

Solidarity

Issue No. 126 / May-June 2019

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AFTER THE ELECTION FIASCO

STRIKE BACK TO

STOP MORRISON



ELECTION

Explaining
Labor's defeat

UNIONS

Why Change the
Rules failed

LABOR

How Bob Hawke lost
Labor's base



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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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Things they say

Move to higher ground

John Alexander, Liberal MP for Benelong, to people in Pacific island nations on how to deal with the effects of climate change.

This is a fast track to a socialist, if not communist, economy.

Dan Tehan, Minister for Social Services, on Labor's plan for high childcare subsidies, including free childcare for those earning up to \$69,000 a year

Thank you Bob Brown is all I can say

Liberal MP for Capricornia Michelle Landry, who held onto her seat thanks to the issue of coal jobs and Adani

What he says is extreme, it's unacceptable ... it's not my opinion and not something I've ever said or will ever support.

I feel now he has nothing to lose, I think he's trying to be controversial, to be another Pauline Hanson. Paul Hanson explains why she could never support Fraser Anning trying to become like her

Yep, we blew \$1.3 million. Could have been \$80 million though eh Clive?

Sportsbet on its decision to pay out those who punted on a Labor victory two days before the result

I think it's fair to say I would have majority support in a Labor caucus.

Labor's Treasury spokesperson Chris Bowen the day before he withdrew from standing for the Labor leadership

You might also say he had a Labor heart, but a Liberal head.

Tony Abbott's controversial, but fairly accurate, judgement on Bob Hawke

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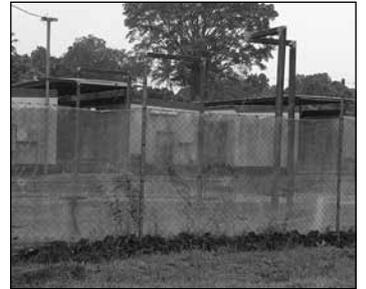
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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

Penalty rate cuts failed to create jobs

CUTS TO weekend penalty rates have failed to create a single job, the Council of Australian Small Businesses now says. Its chief Peter Strong has admitted, “There’s no extra jobs on a Sunday. There’s been no extra hours. Certainly, I don’t know anyone [who gave workers extra hours]. It’s been just a waste of time.”

His tune was very different when the cuts first came into force in 2017 when he declared, “There will be more jobs... We don’t know how many but we’ll find out,” and slammed Labor’s decision to reverse the cuts as “disgraceful”. Liberal Minister Michaelia Cash told us the same thing.

Strong claims there was no impact because of the minimum wage increases of 3.3 and 3.5 per cent in the last two years. But it’s obvious business was only ever in favour of the penalty rate cuts for one reason—pay cuts mean fatter profits.

Dumped Abbott grabs a pay rise

TONY ABBOTT was humiliated on election night, losing the seat of Warringah that he has held for 25 years. But he can now look forward to a pay rise thanks to the parliamentary pension scheme.

As a backbencher, Abbott has been pulling in \$207,100 sitting in parliament. But now, as a former Prime Minister, he will receive an annual pension of \$307,542. Or if he chooses, he can take \$1.53 million up front and survive on just \$153,771 a year.

Bank boss pockets \$27.9 million

MACQUARIE BANK boss Nicholas Moore was handed \$27.9 million in pay after quitting in November.

His total stake in the company through shares now totals \$274.7 million, according to Bloomberg. The bank’s full year profit rose to \$2.98 billion in the year to 31 March. It shows the banks aren’t working too hard trying to improve their image after the revelations at the Royal Commission.

Billionaire backer hosts Liberal fundraiser



THE TOP end of town gathered for a lavish \$3300 a head Liberal fundraiser in Vaucluse two weeks out from the election. The cocktail party was hosted by Merivale billionaire Justin Hemmes at his historic harbourside mansion The Hermitage. Hemmes was also in the news in January, after his pubs and venues were forced to start paying their 3000 workers at the minimum rates in the hospitality award. They had spent 12 years using a WorkChoices-era agreement with hourly rates and penalty rates lower than the legal minimum.

Almost 100 guests attended the fundraiser, rubbing shoulders with Scott Morrison, federal Liberal Party President Nick Greiner, and Ministers Mitch Fifield, Michaelia Cash and Simon Birmingham.

Those who could afford \$13,500 a head stayed on for a private dinner with Morrison and senior government ministers. The rich know who’s really on their side.

Major injuries in police raid stuff-up

A BUNGLED police raid in Melbourne has left a man so badly injured that he could lose the use of his left arm.

Nik Dimopoulos lives above an LGBT bookshop in Fitzroy in inner city Melbourne, Hares & Hyenas. When police broke into his home at 2am on a Saturday he ran from the building, fearing it was an anti-gay home invasion.

Bookshop co-owners Rowland Thomson and Crusader Hillis said in Facebook post, “The police broke in through our garage as they thought that an armed member of a ‘Lebanese’ gang was inside”.

“At no stage did they identify themselves as police. They just stormed into a dark room shining torches and it was impossible to identify them as police.”

Police twisted his arms behind his back and threw him to the pavement in the course of arresting him. He subsequently underwent major surgery to try to save the use of his arm.

Yet Victorian Police Association secretary Wayne Gatt has told the ABC he was “proud” of the police involved, adding, “we don’t think they should be apologising”.

Police have admitted they wrongly identified Dimopoulos as a suspect in a home invasion and carjacking investigation. The incident is being investigated by the police’s internal Professional Standards Command. Dimopoulos’s lawyer, Jeremy King, described it as “an absolute joke” to call this an independent investigation.

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Four weeks in jail for 14-year-old Aboriginal boy

A 14-YEAR-OLD Aboriginal boy spent four weeks in a Queensland watch-house after stealing chocolate bars and deodorant from a 7-Eleven store.

His mother told the *Brisbane Times* that when he was released, “He wouldn’t talk to me about what it was like in the watch-house, he was too traumatised.”

Queensland’s youth detention facilities are over-flowing, so minors who are charged with a crime are simply left in the police watch-house.

The state’s Public Guardian has reported that this has seen children imprisoned, “who haven’t accessed any real outdoor air for two weeks or more, and who have little or no access to education”.

According to *Four Corners* the policy sees children, “being held alongside some of the state’s most hardened adult criminals”. Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk says the government is building new youth detention centres, but will give no time frame on how long this might take.

Fossil fuel subsidies top \$5 trillion globally, says IMF

GLOBAL SUBSIDIES for fossil fuels grew to an appalling \$5.2 trillion dollars in 2017, according to a new study from the IMF.

In Australia alone annual subsidies were \$29 billion, or \$1200 per person.

All up a total of 6.5 per cent of global GDP goes on subsidising polluting energy sources. The biggest subsidies come from the world’s most powerful economies, with China providing \$1.5 trillion in 2015, and the US \$649 billion.

The figures include the estimated cost to government of air pollution and climate change impacts due to fossil fuel use.

Even direct subsidies alone cost governments \$390 billion a year.

EDITORIAL

Election shock—but Morrison can be fought

THE ELECTION result has shocked everyone—from the pollsters to the pundits, Labor and even Scott Morrison himself.

For the last three years, polls showed that the Liberals would be defeated. But Morrison has won a narrow majority by picking up a handful of extra seats.

His scare campaign against Labor's plans on franking credits and tax proved effective.

The political commentators are already concluding that Shorten's plans were too bold and ambitious. But Labor equivocated when explaining its policies, rather than coming out clearly and saying they wanted to hit the rich.

The unions ran a concerted Change the Rules campaign, but it was focused overwhelmingly on door-knocking and leafleting in marginal electorates. Yet in some targeted seats there were swings to the Liberals.

The campaign was much worse than the Your Rights at Work campaign that was central to defeating John Howard in 2007. The series of YRAW national mass stopwork rallies put workers' rights at the centre of the campaign against the Liberals.

Not this time. It was only in Victoria that there were large stop-work demonstrations that involved a significant cross-section of the union movement. It is no coincidence there was a small swing towards Labor in that state.

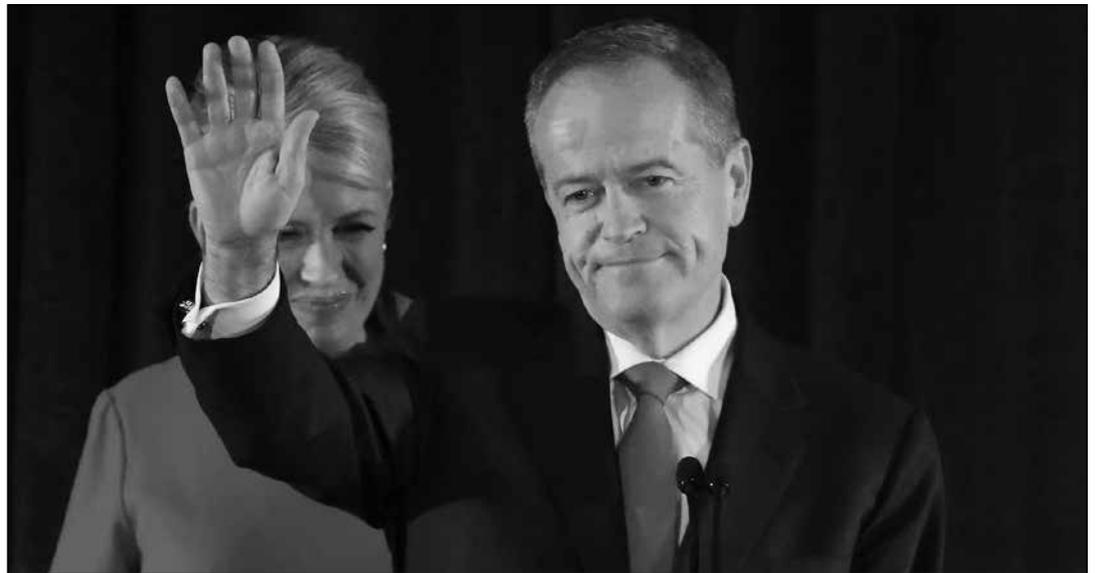
A union movement that was actively mobilising well before the election campaign could have helped put the social weight of the union movement behind class issues like increasing the minimum wage, restoring penalty rates and taxing the rich.

Instead workers were left wondering if Labor was serious about its promises about a living wage or tackling casual contracts.

Climate election?

Climate change was also a major issue in the election. One of the few things to celebrate on election night was Tony Abbott losing his seat to conservative independent and "climate leader" Zali Steggall on Sydney's wealthy north shore. The Greens also held their vote and managed to keep their Senate seats.

Yet workers in Queensland swung heavily against Labor over its position on the Adani mine. Without a climate action policy that would guarantee



Above: A shocked Bill Shorten concedes defeat on election night

existing jobs and create more, One Nation and Clive Palmer were able to win votes. Labor's two-bob each way—with Shorten refusing to oppose Adani but also saying he might review it—made it look like coal miners' jobs were at risk. It was a Trump moment in the Australian election.

The focus on the Stop Adani campaign without any serious campaign for climate jobs has proven to be a disaster. Demand for climate action that costs workers' jobs will not win popular support, and only ends up boosting the far right.

As a result we have three more years of a government dominated by racists and climate deniers.

But there is large majority for action on climate change. The issue was ranked as "a critical threat", by 64 per cent of people in this year's Lowy Institute poll.

And the issue of climate change is far from settled. The Liberals still lack an energy policy, and Scott Morrison will be under pressure from big business to provide energy certainty. On election night retiring Liberal MP Julie Bishop declared that the party needed to re-consider the National Energy Guarantee, the policy it dumped during the push against Malcolm Turnbull.

The Liberal Party will continue to be divided over climate. Morrison has pandered to the hard right of the party, and some of them will want a Morrison government to build a new coal-fired power station. Already Melbourne climate demonstrators have blocked roads demanding the government call a climate emergency.

The global climate strike in September will be a chance to strike back at Morrison. High school students will strike again in big numbers. This time there needs to be a concerted mobilisation of unions and workers behind them. The call for serious government spending to create the jobs and the transition that is needed must be the central focus of ongoing climate campaigning.

As the economy slows, there will be more pressure from big business for cuts and further attacks on unions.

Employers already have more applications to terminate enterprise agreements in the Fair Work Commission. And construction unions face three more years of the anti-union Australian Building and Construction Commission.

The election is a setback, but the government can be fought. Refugee rallies to re-ignite the demand to close Manus and Nauru have been called for 20 July.

It will be the unions' industrial strength and willingness to take strike action to defend wages and conditions that will be crucial in the weeks and month ahead. Unions will have to be prepared to break the rules that limit solidarity and strike action. Three days after the election the TWU defiantly announced a national sector-wide campaign, "the most concerted push in our union's history to bolster our bargaining power."

That's the kind of action that can wipe the grin off Morrison's face and show where our real power lies to fight for climate action and system change.

.....
The election is a setback, but the government can be fought

Labor never campaigned on clear call to tax the rich

By James Supple

IN THE aftermath of Labor's shock loss, commentators have blamed its plans as too radical and ambitious.

But the real failure was their unwillingness to fight for their policies as attacks on the rich, and necessary to enable spending to improve the lives of poor and working class people.

In Queensland this was mixed with opposition to their position on the Adani mine, which suggested they were a risk to jobs in the coal industry.

The Liberals' scare campaign against their plans on franking credits and tax led many ordinary workers and retirees to fear they would be worse off.

Yet this was a policy that targeted wealthy shareholders and meant cancelling payments worth \$4.4 billion in the first year. ANU academics Ben Phillips and Matthew Gray found that franking credit payments are "heavily concentrated" within the top 10 per cent of income earners—who receive \$2600 a year on average. Many receive nearly \$12,000 a year. Those in the bottom 60 per cent receive less than \$200 a year—most much less. And Labor exempted the bulk of pensioners from any losses.

But instead of responding to the Liberals' attack with a clear argument that this was a handout for the rich, Labor tried to position its plan as responsible economic management. On ABC's 7:30 program Shorten denied that the franking credits policy had a redistributive agenda and said the change was necessary to "close loopholes" that were "eating the budget".

In the election debates he argued the payment was "not sustainable" and that, "This nation can't keep giving money in the form of a tax cheque to people who didn't pay tax."

He said franking credits were "a gift" from the government. But since when has anyone seen getting a gift from the government in retirement as unfair? What's unfair is the fact that the wealthy get the proceeds.

Labor wanted to both reassure big business that its plans were economically responsible as well as appeal to workers on the basis of hitting "the top end of town". This meant it ended up with mixed messages.

Labor's changes were hardly radical and did not inspire any kind of social movement in their support. They are nothing like the hopes of



Above: Shock and despair from Labor members at Bill Shorten's election night party

change that have produced a real increase in Labour Party membership and activism in the UK around the left-wing policies of British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

In the face of the barrage of negative ads from the Liberals and Clive Palmer, such a people power movement could have made a real difference.

Not trusted

Instead Morrison's scare campaign tapped into a lack of trust for Bill Shorten and change proposed by the major parties. The level of disillusionment with official politics is at very high levels after decades where Labor and the Coalition have both imposed neo-liberal reforms that have delivered cuts to living standards along with privatisation and declining services.

The vote for non-major party candidates rose to a record 24.6 per cent this election.

Bill Shorten has never been a popular figure, with his history as a factional operative in the Labor Party involved in the assassination of Labor's last two Prime Ministers. He personifies the machine man who people see as standing for nothing.

Shorten was anything but well placed to convince people that Labor offered change that would make their lives better.

And because Labor failed to explain its changes, it was left open to a scare campaign about what they were

really planning, and who could lose out. Many workers and pensioners were worried they could lose money.

The party is now set to move to the right, concluding that it needs to chase aspirational voters who saw its policies on negative gearing and franking credits as an attack on their efforts to accumulate wealth.

Labor is likely to adopt an approach even more like the Liberals.

This would be a disaster. It has been Labor's embrace of neo-liberalism and pro-business policies that has been responsible for eroding its support base and credibility over recent decades, since the period of the Hawke and Keating governments.

The number of people who describe themselves as stable life-long Labor voters has fallen from 33 per cent before Hawke came to power in 1979 to 16 per cent at the last election, according to the Australian Election Study. Its primary vote this election of 33.5 per cent was only 0.2 per cent above its lowest ever result in 2013.

Far from a shift to aspirational attitudes, there has been consistently high public support for increased taxes on corporations and the rich over recent decades. Around 70 per cent of people think government should spend more on services and 60 per cent think high income earners don't pay enough tax, according to Per Capita's tax surveys over many years.

It was Labor's failure to clearly put that forward that cost it the election.

.....
Labor tried to position its franking credits plan as responsible economic management

Change the Rules never seriously mobilised workers

By Miro Sandev

THOUSANDS OF union members and officials gave up their time to doorknock, phone-bank and staff polling booths for the Change the Rules campaign. But the campaign has been a spectacular flop, failing to deliver a swing to Labor and wasting millions of dollars of members' money in the process.

The ACTU boasted that they spent more money than ever before on TV and radio advertising.

The focus on marginal seat campaigning was based on the flawed idea that electing a Labor government that had promised to change some of the worst anti-union laws could dramatically improve the unions' position.

It failed to achieve even this very narrow electoralist goal. Of the 14 seats targeted by the ACTU that were not newly created, Labor's primary vote actually went backwards in ten of them, and by more than the national average.

Given that the ACTU spent almost \$25 million on this two-year campaign, this is a disastrous result and should prompt serious soul-searching. Instead, the ACTU Secretary Sally McManus said it had been "a magnificent campaign" and blamed its lack of impact on paid advertising by Clive Palmer and Morrison's talking points on tax.

But workers are much more susceptible to those messages when the level of union mobilisation and struggle is low. Change the Rules never seriously set out to mobilise workers in mass action.

The previous union campaign Your Rights at Work that torpedoed John Howard's re-election in 2007 at least featured mass demonstrations and strikes. Thousands of unionists came together in all-union delegate meetings to launch the mass stop-work demonstrations. Despite threats of \$22,000 in fines, up to 500,000 workers took action nation-wide. This helped win the argument against Howard's anti-worker laws amongst wide layers of the population.

The first rally had cost the bosses \$20 million in lost profits. An ongoing strike campaign could have even stopped Howard passing his anti-union Workchoices legislation.

Ultimately union leaders funnelled the energy of the mobilisations into a marginal seats campaign. This was a huge mistake because it gave Labor



Above: The Change the Rules campaign was heavily focused on door-knocking and other electoral work

a blank cheque, and Labor ended up passing laws which still severely restricted union organising.

By comparison Change the Rules was even more electoralist. It was only in Melbourne that the whole union movement mobilised members for stopwork rallies. Victorian unions held three major weekday rallies, the first of them 120,000-strong. Elsewhere it was only the construction and maritime unions who significantly mobilised members for stopwork demonstrations.

As a result the campaign has not built the industrial muscle of the unions and leaves workers no better off to fight the imminent attacks from Morrison and emboldened employers.

But even if it had managed to get Labor elected, our ability to fight would not have been much improved. Labor tacked left on some workers' rights issues, but refused to support key demands like the right to strike or industry wide bargaining.

Waiting for the election

Unfortunately, most union leaderships supported Change the Rules uncritically and accepted the logic of waiting for a Labor government instead of fighting the bosses for immediate gains.

When the Liberals slashed penalty rates, instead of bringing workers out on the streets or trying to fight the cuts industrially they called press conferences and told people to vote Labor. When the Liberals hit the construction unions with the restrictive building code, the unions fought back initially.

But eventually they gave up and signed shorter enterprise agreements compliant with the code, hoping to renegotiate these agreements after an expected Labor win.

The maritime union did not call workers out on strike when shipping crew were sacked, focussing instead on its Australian Shipping campaign to lobby Labor. When bosses terminated agreements, instead of leading a fight to maintain conditions union leaders simply argued that the solution was to elect Labor because it was going to ban the terminations.

The "wait for Labor" strategy now lies in tatters. We need a plan to resist the anti-union laws that will still be on the books over the next three years. The ABCC is still terrorising construction workers. Labor hire companies are still undercutting existing conditions and employers are rushing to terminate even more agreements.

But we can turn things around. The successful strikes at Chemist Warehouse and Boom Cranes show that the best weapon we have against the bosses is still a united group of workers willing to take militant action and break the rules. Workers at Boom defied the law, organising secondary boycotts and other militant tactics to win a decisive victory.

We need to generalise these tactics across the whole union movement and we need the ACTU to organise industrial support for anyone who breaks the anti-union laws. If we are to win any of the things Labor promised, we will need to build a rank-and-file revolt against Morrison and the bosses.

.....
The union campaign Your Rights at Work that torpedoed John Howard in 2007 at least featured mass rallies and strikes

New Labor leader Albanese moves the party right

By Ian Rintoul

ANTHONY ALBANESE, a leading figure in the party's left faction, is set to be elected as new leader of the Labor Party unopposed. In the aftermath of Bill Shorten's election defeat, even the right-wing of the party is backing him. Arch right-wing former NSW Premier Bob Carr sang Albanese's praises to the *Financial Review*, "The key thing is he has left the illusions of the Left well behind him without becoming some sort of devotee of the worst type of capitalism."

And "aspiration" is back. Albanese has been telling anyone who will listen, "One of the things about the suburbs is the issue of aspiration. People do aspire to improve their living standards, their wages, and they do want more opportunities for their kids."

Leadership bid or not, Anthony Albanese has been making peace with the right for quite a while. In 2018, in the Gough Whitlam Oration, when it seemed possible that Bill Shorten might be in trouble as Labor leader, he made an early pitch to the right, "Successful Labor Governments collaborate with unions, the business sector and civil society to achieve positive outcomes in the national interest."

Albanese, who once boasted, "I like fighting Tories. That's what I do," had soothing words for the corporate world, "We respect and celebrate the importance of individual enterprise and the efforts and importance of the business community."

In 2015, at Labor's national conference, Albanese had opposed turning back asylum boats, "because he himself could not turn back an asylum seeker boat at sea." By July 2018 he told Sky News that he agreed that the Coalition's policies "have stopped the boats". He also rejected calls to put a time limit on offshore detention, and reiterated Labor's policy that asylum seekers who came by boat would not be allowed to settle in Australia.

In 2013 when there was a contest between Shorten and Albanese for the Labor leadership, Albanese asserted there were no policy differences between them. He was just the candidate with, "more experience and the best able to end divisions."

Anthony Albanese is not the first Labor Left leader to make peace with the party machine and the system. In recent times, Julia Gillard, Anna Bligh and Peter Garrett have all ditched



Above: New federal Labor leader and left faction heavyweight Anthony Albanese

any left credentials they once had to become loyal servants. Albanese has gone the same way.

"The ALP suffers from the absence of a Left", so wrote promi-

nent party critic Rodney Cavalier, a one-time NSW Labor government minister, in 2010.

Albanese has done his bit to make sure that nothing's changed.

Greens hold seats but pitch to Liberal voters

AGAINST EXPECTATIONS, The Greens held their seats at the election, winning a Senator in each state and re-electing Adam Bandt in Melbourne. Their Senate vote increased in Queensland and South Australia in particular. This was an indication of the desire for more serious change than Labor was offering, on climate change in particular.

But leader Richard Di Natale ran a campaign that focused on trying to win votes in wealthy and middle class areas around issues like Adani.

In Victoria, the party's focus seats included blue ribbon Liberal areas in Higgins and Kooyong, where The Greens ran high profile barrister Julian Burnside. Di Natale summed up the logic by saying, "people in seats like Kooyong, traditional Liberal voters, want action on climate change".

Their hopes of picking up new lower house seats did not eventuate. In other target seats including Wills, Cooper and Grayndler, The Greens' vote declined.

And the focus on winning over Liberal voters will lead The Greens away from emphasising policies such as union rights and taxing the rich that turn off wealthy Liberals.

By contrast the party failed to see the importance of the union Change the Rules campaign. So while The Greens had very good

policies on industrial relations on paper, the issue was almost completely absent from their campaign.

And the way The Greens often depict Labor and the Liberals as just the same does nothing to help win over unionists and working class Labor voters.

With over 1.1 million voters in the lower house, The Greens could play a significant role in building and championing union struggles and social movements outside of parliament. But The Greens have moved a long way from their social movement roots as a radical force campaigning to shift politics.

Federal leader Richard Di Natale's focus is almost exclusively on parliament. When he outlined the party's achievements during the election campaign he simply pointed to parliamentary motions on marriage equality, the Banking Royal Commission and the refugee Medevac Bill.

Instead of a force shaking up the political status quo his appeal to Labor was for a repeat of the disastrous period of the Gillard Labor government when the party struck an alliance with The Greens, saying, "I would hope Shorten would show the maturity that Julia Gillard demonstrated".

But the left's future lies opposing the increasingly distrusted political system, not in helping to run it.

Anthony Albanese has been making peace with the right for quite a while

Election shows why climate action must be a fight for jobs

By Adam Adelpour

THIS WAS supposed to be the climate election. The waves of school climate strikes and a growing mood for climate action looked to have Morrison on the ropes. He told school students not to strike for climate, and they defied him—twice.

But the election result was a heavy blow that has left many supporters of climate action reeling.

The media, Scott Morrison and Labor leaders have all drawn similar conclusions. According to them, the election result proves that climate action is electoral poison in blue collar areas dependent on mining and is of little interest amongst the working class elsewhere. By positioning themselves as supporters of climate action—and equivocating on Adani—Labor supposedly pandered to inner city “elites” at the expense of their blue collar base.

At first glance this seems credible. Queensland was a disaster for Labor, with swings against it in regional seats they had hoped to win like Capricornia, Dawson and Flynn over the issue of Adani and mining jobs. Labor also lost seats it held in Longman and Herbert.

Much of the swing went to One Nation and Clive Palmer. And in the seat of Hunter in NSW mining country, Labor saw a catastrophic 10 per cent swing against it and only held the seat by a thread.

It wasn't just mining areas that indicated a class divide over climate action.

Rich areas seemed to respond most strongly to a call for action to stop global warming. A campaign focused heavily on climate saw independent Zali Stegall topple Tony Abbott in the wealthy North Sydney seat of Warringah.

Similarly, the ALP tended to get swings towards it in affluent areas, partly on the basis of its climate policy.

Analysis of booth by booth swings in Sydney shows that the ALP gained most in wealthy Liberal party seats in the North and East. There were a comparatively large number of swings against the ALP in the more working class south and west of the city.

But the conclusion that climate action is a middle class issue is completely wrong. In reality, the election result reflects the weakness



Above: Bob Brown's Stop Adani convoy only inflamed support for mining projects in Queensland

of Labor's policy and the fact that the prevailing strategy in the climate movement is devoid of class politics.

No plan for jobs

While leaving open the possibility of stopping Adani, Labor had no serious plan for alternative jobs for coal mining areas.

Its Just Transitions Authority, allocated a paltry \$15 million over four years, dealt only with workers in coal power stations.

And the overwhelming focus of climate NGOs on stopping Adani is a problem in itself. A narrow anti-coal focus makes it impossible to address working class concerns about jobs in areas dependent on mining.

The default response of the Stop Adani campaign in the face of concerns about jobs was to dismissively point to how few jobs the project creates. But most campaigners see stopping Adani as a step to stopping all new coal projects in the Galilee basin, and phasing out coal mining completely. It's ludicrous to pretend this wouldn't kill job prospects.

Bob Brown's "stop Adani convoy" before the election was a disaster. It charged into coal mining areas with an arrogant indifference to concerns about jobs and handed the initiative to the right to go on a pro-mining offensive.

The endorsement of Zali Stegall by a section of school strikers was another example of the campaign being on the wrong side of the class divide. Stegall said she would support

a Liberal government in the case of a hung parliament.

Only a pro-jobs climate movement that draws in significant working class support can succeed. The demand for direct government investment in 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030 has to be raised alongside the call for a just transition.

This means guaranteed re-training and new, public sector jobs for mining workers with no reduction in pay and conditions.

It will also require detailed regional transition plans for mining areas that sees them re-developed to produce green energy infrastructure, technology and transport necessary to slash emissions.

The Greens did talk about the need to fund a transition for coal communities.

But unless there is a movement that workers can see is seriously fighting for jobs these plans seem abstract and unbelievable.

The election shock will open up space to argue for the demands necessary for real climate action. Following the election result, the National Union of Workers released a statement calling for a just transition, climate jobs and a Green New Deal.

But good demands alone won't be enough. We also need a movement that uses working class power to force through real change against the will of big business.

The kind of inspiring climate strikes we saw earlier this year need to take up pro-worker demands and spread from the schools to workplaces.

.....
Labor had no serious plan for alternative jobs for coal mining areas

New campaign fights to decriminalise abortion in NSW

By Caitlin Doyle

A NEW lobbying group, the Pro-Choice Alliance, formed by 60 medical and health organisations around NSW, has shone a light on the state's archaic and sexist abortion laws.

The Alliance, which includes the Human Rights Law Centre, NSW Nurses and Midwives Association and Domestic Violence NSW, will campaign to remove abortion from the state's criminal code. The campaign was prompted by changes to abortion law in Queensland last year, where the Termination of Pregnancy Bill removed the procedure from the criminal code.

NSW is the only state in Australia where abortion remains a crime, except in cases where the life or wellbeing of the mother is threatened. While prosecutions are rare, the threat remains.

In 2017 a woman in Sydney was prosecuted after she bought drugs online for a medical abortion.

Women in NSW sometimes have to travel interstate when they have been denied an abortion locally.

This is particularly the case for women in rural and regional areas where doctors might be personally known to the woman or are anti-choice.

The situation is especially horrific when a woman is carrying a foetus that has not developed properly or is unlikely to survive. In these cases, where there is no direct threat to the physical or mental health of the mother, the woman must face a panel of doctors and administrators to request an abortion.

This process is often drawn out and traumatic, and women sometimes have to wait up to two weeks to even be seen by the panel.

Many pro-choice advocates had been banking on Labor victories at both a state and federal level. Labor had laid out plans to amend the law in NSW and expand access to abortion, which remains expensive and is largely confined to private clinics. Instead, advocates are facing conservative, largely anti-choice Coalition state and federal governments.

While NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has said she is pro-choice and would allow a conscience vote on a private member's bill, her government announced in March that they had no plans to remove abortion from



Above:
Protesting for
decriminalisation of
abortion

.....
**NSW is the
only state
in Australia
where abortion
remains a
crime**

the Crimes Act.

After the frightening attack on women's reproductive rights in Trump's America, with the states of Georgia and Alabama outlawing abortion altogether, the question of a woman's right to decide has again come to the fore, and shows that hard-won rights can be rolled back.

But pro-choice advocates in NSW cannot rely on the conscience of sexist Liberal and National MPs to win the right to choose.

This will require a mass campaign that goes beyond lobbying and forces the state to relinquish its control over women's bodies and give it back to women themselves.

Teachers fight NAPLAN at Mount Alexander

THERE HAS been more criticism of NAPLAN after outages disrupted this year's online tests. State governments are continuing to push to replace it.

AEU members at Mount Alexander College first took a stand against NAPLAN and standardised testing back in October 2018, passing a motion to refuse to administer NAPLAN in 2019.

The school has recently revolutionised its curriculum to put student choice and empowerment at the centre of subject selection. NAPLAN and standardised testing has become more and more alien to the values of the school. Students are not objects to be measured and categorised to check on their teachers' classroom practice. When the Victorian State government proposed extending standardised literacy and numeracy testing to Year 11 and Year 12, and the NAPLAN online tests malfunctioned, AEU members decided to take a stand. Union activists in each staff room patiently explained the issues and the sub-branch was confident.

At the end of 2018, 11 teachers (out of around 40) found other jobs and the school had to recruit 13 new teachers to replace them. The Principal himself then moved schools. The sub-branch met again to test the waters in a substantially changed workplace. The new Principal attended the AEU meeting. In her presence the sub-branch again endorsed refusing to administer NAPLAN.

AEU Vice President Merino

D'Ortenzio then came to the school. While sympathising with anger about standardised testing, he argued against our action because of the dangers of disciplinary action and said that it could harm the AEU's Fair Funding election campaign. He also said there were signs that other sub-branches do not feel the way Mount Alexander College does. The one school that basically doesn't administer NAPLAN (Spensely St Primary) did so by encouraging parents to withdraw their children from it, he said.

In the face of this, and knowing that practically the ban would fall on the shoulders of younger, graduate teachers, AEU members decided to back down.

But the struggle against NAPLAN will continue.

AEU members at Mount Alexander College have resolved to reach out to the parent community through the School Council and perhaps organising information forums. We will need to address parent concern about having information about how their children are progressing at school, in addition to convincing them to withdraw their children from NAPLAN.

Solidarity and action at a school level can beat harmful standardised testing. The opposition to NAPLAN is growing. Solidarity and support from parents and students will also be crucial to giving teachers the confidence to implement bans. We need to take control of our education and classrooms through our own action.

More Black deaths in custody as police inflict brutal trauma

By Jasmine Ali

IN APRIL, the family of proud Yorta Yorta woman Tanya Day led a vigil to mark 26 years since the release of the landmark report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Most recommendations from the report have not been implemented and there have been a shocking 411 Black deaths in custody since it was released.

Tanya Day died in a police cell at Castlemaine police station in 2017. Police picked Day off a train and put her in a cell under the Victorian government’s public drunkenness law. The autopsy report reveals that Day’s death was the result of a head injury sustained when she fell in the cell.

The criminalisation of public drunkenness was explicitly identified by the Royal Commission as contributing to high rates of Black deaths in custody.

The Andrews Labor government has refused to act on calls for decriminalisation, a reform passed years ago in most other jurisdictions. Disgracefully, Andrews has just committed \$1.8 billion for an expansion of prisons, including a giant new jail north of Geelong.

Drawing a crowd of 200 people, the vigil in Atherton Gardens lit candles to mark every death in custody, then marched down Brunswick Street to Fitzroy Police station. Protestors projected images onto the station and defiantly chanted, “they say accident, we say murder”.

Advocates for the family have applied for the coronial inquest to consider “systematic racism” a factor in Day’s death, arguing that non-Indigenous people are drunk in public all the time but are not arrested.

The Human Rights Law Centre described systemic racism as, “rules—spoken and unspoken—by which these institutions run that perpetuate the unfair and harmful treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since colonisation”. This would be the first time such a factor would be considered in a coronial inquest in Australia.

Just before the anniversary vigil in Melbourne, news broke about Cherdeena Wynne, another Aboriginal woman who died after an extensive ordeal with WA police. In a case of “mistaken identity”—racial profiling—police handcuffed and brutalised



Above: Tanya Day’s daughter Belinda Stevens with her brother Warren and sister Apryl outside the coronial hearing
Photo: Charandev Singh

Wynne in her mother’s house at 3.30am, while looking for a different Aboriginal woman.

Wynne fled the house after the ordeal, only to have a second violent encounter with police. Paramedics took her to the hospital where she died five days later.

These two deaths illustrate how the horrific trauma of police violence is relived through generations of Aboriginal families.

Tanya Day’s late uncle Harrison Day also died in police custody. He was arrested for not paying a fine for public drunkenness and his death was examined by the Royal Commission. Similarly, Cherdeena Wynne’s father in WA, Warren Cooper, died 20 years ago while in a WA police watch house.

Queensland

The Palaszczuk government is also under pressure from Aboriginal activists about the brutality of the Queensland police, particularly against young people.

In May, the families and supporters of 16-year-old Jaylen Close Armstrong and 17-year-old Rayshaun Carr marched in Toowoomba, Queensland. Police say the boys died driving a stolen car that rolled into a creek earlier this year. But the families deny the boys stole the car and allege foul play by the police.

In response to the protest, a police spokesperson threatened the families through the media, saying they would be arrested for blocking traffic. Supporters are waiting on a decision by the coroner as to whether the crash

will be investigated as a death in custody.

Also in May, a demonstration was held in Brisbane after ABC Four Corners exposed the brutal treatment of children, mostly Aboriginal, in Queensland police watch houses. Children as young as ten have been kept for up to a month in maximum-security cells in breach of clear policies.

At all these demonstrations, activists have highlighted the deeply-entrenched patterns of over-incarceration, over-policing and intense racial profiling of Aboriginal communities—patterns forged through colonial occupation from 1788 that remain lethal today.

Liberals on the attack

While state Labor governments shut the doors in the face of families seeking justice, the re-election of a Morrison government federally is set to intensify the crises facing Aboriginal communities.

Racist rhetoric has already ramped up since the election, with Liberal Minister Alan Tudge claiming the biggest issue facing Indigenous communities is “chronic alcohol abuse fuelled by the welfare dollar” and flagging further expansion of the punitive Cashless Debit Card.

In the budget released in the lead up the election, the Liberals rolled all funding for Aboriginal Legal Services into the “mainstream” Legal Aid funding stream provided to state governments. This leaves the future existence of these vital services at the whim of potentially hostile state governments.

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Tanya Day’s late uncle Harrison Day also died in police custody

Jokowi wins Indonesian election after cave in to religious conservatism

By Vivian Honan

INCUMBENT JOKO Widodo (Jokowi) has claimed victory in the Indonesian presidential election against Prabowo Subianto. Jokowi won 55.6 per cent of the vote, slightly higher than in the 2014 election.

Both sides sought to court and encourage a growing Islamic conservatism, while announcing very little in terms of policy that would actually improve the lives of ordinary Indonesians. This highlights the need for an Indonesian working class alternative.

Many Indonesians celebrated Jokowi's victory in 2014 as he came from outside the corrupt elite. His image as a technocratic populist who would improve public services contrasted with Prabowo, a former army officer, now wealthy businessman, who has suggested his desire to reinstall an authoritarian regime.

In December 2018, Prabowo addressed the 212 rally organised by the conservative Islamic forces that had successfully campaigned for the prosecution for blasphemy of then-Jakarta governor Ahok, a Christian of Chinese descent.

Rather than stand against the fearmongering, Jokowi sought to accommodate it. He chose as his running mate Ma'ruf Amin, the chairman of Indonesia's Ulama Council (MUI) and the leader of Nahdlatul Ulama—Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation. Amin has supported banning the activities of the minority religious group, Ahmadiyah, and called for the criminalisation of LGBT relationships.

While many Indonesians saw Jokowi as the "lesser evil", for the last five years he has eroded democracy. Human rights issues that Jokowi promised to address, such as the mass killings in 1965 and the abuses in 1998, remain unresolved. Extrajudicial killings continue in West Papua where a new military operation was launched in December 2018. A new law was introduced in 2017 to disband organisations considered to be against the state ideology and constitution.

Unions have had their ability to organise further hampered by the introduction in 2015 of a regulation determining wage increases. This replaces the tripartite model in which unions were able to use their industrial power to win significant wage rises. To win unions' support, Prabowo promised to repeal it, while Jokowi has said he



Above: Jokowi with his running mate, Ma'ruf Amin

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Rather than stand against the fearmongering, Jokowi sought to accommodate

will reform it. While two major union confederations supported Jokowi, another supported Prabowo, and a smaller grouping called for abstention.

The unions have been able to exert some influence, but their own decline in militancy and the shelving of plans to launch a political party have left their membership open to influence by conservative religious forces. While mass strikes in 2012 saw workers in industrial areas unite across unions, ethnicities and religions to demand higher wages and an end to outsourcing jobs, there has since been a retreat in struggle.

The challenge for the left is to rebuild the struggle and class unity in the face of the growing religious conservatism.

Modi victory means religious and caste minorities under threat in India

HARD RIGHT prime minister Narendra Modi and his BJP party have been re-elected by a landslide in India's general election.

The result is a disaster for the poor and also for religious and caste minorities—and it will make the world a more dangerous place.

Modi's BJP uses Hindu nationalism and deliberately fans the flames of communal violence. His supporters say India's 200 million Muslim citizens are the "enemy within" and target them with allegations that include molesting Hindu women and eating cow's meat—an animal Hindus regard as sacred.

Mixed religion couples are also threatened, with BJP supporters alleging they are part of "love Jihad" aimed at undermining the "essential Hindu character of the nation".

From these rumours come riots in which Muslims are targeted and beaten, and sometimes killed.

Officially, Modi is against such outbursts. Privately, he knows they solidify his support.

Modi is all too keen to threaten war with Pakistan too. Earlier this year, after a terrorist attack in the disputed Kashmir region killed scores of Indian soldiers, he ordered airstrikes inside Pakistan, putting both nuclear-armed countries on red alert.

Alongside the BJP's distraction campaign of intimidation and division, its economic policies have made the rich and the middle classes far wealthier. Indian economic

growth rates are among the highest in the world.

But the lives of richer Indians are increasingly detached from the poor majority. Unemployment is the highest it has been since the 1970s.

This should have allowed the Indian National Congress party to make gains. But as a centre ground political force, entirely dependent on the Gandhi family name for its success, Congress is fading fast.

It had one of its worst ever performances. Party leader Rahul Gandhi lost his seat—previously held by his mother, father and uncle.

The other big election casualties are the Communists.

Twenty years ago Communists won more than 30 parliamentary seats and were one of the biggest opposition parties. They ran the crucial state of West Bengal and were regularly in government in Kerala.

Now for the first time in its history the CPIM party has won not a single seat in West Bengal, and looks likely to get only two in Kerala.

The left should have been able to take advantage of huge social movements involving women and students, as well as a general strike that involved tens of millions of workers.

While Indian Communists have been ever more focused on trying to win elections, struggles outside parliament are regarded as secondary. Now they are paying the price.

Socialist Worker UK

Venezuelan coup collapses, but dangers remain for Maduro

By James Supple

JUAN GUAIDO'S farcical coup attempt in Venezuela collapsed within hours. But the threat remains—as the crisis in the country continues and the US continues its sabre rattling against the left-wing government of Nicholas Maduro.

Guaido has become the figurehead of the right-wing opposition, who are determined to put the country's wealthy back in power and reverse the "Bolivarian revolution" begun by former President Hugo Chavez in 1999. Guaido declared himself "interim president" in January with the backing of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, after Chavez's successor Nicholas Maduro was sworn in for his second term as president.

Guaido was joined by a handful of soldiers outside the Carlota military base in Caracas to declare that he was taking power on 30 April. Alongside him was right-wing protest figurehead Leopoldo Lopez, who had been released from house arrest by guards. They called on Venezuelans to march on the presidential palace. Thousands did, but the crowd was quickly dispersed by the army.

Within hours Lopez had fled to the Columbian embassy to seek asylum, and top generals had all declared their continuing support for Maduro.

In the aftermath, Trump's National Security Advisor John Bolton claimed that Venezuela's Defence Minister and Supreme Court Chief Justice had been ready to join the plot, withdrawing at the last minute. Others claimed the coup attempt had been launched prematurely after fears it had been uncovered.

One senior military figure, head of intelligence General Manuel Cristopher Figuera, has been replaced amid rumours of involvement in the coup attempt. An open letter in his name warned Maduro that, "many people you trust are negotiating behind your back."

For now, the debacle has weakened the opposition. But Venezuela's economy remains in freefall, with declining oil revenues and skyrocketing inflation. US sanctions are also depriving ordinary people of vital medicines, food and other imports—and costing the government at least \$6 billion in oil income.

Venezuela's crisis is not a failure of socialism. The majority of the country's economy has remained in the hands of the wealthy. But it shows



Above: Left-wing Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro

the problems with relying on change from the top down using the existing state. There is widespread corruption within Maduro's government, which has mismanaged the economy and has

no solution to the crisis.

Only an effort to take control of society from below through a mass movement of workers and the poor can change the outcome.

Caster Semenya, sport and sex tests

"HELL NO." This was the response from two time Olympic champion Caster Semenya after the IAAF, the athletics governing body, ruled that she would need to take testosterone lowering medication to continue to compete in the women's division of her two best events.

Semenya is hyperandrogenic, meaning she has naturally elevated testosterone levels higher than those of most women.

Comparisons have rightly been made between Semenya and Michael Phelps, whose naturally lower levels of lactic acid were accepted without question as a fair natural advantage. But testosterone is politicised by its association with gender.

To compel anyone to take hormone altering medication against their wishes is outrageous, and it is especially telling that the backlash to Semenya's case from the conservative press has been non-existent despite years of media hysteria surrounding trans children consensually accessing hormone treatment. It is clear that the problem is not hormone medication itself, but the deep entrenchment of the gender binary in our institutions.

This isn't just about hormones either. The same relentless gender interrogations were levelled at trans AFLW player Hannah Mouncey last year, despite her meeting all the

AFL's testing criteria.

Racism is tied up in Semenya's case too: we've seen that it doesn't take a blood test for successful black athletes to have their womanhood called into question. In 2014 the head of the Russian Tennis Federation referred to Venus and Serena Williams as "The Williams Brothers".

Semenya's case is a result not just of ideas about gender being socially determined. It's also clearer than ever that biological sex is not binary either. We've known for some time that there is room for significant variance between a person's chromosome makeup and other perceived sex indicators like genitalia and hormone levels.

In elite sport, of course, that binary is not going anywhere fast. And we will need to continue to stand with trans athletes, intersex athletes, and all athletes who have their gender called into question.

But this has implications beyond sport. Together with the science, we can look to a socialist vision which understands that many of the distinctions between male and female are arbitrary and can be dissolved. It's a vision in which, as Russian socialist Alexandra Kollontai wrote, "a great universal family of workers will develop" and all genders "will above all be comrades".

Matilda Fay

Venezuela's crisis is not a failure of socialism. The majority of the economy has remained in the hands of the wealthy.

BOB HAWKE— AUSTRALIA'S THATCHER

Bob Hawke has been lauded for his consensus politics, but he waged a brutal assault on unions and Labor's own working class supporters, argues **Ian Rintoul**

CONCEDING DEFEAT on election night, Bill Shorten said, "I wish we could have done it for Bob". But Bob Hawke, who died just before the election, was more responsible than anyone for Labor's loss of support amongst its working class base, and the decline of union membership.

There is a reason that Hawke was lauded across the political spectrum, including by the Murdoch press: Hawke was Australia's Margaret Thatcher. Hawke's "economic rationalism" was an early version of what is now known, and condemned, as "neo-liberalism."

The tributes have celebrated Hawke as a man who brought unions and business together and introduced reforms that ensured Australia's prosperity. But his Prices and Incomes Accord was a blatant wage-cutting exercise. Hawke shackled the unions while his reforms boosted corporate profits.

The floating of the dollar, financial deregulation, privatisation and labour market deregulation dramatically shifted wealth away from workers in favour of big business.

This set the scene for subsequent Labor governments' slavish embrace of the market.

Even before entering parliament, Bob Hawke had a bad reputation as head of the ACTU. He was known as "the Fireman" because of his role in ending strikes and hosing down disputes. His first loyalty was to Australian capitalism.

Hawke took over as ACTU President in 1969, the year of the general strike to free jailed union official Clarrie O'Shea. Although rank and file struggle was on the rise, Hawke wanted to hold it back.

When Gough Whitlam was sacked as Prime Minister in 1975, workers spontaneously walked off the job around the country. But Hawke told them to go back to work, saying "don't strike, donate a day's pay to

Labor's election campaign". With workers demobilised, Labor lost the election to Malcolm Fraser.

Hawke has been lauded for introducing Medicare, but the story is not so straightforward. Medibank (as Medicare was then called) had been introduced by the Whitlam government. After his sacking by the Governor-General in 1975, Malcolm Fraser's Liberal government began dismantling Medibank.

Angry mass meetings of rank and file unionists pushed for Australia's first general strike in July 1976 to save Medibank. True to his reputation, Hawke spent the strike day playing tennis. What could have been a major victory over the Liberals was turned into a defeat that allowed Fraser to dismantle Medibank as a universal health care system.

As Prime Minister, Hawke re-introduced Medibank, now called Medicare, in 1984.

The Accords

Hawke came to power in 1983 with the Australian economy still in turmoil following the end of the post-war boom in the mid-1970s. The country had just experienced its second major recession in ten years. But the union movement remained strong, and was still capable of fighting for significant wage rises.

Hawke set out to break this. With the connivance of most union officials of the day, Hawke introduced the Prices and Incomes Accord, which imposed savage wage cuts far more effectively than any Liberal government could have done.

The Accord also ended the principle that wage rises should be tied to increases in the cost of living, instead demanding increases in productivity through changes that forced workers to work harder in return for pay increases.

Unions that opposed the wage-cutting Accord were savagely attacked.

.....
The Accord imposed savage wage cuts far more effectively than any Liberal government could have done

When the Builders Labourer's Federation (BLF) tried to break the Accord straitjacket, the Hawke government permanently deregistered the union in 1986, and collaborated with the bosses to drive the union out of the construction industry.

In 1989, Hawke used the RAAF to break the pilots' strike, when they attempted to get a wage rise outside the limits of the Accord.

With wages determined through the bureaucratic Accord process, there was no need to maintain shopfloor union organisation and militancy. This resulted in the beginning of the enormous decline in union membership as it dropped from almost 50 per cent of the workforce when Hawke came to power to 40 per cent by 1990 and 31 per cent in 1996.

The aim of all this was to restore big business profits, massively shifting the economy in favour of the bosses.

The wages share of the economy fell from 61.5 per cent when he took power to less than 55 per cent when Labor lost office, amounting to a transfer of \$50 billion from workers to the rich.

By the time Labor lost office in 1996, the average factory worker had lost \$100 a week in pay in real terms, and full-time workers were putting in two hours longer a week at work.

Over the same period Labor also slashed corporate tax by 16 per cent from 49 per cent to 33 per cent. This meant it had to hold down government spending and make cuts.

The Hawke Labor Government overturned Whitlam's system of free tertiary education and began gradually re-introducing university fees, finally introducing the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) in 1989.

His government forced through privatisation—including of Qantas and the Commonwealth Bank—and tax cuts for the rich.

Hawke's record on other issues

like foreign policy and Aboriginal rights was no better. In the lead up to his election, Hawke had promised Aboriginal people national land rights legislation, but backed down rather than challenge the mining companies and the Burke Labor government in Western Australia in 1984.

Bob Hawke attended the Barunga festival in the Northern Territory in June 1988 and promised a treaty with Aboriginal people by 1990. But that promise was discarded as quickly as the promise for national land rights.

Late in his life he was a strident advocate for establishing an international nuclear waste dump on Aboriginal land “to solve Indigenous poverty”.

Hawke was also a loyal supporter of US power, offering regular briefings to the US embassy on his Labor colleagues during the period of the Whitlam government. He was also stridently pro-Israel, even calling for the use of nuclear weapons in the event of war with Arab governments.

Bob Hawke took Australia into the First Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq alongside the US in 1990. He bragged about his personal relationship with George Bush Snr and his role in getting Canada to also commit to the war.

Managing capitalism

The Labor Party has always sought to work within the system. When capitalism is booming, it is sometimes prepared to offer reforms to improve people’s lives. But when capitalism faces crisis, it ultimately sides with the bosses and imposes cuts in order to maintain corporate profits and nurse the system back to health.

This means that Labor governments end up attacking their own working class supporters.

For six weeks in May and June 1988, workers in the Department of Social Security (DSS) in Sydney fought against the Hawke government’s proposal to slash nearly 1200 jobs from the Department nationally.

The Hawke government sided more firmly with capitalism than even the Labor governments that had come before it.

Accepting the needs of capitalism meant abandoning many of the ideas Labor had once been associated with—from public ownership of assets to defence of the welfare state and increased government spending on services.

Hawke promised that the pain of the Accord would make workers better off in the long run by creating



Above: Bob Hawke meeting Margaret Thatcher

jobs and increasing the social wage. But after eight years of sacrifice workers were hit with another major recession beginning in 1990. Unemployment reached 11.25 per cent, and didn’t drop below 10 per cent until the middle of 1994.

By the time Hawke was removed as Prime Minister in 1991, his approval rating was down to 27 per cent.

The scale of the anger at Labor became obvious at the 1996 election, when the party was finally thrown out of office after 13 years in power.

Labor Senator Nick Sherry recalled that during the 1996 election mentioning neo-liberal buzzwords like “productivity” and “efficiency” around workers, was, “a good way to end your life”.

Hawke’s loyalty to capitalism never dimmed. As recently as 2014, as the union movement and community groups prepared to fight Tony Abbott, Hawke (and Keating) shamefully urged the Abbott Liberal government to slash spending and speedily repair the budget, boasting that they had made cuts worth \$30 billion in 1986.

The unions held gatherings to celebrate Hawke on the eve of the election. But Hawke spent his life upholding capitalism and holding back workers struggle, even attempting to break militant unions.

The Hawke government shows just how much Labor is committed to running capitalism. Bill Shorten had already promised to work “co-operatively and constructively with busi-

ness”. Shorten was suggesting holding a summit of business and unions after the election—not an actual Accord summit—but something similar.

Hawke’s endorsement of Shorten said that his background as union leader would be an asset, and that it would give him, “the experience to achieve consensus with business, unions and community-based organisations”. Anthony Albanese has also been trying to wrap himself in the legacy of Bob Hawke.

But the “consensus politics” of Bob Hawke meant that the interests of the working class were always subordinated to the interests of profit and the corporations.

The power to change the system does not lie in parliament. It still lies with the workers who walked off the job when Whitlam was sacked and with the builder’s labourers and the unionists who fought against de-registration of the BLF.

In the 1980s, handfults of socialists opposed Hawke’s Accord and the enterprise bargaining system that it led to. Now tens of thousands of workers understand that the system is broken.

“Voting Labor” was never going to be enough to challenge the inequality that is part and parcel of the capitalist system.

Over the next period we need to build socialist organisation and fan the flames of every bit of struggle—strikes, rallies, demonstrations—to fight for a society that puts human need before the profits of the bosses.

EXTINCTION REBELLION MANIFESTO HOW DO WE BUILD A CLIMATE MOVEMENT THAT WINS?

Extinction Rebellion’s founder, Roger Hallam, has published his ideas on how to build a movement that can win real change. **Sadie Robinson** responds

THE ONLY chance of stopping catastrophic climate change is with a “revolutionary transformation of our politics”, according to campaigner Roger Hallam.

Hallam is a co-founder of Extinction Rebellion (XR), the environmental group that is demanding action on climate change.

XR has pulled thousands and possibly tens of thousands of people into political activity in Britain and has inspired others here to launch protests using the same slogan.

Its mass occupations of sites in central London in April pushed climate change to the top of the political agenda.

XR managed to close major roads in the city for several days, defying police attempts to clear them.

And pressure from campaigners meant that the British parliament agreed to pass a motion acknowledging that we are facing a “climate emergency”.

The group demands that the government tell the truth about the climate emergency, reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2025 and set up a citizens’ assembly to oversee the changes.

XR has been a big success and the ideas of those behind it should be taken seriously. Hallam’s booklet, *Common Sense for the 21st Century*, looks at how to organise, what actions are most effective, and how to win real change.

He argues that whether we become extinct “largely depends upon whether revolutionary changes happen in the next decade”.

And he says that the focus must be on organising “mass participation civil disobedience”.

“We are looking at the slow and agonising suffering and death of billions of people,” writes Hallam. “The structural change we need has to happen too fast for a reformist strategy.”

Hallam argues that ordinary people, not politicians, must take charge. For him this means a “national citizens’ assembly” made up of people from across Britain.

He stresses the importance of “ordinary people seeing people like them (as opposed to activists) declaring a climate emergency”.

Forces in the way

It’s right to say that we need radical change to tackle climate change. And it’s heartening that activists are thinking about how to involve more working class people in the movement.

So what about the forces ranged against us—the fossil fuel industries, the rich and the governments that back them, and the repressive apparatus of the state? All are barriers to radical change. How do we overcome them?

Hallam says that people must take action for more than one day, should break the law and should be “strictly nonviolent”.

“After one or two weeks following this plan, the historical records show that a regime is highly likely to collapse or is forced to enact structural change,” he says.

This is too optimistic. Hallam says that mass civil disobedience forces the government to “agree with us or repress us”. He rightly points out that repression can provoke more people to take action.

But victory or repression aren’t

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Governments are expert at appearing to agree to demands only to backtrack once the heat is off

the only possible outcomes. Governments are expert at appearing to agree to demands only to backtrack once the heat is off. They may agree to some things but demand compromises in return.

Hallam says the movement won’t compromise. But there will be disagreements about what is an acceptable outcome. And if campaigns don’t seem to be making headway, some people can become disillusioned and drop out.

Repression doesn’t always push more people into activity—it can scare people off. Hallam doesn’t say how non-violent protesters should respond in such a situation.

The risk of repression comes across as remote, largely because of how Hallam treats the cops.

“A proactive approach to the police is an effective way of enabling mass civil disobedience,” he writes. Police may not be aggressive “as long as activists are civil and open with them”.

It can seem that the recent XR blockades in London back this up. But the broader history of social movements shows the opposite. Time after time it is police who initiate violence against protesters, not “violent” activists.

When people protested against the Poll Tax in 1989, cops on horses rode through the crowd without warning. Police infuriated people by arresting a disabled, non-violent, protester.

One marcher said, “I didn’t think the police hit people without a reason. But they came for people who were doing nothing.”

The police exist to protect the rich and their system. It’s dangerous to think they could be won over to sup-

porting or sympathising with our side.

The fact that cops didn't smash up the XR blockades probably has something to do with the big numbers of people involved—and the widespread support for them. But ultimately the cops did clear them.

Hallam makes repeated references to the need for revolutionary change. But he also focuses on operating within the current system.

So the citizens' assembly could be "set up in competition" with the government but "parliament would remain". Why? Because this would help win the "hearts and minds" of wider layers of people who don't want radical change.

So politicians who have failed for decades to tackle climate change would stay in place. So would the bosses and the rich.

Hallam says we should focus on governments because they make decisions. These decisions matter. Politicians can give the go-ahead to new fracking licences or they can refuse them.

They can fund public transport or cut it. They can invest in renewable energy or open a new coal-fired power plant.

But governments don't make the major decisions about how our economy is run. The big firms decide what is produced and how much, what materials are used and so on.

Real power lies in the hands of unelected and unaccountable top bosses, bankers and the rich. What about an economic revolution to tackle this ruling class?

Force for change

Presumably the citizens' assembly, if it gets underway, would make very good decisions.

It could instruct all firms to switch to using 100 percent renewable energy by a certain date, for example.

But how would it enforce such changes?

Revolutionary socialists see the working class as key to transforming the world.

Workers have a unique position in capitalism because they can switch off the flow of profit. They have the numbers and expertise to create and run a more democratic and sustainable society.

And they are repeatedly pushed to organise collectively to fend off attacks. All over the world, action by working class people has challenged rulers and regimes.

Strikes played a key role in the movement that forced out dictator



Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in 2011. And today strikes are deepening the crises for the regimes in Algeria and Sudan, where dictators have again been toppled.

Workers can stop the system in its tracks. But Hallam fears that taking action that hits profits is "highly polarising".

So he advocates appealing to the right-wing press by framing the climate crisis in terms of "order, security and legacy". And he describes a "massive opportunity to build up right wing support".

"Words like honour, duty, tradition, nation and legacy should be used at every opportunity," says Hallam.

It seems he thinks that, if we stop right wingers from stifling the movement at the start, it can become unstoppable.

But promoting ideas such as "national pride" encourages divisions that ultimately weaken us.

"The rebellion has to morph at the last moment into a general rebellion," says Hallam. This will take argument and organisation. Pandering to the right, who will fight to limit the radical change we need, makes winning this harder.

Working class people and the poor have the most to gain from fighting climate change.

Environmental catastrophe hits

Above: In Britain, thousands have joined Extinction Rebellion's protests over climate change

poorer people hardest. Meanwhile the ruling class benefits from the unsustainable system.

Could we have a revolution where working class people took control of production and society as a whole?

Hallam sees attempts to create socialist societies as having failed—"been there and done that!"

He blames a "lack of post-revolution planning". The Bolsheviks who led the Russian Revolution in 1917 had a plan. They argued for workers' councils to run the new society and they knew that the revolution would have to spread internationally to survive.

The revolution didn't fail due to lack of planning. It failed because capitalist armies from across the globe invaded and helped to fight a bloody counter-revolution.

And revolutionary parties elsewhere weren't strong enough to lead successful uprisings, leaving Russia isolated.

The defeat of revolutions isn't inevitable. But climate chaos is inevitable if capitalism continues. And workers remain the only force capable of overthrowing it and ushering in a sustainable world.

Socialist Worker UK

Common Sense for the 21st Century by Roger Hallam is online at www.rogerhallam.com

FORGING UNITY IN THE STRUGGLE

The Communist International, founded 100 years ago, was the scene of rich debates about how socialists can work in common struggle with other parties, writes **Lachlan Marshall**

THE LIBERALS' re-election poses the challenge of resisting new attacks on unions and continuing to demand action on climate change and refugees.

How can radicals and revolutionaries reach out and work alongside others, while maintaining their own radical principles? The experience of the Communist International, established out of the wave of revolutions and mass struggles following the First World War, holds invaluable lessons.

The key policy it developed on this was the united front. There were extensive debates as it tried to put the idea into practice.

Its aim was to unite working class and oppressed people to combat a common threat, whether it be racism, employers or state power.

The Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote in March 1922 that, "the working masses sense the need of unity in action, of unity in resisting the onslaught of capitalism or unity in taking the offensive against it."

The united front was designed to mobilise the working class in struggle, not simply unite groups in an election pact or broad cross-class alliances.

It advocated the, "greatest possible unity of all workers' organisations in every practical action against the united capitalists."

At the same time it was conceived as a way to win workers away from reformist leaders towards revolutionary politics, through demonstrating that revolutionary socialists were the most effective builders of the struggle.

So revolutionary socialists should maintain "absolute autonomy" and "freedom in presenting their point of view."

The Comintern

The Comintern grouped together revolutionary socialist parties, many of them hundreds of thousands strong, that had sprung up rapidly as the working class radicalised following the war.

The united front was debated at the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921. It was a response to a problem for the new radical movement.

By 1920 the immediate prospects of revolution had receded. The working class movement was now divided between the reformist parties of the Second International who had supported the war and new parties formed through splits—either the Communist parties of the Third International, or "centrist" parties that stood apart from both.

The Communist Parties, despite a mass membership of often hundreds of thousands, remained a minority inside the working class.

The betrayal of the reformist leaders, the equivalent of today's Labor Party, who had backed their respective ruling classes and sent millions of workers into the slaughter of the First World War was still fresh.

Yet the leaders of the Comintern argued that the new Communist Parties had to seek unity in action with the reformists, using the united front.

Trotsky explained that, "If the [Communist] party embraces one-third or one-half of the proletarian vanguard, then the remaining half or two-thirds are organised by the reformists or centrists. It is perfectly obvious, however, that even those workers who still support the reformists and the centrists are vitally interested in maintaining the highest material standards of living and the greatest possible freedom for struggle... the party must assume the initiative in securing unity in these current struggles.

"Only in this way will the party draw closer to those two-thirds who do not as yet follow its leadership, who do not as yet trust the party because they do not understand it."

This approach was attacked by ultra-left delegates at the congress. The Italian, French and Spanish Communist parties rejected the united front.

But Trotsky also made it clear that

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It was also a way to win workers away from reformist leaders towards revolutionary politics

entering a united front did not mean that revolutionaries should sacrifice their ability to break with the reformist leaders and act independently:

"In entering into agreements with other organisations, we naturally obligate ourselves to a certain discipline in action. But this discipline cannot be absolute in character.

"In the event that the reformists begin putting brakes on the struggle to the obvious detriment of the movement and act counter to the situation and the moods of the masses, we as an independent organisation always reserve the right to lead the struggle to the end, and this without our temporary semi-allies."

Such an approach would allow the Communist Parties to win over larger numbers of workers to revolutionary politics.

The German Communists

The United Front policy was put to the test in the German revolution.

In November 1918, revolution toppled the German Kaiser, ending the First World War. The role of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in restoring capitalist order prompted revolutionaries to split and set up the German Communist Party (KPD).

Deep enmity existed between the KPD and the SPD. In January 1919 the SPD government ordered the murder of communist leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. But despite this crime, communist unity with the social democrats remained necessary.

Reformism, expressed in support for the SPD, was much more deeply rooted in Germany than it had been in Russia, where workers took power in the socialist revolution of October 1917.

As the revolutionary struggle subsided, there was an attempted military coup in March 1920 known as the Kapp Putsch.

The coup was defeated through a series of general strikes uniting

revolutionary and reformist workers in joint actions.

A KPD member described events in Stuttgart: “We did not then have any theory of united front, comrades. But our party organisation, that of the old Spartacus League, instinctively applied this policy when there was a demonstration against inflation and a strike against a 10 per cent deduction from wages.”

This fighting unity forged out of the struggle against the Kapp Putsch strengthened the revolutionary left. In late 1920 a majority of the centrist Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) merged with the KPD, resulting in a Communist Party 400,000 strong.

In January 1921 the KPD addressed an open letter to the leaders of the workers’ parties (primarily the SPD and USPD) and trade unions. It called for united action to fight for the preservation of working class living standards, to demand, “the minimum that the proletariat must have now in order not to perish.”

All the leaders rejected the proposal, but there was a groundswell of support from rank and file party members for the communist initiative.

In 1922 the Comintern’s Fourth Congress supported the KPD’s approach in the open letter as an example of the united front.

However, this progress was squandered. An ultra-left faction of the KPD developed a “theory of the offensive,” which aimed for the immediate seizure of state power. This faction became increasingly influential in the party.

In March 1921, following a government provocation, the KPD called for an insurrectionary general strike. A tiny minority of workers responded to it, and the strike was crushed. In the wake of this fiasco the KPD lost half its membership.

A decade later it was the failure of the communists to apply the united front that allowed the Nazis to take power. A united front of social democratic and communist workers opposing the Nazis could have stopped Hitler.

However, by the 1930s the Comintern had become a tool for Russian foreign policy. The KPD, like other Communist parties, followed “Third Period” policy, which labelled social democrats as “social fascists.” This ruled out any possibility of unity against the common threat of fascism.

When the Nazis took power they murdered and imprisoned communist



and social democratic workers alike.

Italy

Workers in Italy faced a similar threat. The years 1919 and 1920 are known as the Two Red Years in Italy. During this time Italy teetered on the edge of revolution, with workers in the industrial north involved in strikes, factory occupations and in some cases workers’ councils.

With this breakdown in capitalist order, sections of the ruling class decided to wage a violent assault on the organisations of the working class. Benito Mussolini’s fascists offered themselves as the force capable of destroying the threat of revolution and protecting the bosses’ system.

The fascist threat demanded a united response from the left and the working class. As the Bolshevik Nikolai Bukharin warned, “In a country where fascists are shooting down the workers, where the entire land is burning, the mere existence of the fascist organisation is enough for us to say to workers: ‘Let us unite to strike down this riffraff’.”

Anti-fascist defence guards composed of workers emerged to fight off violent attacks by fascists, but the ultra-left Italian Communist Party refused to unite with other sections of the working class.

With the workers divided, the fascists were able to take control of the streets, smash workers’ organisations

Above: Workers in Italy formed anti-fascist defence groups called the Arditi del popolo in 1921, but the ultra-left Communist Party refused to take part

and ultimately seize state power.

The King appointed Mussolini prime minister of Italy in 1922 and the workers’ movement was suppressed for the next two decades.

Today the Australian left does not confront an organised fascist movement on the scale of Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. But for revolutionary activists involved in building struggle the underlying approach of the united front retains all its relevance.

There is a desperate need to build a united front to combat the racist policies of the Liberal government, to fight for climate action and win the right to strike.

Trotsky saw the united front as applicable in a broad range of contexts: “Just as the trade union is the rudimentary form of the united front in the economic struggle, so the soviet is the highest form of the united front under the conditions in which the proletariat enters the epoch of fighting for power.”

Most workers still hold to reformist ideas and organisations, as expressed in the vote for Labor by unionists. But in order to successfully challenge the re-elected Liberal government, we need campaigns that involve Greens and Labor voters as well as revolutionaries.

Revolutionaries can only convince large numbers workers of the need to overthrow capitalism by fighting alongside them in united fronts.

NEW MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS— FIGHT OFFSHORE DETENTION

By Ian Rintoul

ALTHOUGH THE Liberal government made a big show of re-opening the Christmas Island detention centre in the lead-up to the election, refugees were hardly mentioned during the campaign. There is little difference between Labor and Liberals' offshore detention policies. Yet Labor's election loss has hit refugees and asylum seekers very hard.

There were big expectations that a Labor government would get people off Manus and Nauru, although they never actually said where they would go.

For those onshore, Labor had promised to turn the temporary protection visas into permanent visas, to restore funding for legal services advising asylum seekers as well as the SRSS funding to support asylum seekers living in the community; and to end the fast track refugee process of assessing (and mostly rejecting) protection applications—to name just the most important matters.

The election loss has resulted in another wave of despair on Manus Island and Nauru. In the weeks before the election the incidence of attempted suicide and self-harm had already been climbing. But in just a few days after the election, as many as 12 refugees on Manus have self-harmed or attempted suicide, as their last hopes flickered out.

The prospect of another three years, separated from families, with no future and no security, is just too much.

The attempted suicides are the most graphic indication of the urgency that confronts the refugee movement. Morrison declared that one of the first acts of a re-elected Liberal government would be to repeal the Medevac Bill. Morrison may not have the numbers in the Senate to do so but we should expect that Christmas Island will close just the same.

The medical transfers under the Medevac Act have been very slow. Prior to the election, there was a very deliberate decision to limit the



Above: A refugee on Manus Island receives medical attention

numbers of medical transfers on the basis that a large number of applications might give Morrison a propaganda advantage. Referring doctors in Australia have effectively limited numbers by placing a very high medical threshold on applications; something that needs to change if the numbers of medical transfers are going to increase.

Despite this, some people have been successfully transferred, and as detention makes more people even sicker, inevitably more people will come off.

Keep up the fight

Neither Manus nor Nauru is any more viable after the election than they were before.

The Morrison government will also have to deal the Australian National Audit Office investigation into corruption allegations of the contracts they approved with Paladin and JDA, the so-called offshore service providers on Manus.

It is worth remembering that Mor-

risson was already prime minister when hundreds were transferred from Nauru as the #KidsOffNauru campaign gathered momentum in the last months of 2018.

Regardless of the election result, the shift in public opinion won by the campaign hasn't gone away. The size and extent of the Palm Sunday rallies as the election campaign opened is one indication of that.

One of the first challenges the movement faces is the prospect that the government will move to deport the Biloela Tamil family, Priya and Nades, and their two children, who ran out of legal options during the election campaign. Shorten's promise that a Labor government would review their case held out some hope. But it also showed the importance of the refugee movement maintaining the pressure on Labor.

A clear call from Labor to keep the family in Australia would help deliver a win to the magnificent community campaign waged by the family's Biloela supporters.

The movement will also need to keep up the pressure on Labor to shift its policies on offshore detention.

Some right-wing commentators are declaring the first sign that Labor would lose was when it supported the Medevac Bill in February. And Labor leaders are themselves drawing right-wing conclusions from the election defeat that will likely lead to a retreat from pro-refugee policies. But going quiet only encourages the Liberal's scapegoating and anti-refugee border protection policies.

"Bring Them Here" rallies have been called in Sydney and Melbourne for 20 July—the sixth anniversary of the then-Labor government declaring that no one sent offshore would ever be resettled in Australia. That policy opened the door to the horror of Manus and Nauru.

Large rallies, with union contingents and banners, will let Morrison, and the Labor opposition, know that the refugee movement remains committed to ending it.

Regardless of the election result, the shift in public opinion won by the campaign hasn't gone away

Solidarity