Solidarity

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NO TO RACISM, CLIMATE FAILURE AND RULE FOR THE RICH

KICK THE LIBERALS OUT

UNIONS

Chemist Warehouse wins on pay and casualisation

ALGERIA

Millions-strong protests topple dictator

LABOR

Lessons from the last Labor government

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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.

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Things they say

I don't have to believe whether it's right or not. I can just tell you that we lost a seat over it—that's a fact.
Barnaby Joyce on whether his claims that environmental polices around the Murray-Darling and land clearing were hurting the bush were true

Spend more time in Tamworth and less time on TV.
Liberal MP for North Sydney Trent Zimmerman to Barnaby Joyce

Extraordinary personal triumph.
Alan Jones, Sydney shockjock and One Nation donor on the racist Mark Latham winning a seat for One Nation in the NSW state election.

Frydenberg...looked ridiculous claiming that 'we are back in the black' this financial year when we clearly are still in deficit...
John Hewson, former Liberal Party leader

We are going to stand by our tradies and we are going to save their utes.
Michaelia Cash, Liberal Minister for Small and Family Business, Skills and Vocational Education, gets emotional about electric cars

If you want to climb that; it's very, very hard to climb and it's pretty sharp up on top too. If you want to climb that, you deserve whatever you can get ... But, it's a great wall. I think it looks fantastic. It's very see through…
Donald Trump, inspecting 3.5 kilometres of wall on the Mexican border

If nothing else, psychologically you feel you are hedged; if one country goes communist you've still got the other one.
Australia's richest person, billionaire Anthony Pratt, explains why he has business operations in both Australia and the US.

The minute you betray my trust, I will destroy the cockroaches that live in your village for a thousand years.
Glenn Druery, the preference whisperer, upset about Family First stopping his monthly payments

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INSIDE THE YTEM

Workers facing $42,00 fines for attending rally

THE ANTI-UNION Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) has filed charges against 53 workers in Melbourne for joining a Change the Rules rally last year. The workers, AWU members at Liberty OneSteel, face individual $42,000 fines for taking unlawful strike action.

After they stopped work to attend the union rally on 30 October, their employer retaliated against workers. Union members were, "bullied by management, dragged into meetings and having their employment threatened", union officials reported. The workers staged an additional two day strike in protest at management's actions.

The legal action was filed in the lead up to the 10 April ACTU rally in Melbourne—in another effort to intimidate union members. The targeting of manufacturing workers under the special laws for the construction industry is a further escalation in the ABCC's anti-union offensive.

In April the full Federal Court also imposed a record $1.7 million fine against the construction union over a strike at Barangaroo in Sydney in 2014. The action was in response to a union delegates' sacking.

ASIO entrapped teenager, lawyer says

A 24-YEAR-OLD Sydney man was pushed into trying to travel to Syria by an undercover intelligence operative, his lawyer has told court. Moudasser Taleb was a socially isolated teenager who spent his time playing war games on Play Station and looking after his mother, who had multiple sclerosis, QC Michael Finnane has argued.

"At no stage does my client say he wants to go and fight anyone," he said.

"At no stage does he say he wants to kill anyone, nor does he say he wants to overthrow any government."

Moudasser is charged with preparing to travel to Syria to fight with a terrorist organisation. Yet when the intelligence operative, posing as a member of Islamic State, asked what he would do if he was turned around at the airport, he replied, "I can just look after my mum."

Impunity for guards in NT juvenile detention

SHOCKING IMAGES of children in spit hoods shackled to chairs emerged from youth detention in the NT in 2016. But now the media spotlight has moved away, the abusers are back off the leash. The subsequent Royal Commission uncovered what is said was, "regular, repeated and distressing mistreatment in detention" by prison guards.

Yet the NT is now set to pass new laws giving guards in youth detention greater powers to restrain, isolate and use force against children. The laws will also cover guards for actions already committed.

The Law Society Northern Territory said it was "deeply concerned", describing it as, "bewildering why these amendments have had to be made on an urgent basis and to apply retrospectively". The Don Dale youth detention facility will now also remain open—completely disregarding the Royal Commission's recommendation it be closed.

The Royal Commission, launched by Malcolm Turnbull after a *Four Corners* expose, cost an estimated $70 million.

An ABC investigation in early April has also revealed that NT Legal Aid has stopped sending lawyers to the 30 courts outside of Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek due to budget problems. Indigenous children as young as 11 have gone unrepresented on serious charges including robbery and assault. Last year it was exposed that the entire juvenile prison population of the NT was indigenous.

NSW cops make millions on private events

NSW POLICE made almost $13 million in seven months hiring out officers to private events, an SBS investigation has found.

Some music festivals and other events are required to pay police as a condition for holding their events. Eric Lamir-Pyke, whose company runs the Bohemian Beatfreaks festival, said police demanded $200,000 to provide officers for the three day event, after withdrawing an earlier attempt to stop the event. They were previously quoted $16,000, in line with costs in previous years.

He said, "it's obvious that it's a tactic to shut the event down". The increased cost of policing forced both Psyfari and Mountain Sounds Festival to cancel their events earlier this year. Last year NSW police made $21.5 million from private events, compared to just $8.5 million in the 2012-13 financial year.

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

Netanyahu to annex West Bank settlements

AS *SOLIDARITY* went to press, Benjamin Netanyahu looked to have hung onto his position as Prime Minister in the Israeli election.

Days before the poll, he announced plans to annex Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, saying, "we will move to the next stage". This would violate international law, which does not allow the annexation of territory seized through war. Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967.

The territory was supposed to be part of the basis for an eventual Palestinian state. But it is now clear that Israel has completely abandoned any pretence of continuing a "peace process" with the Palestinians. Since peace negotiations began in 1993, the number of Israeli settlers in the West bank has increased from 100,000 to 450,000 in around 130 settlements.

Settlements have increased dramatically since Donald Trump came to power. During the election campaign Trump announced US support for the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights—seized from Syria in 1967. This breaks with 50 years of US foreign policy.

Israel is becoming even more expansionist and aggressive. More than 240 Palestinians have been killed at protests in Gaza over the past year, and over 27,000 injured. Another four were killed at a protest in March.

$8 million for six days' work on Manus

TOLL HOLDINGS was paid $8.1 million for six days' work on Manus Island in 2017.

Their contract for temporary housing, after the old detention centre was closed, was torn up after the PNG government decided -permanent accommodation was needed.

EDITORIAL

Drive Morrison out and organise for real change

FANTASTIC! TENS of thousands of angry unionists took to the streets for Melbourne's Change the Rules rally on 10 April to change the government. Between now and 18 May we need more mass stopwork rallies and demonstrations to finally kick out the Coalition government on the best possible terms.

The national refugee rallies on 14 April and the 1 May union rally in Sydney are the next steps to galvanise the anti-Liberal anger and set the political agenda for real change.

Scott Morrison's budget was a last desperate effort to buy back support. But the budget was more of the same with Morrison shovelling massive tax cuts to the wealthy. When fully implemented, 54 per cent of the benefits go to the top 20 per cent of income earners, according to the Australia Institute. John Howard tried bribing the electorate with tax cuts in 2007—and he ended up humiliated, losing his own seat.

The Liberals have spent six years ruling for the rich. Their first budget, in 2014 under Tony Abbott, revealed their agenda of massive cuts to health and education spending, universities and the dole.

While much of this was blocked in the Senate, the cuts to health and education have never been fully reversed. The Liberals imposed $2.2 billion cuts to universities in late 2017, and have forced students to repay HECS loans at a lower income threshold.

The Coalition fought to protect the banks from a Royal Commission—until their own MPs were set to the cross the floor to support it.

The Liberals have also imposed a vicious anti-union agenda, reintroducing the ABCC construction police and imposing bigger fines on unions for breaching the anti-strike laws.

They have consistently used racism and Islamophobia in their effort to win popular support, imposing brutal anti-refugee policies through a naval blockade against refugee boats and the torture of asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru for almost six years.

As the election campaign begins, the Coalition are desperately thrashing around. They are even claiming that Labor's policy on electric cars will mean the end of four-wheel drives, tradies utes and, wait-for-it, the weekend.

Labor's policy is simply a target for 50 per cent of new car sales to be electric vehicles by 2030. Modelling for the Clean Energy Finance Corporation shows that electric vehicles are likely to make up 29 per cent of sales by 2030 even if the government does nothing.

Their last-minute tick for the Adani coal mine is just the latest confirmation that the Liberals are a party of climate deniers.

Above: Tens of thousands hit the streets of Melbourne on 10 April to Change the Rules and Change the Government Photo: Victorian Trades Hall

The Liberals have spent six years ruling for the rich

Scare campaign

The Coalition's other big scare is that Labor is going to raise taxes. But, as usual, the Liberals are simply defending the wealthy top end of town.

Shorten has committed to reducing negative gearing on extra houses and dividend imputation, both of which will hit wealthy shareholders, raising a modest $9.5 billion a year averaged over ten years.

By maintaining current tax rates on corporations and the rich, Labor has a significant war chest. Labor has promised to boost spending on schools, TAFE and hospitals—with its plan to make cancer treatment free and cancelling the fees for 100,000 TAFE courses announced in Shorten's budget reply.

However, his reply speech also contained a warning of Labor's absolute commitment to play by capitalism's rules, as he promised, "stronger surpluses, paying down national debt faster" and guaranteeing an increase to put, "defence spending at 2 per cent of GDP". But Labor will not commit to increasing Newstart or single parent payments.

The Greens have been left floundering by Labor's tack to the left. Their inability to put working class demands that the left could fight around—such as the right to strike and industry bargaining—at the centre of their campaign means many unionists are likely to vote Labor.

But The Greens' policies around climate change and refugee rights are clearly to the left of Labor. To get the Liberals out, Solidarity supports voting 1 Greens, 2 Labor.

But what will be crucial is what happens after the election. On climate change, refugees, Newstart, the right to strike, it will be strength of the unions and social movements to keep fighting that will determine if there is going to be real change.

The Palm Sunday refugee rallies will be both a chance to march against the Liberals and to demonstrate that the movement will keep campaigning until every single refugee and asylum seeker comes off Manus and Nauru.

To stop climate change, end inequality, and to change the rules for workers and refugees, we need more than a change of government. We need to fight to change the system. Join us to help build the struggle for a society that produces for need, not greed.

Rich reap the real benefits in Morrison's election handouts

By James Supple

Above: Jokers Scott Morrison and Treasurer Josh Frydenburg

THE TAX cuts at the centre of Morrison's budget were a transparent effort to buy votes.

They are a rehashed version of the tax cuts the government announced last year. It has simply increased the modest amounts already slated to be delivered in July, handing up to $1080 to anyone earning between $48,000 and $90,000.

But the bulk of the Liberals' tax cuts don't start kicking in until 2024—beyond the election after this one. They would eventually impose a flat tax structure that would see an executive on $195,000 pay the same marginal rate of tax as a low paid worker on $45,000. The bulk of the benefits go to wealthy Liberal voters on big incomes—in another handout to the rich.

Labor called their bluff by opting to increase tax cuts for low income earners on under $40,000, and opposed the Liberals' broader tax plan for the rich.

The Coalition are also throwing money at local infrastructure projects they claim will reduce congestion in cities—all so they can make plenty of funding announcements in marginal seats during the election campaign. All up another $42 billion is going to infrastructure spending over four years.

Failure on climate and disability

Treasurer Josh Frydenburg went out of his way to talk up how fair the government was being, including funding for mental health, pre-schools and medicines.

But the budget did nothing to seriously address climate change—there is just the reheated Tony Abbott-era Emissions Reduction Fund. And the budget revealed that the Liberals will provide only a pathetic $189 million for it over the next four years.

This has further exposed their main mechanism to deal with climate change as a farce.

There was also $129 million to extend the punitive cashless debit card that is used to control the money of people on welfare, overwhelmingly in Aboriginal communities. And the $185 million spent to open Christmas Island detention centre just so Scott Morrison could stage a press conference.

And the government has taken $1.6 billion from the NDIS, saying it hasn't been spent due to slower than expected uptake of disability support plans.

Associate Professor Bob Davis from the College of GPs, said the underspend was the result of, "delays in the rollout of plans, the bureaucratic maze that even the most capable of carers or people with disability struggle to get through, and the difficulties that people with plans have in accessing services that are not there."

Yet instead of spending the money to help fix the scheme the government has put it towards its budget bottom line.

The Liberals will provide only a pathetic $189 million for emission reduction over four years

Economy

In an effort to claim the high ground on economic management, the Coalition also boasted about getting the budget back into surplus. They haven't actually delivered one, but say it should arrive next year—based on projections.

For its part, Labor wants to compete about who has, "the more fiscally prudent offering", as Shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen put it, promising larger surpluses than the Liberals. This carries the danger of cuts if the economy gets worse.

The Liberals' election campaign is based on the claim that everyone will benefit from a strong economy—which they say they can deliver.

This only proves how out of touch they are. Thanks to the Liberals, most of the benefits of economic growth are going to big business, not to workers. Average wages have been growing at barely above the inflation rate—meaning many workers are going backwards. Since mid-2016 wages have risen just 8 per cent but profits went up by 43 per cent.

So it's not surprise that, even while polls say the budget in general was well received, the three polls run by Newspoll, Essential and Ipsos all show the Coalition continues to trail Labor at least 48 per cent to 52. That's enough for a crushing election defeat.

Labor leader Bill Shorten has tried to tap the concern about pay by declaring the election a "referendum on wages".

Labor would instruct the Fair Work Commission to determine what a "living wage" should be, and then recommend how this could be phased in to increase the minimum wage. But it will be allowed to take into account, "the capacity of businesses to pay, and the potential impact on employment, inflation and the broader economy". So don't hold your breath.

Labor is also committed to overturning the cuts to penalty rates and a number of other industrial relations changes. But workers at Chemist Warehouse have shown how it's possible to win big gains on pay and to reverse casualisation—staging a 16 day strike.

The best thing Labor could do to back wage rises would be to unshackle the unions through giving us the right to strike and to pursue industry wide bargaining.

The fight for that will have to continue beyond the election.

Chemist Warehouse strike—stunning win on pay and casualisation

By Chris Breen

STRIKING CHEMIST Warehouse workers have had a stunning victory, winning large pay rises and permanent jobs for many workers.

The strike has also strengthened the existing union campaign against sexual harassment and bullying in the Chemist Warehouse Distribution centres.

Up to 800 workers stayed out on strike for 16 days at the three Chemist Warehouse distribution centres at Somerton and Preston in Melbourne and Eagle Farm in Brisbane. They have won an immediate 8.75 per cent pay rise, as part of a total pay increase of between 18.75 and 22.5 per cent over four years, and improved redundancy pay.

Husain Alqatari, a National Union of Workers (NUW) delegate at Chemist Warehouse's Preston distribution centre in Melbourne, told *Solidarity* the workers had demanded the, "standard wages in the industry". Previously they were "paid 25 per cent lower than [across] the industry", he said. Full-time workers received as little as $24 an hour.

The other major issue was, "secure jobs", Husain said, "because Chemist warehouse, a giant company, is 80 percent casualised. In this shed there's 50 permanent and around 250 to 350 casuals, some others have 90 full-timers and 400 casuals."

The company had created a toxic culture with casual workers left waiting for text messages to find out if they were working the next day.

The strike showed how to fight casualisation, with permanent workers on the picket lines fighting alongside casuals for the rights of their fellow workers employed via labour hire companies.

All labour hire workers who joined the strike will now receive permanent jobs, and any labour hire worker employed for six months will be converted to a permanent position. Previously the company had insisted, "labour hire are not our workers and we're not going to give them secure jobs", Husain said.

The open ended strike and picket lines to prevent stock moving out resulted in shelves at Chemist Warehouse stores across Melbourne running empty, pressuring the company to concede.

Above: Chemist Warehouse workers on the picketline

The strike showed how to fight casualisation, with permanent workers fighting alongside casuals

This is the kind of action that can bring an end to stagnant wage rises and push up pay.

"The owner has just bought a big mansion in Toorak worth $16 million and [co-founders Jack Gance and Mario Verrocchi's] wealth is $1.6 billion combined", Husain told *Solidarity*. "You see their stores everywhere, and the company says they're growing, opening more stores and stores in New Zealand.

"It's a very profitable company—everyone gets sick and needs to go to the pharmacy. So the workers here deserve secure jobs and permanent jobs."

Bullying and harassment

Workers have also experienced serious problems with sexual harassment.

"Management sexually harass casual workers and permanent workers—[saying] for example if you want more shifts, sleep with me", Husain explained.

"The company said it was inappropriate behaviour and forced one manager to resign, but only because union members got together and fought back.

"The company was not taking it seriously. They think they can cover it up, saying it was inappropriate behaviour and sending the person to a course.

"The only solution was to take the issue to the union. After that people saw they have to escalate it to the union to get an outcome."

Husain explained that ending sexual harassment was an important union issue for both women and men, "A lot of the men there were ready to fight for a safe work environment for women."

The strike has changed the atmosphere at work, and compulsory sexual harassment training for managers is part of the settlement.

Workers faced a widespread culture of bullying and intimidation.

"The company continuously threatens people", Husain said. "They have especially bullied union members and put them under pressure so that if you're in the union, you're going to do the hardest jobs and union members get moved from this site to other sites."

But sticking together and fighting has won union rights, including paid union meetings, delegate time, and union training in the agreement for the first time.

The NUW is now set to take on logistics company DHL, with a planned strike involving 500 workers who earn as little as $23.30 an hour.

The NUW's industrial campaign has highlighted the problems of low pay for warehouse workers.

Changing the rules to allow industry wide strike action could beat low pay across the entire sector. Industry wide bargaining is one of the demands of the ACTU's Change the Rules campaign.

Labor has yet to commit to it, but the strike at Chemist Warehouse shows how workers can win.

Jacinda Ardern has pandered to racism too, says New Zealand activist

Joe Carolan, an activist with Love Aotearoa Hate Racism and member of Socialist Aotearoa, spoke about racism in New Zealand in the aftermath of the Christchurch massacre

AFTER THE horror in Christchurch establishment speakers, from the National Party and the Labour Party, put forward that we're a wonderful multicultural country here, and that this was something that came from outside, that this was not us.

Amongst Maori people, Muslim people and migrant workers, something about that didn't gel.

This country has a racist past, it was built on colonial occupation. Maori, who are 15 per cent of the population, are over 50 per cent of the prison population. Migrant workers are working in slavery here in every liquor store in Auckland, for $7 an hour. And because of this attack more and more stories are coming out from Muslim communities about the everyday Islamophobic attacks they've experienced, such as how they're been insulted on public transport.

There's not a party here, apart from the Greens, who are not guilty of supporting the wars in the Middle East that led to Islamophobia from the state and the demonisation of Muslim in the media.

In the recent election a number of parties said we need to slow down immigration, because it has led to pressure on transport and housing. This has led to rhetoric that "we need to house our own".

The Labour Party named Chinese names of people who had bought new houses, implying that the Chinese were coming here and buying up all the houses.

Many people think of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern as very progressive. But her party is in coalition with a nationalist party called New Zealand First who have used open Islamophobia and racism about migrants. Winston Peters, who's our Deputy Prime Minister, leads this party and gets between 5-10 per cent of the vote.

In 2017 Winston Peters told the Islamic communities and leaders to "clean house". He was quoted as saying, "For New Zealand, we must avoid the same politically correct trap that has allowed communities apart to form… to accommodate the cultural practices and traditions of others."

Above: Joe Carolan at an anti-racism rally in Auckland

The Labour Party are in coalition with this party. A lot of people who voted for New Zealand First thought this politician was going to start evicting migrants and refugees and Muslims from their government houses.

"Jacinda Ardern is in coalition with New Zealand First who have used open Islamophobia"

Morrison's migration policy is racist scapegoating

JUST DAYS after the Christchurch killings, Scott Morrison was back on the racist dogwhistle, announcing a cut to immigration.

Morrison blamed immigration for congestion in Sydney and Melbourne and said his plan was about, "easing population pressures in our biggest cities". This is simply racist scapegoating. The real problem is the chronic government underspending on infrastructure and poor city design.

Governments have cut spending and relied on privatisation to fund new infrastructure. The NSW Liberals are funding their new projects through the selloff of the power industry, ferries, buses and other assets. This means worse services as a result of privatisation.

As we saw with the shoddy construction exposed on Sydney's Opal Tower just before Christmas, planning laws have been hijacked by corporate profiteers.

And there has been chronic underspending on public transport, with only 35 per cent of homes in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney within 400 metres of adequate services, according to the Centre of Urban Research.

After a year of talking about the need to cut immigration levels, the government announced a cut in the permanent migration level to 160,000. This is hardly a radical change, given it accepted just 162,417 permanent migrants last year. But it is a reduction from the previous cap of 190,000. Morrison feared that doing any more could hit economic growth.

More migrants will also be forced to live in regional areas in order to remain here permanently—now for three years. This will apply to 23,000 people a year. Morrison says regional areas are crying out for workers, but the fact is most of the high-skilled jobs that migrants arrive to fill are concentrated in the major cities.

This follows a campaign by the hard right of the Liberal Party. A year ago Peter Dutton claimed Australia's cities were "overcrowded" and blamed immigration levels for "gridlocked traffic in the mornings" and the state of hospital services.

In November Tony Abbott repeated his attack on migration, saying it was putting, "downward pressure on wages, upward pressure on housing prices and adding to the crush on our roads and public transport".

It's time governments got serious about funding services instead of continually blaming scapegoats like migrants and refugees for their own failures.

Racist murder in Christchurch a product of Morrison and mainstream's Islamophobia

By Ian Rintoul and James Supple

THE SHOCKING murder of 50 Muslims at Friday prayers in Christchurch on 15 March is another horrific example of far right terrorism—also seen in recent years in Norway, Canada and the US. But the attack is a direct product of the Islamophobia that has been stirred up and promoted in the political mainstream by the likes of Scott Morrison, Peter Dutton and Tony Abbott.

It is the Coalition's official racism that has amplified the vicious anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideas of the likes of Queensland Senator Fraser Anning. Last year the Coalition even voted for Pauline Hanson's "it's ok to be white" motion in the Senate.

As the Islamophobia has been ramped up, attacks on mosques and Muslims have increased in Australia. Incidents like one in January where a mother and her young son were abused on public transport by a woman who told them "I hate Islam" are now common. Last November, a man armed with a golf club threatened worshippers in the Al-Azhar mosque in Sydney.

Brenton Tarrant, the Australian-born killer, issued a 73-page manifesto making it clear he was part of the online swamp of alt-right and neo-Nazi ideas. He listed Anders Breivik, the fascist who brutally shot 69 people in 2011 in Norway, as his "true inspiration". Both of them embraced an extreme Islamophobia, calling Muslims in Europe "invaders" and arguing for their expulsion. Tarrant believes Australia and New Zealand are also "white homelands", saying the Christchurch attack was designed to demonstrate "no-where in the world was safe..."

It has also emerged that Tarrant sent Facebook threats to anti-racists in the run up to an anti-refugee rally organised by the United Patriots Front in Melbourne in 2016.

All across the world, the far right is on the rise. Fascists have been elected to Germany's national parliament for the first time since the Second World War. Italy's racist Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has threatened to deport 500,000 migrants in a "mass cleansing street by street". And US President Donald Trump has tried to ban Muslims from entering the US, and has defended neo-Nazis as "good people".

Above: In Melbourne 2000 joined a protest against racism the day after the attack

But in the wake of the attack, tens of thousands of people in New Zealand attended vigils and stood in solidarity with the Muslim community. In Australia 2000 people attended a Stand Against Racism rally in Melbourne. Tens of thousands more cheered when "egg boy" Will Connolly egged Anning at his Melbourne press conference. A week after the killings, 3000 people marched in Auckland at a Love Aotearoa Hate Racism rally to say no to racism and Islamophobia.

Morrison's racist fearmongering

Following the tragedy, Prime Minister Scott Morrison condemned the attack as carried out by, "an extremist, right-wing violent terrorist", calling on the community to unite against the "real enemy… hatred and intolerance".

But Morrison and Dutton have doubled down on their anti-refugee and "war on terror" policies in the aftermath of the attack. Even in Morrison's interview with Waleed Aly, he insisted refugees were a threat and connected Muslims with Islamic State and national security. Morrison and Dutton have smeared refugees on Manus and Nauru as criminals and claimed Australians could be thrown out of hospital queues if refugees were brought here for medical treatment.

Morrison and Dutton have doubled down on their anti-refugee and 'war on terror' policies in the aftermath of the attack

Morrison has made a career out of stirring up racism and hate. While Shadow Minister for Immigration in 2010 he famously argued for the Liberals to campaign against Muslim immigration, in a disgraceful attempt to whip up racism and win votes.

As recently as November, following the attack in Melbourne's Bourke Street, Morrison was scaremongering about "radical, violent, extremist Islam", despite evidence that Shire Ali, who carried out the attack, had a history of mental illness. Morrison even blamed the Muslim community as a whole, and demanded that "more needs to happen" from Muslim leaders to tackle extremism.

For two decades, Morrison and other Western leaders have waged a "war on terror", which has cast suspicion on the Muslim community. The Australian government has been a key backer of the West's wars and bombing campaigns across the Middle East since 9/11 that have claimed hundreds of thousands of Muslim lives. At home, there have been draconian anti-terror laws and raids on Muslim homes.

We need a stronger stand from Labor. Too often, Labor has gone along with the Liberals' racism and fear-mongering. Labor leader Bill Shorten continues to support the offshore detention of refugees as well as refugee boat turnbacks.

The government's "official" racism has created the political environment that encourages the far right. The Palm Sunday rallies for refugees are a chance to hit the streets to say no to their racist fear-mongering.

Unions and Aboriginal people unite to save Deebing Creek

By Paddy Gibson

IN LATE January, Yuggera Ugarapul people and supporters began occupying the site of the old Deebing Creek Aboriginal mission in Ipswich, outside of Brisbane.

They are protesting against a proposed 925-lot housing estate planned by Frasers developers.

This development has long been contested by the Yuggera Ugarapul, who are recognised native title applicants, along with many other Aboriginal and community groups.

There are important sites and unmarked graves right across the proposed development area. The campaign is demanding the State Government buy back the land and return it to Aboriginal ownership.

Through February, the campaign had reached out to trade unions for support.

One attempt to bring bulldozers to start work was stopped by the CFMMEU after a few hours, while a court injunction appealing to heritage laws bought some more time.

Then on 7 March, Frasers mobilised scores of police to evict the small group of traditional owners watching the camp.

Karen Coghill was arrested and charged. But a swift mobilisation by the CFMMEU brought 50 unionists to the site.

Soon, large numbers of Aboriginal people and many other supporters swelled the crowd.

Yuggera Ugarapul woman Shale Thompson described the scene to the *Living the Dream* podcast:

"When I was thrown off the camp it was devastating. My sistergirl Karen got arrested. Then I looked down from our little hill and there were all of these unionists standing up to the police.

"In a minute they all showed up, ready to fight and rumble for what is sacred to us. They kept my spirit going, it was unreal.

"And then our people started coming in big numbers, it made it even more special".

The developers backed down and allowed the protestors to re-establish their camp for the struggle ahead.

This campaign shows the power of mobilising organised workers behind fights for Aboriginal rights.

Above: The protest camp at Deebing Creek near Brisbane

A swift mobilisation by the CFMMEU brought 50 unionists to the site

'Delegates from union sites across Brisbane jumped straight in their cars and came out'

AT THE centre of the action on 7 March was young Bundjalung carpenter and proud CFMMEU member Jesse Leach. Jesse was at the camp when the police arrived and climbed straight up a tree.

He stayed there from 10am until 5:30pm despite police blocking food or water, as supporters rallied around him. Jesse spoke to *Solidarity:*

Tell us about your background

I'm an apprentice carpenter. I started with a training company, but they were rorting me. They were getting $45 an hour for having me on, but I was only being paid $11.50. I wanted to leave. But the union delegate kept me involved, I left the training company for a job on a big union site.

I'm Bundjalung from NSW. I've learnt so much more about my culture through the union. I've met Elders, I've been involved in campaigns for First Nation rights.

I went to a union conference with other Indigenous construction workers in Cairns. I made a speech to the press there and said I believe that we are on sovereign country.

Before we start digging into anyone's land, we need to know whose land it is. We need to hear from the Elders. Since then we make sure in EBA agreements there needs to be a welcome to country before work starts. And we need to take a stand like at Deebing Creek if the Elders are not happy with development.

How did you get involved with Deebing Creek?

One of my union delegates sent me a big article about it just a week before my arrest. He contacted me about coming out to the camp on a Saturday afternoon. I took a BBQ out there. We set up tents, brought torches for the camp. Then on Wednesday, the union picked me up from work and took me back to the camp to help set up a fence.

When the police arrived, I was half way through building the fence. We had been expected a school group to visit the camp at that time.

I went straight up a tree, I was really drawn to it. Once I was up there, the Aunties were giving me background information on the tree, that it's a scar tree.

The CFMMEU stands hard for Deebing Creek and the First Nations people. That day, every site in Brisbane basically where there was a CFMMEU flag running, there was at least one delegate from there who jumped straight in their cars and came straight out.

They all came for the same reason I went up in the tree. Look at the bigger picture—it always was and always will be Aboriginal land. You can't just come over and bully the First Nations people. The union can't stand seeing someone being stood over, we will be there to help out.

How did Labor manage to lose the NSW election?

By James Supple

THE LIBERALS have held on to government in NSW, winning a narrow majority in parliament after Labor slumped following a disastrous final week of the campaign for Labor's Michael Daley.

The election was expected to be close, but Labor managed to win just two seats and saw its primary vote go slightly backwards.

But there is little solace for Scott Morrison in the result. The federal election looks likely to be decided in Queensland and Victoria where the Liberals are facing a rout. Polling has shown that even the blue ribbon Liberal seat of Goldstein in Melbourne in under threat.

And the dramatic loses for the National Party in NSW are a further headache for the Coalition.

There were swings of around 20 per cent against the Nationals in five seats across western NSW.

The Shooters, Farmers and Fishers Party took the seats of Barwon, Murray and Orange on the back of campaigns against the Nationals' failure to deliver local services and jobs.

These areas have been hit hard by the drought, as well as the failure of the Murray-Darling River plan which has seen the rivers dry up downstream, leaving towns in NSW reliant on unsafe bore water supplies.

The problems for the Nationals will lead to further divisions and infighting in the Coalition.

On the night of the NSW election Barnaby Joyce was already calling for "a different message in regional areas" and he has joined other Nationals in demanding a new coal power station in Queensland.

Above: Labor's Michael Daley was unable to cut through with a message of change

Why Labor failed

Labor in NSW remains tarred by the corruption that saw its vote savaged in 2011. Former minister Ian MacDonald was only released from prison in February.

NSW Labor's Michael Daley was elected leader just 134 days before the election following Luke Foley's dumping over a sexual assault scandal.

Although largely unknown, Daley was a Minister during the last Labor government and was hardly a sharp break from the past.

Labor in NSW remains tarred by the corruption that saw its vote savaged in 2011

Labor announced policies including more nurses and better nurse to patient ratios in hospitals, increased funding for TAFE and a 50 per cent renewable energy plan. Their call to fund schools and hospitals not stadiums cut through during the campaign, after Daley announced on air with shock-jock Alan Jones that he would sack him along with the rest of the SCG board.

But Labor was unable to create a compelling sense it offered an alternative. Daley's stumbles in the final TV debate over policy details hardly inspired confidence.

And Daley's racist claim that Asian migrants were "taking the jobs" of young Australians cost Labor dearly—however hypocritical it was to see the Liberals condemning racism.

Labor suffered swings against it in seats like Oatley and Kogarah, with large Chinese-Australian populations. And Daley was exposed as just another grubby politician.

Greens hold on

The Greens managed to hold their three lower house seats in Newtown, Balmain and Ballina, increasing their support there, despite a decline of around 1 per cent in their overall vote across the state.

David Shoebridge and Abigail Boyd both won seats in the upper house.

Former Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham, who quit the party to run as an independent after he was accused of sexual assault, had just 0.3 per cent of the upper house vote at the time of writing.

But One Nation won 6.4 per cent in the upper house, putting Mark Latham into parliament.

NSW now faces four more years of the Liberals' privatisation, wage caps in the public sector and hopeless policies on climate change. A more serious union fightback is going to be necessary.

On too many occasions, unions in NSW have failed to take the kind of serious industrial action necessary to stop the Liberals—for instance over bus privatisation and against the public sector pay cap.

The lead up to the Victorian election last November saw a massive union stopwork rally in Melbourne, building momentum to keep the Liberals out. But there was nothing like this in NSW.

A revived public sector union campaign is needed to stop the Liberals' attacks and force them out.

British parliament inept and paralysed in Brexit farce

By Feiyi Zhang

MICHAEL ROTH, Germany's Europe minister, recently called Brexit a "big shitshow".

The show continues with no end in sight after British Tory Prime Minister Theresa May failed at her third attempt to pass her Brexit plan through the British Parliament.

It's clear the government has no majority in parliament and is completely at sea over the issue. The British political system has been exposed as paralysed and inept.

The root of this crisis was the initial Brexit referendum vote in 2016 that delivered an outcome rejecting the effort of the British establishment to remain in the EU.

The referendum was one of the few times big business did not get their way. Companies in Britain overwhelmingly want to remain part of the EU.

But they have managed to push May into a Brexit plan designed to maintain British access to the EU market.

This guarantees profits for corporations. It would end "free movement" of people from the EU and put in doubt the rights of EU migrants currently living in the UK.

The Tories are usually the party of big business. Unfortunately for May, a large number of Tory MPs are believers in the fantasy that Brexit could see Britain re-claim its past power and economic strength and strike out more on its own independently of the EU.

Her motion lost by 286 votes to 344, a majority against of 58. Most Labour MPs, the conservative Democratic Unionist Party and dozens of Tories from her own party voted against it.

Then the farce deepened. After May's failure, parliament took control out of her hands in an effort to find another form of Brexit that had sufficient support.

This led to two efforts at "indicative votes" in parliament, to test whether there was any likelihood parliament could make a decision.

But parliament rejected all the options—from a no deal Brexit to a softer form of Brexit retaining a closer relationship with the EU.

The motion that received the most support was for a customs union with the EU. This would mean accepting the EU's trade rules, but would limit Britain's capacity to strike separate free trade deals outside it.

A close second was the option of a second referendum to seek public approval of whatever Brexit option parliament backs.

Above: British Prime Minister Theresa May has no majority in parliament, but is still trying to bumble in and finalise Brexit

Parliament has now rejected all the options

Labour's mistake

May has now entered talks with Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn in an effort to find a compromise. It is difficult to predict what will happen next.

Another delay to the deadline for Britain to leave the EU on April 12 is likely. This means Britain would be forced to hold EU elections on 23 May, delivering a gift to the far right who would run on the claim of a Brexit betrayal.

It is clear now that there is general disgust at the complete crisis of May, of the Tories and of British politics.

This crisis is a big missed opportunity for Corbyn, the Labour Party and the left.

It was a big mistake for Corbyn to back down on freedom of movement in the UK.

Corbyn has been tied to the Labour strategy of being a respectable parliamentary party. He has backed the two main big business demands for a customs union and full access to the EU market.

The core of the vote for Brexit was opposition to institutions of neoliberalism like the EU. It has overseen decades of cuts to public services and widespread privatisation.

Corbyn should put forward demands that pull working class support to Labour, such as opposition to the single market, nationalization and defence of NHS.

The left needs to both oppose the EU and argue to open the borders. This means fighting to open fortress Europe, where the outer border with the Mediterranean is becoming a mass grave for refugees.

Corbyn's backdown on the right of freedom of movement in the EU gives space to racists.

The danger was evident when the far-right and fascists mobilised outside parliament as May's motion was put to the vote.

They want to take advantage of the undemocratic farce of a second referendum and build their racist offensive against migrants.

As the Brexit crisis continues for the top of society, the working class and left need to mobilise around an alternative of no to the EU and neoliberalism, funding for social services and breaking the walls of Fortress Europe.

People power protests topple dictator in Algeria

By Ruby Wawn

Above: One of the enormous protests in Algeria

MASS PROTESTS in Algeria have forced 82-year-old dictator Abdelaziz Bouteflika to resign after 20 years in power. Since 22 February, protestors have taken to the streets every Friday to demand he not seek re-election for a fifth term.

Millions of protestors took to the streets again for the seventh week following Bouteflika's resignation, marking the largest mass movement in the country since the 1988 popular uprising.

Echoing the demands of the 2011 Arab Spring, hundreds of thousands marched in the capital Algiers and other cities across the country chanting "the people demand the downfall of the regime"—not just its figurehead.

"We must continue the popular movement in order to meet all of the Algerian people's the demands," protester Selim Sarar told the media. "We want the transitional period to be guided by the people, not the current government. If the current system shapes it, it will be like the movement never happened. The movement must go on."

Strikes

Teachers have shut down schools with a national teacher's strike taking place in mid-March to coincide with the meeting of Algeria's constitutional committee, which determines who is eligible to run in the election.

Industrial action has spread to other industries such as transport, energy and goods and services as well as textile workers who have been taking part in an indefinite strike since 27 February.

Socialist activists in Algeria have posted photos of workers occupying factories, bus garages and mobilising on the streets, raising demands for better pay and conditions as well as the right to organise trade unions.

For some young protestors, Bouteflika's resignation marks the first time in their lifetime they can imagine a new future. Since gaining independence from the French in 1962, Algeria has seen little change in political leadership.

Bouteflika has been mute and paralysed since a stroke in 2013 and since then he has not given a speech, interview or spoken a single word in public. In fact, as a political leader, Bouteflika has never given an interview to the media in his 20 years in office.

Protestors have now turned their attention to dismantling the system of power of high-ranking officials, the military and the ruling class behind the incapacitated president.

The ruling class moved to dump Bouteflika in order to maintain as much of the regime behind him as possible. Both the head of the military Ahmed Gaid Salah and the former prime minister Ahmed Ouyahia, who also since announced his resignation, called publicly for the president to resign.

However, the protests are demanding, "the army to hand power to the people". Under the slogan "No to the 3Bs", they are calling from the resignation of prime minister Moreddine Bedoui, president of the constitutional council Tayeb Belaiz and president of the senate Abdelkader Bensalah.

Industrial action has spread to industries such as transport, energy and textiles

Economic failure

The former foreign minister, Bouteflika came to power following the military defeat of an Islamist insurgency in the 1990s.

In the early years of his presidency, oil money flowed freely in Algeria, and along with it a generous social benefits scheme and a loans fund for young people.

But the success of the regime was predicated on a network of corruption as the ruling class grew their wealth off the backs of public money as well as an economy dependent on oil which makes up 97 per cent of exports.

The 2014 fall in oil prices hit Algeria hard, resulting in a dismantling of the welfare systems as well as cuts to subsidies for essential goods and services. Youth unemployment rose to 30 per cent in a country where one third of the country is aged under 30.

The strikes and protests have already spread to neighbouring Morocco where teachers are rallying to end the dictatorship, to Tunisia, the only country to become a democracy following the Arab Spring, where workers are on strike over wage demands, and Sudan, where thousands of people are calling for a revolution over the costs of living and calling for the President Omar Hassan al-Bashir to resign.

State news media in Algeria were originally banned from covering the growing protests, but have now begun reporting on them, under the headline "the street is not backing down".

But for the protests to have any lasting impact they must move beyond demanding democratic elections to more fundamental questions about how society is run. Otherwise the systems of power and privilege in Algeria will remain, even if the dictators do not.

Algeria's own history shows us this—the liberation of Algeria from French colonialism did little to liberate the working class and poor.

Extending the workers' strike movement into a challenge to the power of the rich holds the key to fundamental change in Algeria.

WINNING A 100 PER CENT RENEWABLE REVOLUTION

The transition to 100 per cent renewable energy could happen by 2030, writes **Chris Breen**, but will require far more ambition than either Labor, let alone the Liberals, will muster

As Australia faces record breaking heat, increasing fires and floods, and up to one million dead fish in the Murray-Darling basin, the need for serious emission reductions is undeniable.

Replacing aging coal-fired power stations with renewable energy, and a just transition for workers in fossil fuel industries, is an urgent task.

Yet Scott Morrison continues to do the bidding of the climate deniers in the Coalition.

His shortlist of energy projects the government is prepared to underwrite includes a coal power station at Vales Point in NSW. And he has agreed to spend $10 million examining whether the decommissioned coal plant at Collinsvale in north Queensland can be reopened.

The Labor Party wants to increase Australia's overall reduction target to 45 per cent by 2030. This may not be enough to do Australia's share in keeping warming to 2 degrees, let alone the 1.5 degrees that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says is the safe limit.

Reducing emissions from power generation is the easiest way to cut carbon pollution.

Around 16 per cent of Australia's electricity came from renewables in 2016-17. The amount has been increasing rapidly.

Labor has promised 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. This is far from ambitious.

A report last year from the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), responsible for administering the National Electricity Market, showed that renewable energy would reach almost 50 per cent by then without any climate policy at all.

This is because three large coal power plants must be replaced by 2030 anyway—and the cheapest replacement is now renewable energy.

Possible

Currently, there are 22 coal-fired power stations in Australia. To meet the IPCC's recommended targets, 12 would need to close before 2030, according to research from the Parliamentary Library in Canberra. Labor's target guarantees the closure of only three.

There needs to be a plan for the forced retirement of all existing coal and gas power plants.

A target of 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030 is both necessary and achievable, but will require planning and direct government investment.

When building new power plants, solar and wind power projects are now the cheapest option.

But the existing coal power plants, whose construction costs are already paid for, remain competitive.

As Mark Diesendorf from UNSW wrote in a detailed plan for the Australia Institute in November, it is well established that renewable energy can provide all of our power needs. Computer simulation modelling shows that wind and solar projects distributed across a wide area can provide most of our needs, because when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing in one area, power can be used from somewhere it is.

There is also "practical experience when 100 per cent renewable electricity is already being reached for short periods of time in Denmark, Germany and South Australia", he notes.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Energy Minister Angus Taylor claim we need "reliable" power that is "dispatchable" on demand, as an excuse to support coal.

Yet batteries and other storage systems allow renewables to provide power that is "dispatchable" at any time of day. This does, however, increase their cost.

There needs to be a plan for the forced retirement of all existing coal and gas power plants

Snow Hydro 2.0 would be one method of storing power from renewable energy, pumping water uphill for release to power hydro turbines. It is expected to cost at least $4 billion and will be 100 per cent owned by the federal government.

Another example is the $90 million Tesla battery in South Australia, subsidised to the tune of $50 million by the state government.

Reaching 100 per cent renewable energy would also require upgrades to the electricity transmission grid to connect new solar and wind projects. This would also include new transmission lines to allow power to be sent across the country to where it was needed. For instance AEMO points out in its Integrated System Plan, "SA is a net exporter of electricity and still has enormous untapped wind and solar resources." Yet it is currently has only one inter-connector, into Victoria.

What cost?

Eight years ago think tank Beyond Zero Emissions launched a plan for 100 per cent renewable energy in a decade, showing the concept was technically possible.

Much has changed since. Renewable technology has created at least 15,000 jobs, and costs have fallen dramatically.

Plans to get to 100 per cent renewable energy have sprung up like wind farms. Even AEMO produced a report into 100 per cent renewables in 2013, with one scenario investigating a relatively rapid transition by 2030.

There will be significant costs to replace ageing coal plants in any case, as after around 50 years they are too expensive to repair, so that 60 per cent of their generating capacity is due to go offline in the next 20 years.

A study from the ANU last year estimated, after accounting for grid upgrades and storage, that a fully renewable energy grid could provide power for $93 per megawatt hour. Another study from Winlab, a renewable energy company, said it could be as low as $70. This is not far above current wholesale energy prices which have fluctuated between $50 and $100 a megawatt hour in NSW, Victoria and Queensland over the last three years.

The costs of new energy infrastructure are currently met through our power bills. It is vital to ensure a rapid transition to 100 per cent renewables does not result in higher power prices. This would push up the cost of living for workers and the poor.

We saw with the carbon tax introduced in 2012 how the threat of higher power prices undermines support for climate action.

Above: Labor leader Bill Shorten wants 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030, but this requires almost no effort

Don't rely on the market—End privatisation

Labor has adopted the National Energy Guarantee developed by the Liberals under Malcolm Turnbull, which would force power companies to meet an emissions limit.

It would essentially rely on the market to install the new power generation needed, backed up by $10 billion over five years in new loans and investments through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and $5 billion in loans to upgrade Australia's transmission systems.

The obvious solution for a more rapid transition is for government to step in directly, just like it has with the NBN, and build renewable energy itself. This is not a new concept. All coal-fired power plants in Australia were originally built by government, because of the scale of investment required.

A good starting point would be for government to build the proposed solar thermal tower project in Port Augusta. Its recent collapse because of a lack of finance is a disaster. Coal workers fought for it, and it was one of the few coal communities where it was going to be possible to point to a real transition to new climate jobs. Where the market fails the government must step in.

If the federal government is spend money to subsidise renewable energy, it should take direct control of the investments, rather than hand control to private companies who will siphon off government money as profit.

Taking power back into public hands would also allow the government to cap power prices and stop increases driven by privatisation. Labor has promised to "end the power privatisation mess" but has no policy to achieve it. Labor is not promising to end privatisation.

The Greens have much more ambitious renewable energy plans than Labor, backing 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030 and calling for a national publicly owned energy retailer. But private retailers and suppliers would remain.

Instead of re-nationalising, they say their plan is intended "to increase competition in the National Electricity Market". In addition The Greens' support for carbon pricing is an obstacle to winning wider support for more serious climate action.

Planned transition

Frank Jotzo, Director of the Centre for Climate Economics and Policy at Australian National University argues that, "Without any guiding framework, coal power plants could close very suddenly. If a major piece of equipment fails and repair is uneconomic, then the plant is out, and operators may find it opportune to run the plant right until that point."

Sudden and unplanned shutdowns could devastate communities and lead to electricity blackouts.

A timetable for closure, as proposed by the Greens, would allow serious planning for a just transition, and retraining for workers on full pay. But existing coal workers and communities must be given job guarantees at current pay rates.

The ALP is promising the establishment of a Just Transition Authority, and to legislate for a "pooled redundancy" scheme. When a power station closes, other power stations in the region would have to offer voluntary redundancies to allow workers to transfer to jobs at plants that remain open.

But this is still a far cry from the thousands of new jobs that are needed. And the Just Transition Authority will only be given $8.5 million.

Despite the advances in renewable technology, existing coal plants could run for decades without government intervention.

The transition we need requires a challenge to the profits of the big power companies, by forcing them to close still profitable power plants. And it means demanding the costs of installing renewable energy be paid by big business and the rich.

We need to build a powerful movement to force the kind of government action. That movement must harness the power of organised workers. That requires demands for climate jobs and climate action that will improve workers lives now, as well as stave off future disaster.

In the US, democratic socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's call for a Green New Deal that focuses on renewable energy, jobs and infrastructure, and taxing the rich to pay for it, has been enormously popular. It has sparked protests at offices of politicians who refuse to support it. These are the kinds of demands on which a powerful climate movement could be built.

LESSONS FROM LABOR'S LAST TIME IN POWER

The last Labor government was ultimately destroyed by its determination to defend the interests of big business and manage capitalism, writes **Mark Gillespie**

ALL THE polls point to an election victory for Bill Shorten. But Labor have romped home before only to bitterly disappoint later.

In 2007 Kevin Rudd won office on a massive 5.44 per cent swing picking up 23 new seats—even unseating John Howard in Bennelong. On the back of Rudd's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and apology to the Stolen Generations, his approval rating soared to 70 per cent. The Liberals were in complete disarray and in opposition in every state and territory.

But it all ended in tears. In 2010, Labor—now led by Julia Gillard—only just managed to hang onto power by forming a minority government with The Greens and some independents. Then in 2013—with Kevin Rudd now back in the leadership—Labor was crushed by Tony Abbott, achieving their lowest primary vote since the 1930s.

How could Labor squander all this support? Labor's problems stem from their commitment to managing capitalism. When capitalism is booming moderate reforms for workers can be delivered while corporations keep their profits up, but in times of stagnating growth, managing capitalism "responsibly" means attacking workers.

Rudd and Gillard continually delivered policies tailored to the needs of big business. Even when the Global Financial Crisis struck in 2008, Rudd stimulated the economy and took the budget into deficit as he talked about "saving capitalism from itself." Mostly Rudd was concerned to save capitalism. The Treasurer, Wayne Swan, as early as 2010 was back to promising Labor would deliver budget surpluses.

Instead of redistributing wealth in order to raise workers' living standards they focused on restoring profits. And pursuing budget surpluses meant making cuts to services including welfare spending and education.

Rudd and Gillard could not deliver genuine reform and the longer they were in office the more the gap between their rhetoric and the reality was exposed. Inevitably, this meant disillusioning Labor's own working class supporters.

Not just an echo

When Kevin Rudd replaced Kim Beazley as leader in 2007 he seemed like breath of fresh air. Beazley had been a minister in the Hawke and Keating governments and was very much associated with their pro-market economic reforms.

Rudd promised to be an "alternative, not just an echo". He talked about "fresh ideas"; a "technological revolution", an "education revolution", and "an economy for the 21st century" while criticising Howard's "free market fundamentalism".

Rudd gave expression to the many grievances with Howard. He described climate change as "the moral question for our time" and promised to ratify the Kyoto protocol. Whereas Beazley had failed to stand up to Howard's refugee bashing, Rudd promised to close the Nauru detention centre and adopt a more compassionate approach. Rudd also promised to withdraw Australian troops from Iraq, a very unpopular war that hundreds of thousands had marched against.

By far the biggest grievance with Howard was his WorkChoices legislation which radically deregulated the labour market and used the law to severely restrict unions. The ACTU funded a massive advertising campaign against it and called national days of action that saw hundreds of thousands of workers strike and attend rallies. Rudd pledged to scrap WorkChoices promising a "workplace where everybody gets a fair go".

The other side of Rudd

While Rudd's rhetoric was able to connect with a desire for change there was another side to his politics. He was no socialist about to shake up the status quo. He was absolutely committed to "responsible economic management" and saw himself as part of the "reforming centre" in the same tradition as the Hawke and Keating governments, but more willing to attack the unions.

While Rudd won the election by connecting with people's desire for change, this is not what they got

Even before being elected he made business feel comfortable by establishing a business advisory group and putting Sir Rod Eddington, who had been a CEO and a director of numerous companies, at its head.

He was also socially conservative. He paraded his Christianity, opposed equal marriage, supported the continuation of Howard's school chaplaincy program and criticised Bill Henson's art as "revolting".

Some Labor apparatchiks saw this as necessary to appeal to a socially conservative working class. Defeating Howard meant being "the son of Howard" argued Rudd's former Press Secretary Lachlan Harris.

But Labor's landslide win was a huge opportunity. Social attitudes under Howard had moved to the left. When Howard took power, only 17 per cent preferred increased social spending to tax cuts. Nine years later it was 47 per cent. After Howard privatised Telstra, support for privatisation dropped from 30 per cent to just 9 per cent.

The Liberals were so comprehensively thrashed on WorkChoices that once defeated they dropped all opposition to scrapping the laws. Labor had an "overwhelming mandate" to tear up WorkChoices, said the future treasurer, Joe Hockey.

While Rudd won the election by connecting with people's desire for change, this is not what they got. WorkChoices was scrapped but only to be replaced by the Fair Work Act which many unionists dubbed "WorkChoices lite". The restrictive laws unions are fighting today were almost all contained in Labor's Fair Work Act.

Rudd also maintained Howard's Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) which was used to intimidate and harass construction unions. Two unionists, Ark Tribe and Noel Washington, were threatened

with jail sentences for failing to answer questions from the ABCC during Rudd's tenure. Labor went from promising workers a "workplace where everybody gets a fair go" to promising the bosses a "strong cop on the beat" in the construction industry.

Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations was very moving and grabbed international headlines, but at the same time he maintained Howard's racist and assimilationist NT Intervention and extended income management into new areas.

Rudd's commitment to a more compassionate approach to refugees turned out to be hollow as soon as some refugee boats arrived and the Liberals attacked from the right. Rudd froze the processing of asylum claims for Afghans and Sri Lankans and had some boats towed back to Indonesia.

All these issues massively increased the disillusionment among Labor supporters, but the straw that broke the camel's back was Rudd's retreat on climate change.

Rudd's "solution" was always mild and designed to be as inoffensive to big business interests as possible. He supported a market based emissions trading scheme which allowed industry to pass on the costs to consumers, with plenty of exemptions and compensation for trade exposed industries.

When The Greens, rightly, refused to vote for it because it was so ineffective, Rudd walked away from doing anything and, according to Newspoll, lost over a million votes in two weeks.

Moving to the right

As Labor crashed in the polls and the Liberals attacked, Labor's response was to move to the right. This just made matters worse as it extinguished any lasting hope for real change.

The rightward shift was most obvious on refugee policy. Labor went from closing the Nauru detention centre to reopening Nauru and Manus and exiling refugees there permanently, in the vain hope of "stopping the boats".

As Labor slid in the polls the party moved to dump Rudd as leader.

But his replacement Julia Gillard was just as hollow. She marketed herself as a traditional Labor reformer. But her "reforms" were not social democratic but neo-liberal.

Her "education revolution" meant adopting the Gonski funding model and establishing the My School website and Naplan testing. The My School website created a market place in education as better off parents shopped around for better preforming schools, while Gonski funding ensured private schools continued to milk the public purse. These "reforms" have only worsened the already high levels of social segregation in our schools.

Above: Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard—Labor's leadership woes were a product of its underlying failure to deliver for working people

Gillard's speech attacking Tony Abbott's misogyny did a lot for her feminist credentials. But she was also responsible for cutting payments to single mothers, forcing them onto unemployment benefits and its regime of harassment and punishment.

The change in leadership gave Labor a short boost but it wasn't long before the disappointment set in again. In desperation Rudd was brought back to the leadership in 2013. But Labor was already doomed.

Will Shorten be different?

With the relative success of the openly socialist Jeremy Corbyn in the UK and Bernie Sanders in the US, Bill Shorten has cottoned on that economic conservativism is on the nose and has tacked left, attacking "inequality" and "trickle-down economics".

Whereas Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd wanted to cut corporate taxes, Shorten consistently opposed the Liberals' cuts accusing, "the top end of town" of "gorging themselves". Labor is also committed to rolling back tax rorts for the rich such as negative gearing and share dividend imputation. Labor also supports the concept of a living wage for low income workers and is committed to reversing penalty rate cuts and some mild industrial relations reforms.

But at the end of the day, Shorten—like Rudd, Gillard and Labor historically—is committed to working within the framework of capitalism. This means, particularly in a period of deep crisis and global uncertainty, that fundamental change will not be delivered.

Already Shorten has assured big business he won't be the unions' "handmaiden" and his industrial relations spokesperson Brendan O'Connor has ruled out giving unions the "unlimited right to strike".

In his budget reply he also promised stronger budget surpluses than the Liberals. This will force Labor to make cuts if the economy deteriorates.

But by putting low wages and inequality on the agenda Shorten has raised the question of the capitalist system itself. Rudd won the 2007 election on the back of massive union national stopwork rallies. But those rallies turned from "Your Rights At Work—Worth Fighting For", into "Your Rights At Work—Worth Voting For." After workers had voted Howard out, the union leaders demobilised the movement and let Rudd and Gillard trash the victory over the Liberals and the bosses.

This time around, there is the Change the Rules campaign. Although the rallies have not been as consistent, the hunger for real change is deeper. A victory over Morrison can fuel workers' confidence. We learned last time that to really tackle inequality and injustice we have to go beyond just getting Labor elected. The fight for real change will need to continue after the election—in rallies, strikes and demonstrations where workers can show their real power to win social change.

A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR REVOLUTION

One hundred years ago a small meeting in Russia founded the Third or Communist International, winning millions of supporters within months, writes **Tom Orsag**

ON 2 March 1919, 51 people met to hold a conference in the old imperial court of justice, in Moscow, to found a new "Communist International" or Comintern.

The conference aimed to clarify the lessons of the Russian revolution, and create a movement to build revolutionary parties capable of leading the working class to power in other countries.

The gathering that founded the Communist International was small and rather unrepresentative. Only the Russians represented a mass revolutionary party. A delegate from the Norwegian Labour Party came from a mass party but it was distinctly not revolutionary.

Most of the delegates were not even very representative of their own organisations, even though they claimed to represent 35 different parties across Europe.

A capitalist blockade barred travel to the revolutionary Soviet republic, so many of the delegates were foreigners who just happened to find themselves in Russia at the time of the revolution. Some had been prisoners of war and one was an attache to the French embassy.

Only nine of the delegates had actually come to Moscow from abroad, specifically for the meeting.

The most important was from the German Communist Party. It had been founded in December 1918, barely four months earlier. It was new, raw and growing fast, as a revolutionary epoch opened up in that country. But its leaders opposed the decision to form a new International, believing it was premature until there were mass revolutionary parties in several European countries.

Yet within the next year, parties representing millions of workers would seek to join, including mass parties in Germany, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Bulgaria.

John Dos Passos, the American novelist, reported from Spain, "Here, as everywhere else, Russia has been the beacon fire", as workers and landless labourers revolted on the Western edge of Europe.

A tremendous wave of struggle swept almost every capital city and region of Europe, as workers and peasants revolted against capitalism and were inspired by the October revolution in Russia in 1917.

In 1918, after four years of mind-numbing and industrial-scale slaughter through the First World War, four great empires lay in ruin. Gone were the Tsar in Russia, the Kaiser in Germany, along with the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Emperors.

In 1919, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George wrote to Georges Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, "The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution."

The US representative in Paris, Edward M. House, wrote in his diary, "Bolshevism is gaining ground everywhere."

The question now was, could the workers of other countries emulate Russia and also come to Russia's aid?

The International

Internationalism has always been at the heart of the socialist movement, not for sentimental reasons, but because capitalism has created a world economy, which can only be transformed on a world scale.

In January 1918 following the socialist revolution in Russia the revolutionary leader Lenin wrote, "The final victory of socialism in a single country is of course impossible." Again in July, Lenin wrote that victory over capitalism required "the joint effort of the workers of the world".

The Russian revolution was soon besieged as the world powers sought to crush it through foreign intervention and civil war.

The purpose of the International was to "facilitate and hasten" that world victory, a task in which working people inside and outside Russia had an equal stake.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the founders of modern socialism, were key leaders of the First International established in 1864. But, the wave of reaction in Europe following the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871 led to its disbanding.

A tremendous wave of struggle swept Europe, as workers and peasants were inspired by the revolution in Russia

The mass socialist parties that emerged in the following decades formed a Second International in 1889, which claimed to stand in the revolutionary tradition of Marx and Engels.

But at the outbreak of the First World War it collapsed, as the leaders of the Socialist and Labour parties across Europe betrayed their promises to oppose war and backed their own ruling classes in promoting a slaughter that was to claim 20 million lives.

Only a small minority continued to oppose the war and maintain their socialist internationalism.

In 1915, 42 anti-war socialists from 12 countries, including the Russian revolutionaries Lenin and Trotsky, met in Zimmerwald, Switzerland, to adopt a historic statement calling for an international fight for peace, based on self-determination of nations and without annexations or indemnities.

A minority current at Zimmerwald, led by the Russian Bolshevik Party, asked the conference to go further.

It called for revolutionary struggle against the war, and the capitalist governments supporting it, under the banner of socialism. This current also favoured a "ruthless struggle" against the opportunist forces in socialist parties whose pro-war stand had betrayed the workers' movement.

Known as the Zimmerwald Left, it was the embryo of the future Communist International.

The Zimmerwald Left's strategy was soon vindicated. As the war progressed the revolutionaries drew strength from strikes, soldiers' and sailors' protests, and demonstrations in all warring countries.

Worker-soldier revolutions in Russia in 1917 and then in Germany

in 1918 overthrew their governments and forced an end to the war.

In Russia, workers themselves took power in the socialist revolution of October 1917 led by the Bolshevik Party.

After the German Revolution began, and the formation of the German Communist Party under the leadership of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in December 1918, the Bolshevik leaders felt it was urgent to convene an international congress.

Russian experience

The leaders of the Russian Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky, sought to generalise the politics and role of the Bolshevik Party that had made the revolution possible.

The Russian revolution was based on a new kind of direct working class democracy and power, embodied in the workers' councils or soviets.

It was only when the Bolsheviks winning majority working class support in the St Petersburg and Moscow Soviets in September 1917 that provided the basis for the revolution.

In early 1919, when invading imperialist and counter-revolutionary armies threatened the soviets' survival, Lenin proposed to the Comintern conference some theses explaining the nature and potential of soviet power.

Its substance, he said, "is that the permanent and only foundation of state power, the entire machinery of state, is the mass-scale organisation of the classes oppressed by capitalism". Soviet power "is so organised as to bring the working people close to the machinery of government." That is why the councils were based on the workplace, not a territory.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the Russian revolution seemed to millions an immediate practical example to follow.

But events in 1919 showed how difficult it was for a revolution to succeed without an experienced and mass revolutionary party like the Bolsheviks.

Germany's rulers worked with the Social Democrats to provoke revolutionary workers into a series of isolated uprisings that were easily crushed. Key Communist Party leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered in Berlin in January 1919. The lack of any nation-wide party capable of leading and co-ordinating workers' action produced a severe setback.

And in Hungary, a badly led Soviet republic was overthrown by force after just four months.

Above: Lenin with fellow Bolsheviks Zinoviev and Bukharin alongside other delegates including Karl Radek at the Second Congress of the Comintern at the Uritsky Palace in St Petersburg

The Comintern had to quickly try to construct mass parties capable of leading a revolutionary movement to victory.

As the Second Congress of the Comintern, in 1920, stated, the working class cannot, "achieve its revolution without having an independent political party of its own… Political power cannot be seized, organised and operated, except through a political party."

A revolutionary party should consist not of "the whole working class" but rather "its most advanced, most class-conscious and therefore its most revolutionary part".

It must be an interventionist party which can serve as a, "political lever with whose help the advanced part of the working class can steer the whole mass of the proletariat and the semi-proletariat on to the correct road".

This required parties with both roots in the workers' movement and a leadership capable of navigating a turbulent period of struggle.

But in the heat of a revolutionary period across Europe this was a difficult task. Hundreds of thousands of workers were breaking from the old social democratic parties that had supported the capitalist order and the war.

New Communist parties developed through splits in those parties in France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere. But they were full of a confused mix of ideas. And many of the old opportunist party leaders came with them, but were far from committed to revolution.

The Comintern tried to deal with this problem at its second congress in 1920 by imposing a series of conditions on Comintern membership, in an effort to exclude opportunist figures and win the new parties to a firm commitment to revolutionary struggle.

Even genuine revolutionaries within the new Communist Parties were often very inexperienced, and prone to ultra-left attitudes that prevented them from developing a mass base, such as refusing to work in non-revolutionary trade unions or to use parliamentary elections to spread revolutionary ideas.

The Comintern faced crucial debates about revolutionary strategy and how to win over the mass of the working class to socialist revolution.

The Comintern's first four congresses, between 1919 and 1922, distilled the revolutionary experience of the time and provide a foundation on which revolutionary socialism still stands: on issues like the united front, work in trade unions, liberation struggles of the oppressed, the nature of workers' rule and the fight for national liberation in the colonies of imperialist powers.

This period remains the highpoint of the revolutionary socialist movement so far in history, with valuable lessons for today.

FIGHT FAR FROM FINISHED OVER MANUS AND NAURU

By Ian Rintoul

EVERYONE MARCHING on the Palm Sunday rallies will be marching to get rid of the Morrison government. The last six years of the Coalition has taken refugee scapegoating to new levels. The government has changed laws to restrict their rights, leaving thousands to languish in poverty in the community, while inflicting unprecedented levels of brutality, on and offshore, to maintain their divisive policies.

Even in the wake of the Christchurch killings, Morrison and Dutton have continued their relentless campaign of Islamophobia and refugee-bashing. But this time around, refugee scaremongering has not bolstered the government at all.

No one will mourn the end of Morrison and Dutton. But voting Green or Labor is not going to end offshore detention, nor end mandatory detention. A Labor government is not going to herald the beginning of the humanitarian policy that the refugee movement is fighting for.

A Labor government is committed to scrapping temporary protection visas, and says that it will get everyone off Nauru and Manus Island. But offshore detention, and turning around asylum boats, remain part of Labor policy. Shorten says that Labor will accept the New Zealand offer to resettle 150 refugees, but still says that none of the refugees and asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru will be allowed to settle in Australia.

There are still 915 refugees and asylum seekers languishing there, most of them with no chance of resettlement.

Over the last few months the movement has shown that Labor can be pushed to break with its bi-partisan support of anti-refugee policy. In February, Labor actually voted against the Liberal government to support the Medivac Bill that allows sick refuges to be brought to Australia for treatment or assessment on the recommendation of two treating doctors.

Above: Refugee supporters will be hoping to see the back of Morrison

But when Morrison announced the re-opening of Christmas Island to hold anyone transferred from offshore, Labor's initial response was to say detention on Christmas Island was OK.

Medivac transfers

Worse, the promise of the Medivac Bill to get many people transferred has not been fulfilled. In the first six weeks since the Medivac Bill has been law, only one person has been transferred—to the mainland, not Christmas Island. More people have been transferred on the government's own initiative than have come under the terms of the Medivac Bill.

One of the reasons there is only one transferred is because there have been very few applications. Even now, when Morrison's budget has flagged the closure of Christmas Island—its reopening was a $185 million election stunt—the transfers are still being held back by the timidity of the group assessing and recommending the transfers.

There are others who argue that the movement should compromise with Morrison and with Labor, to drop opposition to turnbacks and offshore detention as the political price for the government to find third resettlement countries, including Australia.

In six weeks since the Medivac Bill has been law, only one person has been transferred

But this is no time for compromise. There is much to be won and a lot of unfinished business to overturn six years of the Coalition.

The Palm Sunday rallies will be the first chance we have since the election was called to hammer another nail into Morrison's political coffin.

But when Rudd's Labor government was elected in 2007, it was only a matter of months before Rudd went down the same refugee-bashing road as the Liberals, until Labor finally imposed the present version of offshore detention in July 2013.

Since then, the movement has fought Morrison to a standstill.

The high point of the #KidsOff-Nauru campaign last year saw teachers walk off in Melbourne and Brisbane taking the first union industrial action explicitly to oppose offshore detention and call for everyone on Nauru and Manus Island to be brought to Australia.

It is a testament to the campaign that there are now more refugees and asylum seekers medically transferred from Manus and Nauru in Australia than remain imprisoned offshore. But there is no guarantee that Labor will adopt a more generous interpretation of the Medivac Bill after the election; quite the opposite.

The movement will need more rallies and strikes to push beyond the limited promises of an incoming Shorten government.

If Australia is going to finally break with the history of consecutive governments vilifying and denying asylum to boat arrivals, the movement will need to maintain its determination to end turnbacks, open the borders to all asylum seekers, bring to Australia all those imprisoned offshore who want to come from Nauru and Manus, and let them stay with permanent visas.