Solidarity

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END THE MILLIONS FOR COAL AND GAS

CAPITALISM IS CO$TING THE EARTH

GAS DEAL

Morrison expands fossil fuel use in NSW

CORONAVIRUS

New virus no excuse for racism

BERNIE SANDERS

Can a socialist beat the corporate Democrats?

Solidarity WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Things they say

I wasn't sent here to lead a rabble, a destabilised rabble.
Michael McCormack, Deputy Prime Minister, and the leader of a destabilised rabble

There wasn't a cent wasted
Michael McCormack sums up the government's sports rorts spending on marginal seats

The people might pay the salary but they work for the government who appoints them
Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore on the Federal Police's decision to drop the investigation into Angus Taylor's forged City of Sydney budget documents

Christmas Island is purpose-built for exactly this scenario.
Peter Dutton rewriting history to claim the almost-empty detention centre was always meant for quarantining

Most of the federal cabinet wouldn't even know who Matt Kean was.
PM Scott Morrison on NSW State Environment Minister Matt Kean's suggestion federal Liberal MPs are pushing the PM for more ambitious emissions reductions targets.

At the end of the day, people were having a dinner.
Deputy Labor leader Richard Marles explains a meeting of pro-coal right-aligned Labor MPs at a restaurant

One hundred and thirty-two lawmakers in this room have endorsed legislation to impose a socialist takeover of our healthcare system, wiping out the private health care insurance plans of 180 million very happy Americans.
Donald Trump in his State of the Union address to Congress. In 2018, 8.5 per cent of the US population, or 27.5 million people, had no health insurance, and 55.1 per cent (167 million) only had coverage through their employer for all or part of the year.

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INSIDE THE YTEM

New Minister thinks Morrison too serious about climate

THE COUNTRY'S new Resources Minister, the Nationals' Keith Pitt, is a die-hard supporter of coal and nuclear energy who even thinks Scott Morrison is doing too much on climate change. He took the job after the Nationals reshuffle following Barnaby Joyce's failed leadership bid.

Pitt was one of the Nationals MPs to sign a letter to leader Michael McCormack before the election demanding government support for a new coal power station in Queensland.

He even resigned as an assistant minister in 2018 citing Scott Morrison's commitment to the Paris Agreement targets—signalling that even the government's pathetic excuse for a climate policy was too much for him. In 2015 he threatened to cross the floor after Tony Abbott secured a deal with Labor to cut the Renewable Energy Target, opposing any support for renewables at all. He denounced renewable energy as just about giving environmentalists a "warm, fuzzy feeling".

The Queensland Resources Council welcomed his appointment, claiming he, "has a strong understanding of the policy issues".

Plibersek backs US-style patriotism

FRONTBENCH LABOR MP Tanya Plibersek used Invasion Day to declare Australia needed a US-style pledge of allegiance for school kids. Oblivious to the toxic nationalism that has led to racist outrages like the Cronulla riots, she declared her support for patriotism.

Plibersek claimed the bushfires over summer had seen action "connecting us all as Australians", conveniently forgetting the contempt for ordinary people shown by Scott Morrison—and the fossil fuel companies who backed his refusal to act on climate change.

On a day that stands for genocide and dispossession for Indigenous people, all Tanya wanted to talk about was, "what it means to truly love your country".

Liberals plan more punishment for unemployed

THE LIBERALS have announced plans to further expand the humiliating and punitive system of welfare quarantining. Social Services Minister Anne Ruston wants to expand the "cashless debit card" system across the major cities, after a trial at four sites in regional areas that began in 2016.

Ruston announced in early February that work was underway with the four big banks and retailers Coles and Woolworths on using the cards nationally.

The next step is expanding the card across the Northern Territory and Cape York, to replace the BasicsCard introduced for Aboriginal communities under the Intervention in 2007.

Under the trial 80 per cent of a person's welfare payments are diverted onto a special debit card that can only be used to make eftpos payments at certain stores, preventing purchases of alcohol or drugs.

Participants are humiliated by having to use special cards that mark them out as welfare recipients. Lack of access to cash prevents people from shopping at second hand stores, and online purchases on sites like Facebook Marketplace have to be approved by Indue, the company running the scheme. Parents have reported being unable to pay for school camps and excursions. The cards are also an appalling waste of money—documents on the trial show they cost $10,000 per person to administer.

The government has also announced plans to cut $2 billion from welfare spending over four years by changing the way hours of work are calculated for people on Newstart working part-time.

While the Liberals are determined to continue punishing the unemployed, welfare groups have slammed the latest moves. As ACOSS's Cassandra Goldie put it, "This is a shameless attempt to distract from the mounting, widespread support for Newstart to be raised after 26 years without a real increase."

Liberal rorts pile up

FRESH FROM the sports rorts fiasco that cost Minister Bridget McKenzie's job, still more Coalition rorting of public money has surfaced. A separate $150 million program for women's sport was used to fund 11 swimming pools in Coalition seats as they desperately worked to save the election.

A total of $60 million, or 40 per cent of the funding, was poured into two marginal Liberal-held seats, Corangamite and Pearce. The money was spent without bothering to draw up any guidelines or criteria, or requesting applications or tenders.

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

NSW Liberals halt strip search inquiry

THE INQUIRY into police strip-searches in NSW has been cut short, after the government sacked the commissioner running it.

Further public hearings had been planned for either late January or February. A report is still supposed to be published but the date of its release is "yet to be determined", according to a spokesperson for the Commission.

The hearings exposed a huge increase in strip searches, including on girls as young at 12 years old, embarrassing NSW police and the state government. Chief Commissioner Michael Adams also accused the NSW police of having "significant corruption" within its ranks just two weeks before his sacking.

Democracy for sale

CLIVE PALMER ran up $83.7 million on advertising in last year's election, far outspending even the Labor and Liberal election machines.

The total figure was revealed when electoral donations disclosures were released in early February.

Palmer failed to win a seat in either the Senate or the lower house, but has claimed credit for helping swing the election against Labor.

But the country's biggest corporations made it clear they had no fundamental problem with either side. Billionaire Anthony Pratt had a bob each way, splitting $3 million evenly between both major parties. That must have been a relief when he realised he'd picked the wrong election party, turning up to spend the night with the loser, Bill Shorten.

Companies including Macquarie Bank, oil and gas company Woodside and Wesfarmers all split their donations evenly between Labor and Liberal.

EDITORIAL

Morrison still pushing coal and gas despite climate disaster

SCOTT MORRISON has seized on the coronavirus as a welcome distraction from the bushfire crisis and the calls for action on climate change.

Morrison no doubt hoped that this would re-establish him as a strong leader able to "keep us safe".

But closing the border to anyone travelling from China, except Australian citizens or permanent residents, has only further fed racism. Using the detention centre on Christmas Island to quarantine Australian citizens was simply a stunt to appear tough on borders.

Morrison may have adjusted his language over climate change, and stored his lump of coal out of sight. But despite the unprecedented horror summer of bushfire destruction and extreme heat, he continues his push to expand fossil fuel use.

Instead of accepting the urgency of stepping up emissions reduction, Morrison declared that "mitigation and adaptation" to the threat of fires through hazard reduction, building dams and disaster planning was "climate action". But this is just dealing with the symptoms, not the fundamental cause.

Instead of expanding renewables he wants more use of gas, announcing a deal bribing NSW to increase supply.

He declared there is "no credible energy transition plan" for Australia without increased use of gas as a "transition fuel". Yet gas is still a fossil fuel that produces carbon emissions. Morrison backed this up with the straight out lie that alternatives would not be, "commercially scalable and available for at least a decade".

Yet South Australia's Tesla battery system, the biggest in the world, has been so successful it is set to expand in capacity by 50 per cent.

Power company AGL is building another one of similar size in Queensland next to a new solar power plant, and another four large battery systems in NSW. All of them will store energy from renewable sources like wind and solar to dispatch power when needed.

Despite the official change of rhetoric, climate denial inside the Coalition is just as active as ever.

The Nationals celebrated the announcement of a $4 million feasibility study into building a new coal-fired power station in Collinsville in Queensland, with Barnaby Joyce predicting it would find in its favour.

Above: Anger at Morrison has hit the streets following the horror bushfires

The Nationals celebrated a $4 million study into building a new coal power station in Collinsville

New Resources Minister and Nationals MP Keith Pitt declared he would spearhead a push to expand coal, gas and uranium mining with the aim to "add billions of dollars to the Australian economy".

Barnaby's push to return to the leadership of the Nationals may have failed. But he isn't about to let up on his regular rants against renewable energy, demanding more action to support coal.

Public investment

Morrison hopes to deflect the growing desire for action on climate change and to pretend that his government is doing what it can. He can't be allowed to get away with this.

Most people now want climate action. But there is huge confusion about what kind of action is needed. Focus group research for *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* in late January found that, despite growing concern, people, "were not able to identify what specifically should be done".

Labor's inability to put forward any climate policy is not helping. Deputy leader Richard Marles would not even give an opinion on whether he supported new coal-fired power stations, washing his hands by saying it was "a matter for the market".

But relying on the market will get us nowhere. Even allowing existing coal power stations to keep running until they need replacement will means decades more pollution. New Greens leader Adam Bandt's push for a Green New Deal has helped open a discussion about how climate action can lead to better jobs and services.

But the only way to transition to 100 per cent renewables in ten years is through a government-funded plan of mass investment in publicly-owned energy.

This is just the start of the transition needed across public transport, manufacturing and land use. And it is only government action that can secure guaranteed alternative jobs for workers as this happens.

The last year has seen the emergence of an exciting new climate movement. Nationwide days of protest in response to the fires this year have seen thousands march again.

Winning the kind of action we need requires a mass movement able to challenge capitalism and the fossil fuel companies blocking action. The power to do this comes from workers' strike action.

Morrison's attack on the unions through the Ensuring Integrity Bill, which Jacqui Lambie has indicated she could support when it returns to the Senate, will strengthen the laws against effective strike action further. That's why climate activists and unionists everywhere should back the union stopwork in Sydney on 1 May for workers' rights and climate action.

School Strike for Climate has also announced the next major Climate Strike for 15 May.

Students, workers and unionists everywhere need to go all out to build a month of Mayhem for climate action.

Uni staff plan for month of Climate Strikes in May

By Miro Sandev

TWO MAJOR strikes in May will see unions and students out in force for climate action. Last year School Strike for Climate brought 350,000 to the streets on 20 September.

Their next Climate Strike has been called for 15 May. And on 1 May, trade unions in Sydney will stop work to rally for workers' rights and climate action.

University workers in Sydney from five campuses met in early February to plan for the mobilisations.

The meeting attracted 40 staff from Sydney University, UTS, UNSW, Western Sydney University and Macquarie and centred on building staff contingents to the Climate Crisis National Day of Action on 22 February. It also strongly backed a resolution to mobilise widely for the 1 May strike rally and for the Climate Strike on 15 May.

Kurt Iveson, Sydney branch president of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), explained why the union had strongly backed the Climate Strikes in 2019 and argued that the union has to become a vehicle for staff climate activism. He pointed to examples of past political strikes such as the Builders Labourers Federation's Green Bans and railway strikes against uranium mining in the 1970s.

Others drew out lessons from mobilising on campus last year. University Vice-Chancellors (VCs) were pressured to concede that no one attending the strikes would be penalised. But in many departments staff had to fight even to use paid leave or their lunch break to attend. To shut down whole departments we will have to fight the VC and local administrators tooth and nail.

Several workers mentioned the importance of linking industrial issues to the climate action mobilisations. A number of people have joined the NTEU through the climate strikes as a result of the union's role in leading calls for investment in publicly-owned renewables and a just transition for workers. So climate mobilisation can strengthen the fight over casualisation and management restructures. But to get a real strike over climate action, we will also need to build up people's confidence to strike over industrial issues, and to win those industrial fights.

Iveson raised that white-collar unions like the NTEU need to build credibility with blue collar unions, whose members face the loss of jobs in fossil fuel industries, in order to win stronger union support for climate action.

Above: NTEU members at Sydney's Climate Strike on 20 September

Others responded by saying the best way to build credibility with unions like the CFMEU and the MUA was to hit the streets with them shoulder-to-shoulder for the 1 May strike rally. Last year thousands of workers marched off construction sites, factories and wharves against the Morrison government's anti-union laws. This year the 1 May stopwork rally includes demands for climate action, alongside workers' rights and social justice.

This year the 1 May stopwork rally includes demands for climate action, alongside workers' rights and social justice

Mass mobilisation

Mass mobilisation will be crucial to winning jobs, public investment in renewables and the emissions reduction required to avoid future climate disasters.

At the 20 September Climate Strike in Sydney teachers, public servants, nurses, electricians, construction workers, wharfies, land regeneration workers and many more came as part of around 20 different contingents. University staff and students organised a 5000-strong contingent to march into the Domain.

Hutchison workers at Port Botany, as well as NUW members at Fenner Dunlop and farmworkers from Melbourne, all on strike over workplace issues, attended the rallies. We will need larger contingents and many more workplaces out on strike for climate justice in future.

The 22 February day of action has been endorsed by the United Workers Union, the Maritime Union and the Nurses union nationally—as well as Unions NSW and Unions ACT.

Working class support for the climate movement is vital. Workers are the only force in society with the power to win the movement's demands—through strike action that stops the gears of the economy turning.

That's why Morrison always talks of job losses and higher electricity prices to try to undermine support for climate action. The truth is that Morrison doesn't care about job losses or workers' rights—but the climate movement should.

It's crucial that we build the largest possible walk-offs for the Climate Strike on 15 May. But it's also vital that the movement seriously mobilises for the 1 May strike rally, and stands in solidarity with workers who are defying the law to fight for workers' rights.

As the Liberals attack militant unions like the CFMEU through their union-busting Ensuring Integrity Bill, climate activists and unionists everywhere need to back their fight.

The climate movement will only succeed if it nails the real culprits—the big polluting companies and the politicians who back them. We need to tax the rich to deliver publicly-owned renewables—and to shut down the workplaces and the streets to win it.

Morrison backs NSW fossil fuel expansion as the planet burns

By James Supple

SCOTT MORRISON and the NSW Liberals have agreed to ramp up fossil fuel use through a fresh expansion of gas and coal production.

The deal requires the NSW government to boost gas supply as well as secure an increase in coal for the Mt Piper power station near Lithgow.

The now privatised power plant was forced to reduce output last year due to a coal shortage. The NSW government is working to help bail it out, with more public money going to subsidise coal.

The amount of new gas planned, 70 petajoules a year, is precisely the same amount that Santos will produce if its coal seam gas development at Narrabri in northwest NSW goes ahead.

Morrison has tried to present gas as climate friendly, claiming it as an "important transition fuel" to reduce emissions. But gas is still a fossil fuel that releases 60 per cent of the emissions of coal.

Even the official energy regulators don't believe the use of gas for power generation needs to increase. The Australian Energy Market Operator's projections show that we can dramatically expand renewable energy without this.

The NSW government's decision on final approvals for the Narrabri gas project is expected within months.

Gamilaraay people and local communities have been campaigning against the development for years, alongside farmers organised through a Lock the Gate campaign. Santos plans up to 850 gas wells across the area, drilling through areas of the Great Artesian Basin to get at gas deposits underneath. This could see toxic chemicals contaminate water used for drinking and irrigation. It would also mean land clearing in the Pilliga State Forest, the largest remaining temperate woodland in eastern Australia with important spiritual significance for the Gamilaraay.

"Santos has failed to get support from regional communities here for their dangerous gasfield and so the Commonwealth Government has opted instead to flat-out bribe the New South Wales government," Margaret Fleck, whose farm is not far from the gasfield, told the media.

There is also another option to meet the quota—building a new gas terminal at Port Kembla to import gas for domestic use. This is on a list of energy projects Scott Morrison want to underwrite with government funds and this deal requires the NSW government to support them.

Above: There is a long-running local campaign in the Pilliga against gas mining there

The list includes an upgrade for the coal power station at Vales Point near Lake Macquarie. According to *The Guardian*, its owners have been told $11 million in funding will go ahead.

In exchange the federal government will hand over $2 billion to NSW, half of it for unspecified "emissions reductions initiatives". Some of this may fund renewable energy projects, such as a proposed renewable energy zone in the state's west. But this will also consolidate privatisation of the electricity sector, with projects to be delivered by energy corporations. And Morrison has suggested some of it could go to "coal innovation" to reduce emissions from coal.

The rest of the money will help fund new interconnectors to boost the power transmission grid, including a new link between Queensland and NSW. This should indirectly help renewable energy projects.

But Morrison's plan is simply a bribe to force an expansion in coal and gas use. We need an end to all government subsidies for fossil fuels, not further handouts for the industry. Government spending and public ownership is badly needed to drive a rapid transition to 100 per cent renewable energy. We need to build a climate movement that can fight to make this happen.

Morrison's plan is simply a bribe to force an expansion in coal and gas use

Steggall climate bill a step backwards

INDEPENDENT MP Zali Steggall has presented her new climate bill as a way to break the deadlock on climate action. But it avoids the key question of what policies we need to cut emissions—and so will get us nowhere.

It would simply set up a Climate Change Commission to draw up five-year plans on how to reduce emissions, focused on a target of zero emissions by 2050. But labelling the plans "independent" is just a sleight of hand. There is no way of avoiding the debate about what mechanisms are best to reduce emissions. If the Commission proposed a carbon price, another carbon tax, it would only generate the same opposition about higher power prices that the Liberals used to undermine support for climate action under Tony Abbott.

The fact that the Bill has attracted support from not just business figures like Atlassian's Mike Cannon-Brookes but even the Business Council of Australia, which represents the country's 100 biggest corporations including oil and gas company Woodside and mining giant Rio Tinto, should set off alarm bells. They see it as a way to argue for climate policies that won't hurt corporate profits.

We need the kind of action that will impose costs on business—large-scale government investment in jobs and renewable energy, paid for by taxing corporations and the rich. Steggall's Bill would only set back climate action.

Morrison's coronavirus travel ban fuels anti-Chinese racism

By James Supple and Ian Rintoul

Above: Australians evacuated from Wuhan in China

MEDIA-DRIVEN PANIC over the spread of a new coronavirus (Corvid-19) has produced a wave of anti-Chinese racism.

The World Health Organisation has explicitly advised against imposing travel bans in response the outbreak of the virus. But, following Donald Trump, Scott Morrison's travel ban on everyone from China who is not an Australian citizen or permanent resident has fuelled the racist response here. It has reinforced the idea that all Chinese people are suspect.

The Daily Telegraph, among others, has drummed up fear by saying the virus had "pandemic potential", warning of "panic buying" of face masks and hand sanitisers and sharing photos of "terrified travellers" from China trying to protect themselves.

Melbourne's *Herald-Sun* splashed the words "Chinese virus panda-monium" across its front page. In Perth, a Malaysian student was locked out of her accommodation, although she hadn't travelled to China.

The Australian government's move to quarantine Australian evacuees in the Christmas Island detention centre is not about healthcare. It's a political stunt to prove that it's "tough on borders". Anyone on Christmas Island who actually got sick would have to be transferred to mainland hospitals for treatment.

Although Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton insisted there were no hospitals that could cope, the S*ydney Morning Herald* revealed that Dutton rejected a plan from NSW health authorities to use hospitals in Western Sydney.

Tragically, some unions have taken up the scaremongering, with the TWU calling for bans on flights from China even before Morrison imposed them. The MUA has called for ships to be held at sea for 14 days before docking in Australia.

Other directly-affected unions have taken a stand against the racism. In both Sydney and Melbourne, the respective NTEU branch secretaries spoke at rallies calling on the government to lift the travel ban.

China's economy is slowing as many major cities and manufacturing areas have been shut down, with the inevitable knock-on effects beginning to impact on the global economy. Morrison's travel ban is already hitting Australia's tourist industry, with warnings of up to 1800 jobs at risk in Cairns. Around 100,000 international students at universities are stranded in China, which could mean job losses for staff. The travel ban is also putting thousands of overseas workers' jobs in jeopardy.

Any slowdown in the Chinese economy will inevitably cut Australian exports of coal, LNG, iron ore, and meat, which in turn will cut government revenue. But for now Morrison is following his racist instincts and is more interested in following Trump, who sees the coronavirus through the prism of imperialist competition with China.

Morrison is following his racist instincts and following Trump

Viruses

There have now been 1500 deaths from the virus—overwhelmingly in Hubei province where it first emerged. Just three have been recorded outside China. Reports say most of those who have died so far have been over 60 years old and suffered from other underlying health problems.

Other viruses have killed far more people. The flu has claimed 8200 lives in the US alone this flu season, and normally kills 400,000 globally each year.

The new coronavirus also appears to be less deadly than SARS or MERS. Around 2 per cent of those infected have died, compared to 10 per cent for the SARS virus and 34 per cent for MERS. Outside the Hubei province, where the outbreak began, just 0.55 per cent of those infected have died. This suggests inadequate and overwhelmed medical services may be partly to blame. Tragically more than 1700 Chinese medical workers have become victims of the virus.

The official Australian Health Protection Principal Committee has advised that people who have travelled to Hubei province, where the virus is concentrated, or had contact with a person who has the virus, are the main concern. It does not recommend self-isolation or quarantine of people from the rest of China due to the low number of cases.

This has not stopped a number of schools bowing to fear, telling students who have travelled anywhere in China to remain home for two weeks. The NSW government has also adopted the same policy, despite saying initially that only those who had been in contact with the virus were of concern. It put the change down to "community expectations", not medical advice.

A number of private schools as well as Sydney Catholic schools have completely banned for two weeks any students who have travelled to China. Stuartholme private boarding school in Brisbane has isolated ten Chinese students and forced them to have daily medical checks.

The Sydney University student association is holding another protest during Orientation Week to show support for international students, solidarity with Wuhan and the Chinese community, and to demand that Morrison's lift his travel ban.

The coronavirus outbreak is no excuse for fearmongering or racism.

How Germany phased out coal—and secured workers' jobs

By Ruby Wawn

WHILE AUSTRALIA plans to open new coal mines, Germany is in the process of closing down its mining sector.

The last of the black coal mines in the historic industrial centre of the Ruhr Valley was decommissioned in 2018, although other coal mines remain. In the face of catastrophic climate change and an urgent need to transition away from coal-fired power, Germany is an example of how a just transition could work in practice.

At the height of industrial coal mining, Germany was producing 150 million tonnes of black coal and employed 607,000 miners in the fossil fuel industries. In 1957, the coal, iron and steel industries provided 70 per cent of the jobs in the Ruhr region.

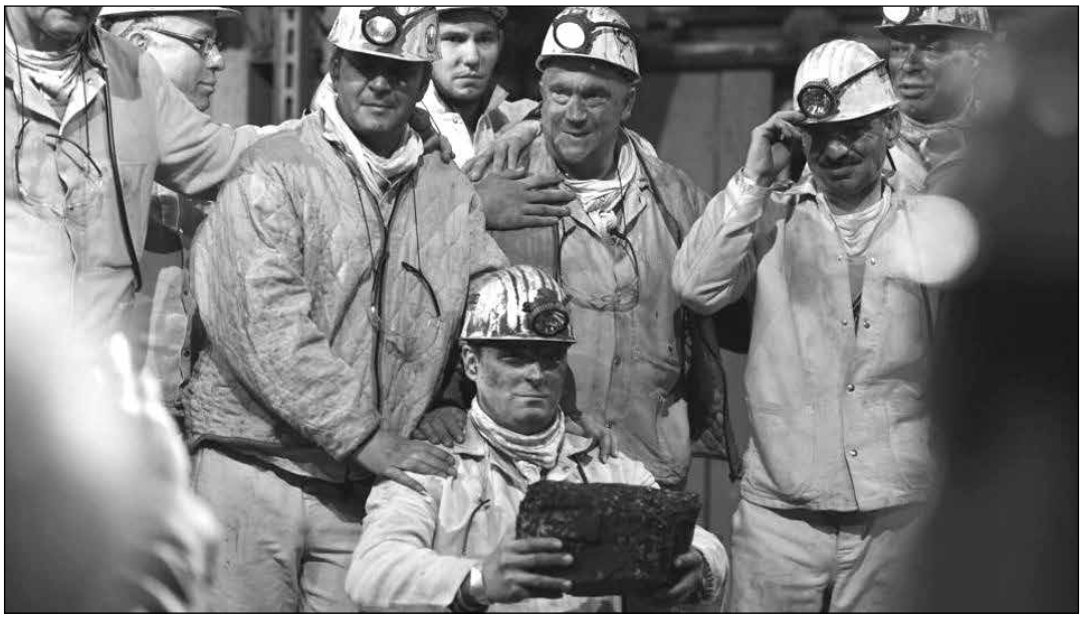
The industry's decline began because mining coal underground in deeper and deeper shafts became more expensive than importing it from elsewhere. By the 1980s the industry was already in sharp decline, and required large government subsidies to continue operating.

The government began investing heavily in re-training for new industries such as engineering, business and technology. Since 1961, there have been six new universities, 15 technical colleges and 60 research facilities built in the Ruhr.

Together with funding for the environmental clean-up of old mines, this meant the same number of jobs were created in new service industries as were lost in coal and steel between 1957 and 2000.

By 2007, coal industries accounted for less than 2 per cent of total employment. That year an agreement was struck to close coal mining in the region altogether, although coal-fired power stations and manufacturing continue.

Staggered mine closures aimed to ensure not a single worker was sacked. A just transition package provided early retirement schemes as well as training and on-the-job certification to move into other industries. Unions have ensured that former miners are entering high-wage, high-skill industries and secured substantial pay outs for people leaving the workforce altogether. However the process of closure took 11 years, allowing 10,600 workers to transfer to work at other coal mines during gradual closures.



Above: German miners pose with the last piece of coal cut at the Prosper Haniel colliery in 2018

A just transition package provided early retirement schemes as well as training for other industries

The German transition has been pro-active and long term, allowing for new jobs and investment to fill the hole left by the coal industry. By contrast the Hazelwood coal power station and mine in Victoria closed with just five months' notice.

Germany has sought to reinvent itself as a leader in new energy production, focusing on environmental technologies and renewable energy as well as playing on the existing strengths, skills and industry of the Ruhr region. Two of the world's leading wind turbine manufacturers, for instance, are companies in the Ruhr that formerly produced coal mining equipment.

This all required large-scale public investment, to the tune of 14 billion euros in grants to stimulate the local economy, with a further 26 billion euros for research and development programmes. These funds are being used to build new infrastructure projects such as road and rail, as well as sports and recreational facilities, and investment in leisure and cultural industries including eco-tourism.

Complete phase out

Germany continues to use significant amounts of coal, which produced 29 per cent of its energy last year. Much of it is cheap and heavily polluting brown coal.

But in January 2019, the German government announced it would also be shutting down all remaining coal power stations along with remaining brown coal mines by 2038.

However, the transition is not without fault. It would allow the burning of coal to continue for another two decades. This is too slow compared to what is needed to meet Paris Agreement targets to keep global warming below 2 degrees. Germany looks unlikely to reach its 2030 target of 55 per cent emissions reduction until 2046, according to a McKinsey study.

And it is currently constructing a brand new coal power station, Datteln 4, the only one being built in Western Europe.

Its plan also relies mainly on private investment in new industries, with companies being encouraged to invest through tax cuts and regulatory exemptions. We need to fight for 100 per cent publicly-owned renewable energy to ensure that investment reflects what is needed to maintain energy production, and not what is profitable for the capitalists.

While the German transition is not perfect, it shows how a properly funded and planned transition away from fossil fuels can ensure secure, well-paid union jobs are at the heart of new industries.

The Morrison government is desperately trying to keep coal power stations running, committing millions of dollars in subsidies. Australia should take a leaf out of Germany's book and ensure that public investment is spent on new infrastructure projects and public renewable energy to ensure that every coal worker has a good, union job to transition into.

Bandt's Green New Deal no break with electoral dead end

NEWLY-ELECTED GREENS leader Adam Bandt has launched a push for a Green New Deal, aiming to give a little zest to the party's flagging image after it drifted to the right under former leader Richard Di Natale.

Bandt sees the Green New Deal as a way to tackle climate change together with the "jobs and inequality crises" we face. Pointing to the opportunities in manufacturing and installing renewable energy, he called for "proper, believable transition plans" for workers in coal communities.

This is the kind of approach needed to both build a movement for climate action and draw in the organised working class support the movement needs. But, following Di Natale, Bandt has made no call to build the social movement that will be needed to win this. His call for a Green New Deal is entirely focussed on winning more seats in parliament as the way to make change.

Bandt has also continued The Greens' mistaken focus on coal exports as more important than transforming Australia's domestic energy system, a process that would create tens of thousands of jobs that could provide alternatives for coal dependent communities.

The focus on export coal plays into Scott Morrison's attack on climate action as a threat to workers' jobs. Instead of fighting for new jobs, the focus of the climate movement and The Greens in the lead up to the election was stopping the Adani mine. The led to the disastrous Stop Adani convoy, led by former Greens leader Bob Brown, which charged into coal mining areas in Queensland and helped deliver seats to the Coalition.

The focus on coal mining also meant The Greens had remarkably little impact during the months-long bushfire crisis. To win over working class people, The Greens have to put class issues like jobs and services at the front of their calls for action on climate change.

As leader, Di Natale became known for his embrace of an exclusive focus on parliament, saying he was simply about getting more Greens elected and delivering "outcomes" in parliament. He even announced he was would "never say never" to a Liberal-Greens coalition.

Di Natale cited the carbon price negotiations with the Gillard Labor government as The Greens' biggest achievement during his time in parliament. Adam Bandt has named this as a model too, saying we need a "carbon price plus". But the carbon tax was a political disaster because it forced the cost of action onto workers.

Adam Bandt's talk of a Green New Deal is welcome. But he shares the same basic approach as Richard Di Natale. Unless his call is centred on building a movement for change on the streets and in the workplaces he is on the road to the same electoral dead-end.

Above: New Greens leader Adam Bandt has called for a Green New Deal

Bandt has made no call to build the social movement that will be needed to win this

Strikes banned at DP World in attack on right to strike

THE FEDERAL Court has issued an injunction preventing 1800 DP World wharfies from taking strike action for six weeks until mid-March, despite it being legally "protected" action.

A union ballot in March 2019 resulted in 97-99 per cent support for industrial action, including unlimited strikes.

The temporary ban applies across all four terminals in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Fremantle.

This is the latest attack on the right to strike, in an unprecedented use of the law on the waterfront.

Under the Fair Work Act, bans on the outsourcing of work or automation, which threatens jobs at DP World, are not "permitted matters" able to be included in an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA).

The union was attempting to negotiate a separate deed containing these clauses. The company has refused to sign and argued that upcoming strike action was illegal because the union had raised these issues.

The right to strike only exists for the most narrow purpose of negotiating over the terms of a new EBA.

Even then, the union must give the company three days' notice of any action. Last year DP World successfully applied to increase this to five days—plenty of time to outsource ships.

Strikes against sackings, discrimination, government policy targeting workers, breaches of the EBA, or in solidarity with other striking workers are all illegal.

DP World are on the warpath.

An MUA press release explained: "In the last year, DP World management have…[been] cancelling approved holidays, attempting to strip away social benefits such as income protection, sacking workers, docking pay, preventing workers from meeting with their union representatives, cancelling Christmas bonuses, and threatening the mass termination of 10 per cent of the workforce."

There is an urgent need for the union movement as a whole to mobilise against and break the anti-strike laws, before they are used to completely break union power. The court rulings and penalties need to be met with further, widespread strike action.

On 1 May the maritime and construction unions in Sydney will hold a stop work rally under the banner of "Right to Strike, Social Justice, Climate Action". Supporters of the right to strike should join them.

Erima Dall

Trump plans total Israeli domination of Palestine

DONALD TRUMP has finally released his "deal of the century", touted as a "peace settlement" between Israel and the Palestinians.

In reality, it's a green light to Israel to grab all but a few tiny scraps of what remains of Palestine.

Jared Kushner, Trump's son in law and mover behind the deal, made clear what it's about. He threatened, "It's the last chance for the Palestinians to have a state. It's time for Palestinians to let go of past fairy tales that quite frankly will never happen."

Any Palestinian "statelet" would be under the thumb of the Israeli military.

The plan includes Jerusalem as Israel's "undivided" capital. And it would recognise Israeli settlements in the West Bank and its occupation and control over the Jordan Valley, which makes up around a third of the area.

It will be completely under the thumb of Israel, militarily and economically. There will be no justice for the Palestinians who have been robbed of their land and oppressed by Israel ever since its creation in 1948.

Trump has been building towards this since 2017 when he declared Jerusalem the "capital of Israel." This effectively approved Israel's claim to the whole of the city. He followed up on that by accepting Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, which it stole from Syria in 1967.

Most recently his secretary of state Mike Pompeo declared last November that the US considers Israel's West Bank settlements to be legal.

All of this has already encouraged Israel to tighten the screws on Palestinians. It increased settlement building in anticipation of Trump's deal—as well as demolitions and land grabs.

Trump's deal should be the final nail in the coffin of the "two-state solution"—the idea that there could be a state of Palestine alongside Israel. The Oslo Accords signed in 1993 claimed to pave the way to a Palestinian state.

In fact, it turned Palestinian leaders into enforcers of Israel, while the occupation steadily deepened.

A one-state solution is coming. It can either be the state envisioned by Trump and every mainstream Israeli politician, where Palestinians are expelled and marginalised.

Or it can be a single, secular state where Arabs and Jews can live together with equal democratic rights—the only just solution.

Above: Trump has given Netanyahu and Israel practically everything they want in his new deal

Trump's deal should be the final nail in the coffin of the 'two-state solution'

Winning that state will take a struggle by ordinary people across the Middle East against Trump, Israel and the Arab rulers who prop up US power.

Socialist Worker UK

Democrats' impeachment fails to hurt Trump

IN SEPTEMBER 2019, the Democrats initiated an impeachment inquiry against President Donald Trump. The impeachment concerned Trump's attempts to get the Ukrainian president to dig up dirt on Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, and Trump's threat to withdraw US military aid to force him to do so.

Predictably, the Republican-majority Senate acquitted Trump of all charges in early February. But instead of furthering resistance, Trump's approval ratings have actually increased to a record high of 49 per cent.

However, the impeachment was never really about ousting Trump. No US president has ever been removed from office via impeachment. Very few people expected the required 19 Republican senators to side with the Democrats to find him guilty. Nor was the impeachment designed to bolster the struggle against Trump in the streets and workplaces.

While Trump is certainly guilty of pressuring the Ukrainian president, there is a long list of more serious crimes by this racist, sexist, billionaire president.

Instead, the impeachment positioned the Democrats to defend the reputation of the Democratic establishment's favoured presidential candidate, Joe Biden, and champion the interests of US imperialism.

The US-Ukraine alliance

The proceedings had more to do with the fact that the US security establishment does not trust Trump. Since 2014, Ukraine has been a key pro-Western bulwark against Russia. By threatening to withdraw military aid from Ukraine, Trump risked undermining the relationship between the US and Ukraine and the wider interests of US imperialism.

They have similar concerns over Trump's admiration of Putin, and his erratic behaviour in the Middle East—pulling out of Syria, tearing up the anti-nuclear deal with Iran and the latest Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.

The failed impeachment effort has been quickly overshadowed by the Democratic primaries to select their presidential candidate to take on Trump. But for people who really want to defeat Trump the Democrat establishment's commitment to US capitalism is a serious obstacle.

The teachers' strikes, the women's marches, and the militant protests against Trump's anti-Muslim travel bans have shown the real power to resist Trumps' policies and finally remove him from office.

Daniel Cotton

Shift to the left in Ireland as Sinn Fein humbles major parties

By James Yan

IN A major shake-up of Ireland's two-party system, Sinn Féin has swept the polls in the general election. It won 24.5 per cent of first preference votes, puncturing the decades-long right-wing duopoly of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil.

The two parties, which took 69 per cent of the vote in 2007 before the economic crisis, were reduced to just 44 per cent between them. In the 2011 election Fianna Fáil, historically the strongest party, was decimated after implementing austerity. Since 2016 Fine Gael has needed the support of the other major party, Fianna Fáil, to govern.

The result represents an electoral shift to the left amidst a housing crisis and an unequal recovery from the economic crisis. Sinn Fein campaigned around a manifesto of social democratic policies including progressive taxation, rent freezes and universal healthcare. Socialists, grouped in the Solidarity-People Before Profit alliance, retained five of their six seats.

Exit polls found Brexit to be a negligible concern for voters, despite claims that Ireland's relationship to Britain was a major issue. Notably, Ireland has also bucked the European-wide rise of right-wing nationalism. Attempts by an emerging far right to contest the election were stillborn.

Sinn Féin is a republican party that, unlike the two major parties, aspires to govern on an all-Ireland basis. While the party's electoral appeal in the South is a left social democratic one, it has governed as a pro-business party in Northern Ireland for 20 years as part of a power-sharing arrangement with the Democratic Unionist Party.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, the shape of the next Irish government remains in flux. Sinn Féin did not field enough candidates for its vote to translate into seat numbers and only won 37 seats in the Irish parliament, the Dáil, as against Fianna Fáil's 38 seats. Having now ruled out a left coalition government with the Greens, Social Democrats and Solidarity-People Before Profit on the basis of parliamentary arithmetic, Sinn Fein is seeking talks with Fianna Fáil.

But a coalition with Fianna Fáil would rapidly diminish any hopes for progressive change among Sinn Féin's voters. The electoral collapse of the Irish Labour Party following its participation in the Fine Gael austerity government of 2011-2016 is a cautionary reminder.

Above: Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald celebrates the election result

Both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have, in any case, refused to talk to Sinn Féin. The most likely scenarios at this point are another Fianna Fail-Fine Gael coalition government, a weak Sinn Féin-led government, or a second election that would increase Sinn Féin's vote. Whatever happens the stage is set for a historic realignment of Irish politics.

The result represents an electoral shift to the left amidst a housing crisis and an unequal recovery

Setbacks for French strikes against Macron

FRENCH BOSSES and the government of President Emmanuel Macron are stepping up attempts to break strikers' resistance to their pension attacks.

They hope to fend off the great revolt that has seen millions on strike and on the streets repeatedly since December.

A group of strikers at the incinerators and waste disposal centres in the Paris region and Marseille have been "requisitioned"—ordered to return to work or face six months' imprisonment and a big fine. Their action had seen rubbish piling up in the streets.

Lacking sufficient backing from the union leaders, most felt they had to give in. One union rep said, "The life expectancy of a garbage collector is seven years lower than the national average. If the pension changes go through we will have no retirement, just work in horrible conditions and then die."

Employers are also moving against individual militants in the RATP Paris public transport system, on the railways and in universities.

The unions have a strategy of calling one-day mobilisations to coincide with significant dates in the parliamentary scrutiny of the pension changes. But the indefinite strikes have ended nearly everywhere.

There are some good signs. Nuclear electricity generating workers are continuing their actions that lead to power cuts.

Thirteen hospital workers' organisations organised a day of strikes and demonstrations on Friday 14 February. They want "real negotiations" over the crisis of funding and staffing in hospitals and social care establishments.

The CGT trade union federation says it is preparing for a national day of strikes and demonstrations on Thursday 20 February. This has been backed by eight union federations and student organisations.

All of these initiatives are hugely positive. They show the fight is not finished. "The fight is over pensions but it has become about a lot more for many of us," hospital striker Annette said. "We have learnt a lot over the last few months about how we have to struggle against the whole system."

The danger is that the days of mobilisation become symbolic rather than being a genuine strategy to force the government into complete retreat.

By Charlie Kimber
Socialist Worker UK

A Green New Deal means a frontal challenge to capitalism

On Fire, The Burning Case for a Green New Deal
By Naomi Klein
Allen Lane, $29.99

NAOMI KLEIN'S new book taps into a growing sentiment around the need for large-scale social transformation in response to the climate crisis, which is coalescing around the call for a Green New Deal.

Democrats like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have helped popularise it, and new Australian Greens leader Adam Bandt has also made it a focus.

According to Klein, the Green New Deal would involve government investment to create millions of new jobs in renewable energy, health, education, care work, construction, transport, land management and other industries.

It would also involve providing a job guarantee, and increasing welfare payments and free education and healthcare, as a way of tackling growing inequality.

The focus on positive demands for jobs and increased living standards, not just blocking fossil fuels developments, is an important step forward for the environmental movement and should be encouraged.

Winning a Green New Deal

The key question is how can we win these kinds of policies and what power must be mobilised?

While Klein talks about the importance of social movements, the framework of the Green New Deal revolves around electing progressive politicians to legislate it—she mentions Democrats Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren as people with a track record of standing up to the vested interests.

Above: Climate activists protesting in Washington demanding a Green New Deal

Klein explicitly looks to US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930's, which included expansion of public investment in housing, infrastructure, education, health and social security as well as job guarantees.

While American capitalists disliked some parts of the New Deal, overall they were enthusiastic supporters of it as a way of saving capitalism from itself.

The US in the 1930s was in the grips of the Great Depression: capitalists had stopped investing, production was contracting and up to a third of the working age population was unemployed. Government investment on a mass scale could generate new demand to help private investment.

The New Deal was also attractive to capitalists because it included policies that co-opted the leadership of the unions into doing deals with bosses quickly, instead of organising protracted strikes that hurt profits. It made it harder for union branches to go on strike legally if they did not have the support of their national leadership, who were usually more conservative.

She references 'deregulated capitalism' as the main obstacle to a just transition

Vested interests

Another of the big differences between FDR's New Deal and Klein's version is that Klein's would include the phasing out of the fossil fuel industries, which are still very profitable. This will be vigorously opposed by the capitalists.

Klein understands that the bosses will have to be fought in order to deliver even a slice of the Green New Deal, but she underestimates the ferocity of the bosses' response.

They are willing to unleash vicious police brutality on movements like the Yellow Vests and general strikes in France. These movements by comparison are calling for quite moderate demands. The repression against a militant Green New Deal movement, backed by strikes, would be much worse.

Klein's book articulates the need for system change in order to address the climate crisis and is right in saying we need to, "confront the economic order and replace it with something that is rooted in both human and planetary security".

But when she discusses what this economic order is, she references "deregulated capitalism" as the main obstacle to a just transition. This suggests a more regulated capitalism could tolerate the huge cuts into profits that are required to avert climate disaster.

But the truth is no form of legal regulation can alter the relations of production in capitalism which are the ultimate cause of climate change.

Climate change is caused by a system is addicted to fossil fuels which, as Marx said, "robs both the soil and the worker".

Capitalism will need to be smashed, not "saved from itself".

In order to build the workers' power that can ultimately do this, any Green New Deal movement needs to be deeply embedded in the already existing struggles workers are waging, like the recent teachers' strikes.

And it cannot pin its hopes on presidential hopefuls like Bernie Sanders. It must call on workers to take matters into their own hands—to go on strike and force the government to build public renewables and transition the economy away from fossil fuels, regardless of who sits in the White House.

Miro Sandev

CAN BERNIE BEAT THE CORPORATE DEMOCRATS THIS TIME?

Bernie Sanders' campaign has galvanised support in the early Democratic primaries, but will he be sabotaged again, asks **Lachlan Marshall**

BERNIE SANDERS has electrified the Democratic primaries, pulling thousands to rallies with his radical, left-wing message.

In a country that waged the Cold War against the Soviet Union, few expected a presidential contender who proudly calls himself a "democratic socialist" could be the frontrunner. But that's what has happened after he won the most votes in the first two contests—Iowa and New Hampshire.

His unflinching criticism of billionaires has struck a chord as more and more people have become disillusioned with the politics of party elites. His rise comes on the back of a re-emergence of strikes and as politics becomes more polarised across the world. Growing numbers of people in the US are interested in socialism.

Sanders is a veteran independent Senator for Vermont who caucuses with the Democrats.

He lost the 2016 nomination to Hillary Clinton after the party establishment threw its weight, and the votes of unelected party super-delegates, in her favour. Now he is again attempting a radical assault on the Democratic Party establishment. Many people think Sanders can win the nomination this time.

While he does not call for the overthrow of capitalism, Sanders' popularity rests on his call for a "political revolution"—introducing Medicare for All, a Green New Deal and a $15 an hour minimum wage. A million people volunteered for his campaign in the 24 hours following its announcement and he's raised more money than any of the other frontrunners, mostly from small donations.

The Democratic primaries will decide who takes on Trump in the presidential election in November. Sanders consistently leads Trump in head-to-head polls.

Sanders and the neo-liberal Pete Buttigieg have made the running in the first two primaries. Buttigieg was named the winner in Iowa, despite receiving fewer votes than Sanders. He scraped past Sanders in the "state delegate equivalents" count used to determine the winner. Sanders narrowly won New Hampshire.

Former Vice President Joe Biden—the favourite of the Democratic establishment—has been humiliated, coming fourth in Iowa, and fifth in New Hampshire, after a series of gaffes and embarrassing stumbles as he attempted to answer basic questions.

The left in the US has backed Sanders and there is a strong movement behind him, unlike any of the other candidates.

The Sanders campaign has pulled other candidates to the left—at least at the level of rhetoric. Elizabeth Warren is often grouped with Sanders as a "progressive" candidate because of her promise of "big, structural change" and criticism of the rich.

But after initially supporting Medicare for All, Warren's plan is to now pass legislation in the third year of her administration. This is widely interpreted as meaning that it simply won't happen, because any meaningful legislation usually passes at the beginning of a president's term.

Warren's attempt to appeal to Sanders' progressive base alongside more conservative Democrats is costing her support in both camps. After early promising polls, Warren's support has either flowed left to Sanders, or right to Buttigieg.

Divided right-wing

The Iowa and New Hampshire primaries have been a major setback for Joe Biden.

As a former Vice President under Obama, he's seen by the corporate and Democrats elite as someone who can return US capitalism to normal, maintaining the rule for the rich, and winding back Trump's erratic foreign policy moves that have alienated allies.

Sanders is seeking the endorsement of a pro-capitalist party that is against everything he stands for

Despite having a strong base of support among people of colour, Biden has an unseemly record of working with Southern racists in the 1970s and 1980s to oppose desegregation of bussing. He wrote the 1994 crime bill which sent thousands more cops into black neighbourhoods and funded new prisons, contributing to the mass incarceration of people of colour.

Biden will hope his campaign can recover in the "Super Tuesday" primaries on 13 March when states with high proportions of black and Latino voters go to the polls.

Buttigieg is a former military intelligence officer in Afghanistan. He is the first openly gay person to seek the Democratic nomination for President. But, like Biden, he stands for a continuation of the neo-liberal status quo. Whereas the Sanders campaign prides itself on winning small donations, Buttigieg has dismissed these as "pocket change," and receives most of his donations from big business.

Buttigieg supported Medicare for All early in the campaign, only to drop it in favour of "Medicare for all who want it." He now attacks single-payer health insurance in line with the interests of his health and pharmaceutical industry donors.

But despite his good early showing, Buttigieg does not poll very strongly in the states with large minority populations which are crucial to winning the Democratic nomination. This has created a problem for the Democratic establishment as they now lack a clear anti-Sanders frontrunner. In 2016, the right-wing establishment united behind Hillary Clinton.

The billionaire media mogul Michael Bloomberg, who is bankrolling

his own campaign, could yet emerge as the establishment favourite if he does well in the "Super Tuesday" primaries.

Democratic socialism

Sanders bases his policies on the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who expanded union rights and public works during the 1930s Great Depression.

As Sanders explained in a speech, "Over eighty years ago Franklin Delano Roosevelt helped create a government that made transformative progress in protecting the needs of working families. Today, in the second decade of the 21st century, we must take up the unfinished business of the New Deal and carry it to completion."

Among FDR's policies, Sanders plans to revive the idea of an Economic Bill of Rights that includes, "The right to a decent job that pays a living wage, the right to quality health care, the right to a complete education, the right to affordable housing, the right to a clean environment (and) the right to a secure retirement."

These policies could really improve the lives of American workers, yet establishment Democrats claim that these policies are a "big target" that will alienate conservative voters.

But FDR's New Deal wasn't socialist. FDR aimed to save capitalism from itself, at a time when it had lost all credibility. As FDR admitted, he was, "the best friend the profit system ever had."

And because Sanders plans to take the helm of the US state, he has made compromises on nationalism and imperialism.

Sanders was one of few politicians to oppose the invasion of Iraq. But he supported the war in Afghanistan, and has suggested that the US state under progressive leadership could lead an international effort to move China towards democracy.

A ruling class party

On "Super Tuesday", 14 states will vote on the same day. But the nomination won't be confirmed until the Democratic National Convention in July.

Despite his popularity, it will be very difficult for Sanders to win the nomination. He's seeking the endorsement of a pro-capitalist party that is against everything he stands for.

If Sanders looks like he is taking the lead, the party establishment would stop at nothing to sabotage his campaign, much as the Blairites did to Jeremy Corbyn in the UK.

Above: Bernie Sanders celebrates his win in the New Hampshire primary

Emails leaked from Democratic National Committee (DNC) members in 2016 revealed a strong bias towards Hillary Clinton and a campaign to undermine Bernie Sanders.

Even though she is not a candidate, Clinton is playing dirty, levelling accusations of misogyny and anti-semitism at the Sanders campaign, despite Sanders being Jewish. It is even rumoured that former president Barack Obama would oppose Sanders if it looked like he would win nomination.

More recently DNC members flagged reversing the 2018 rule change that limited the role of "superdelegates" (party elites) at the Democratic National Convention. Currently superdelegates can only vote if there is not a majority winner in the first ballot.

If Sanders loses, he says he'll support whichever candidate wins the nomination, just as he supported Hillary Clinton in 2016. That was a disaster that ensured Trump was elected.

But it could easily happen again. The Democrats are a straight-out party of US capitalism.

They do not have any real internal conferences to speak of. There is no formal membership process, so there are no structures through which the members can hold party officials to account. Decisions are made by an opaque bureaucracy and the capitalist funders of the party.

These are the people that scuttled Sanders' nomination last time.

Since Trump's election there have been waves of struggle across the country—women's and anti-racist marches, strikes and mobilisations for migrants and the climate.

2018 saw the highest number of striking workers since 1986. Teachers have taken strike action in states that voted Democrat and Republican, from Chicago to West Virginia. In 2019, 50,000 workers at General Motors staged the longest strike for 50 years.

Sanders reflects this insurgent mood amongst a section of workers. But workers can only rely on their own organisation and strength to win improvements to their lives.

The Sanders campaign has created a big opportunity for socialists in the US. His popularisation of socialism, alongside the mobilisations against Trump, have contributed to a massive growth in the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The DSA often run candidates in Democratic Party primaries, and have endorsed Sanders for president, and are canvassing votes.

Unlike most other advanced capitalist countries, the US has no social democratic or labour party with formal ties to the union movement. The Sanders campaign is an opening to argue for, and build, a socialist party.

The support for Sanders is a sign of the widespread disenchantment with corporate and elite politics. Whatever happens with Sanders' nomination, the "political revolution" he talks about will only come if the movement behind Sanders is galvanised into a movement of action across the United States.

Building struggle in workplaces and on the streets will be needed if Sanders' policies are actually going to be won.

WHAT WOULD SOCIALISM BE LIKE?

Reforming capitalism is not the same as socialism, argues **Sadie Robinson**. Another society is possible—but can only come about through a revolution by working class people

BERNIE SANDERS' success in the Democratic Party primaries in the US has helped put the idea of socialism back on the map.

As a result even the bosses' *Forbes* magazine worried recently that, "Bernie Sanders is surging in the polls and the idea of socialism is gaining traction among young people."

Sanders describes himself as a "democratic socialist", but his vision is still very much one of change within the system.

Some other socialists like Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, who suffered defat in December's election, also see sweeping change as possible through parliament.

Yet socialism is so radically different to capitalism that winning it means overthrowing the system.

Capitalism is driven by competition. Society is divided into classes—the working class and the ruling class, which controls the means of production.

Bosses compete to make the most profits by exploiting workers—paying them less than the value of what they produce and keeping the rest.

Under capitalism, real power doesn't lie with parliament but with a tiny group of rich people.

Their control of huge corporations and wealth gives them the ability to sack thousands of people at a minute's notice, and withhold investment capital in order to damage economies.

In any case most governments back up the rich over ordinary people. And most of the state—the police, judiciary, army and so on—is unelected. Its role is to maintain the social order and protect the property of the rich.

Our rulers use oppressions such as racism and sexism to help keep workers divided and wage wars for control and influence over land and resources. They are refusing to act on climate change in order to defend the wealth of the fossil fuel corporations.

Capitalism is a brutal, chaotic and wasteful system that fails the vast majority of humanity in the name of making a minority obscenely wealthy. The world's billionaires have more wealth between them than 4.6 billion people, according to Oxfam's recent wealth report.

Socialism would reverse all of this.

Under socialism, the mass of working class people would develop their own institutions to collectively organise production—and society as a whole.

There would be real democratic decision-making. Society would be organised to meet people's needs and look after the environment, not make profits for a few.

Instead of wasting billions on arms, for instance, people could shift resources to housing or nurseries.

Ultimately socialism would do away with class divisions, inequality and oppression.

Past upheavals

Revolutions and revolutionary upheavals in the past have shown how dramatic the changes can be.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 is the only time in history when workers successfully took state power. Working class people set up workers' councils called soviets and began to run society themselves.

Revolutionary journalist John Reed's description of a Congress of Soviets meeting in his book *Ten Days that Shook the World* gives a flavour of this new democracy.

An army officer attacked the Congress and claimed to be speaking for "delegates from the front".

"Soldiers began to stand up all over the hall. 'Who are you speaking for? What do you represent?' they cried. "You represent the officers, not the soldiers! What do the soldiers say about it?' Jeers and hoots."

Revolutionary upheavals in the past have shown how dramatic the changes can be

The revolution saw an explosion of interest in political ideas.

People who had been illiterate learned to read. Hundreds of thousands of leaflets, pamphlets, newspapers and books were distributed across Russia.

Reed wrote, "The thirst for education, so long thwarted, burst with the Revolution into a frenzy of expression. Russia absorbed reading matter like hot sand drinks water, insatiable.

"Every street corner was a public tribune. In railway trains, streetcars, always the spurting up of impromptu debate, everywhere."

The revolutionary government quickly brought in measures to undermine old oppressions.

It gave women the right to abortion and divorce on demand. It set up nurseries and canteens to shift the burden of childcare and feeding from individual women and onto society as a whole.

Homosexuality was legalised. A Jew, Leon Trotsky, was twice elected leader of the Petrograd soviet in a country that had been strongly anti-semitic.

The Chinese Revolution in 1927 saw a similar shift in ideas. In his book *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* Harold Isaacs wrote, "Bandages were torn from the bound feet of children.

"Superstitions and old habits suffered. 'The clay and wood gods have already lost their dignity,' said a report from the country. 'The people no longer need the Five Classics and the Four Books.

"'What they want is political reports'."

In revolutions, ordinary people come to the fore and achieve things they never dreamed possible. After living in societies that insist they must "know their place", they begin

to glimpse their own potential. Old hierarchies become irrelevant.

In Portugal a revolutionary upsurge in 1974-75 saw workers occupy factories and soldiers elect their officers. Luxury houses were turned into creches or used to house workers.

More recently during the revolution in Egypt some hospital workers met in their workplaces and set about reorganising things on their terms. They demanded that old managers who had backed dictator Hosni Mubarak were removed.

The meetings involved workers on every level, including doctors, porters, cleaners and admin workers.

It was a glimpse of what could have been, but there were not enough organised workers involved in the revolution to bring about a socialist transformation.

The old regime was able to regroup and violently reassert control.

But there is no way of transforming society without challenging the capitalist set-up.

The revolutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg argued that people who say they want socialism through reforms aren't arguing for socialism at all.

They "do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society."

Of course, we can win reforms under capitalism and it is worth doing so.

It matters whether we have a decent Medicare system or not, or whether abortion is legal or illegal, for example. And fighting for reforms can spill over into bigger struggles and help ordinary people discover their power.

But reforms under capitalism are not the same as socialism. They don't challenge the privilege of the rich. And they leave all the exploitation, oppression and horror of the system intact.

Revolution

Socialism can only come about through revolution "from below"—from the mass activity of the majority of ordinary people.

This is why strikes and mass demonstrations are so important—they give workers a sense of their power to change society and point towards the kind of struggle needed for fundamental change.

Above: The Egyptian revolution saw a glimpse of workers' power as old managers associated with the dictatorship were removed

As the revolutionary Karl Marx put it, "The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class."

Socialism can't be handed down to us from above. Marxists argue that revolution is needed for two main reasons.

First, winning socialism requires challenging the ruling class and the state machines that back them. They will resist this.

In Russia some 14 armies invaded to aid the counter-revolutionary White Army.

The only way to win a socialist society is by workers imposing it and resisting any attempts at counter-revolution from the old rulers.

The second reason is to do with the transformation it brings about in those taking part.

Marx wrote, "Revolution is necessary, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."

In the process of creating a new world, people begin to transform themselves.

Of course revolutions are not simple affairs. Any successful socialist revolution will have to spread internationally in order to survive. It will need a well organised and rooted revolutionary party.

Old ideas and superstitions won't completely disappear straight away. And the ruling class will throw everything it has at destroying any revolutionary movement.

But a socialist revolution can get rid of the exploitation, oppression and violence that destroys so many lives today.

And the numbers that the working class can mobilise are far, far greater than anything the cops and the state can throw at it.

We have the resources, the power and the potential to build a very different world. Class struggle is built into capitalism. And time after time, this has grown into a revolutionary challenge to the system.

There will be revolutions in the future but change is not guaranteed. Our job is to push for a socialist transformation of society.

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WHY CAPITALISM CAN'T ACT ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The competitive drive structured into capitalism prevents the rich and powerful from acting on the climate crisis, argues **Feiyi Zhang**

THIS SUMMER will be remembered for Prime Minister Scott Morrison's holiday in Hawaii whilst Australia burned red with apocalyptic skies and charred black forests. It is an image of our political leaders completely apathetic and indifferent whilst we are overtaken by climate horror.

But the forces standing against climate action are much bigger than just Scott Morrison, or even the Liberals and the major parties. It is an entire capitalist system embedded from head to toe in fossil fuels.

The climate crisis is so undeniable that even Conservative leaders like UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson are backflipping to declare that they accept the reality of climate change.

After previously scoffing that, "there is plenty of snow in our winters these days" he is now opportunistically arguing, "The evidence is overwhelming, and this phenomenon of global warming is taking its toll on the most vulnerable populations around the planet."

NASA's Operation Icebridge recently discovered that a cavity in the Thwaites ridge in the "Doomsday" glacier in Antarctica is melting much faster than expected. If the glacier melts it would send sea levels surging by 60cm and submerge major coastal cities.

It's often said that everyone will be affected by climate change. Workers and the poor will be worst hit—as those least able to afford to move from disaster ravaged areas. But corporations and governments will also be dramatically affected.

Global investment firms like BlackRock are increasingly concerned about the "sustainability-related risks" that climate change poses to investments.

They have enormous sums to lose. Global not-for-profit Carbon Disclosure Project asked firms to calculate how they thought climate change would impact them financially. After analysing submissions from 215 of the world's 500 biggest corporations, they found that they faced $1 trillion in losses within the coming decades, with a majority of those losses in the next five years or so.

Previous calculations published in the journal *Nature* estimated losses to the financial sector of between $1.7 trillion and $24.2 trillion.

But even given the scale of the climate crisis and the green rhetoric from some of them, governments and the rich and powerful are neither able, nor willing, to act to solve the disaster.

Instead they have sought to fiddle with market-based schemes or use accounting tricks to say they are divesting from polluting industries whilst emissions keep rising.

Capitalism and fossil fuels

Capitalism, the economic system we live under, has a relentless logic of its own that forces companies and governments to operate according to its dictates.

Capitalism is not a rational system based on ensuring environmental sustainability or meeting human needs.

One third of global food production is wasted, according to a study for the UN food agency, whilst one in seven people do not have enough to eat. People die because of lack of access to medicines because pharmaceutical companies control patents.

Capitalism has produced destruction on a massive scale in the past—the two world wars killed over 100 million people and shattered whole economies. It has also taken us to the brink of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War.

Governments and the rich and powerful are neither able, nor willing, to act to solve the disaster

Karl Marx spent decades trying to understand the system and explain its dynamics, culminating in his masterwork, *Capital*.

Marx argued that capitalism is based on the exploitation of workers and competition for profit.

At its heart is competition between rival companies—both within every country and across the globe. To survive, corporations need to not only guarantee their profits but remain competitive against other corporations, which are constantly looking to decrease costs and undercut their competitors.

One important way to do this is developing and installing new technology that is more efficient or requires fewer workers. Companies need to continually expand their profits to ensure they can stay at the technological cutting edge and prevent rivals taking them over.

Fossil fuels play a special role in capitalism—they became structured into the system's DNA as it developed.

Coal was a central part of creating the first centres of capitalist industry in Britain. Coal power allowed factories to move away from traditional sources of energy next to water sources. Coal and steam engines allowed capitalism to become mobile and create cities.

The use of oil alongside the invention of combustion engines and aeroplanes transformed transport and war machines. As corporations grew and consolidated by the 1930s more than half of the biggest companies were based in fossil fuels. They are central not just to energy production but to industries from manufacturing

to clothing, transport and agricultural fertilisers.

As ecologist Ian Angus wrote, "Fossil fuels are not an overlay that can be peeled away from capitalism, leaving the system intact. They are embedded in every aspect of the system."

Reducing carbon pollution would mean huge costs to install new production methods in a whole range of industries—something companies are anxious to avoid.

A government in one country could force them to do so, but if their rivals in another nation don't have the same requirements then they can produce their goods more cheaply, sell them on the global market at a lower price and drive others out of business.

This leaves each individual corporation and government paralysed when it comes to addressing climate change.

They can see the threat it poses to profits and their own national economy in the long term. But each company has to remain profitable in the here and now—or it faces going bust. And their power, their military might and billions of dollars are at stake.

This is why governments across the globe have been unable to agree on the coordinated international action on climate change that is needed. This is why the UN climate convention talks, which began back in 1992, have produced 25 years of failure.

Countries like the US, Saudi Arabia and Australia which are more carbon intensive have acted to sabotage global action because they know it would impose higher costs on their own economies than on their rivals.

At the last summit in December, Australia disgracefully argued to use an accounting trick of carrying over carbon credits from the previous Kyoto Protocol period to count towards its 2030 carbon emissions target.

As long as digging up and selling fossil fuels remains profitable, regardless of the extent of the environmental disaster or social crisis it causes, corporations and governments will still invest in carbon, oil or gas.

Even if one company or investor divests from fossil fuel production, another will pick up its mines and oil rigs and keep them running if they can make a profit.

To act on climate change would require a massive writing down of trillions of dollars in current and future investment in fossil fuels—on a scale that has never been seen before under capitalism.

Above: Coal use is not projected to diminish on a global scale through to 2050

It is estimated that 33 financial institutions have provided an estimated total of $1.9tn to future investments in the fossil fuel sector just between 2016 and 2018. The rich and powerful will fight to defend this wealth with all the means at their disposal.

Greenwashing and false solutions

The scale of the climate crisis means that some people think that governments and corporations will eventually have to act or are already beginning the transition to renewable energy.

Although we already have the technologies to transition to 100 per cent renewables within a decade, the wealth invested in fossil fuels and the competitive nature of the system has prevented renewable power being built on the scale needed.

The new wave of green technologies in renewable energy and electric vehicles are still marginal to capitalism compared to the use of fossil fuels—and, if it's left to the capitalist market, they are not going to replace them in the timescale needed.

A projection in September by the US government Energy Information Administration found global coal use would remain steady until 2040 and then increase.

While renewable energy use is expected to grow, it would simply meet the huge increase in electricity demand over the coming decades.

Instead, as the climate crisis heightens, so does "greenwashing" by corporations and governments to sell the idea that there is action being taken on climate change whilst business continues as usual.

Norway is one country that is celebrated for decarbonising its economy. Last year Norway's enormous sovereign wealth fund announced that it would divest from fossil fuel investments. But, in fact, it would still own shares in major oil companies like BP and Shell because they have renewable energy divisions—despite the fact these are a tiny part of their operations.

The country also "decreases" its emissions by buying offset permits from other countries. With emissions projected to decrease by only 12 per cent by 2030 under current policies, Norway would only meet its 40 per cent target through forest sinks or offsets.

We need to fight for system change; for solutions that break from the logic of the profit system by demanding government investment in publicly-owned renewable energy.

To win this will require a massive fight against the power of the fossil fuel industry and the political establishment—and the logic of the system itself.

Ultimately, we need to fight for a socialist society based on democratic planning, to ensure a sustainable society that is capable of making the emergency transition needed to tackle the climate crisis and organise an economy to meet human needs.

FROM OFFSHORE PRISON TO ONSHORE MOTELS: FREE THE REFUGEES

By Ian Rintoul

Above: The Brisbane hotel where 80 refugees from Manus and Nauru are imprisoned

THE MEDEVAC legislation was meant to guarantee that two doctors could recommend sick refugees in Nauru or PNG to be transferred for medical treatment.

Yet hundreds of refugees brought to Australia for medical attention before the Medevac legislation was repealed are still being held in closed detention.

In Brisbane, there are around 80 people in the Kangaroo Point Central Hotel and another 70 in the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation (BITA). All have been there for months since being transferred for medical treatment.

In Melbourne, there are 41 in the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation (MITA) and 55 in the Mantra Hotel, in Bell Street, Preston.

Since the Grandmothers for Refugees held a protest at the Mantra Hotel before Christmas, there is growing awareness that refugees brought for medical treatment are being imprisoned; many without getting treatment.

A rally called by the Brisbane Refugee Action Collective on Saturday 8 February brought further attention on the situation for transferred refugees being held in that city.

Much of the media attention has focused on the motel detention of refugees which seems at once to be more confronting, offensive and perverse than a detention centre.

Motels that are usually associated with holidays have become places of torment. It is worse than prison.

There are no high fences, but the outside world is just as unreachable. You can see outside, but the windows can't be opened and you can't breathe fresh air.

Many have been transferred with their mental health seriously damaged but are finding that detention in a motel or onshore prison is no different from detention on Manus or Nauru.

People who couldn't come out of their rooms on Manus and Nauru see their mental health decline even further.

They take their medication but the days get longer. They aren't coming out of their rooms in Brisbane or Melbourne either.

Confined

The only exercise and the only way out of the hotel in Brisbane is to go to the detention centre. Refugees are searched before they get on the bus, and have just one hour at the gym, before they are taken back to the hotel and searched again before going back to their rooms.

Similarly in Melbourne, like something out of Catch-22, the only way that refugees get out of the hotel is to request to be taken to the detention centre.

For some that's worse. As one refugee told *Solidarity*, "With the guards, the gates, the bars and electric fences, when I go to the detention centre, I can't breathe."

One refugee has been in Mantra for three months but hasn't yet seen a counsellor, despite his requests.

The only exercise and the only way out of the hotel in Brisbane is to go to the detention centre

People who need proper treatment for diabetes, heart disease, cataracts, kidney and dental problems aren't getting treatment in detention either.

Despite the government making a big deal of repealing the Medevac legislation, since then, it has nonetheless transferred around 16 sick refugees from PNG and Nauru to Australia. But it's a particularly twisted policy that transfers refugees for medical treatment, only to condemn them to onshore detention.

Offshore prisons and onshore detention are twin aspects of the government's border protection regime—it has to go.

Build these protests: "Let Them Out, Let Them Stay"

Melbourne—Outside the Mantra Hotel, 215 Bell Street, Preston, 2pm Saturday 29 February

Brisbane—"Free Kazem, Free Them All", Kangaroo Point Hotel, 721 Main Street, Kangaroo Point, 3pm Saturday 29 February