under capitalism.

Not only can they pay for hundreds of lobbyists and multi-million dollar advertising campaigns, they provide billions in tax revenue and have the ability to sack hundreds of thousands of people. In the context of a capitalist society, this gives them enormous influence over governments—no matter which party is in power.

Just look at how the mining industry in Australia responded to the prospect of losing a small slice of



Above: Oil wells are scheduled to keep increasing production so oil companies can keep making enormous profits

their profits through then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's plan for a mining super profits tax.

The mining bosses poured \$22 million into a massive ad campaign against the tax, claiming jobs would be lost and the Australian economy destroyed.

The government scurried into an embarrassing political back-down, removing Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister and slashing the tax rate.

The power of capitalists outside parliament means that simply electing better politicians will not bring change. Standing up to the power of these companies requires a mass movement of ordinary people to force governments to act.

We need to demand government action to make massive investments in public transport and renewable energy and impose more energy efficient design of buildings, appliances and cities.

All of this means challenging the usual operation of the "free market" and moving away from the idea that it can solve society's problems, promoted by neo-liberal orthodoxy for the last 40 years.

Forcing this kind of action will require mass protests and more walkouts from schools and universities.

Marching on the streets, and actions like blocking traffic, can cause some disruption and keep demands for action on the political agenda. They are vital for drawing people into social movements and building their confidence to fight. But a movement that remains simply at the level of mass marches is not enough.

In 2003 hundreds of thousands marched across Australia against

the Iraq war. Public opinion and the democratic will of the population was overwhelmingly against the war. But the government sent troops into Iraq anyway. The movement simply did not have sufficient power to force the government to back down.

The main power ordinary people have comes from the fact that the working class keeps the economy running. It is workers who drive the trains, run the power station and the ports, operate the factories, keep supermarkets stocked, and hospital services running.

Workers' strike action has the capacity to shut down production and cost businesses millions of dollars in lost profits. This is the kind of power that can force those who run society to take action.

This is why trade union support for climate action is vitally important, as a step towards mobilising workers' power.

Winning the mass of the working class to act on climate change means the movement must put the issues of inequality and jobs at its centre.

Ordinary people should not have to pay to deal with climate change through job losses or cuts to living standards. The corporations who have created the crisis through polluting the planet should pay, through taxes on their profits and on the wealthy elite who control them.

Constructing such a movement is an enormous challenge. It means supporting struggles against capitalism on every front—from the racist scapegoating of refugees to the union campaign to Change the Rules. But it is the only kind of action that can avert disaster.

SENDING IN THE ARMY HOW LABOR BROKE THE 1949 COAL STRIKE

Even in its supposed golden age, a Labor government was prepared to use all the tools at its disposal to wage war on unionism and break a strike, writes **David Glanz**

EVEN TODAY, Prime Minister Ben Chifley remains a totemic figure within the Labor Party. It was he who coined the inspirational Labor slogan, the Light on the Hill, pointing the way to a better society.

He had taken part in the NSW general strike of 1917 as a train driver.

Yet in 1949 he was responsible for one of the greatest betrayals of Labor in government—sending in the army to scab on a coal miners’ strike in NSW.

The years immediately following the Second World War were pregnant with radical possibilities.

Worldwide, millions had died, tens of millions more were wounded or displaced. Europe was in tatters. Workers on the home front had been cajoled or coerced into heroic feats of production.

They had also suffered enormous privations in peacetime, in the Depression that preceded the conflict.

Australia was no exception. Unemployment peaked at about 30 per cent in the 1930s. Some 40,000 Australians died in the war and those at home were made to sacrifice, through rationing of essential goods and inflation.

The mood in 1945 was that it was time for workers to get their reward.

The first to gain from this was Labor under Ben Chifley, returned with 49.7 per cent of the first preference vote in the 1946 election—one of its best ever results. It held 33 of 36 senate seats.

But workers quickly found that improvements would still have to be fought for.

Chifley opposed calls for wage increases to compensate for wartime sacrifice. Unionists responded with strike action—four million days in 1945-46 alone—and won substantial gains.

Labor’s obstruction continued



Above: Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley

over the move to a 40-hour week. Again it was mass action that tipped the balance. The Arbitration Court, in granting the claim from January 1948, declared:

“This working class claim has been and is the basis of industrial dispute and unrest ... No realist for a minute thinks that a rejection by the Court in these cases would bring about industrial harmony and would abate for an instant the demand for the shorter week.”

The 40-hour week raised the question of a five-day week with penalty rates for weekend working. Railway workers led the charge in February 1948.

Once again they faced resistance from Labor. Queensland premier Hanlon banned picketing. Police

baton-charged a demonstration, injuring several people.

Communist Party of Australia

Central to this union struggle was the Communist Party, which emerged from the war (in which Russia had been an ally of the West) at the peak of its success.

It had 23,000 members, an MP in the Queensland parliament, control of some local councils and, crucially, the support of between 25 and 40 per cent of unionists.

By 1948, many of its middle-class, wartime recruits had fallen away. But the party still had some 300 top-level trade union officials and control of key blue-collar unions.

In 1949, the CP leadership of the Miners Federation decided to launch a three-pronged claim, for a 35-hour week, long service leave and a 30-shilling (\$3) a week pay rise.

Chifley blamed the CP for orchestrating the strike as part of a plot against the Labor government.

The truth was that the miners were overwhelmingly behind the strike. They had a proud and militant tradition to draw on. Many of the older miners well remembered the death of Norman Brown—shot by the police on the picket line at Rothbury in NSW in 1929.

They also remembered that 1929 had been a lock-out by the employers and that the state had lined up with the bosses.

As one miner put it in the *Newcastle Morning Herald* in July 1949: “I have no doubt that the conditions I enjoy today are the direct result of the struggle and hardships of the past ...

“We will continue to use our gifts in the only way we ever have found to get results—by struggle.”

Miners backed the claim and the call for a general strike by 7995 votes to 822. Their union paper, *Common*

Cause, reported that meetings were, “among the best in the Federation’s history ... with a higher attendance and better vote that those on the eve of the big 1940 general strike”.

It was the employers who used deliberately provocative tactics in the run-up to the strike.

They not only rejected the pay claim and the 35-hour week, but called on the Federation to make four significant concessions in return for a watered-down long service leave clause.

In June, the Federation was poised to call mass meetings for action. When the head of the Coal Industry Tribunal indicated that the union’s claim would be “generously” considered, the leadership postponed the meetings for a fortnight.

Far from accepting this olive branch, the employers announced that they would oppose long service leave outright.

It was this, much more than any “Communist plot” that tipped the balance towards striking.

The dispute was a turning point that shaped Australian politics for a generation.

On their side, the miners had the power that comes from stopping coal supplies in a society dependent on the stuff. Industry ground to a halt.

While the miners also enjoyed widespread solidarity, they found they were up against not just the employers, but the state.

Labor attacks

Labor launched a series of vicious attacks on the miners and their supporters. Immediately after the strike began they banned strike pay and solidarity donations—even making it illegal for shopkeepers to extend credit.

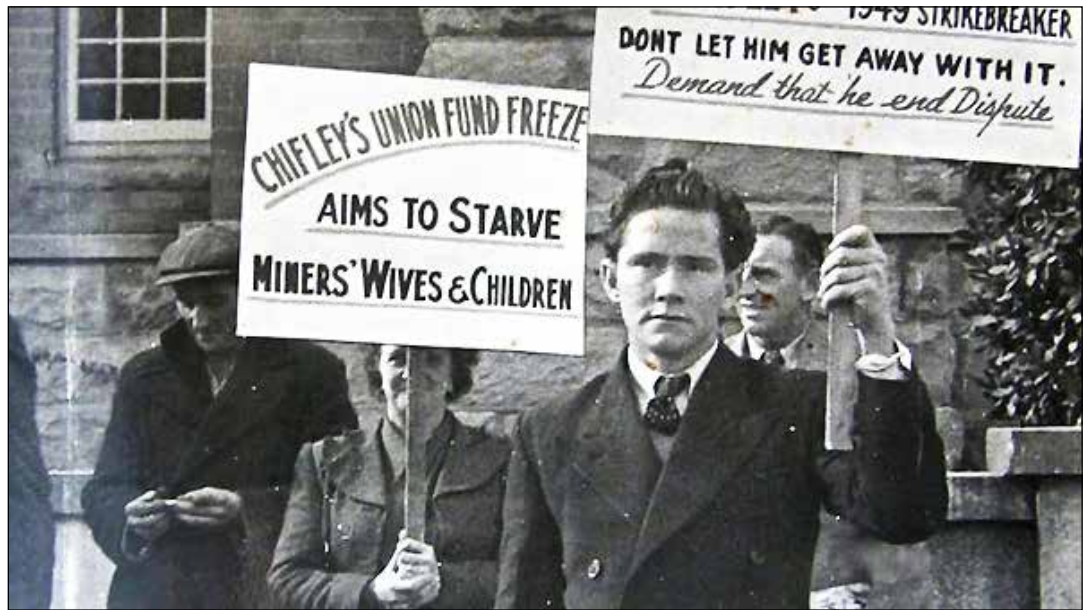
On 5 July, union officials were ordered, under threat of imprisonment, to hand over union funds to the industrial registrar.

They responded by withdrawing a large amount of money from the bank to avoid it being seized.

At the same time, the High Court rejected an appeal by the unions. On 6 July, union officials were arrested. Two days later, union and CP headquarters were raided.

In the last week of July, seven union officials were sentenced to 12 months’ jail and one to six months. The court also imposed fines on another five officials and three unions (the Miners Federation, Waterside Workers Federation and Federated Ironworkers Association).

Alongside this repression, Chifley



Above: Miners protesting Chifley’s anti-union measures

deployed some new tactics, such as major advertisements in the papers putting the government’s case, as well as a dirty old one—convincing the rail union to scab.

Labor MPs went into the coalfields and into major workplaces to argue with the miners and their supporters head on.

The tone deteriorated. The Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, told tens of thousands in the Sydney Domain that Communists should be put into concentration camps—just four years after the Holocaust.

He continued: “We will use all the resources of the country against them. We will use the army on them, the navy on them and the air force on them ...

“Only the stars are neutral in this fight. This is a fight between the Labor movement and the Labor Government on the one hand and the Communist ratbags on the other. It is a fight that the Government must win ...

“The army will be used in the open cuts. We will run up the Australian flag and it will cover Australian servicemen mining coal in Australia for the Australian people.”

By 1949, the Communist Party’s analysis was that a recession, even a Depression, was coming and that workers should grab what they could before the going got tougher.

The CP had also sharpened its anti-Labor rhetoric and was counterposing itself to the ALP in an increasingly shrill, ultra-left way. But there is no indication that it was planning for insurrection, as some have claimed.

After five weeks, Chifley sent in 2500 soldiers to work the mines. It was the first use in peacetime of the

army against a strike. Within another two weeks, the strike was broken.

Far from bringing down capitalism, the outcome of the strike weakened the Left for a generation. The CP went into what turned out to be a long, irreversible decline.

Labor lost the December 1949 election. The strike was not the only reason—Chifley’s pledge to retain rationing in order to help Britain was also deeply unpopular.

The result was not only an even more rabidly anti-Communist government under Menzies, but the deepening of anti-Communism within the ALP, leading to the 1955 split.

The story of the 1949 strike is more than a historical curiosity.

For many Labor supporters even today, the 1940s was the party’s golden age. Curtin presided over the establishment of the Commonwealth Housing Commission, brought in a new tax system and introduced the widows’ pension and unemployment and sickness benefits.

But when bosses’ profits came under attack—and coal was even more central to the economy then than it is now—the ALP turned to vilification, repression and the threat of outright violence.

The dynamic of the strike shows the depth of Labor’s loyalty to the system. It shows how Labor will fracture its base rather than threaten capitalism.

Seventy years on, it is inconceivable that a Labor minister would stand on a soap box and talk directly to striking workers.

But it is sadly all too believable, if the stability of the system demanded it, that today’s Labor would wield its biggest sticks against us.

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It was the first use in peacetime of the army against a strike

IRAN 1979: OPPORTUNITY SQUANDERED

Forty years ago protests in Iran rolled over into a revolution. **John Rose** tells a tale of huge potential brutally suppressed.

THE IRANIAN Revolution of February 1979 was one of the most startling events of the 20th century. This is true not just because of the almost total participation of the population in the active overthrow of the Shah, the dictatorial self-proclaimed monarch, but also because of the determination of the new regime to install what it described as an “Islamic Republic”.

Iran was, and remains, one of the world’s greatest oil producers. A popular Iranian nationalist leader, Mohammed Mossadeq, had been elected prime minister in 1951. He promptly nationalised Iran’s oil industry, which was 51 per cent owned and controlled by the British. In 1953 a British and American organised coup overthrew Mossadeq and placed the Shah in power to protect Western oil interests.

The Shah stabilised his rule with the notorious secret police torture and execution squad, SAVAK. At the same time, using Iran’s vast oil revenues, he launched his “White Revolution”—an ambitious industrialisation programme. As the Shah readily admitted, the White Revolution was designed “to pre-empt ‘Red Revolution’ from below”.

It backfired. It massively expanded a modern and combative working class. And it provoked two traditional and conservative bastions of Iranian society, the mosques and the bazaars. In 1963 the religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini made a name for himself by opposing the White Revolution, publicly denouncing the Shah’s dependency on the US and Israel and the ostentatious squandering of Iran’s resources. The Shah forced him into exile.

Enormous debt

Although Khomeini never admitted it, he owed an enormous debt to a left wing Islamist scholar, Ali Shariati.

Shariati died suddenly in 1977, almost certainly murdered by SAVAK. By then he was a household name in Iran. Ervand Abrahamian, one of the revolution’s most authoritative historians, argues that for Shariati,



Above: A mass protest of over 100,000 women in Teheran on International Women’s Day 1979

Shia Islam was a revolutionary creed resisting all forms of oppression — feudalism, capitalism, imperialism: “The Prophet Muhammad had been sent not just to establish a new religion but... a classless utopia.”

When the street demonstrations against the Shah erupted in late 1977, Shariati’s influence on the slogans of Khomeini and his supporters was unmistakable: “Islam belongs to the oppressed, not to the oppressors”, “Islam represents the slum-dwellers, not the palace-dwellers”, “The poor die for the revolution, the rich plot against the revolution”, “We are for Islam, not for capitalism and feudalism”, “Islam will eliminate class differences.”

In October 1978, the street demonstrations turned into a massive strike movement, led by the oil workers. Strikes were closing down production on the oil fields and in the refineries, raising openly political demands.

The Shah was forced to negotiate and make major concessions. Within months he was forced to flee.

Millions took to the streets to greet Khomeini when he arrived home. But almost immediately he faced a potentially explosive development—workers’ shoras or councils.

What were the shoras? Iranian-American scholar Asef Bayat explains:

“The councils by their executive committees were directly elected and were subject to recall at any time by the members. The committees were accountable to general assemblies, and their members were not paid any extra salary for their positions on the committee. Almost all workers in a unit would attend meetings in which heated debates would take place on issues concerning the running of the workplace.

“Shoras had a dramatic effect on the way workers conceptualised society, authority, and their social position in the society at large...the workers were involved in a learning process. During the last 30 years, democratic institutions had been almost totally non-existent. The councils established a nascent democratic tradition and culture.”

Left wing political organisations began to root themselves in the shoras. The most important were the Tudeh Communist Party and the former guerrilla organisations—the secular Fedayeen, the left-wing Islamic Mujahideen, and the Maoist Peykar group. One Western news agency, Associated

Press, reported from the shora at the world's largest oil refinery, Abadan, in the Iranian province of Khuzestan. The oil workers demanded:

“Redistribution of income, an end to foreign control of industry and the right to reject management appointees... Although most workers claim to be devout Muslim followers of... Khomeini and disavow atheistic communism, they espouse political views very close to Marxism... Managers left over from the previous regime... avoid any decisions that might conflict... with the committee, who also have the power of arrest. It is unclear how many workers belong secretly to the illegal pro-Moscow Tudeh Communist Party or to the People's Fedayeen... Marxist pamphlets... appear regularly on company billboards and on walls in working class districts.”

Total control

At the Tabriz and Pars oil company refineries, shoras took almost total control of administration and production. The latter, near the city of Karaj, was Iran's only privately owned refinery. The shora took over the refinery itself, selling its products to pay wages and salaries. It co-ordinated the takeover with the production managers, establishing a “committee for the provisional administration of the refinery” consisting of shora members and two technicians.

The “National Oil Company of Iran: Karaj Refinery” was publicly declared. A reluctant government would quickly accede to nationalisation.

The shoras posed a potential challenge to Khomeini, but the obstacles were formidable, as Chris Harman explained in his important 1994 essay, “The Prophet and the Proletariat”. The shoras represented only a minority of workers because modern industry was so new. In the capital city Tehran in 1980, there were roughly 400,000 workers in large industrial enterprises. But nearly twice as many worked in small workshops, often operated by family members employing relatives and friends and linked both to the bazaars and the mosques.

In addition, former peasants had flooded into the cities, looking for work and forming shanty towns. Devoid of social support from the Shah's government, the mosques stepped in with much needed charitable interventions. Khomeini's base in these areas was assured.

This made the possibility of the shoras expanding their influence into the localities, along the lines of the early soviets in the 1917 Revolution

in Russia, much more difficult.

Outflanking the left

The left in the shoras might have made a difference if its influence had grown and it was able to formulate demands reaching out to the poor and unemployed. But the left was ill-prepared. The Tudeh Communist Party was compromised by its ties to the former Soviet Union which had a pact with the Shah. Khomeini's anti-imperialist sounding slogan, “Neither East nor West but Islam”, proved popular, outflanking the left.

The Fedayeen and the Mujahideen were inspired by Che Guevara's Guerrilla Warfare. They had recruited among students for armed struggle to overthrow the Shah.

When the mass movement stirred in the late 1970s, Khomeini's clerical cadre was better placed than the urban guerrillas. Not just the street demonstrations but the strikes were often organised from the mosques.

Nevertheless all the guerrilla groups attempted a turn to the mass movement. The Fedayeen launched a new journal *Kar (Labour)* in March 1979. It called for the working class to take political power and destroy capitalism. “If the shoras act correctly and organise those who are capable and knowledgeable, and actively interfere with political affairs, they can develop into people's organisations for running the politics of the country.”

Khomeini responded with the launch of the Islamic Republican Party and the Islamic Associations to defeat the left in the shoras. But it was events outside the shoras that would tip the balance in Khomeini's favour.

Central to this was the issue of women's rights. The new regime wanted to impose its own version of Islam on gender relations. The Family Protection Act, the Shah's minimal reform of women's rights, was suspended. Men were given exclusive right to divorce and permitted to take four permanent and an unlimited number of temporary wives. Women judges were barred. Women conscripted into the army were dismissed. The hijab was to be made compulsory.

On 8 March 1979 an International Women's Day demonstration was planned. The Fedayeen failed to support it. The day was a resounding success, involving hundreds of thousands of women throughout the country. Mob attacks in Tehran with the slogan, “Either hijab or smack on your head”, failed to break their resolve.

The new regime declared a “misunderstanding”. Women should be

At the Tabriz and Pars oil company refineries, shoras took almost total control of administration and production

“guided” not forced to wear the hijab. The women's movement had made a dent in Khomeini's plans.

The left now needed a generalised offensive on women's rights, involving the majority of poorer working class religious women, for whom wearing the hijab was taken for granted. Alas, the left and the Fedayeen in particular wavered then abandoned its support for the movement.

Meanwhile Khomeini pushed hard for a constitution for the new Islamic Republic. But would it be a democracy, as favoured by the nationalists, or a theocracy, with ultimate political power with the Islamic “Supreme Leader”?

The final constitution delivered dictatorial powers for the Islamic leader and his Assembly of Experts, but some democratic constraints exercised by the Majles, constituent assembly. There were promises for a massive reduction in inequality and widespread public ownership of industry. Nevertheless the Supreme Leader had the final say.

There was no certainty that Khomeini would win the referendum on the draft constitution—especially if the left had joined moderate Islamists to oppose it. But this period coincided with the “anti-imperialist” occupation of the US embassy, and the ensuing 444-day US hostage crisis. It redirected people's anger and shattered the left.

Maryam Poya takes up the story: “He was able to split the left completely. All the problems arising in the factories, among women, and among the national minorities, like the Kurds, and who had already taken up arms against the new regime, were due to US imperialism.”

The Tudeh Party fell in with Khomeini's argument. The Fedayeen split, with the majority later backing the Tudeh's line. Other left organisations were similarly disoriented. So the left didn't campaign over Khomeini's new constitution. But the paralysis was by no means total. Maryam Poya reported from the industrial northern city of Tabriz, with an impressive network of left-led shoras: “Supporters of Ayatollah Shariatmadari, a leader of the liberal clergy, organised a general strike and mass demonstration against Khomeini's Islamic constitution.”

This was a lightning flash of an alternative—the left in a shoras movement working with progressive Islamists, a re-energised revolutionary mass movement. Alas, it was not to be. The Tabriz revolt was brutally suppressed. The Iran-Iraq war of September 1980 would consolidate Khomeini's control.

Abridged from Socialist Review UK



DESPERATE MORRISON PLAYS XMAS ISLAND CARD

By Ian Rintoul

THE PASSING of the Medivac Bill has driven the government into a frenzy of desperation and hate-mongering. Scott Morrison announced the re-opening of Christmas Island and declared himself to be “a brick wall”. But he knows that the Medivac Bill has punched a hole in the wall of offshore detention.

Along with the re-opening of Christmas Island has gone the ugliest display of vilification of asylum seekers yet seen as Morrison presses the panic button to try and win the looming election.

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton told 2GB Australians could be thrown off medical waiting lists and “lose their homes” if refugees were transferred to Australian from Manus and Nauru for treatment.

Morrison repeated the lies on Christmas Island saying, “If they are in an operating theatre; that is an operating theatre someone else could be in.” Dutton also warned darkly that medivac refugees could “go on to become Australian citizens”, as if that was a threat.

And we got the usual baseless scaremongering, with the government alleging that murderers, paedophiles, and suspected terrorists would be among those transferred under the Medivac bill.

The vicious outpouring from Morrison and Dutton has been a graphic reminder of why we need to get rid of the Liberals. Their racism and scape-

goating runs deep and casts a long shadow over Australian society.

All the indications are that Morrison’s hatemongering is not playing well. A GetUp poll showed 60 per cent of voters support the Medivac Bill. Opinion polls published since the Morrison’s scare campaign are still running strongly against the Coalition.

Labor has dismissed Morrison’s re-opening of Christmas Island, with Shorten calling it “a political stunt”.

But the movement can’t be complacent. The threat of Christmas Island is real. Its re-opening has already caused some refugees to rethink their medical transfer if it means being locked up on Christmas Island, even if legal action might force the government to shift them to the mainland. The movement will have to oppose any use of Christmas Island.

Since the Bill, transfers from Manus and Nauru have slowed down rather than speeding up. That fact reinforces the reality that legal action won’t end offshore detention. While the Medivac Bill is a blow against offshore detention, it will not end it.

Concessions

There have once again been calls from the Robert Manne (along with Tim Costello, John Menadue, and Frank Brennan) for the refugee movement to accept boat turnbacks and offshore detention as a trade-off for having those marooned on Manus and Nauru transferred to Australia or other third countries.

To accept that would give the green light for a Shorten Labor

Above: Scott Morrison during his election stunt on Christmas Island

government to maintain offshore detention, and to give up the movement’s demand to “Bring Them Here.” Shorten has said that a Labor government will get everyone off Manus and Nauru. But he has not said how a Labor government will make that happen. All Shorten has is New Zealand’s offer to take 150 refugees and the US deal, which will leave hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees on Manus and Nauru.

Morrison simply cannot believe that the refugee-bashing formula that the Liberals have relied on for the last 20 years is not working for them. We can expect more hysteria, more vitriol and more scapegoating as the Liberals desperately hope that more xenophobia will keep them in office.

In 2016, Manne wrote that, “the supporters of asylum seekers need to accept there is no asylum seeker policy with any chance of political acceptance that does not involve the cruelty of turnback and compromise regarding refugees and universal human rights.”

That was not true then. It is even less true now. Things have changed... the years of protest and the mobilisations to get the kids off Nauru has created another tipping point in the campaign. Far from being a time to surrender to offshore detention, the break in bi-partisan support represented by the Medivac Bill is a very real opening to re-double the demand, on Morrison, but more emphatically directed at an incoming Labor government, to end the cruelty, close Manus and Nauru and bring them here.

Opinion polls published since the Morrison’s scare campaign are still running strongly against the Coalition