

LABOR'S CLIMATE PLAN SAFEGUARDS COAL AND GAS REAL EMISSIONS CUTS NOT OFFSETS



CLIMATE

Labor's offsets plan means more coal and gas

UKRAINE

The West's proxy war one year on

VOICE TO PARLIAMENT

How plan for token advisory body was birthed

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.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

National

Online meetings via Zoom
6.30pm every Thursday
See fb.com/soliaus/events for details or contact solidarity@solidarity.net.au

Sydney

For more information contact:
Adam on 0400 351 694
sydney@solidarity.net.au

Melbourne

For more information contact:
Chris on 0403 013 183
melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Perth

For more information contact:
Phil on 0423 696 312

Brisbane

For more information contact:
Mark on 0439 561 196 or
brisbane@solidarity.net.au

Canberra

For more information contact:
canberra@solidarity.net.au

CONTACT US

Magazine office

Phone 02 8964 7116
Fax 02 9012 0814

Email

solidarity@solidarity.net.au

Website

www.solidarity.net.au

Facebook

Search for "Solidarity Magazine" or go to fb.com/soliaus

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Things they say

I think it is another attack on our systems, our society and institutions. Peter Dutton on the decision not to feature Charles on Australian \$5 notes

My concern is that the federal government doesn't know what's in that balloon. Is that bioweapons in that balloon? Did that balloon take off from Wuhan?

Republican House Oversight Committee Chair James Comer

American presidents deal with First Nations communities on a sovereign to sovereign basis.

Stan Grant arguing that Indigenous Australians could be sovereign too—just like Native Americans.

It doesn't bind parliament to act anyway, it's not judiciable, it's not a Bill of Rights.

Conservative constitutional scholar Professor Greg Craven is pro-Voice

We got an incoherent assortment of kumbaya capitalist thought bubbles—the kinds of ideas you might expect from a bunch of virtue-signalling CEOs attending a wellness retreat.

Steven Hamilton, economist and visiting fellow at the Tax and Transfer Policy Institute at the ANU, on Jim Chalmers' essay on values capitalism

Do they know what they are doing? Do they have enough information? Have they done the measurements properly? ... There weren't any clear answers to these questions.

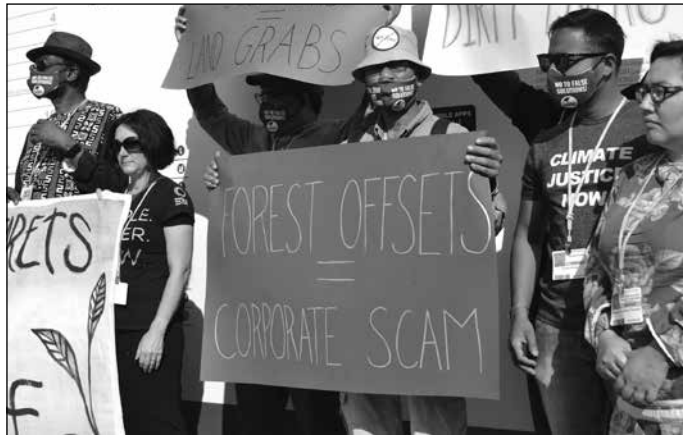
Arjun Makhijani, a former nuclear engineer and expert panel member on nuclear safety, worries as Japan plans to release more than a million tonnes of radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant into the ocean.

Let me see if I'm following. I'm publicly defamed by my former employer. I donated the money to charity because all I wanted was an apology and a retraction. And yet... somehow Linda Reynolds is the victim in this scenario?

Brittany Higgins responds to her former boss Linda Reynolds' complaints that she had to pay compensation after calling her a "lying cow"

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Record profits see oil companies ditch green energy

The world's major oil companies have announced a year of outrageous profits. Their response? Walking back their promises to invest more in renewable energy.

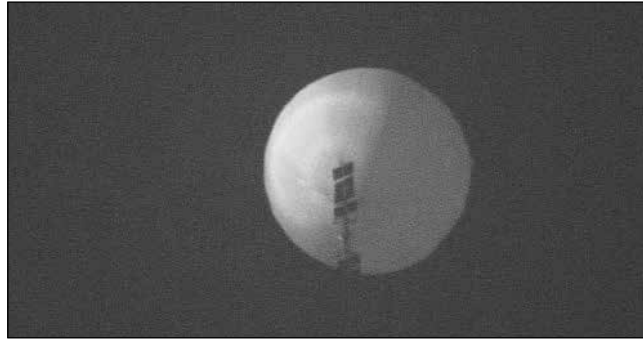
Exxon posted a profit of \$56 billion for 2022, smashing its previous record by over \$10 billion. Chevron doubled its profits to \$35 billion, while Shell made \$40 billion. BP also hit a record profit in the company's 114-year history of \$28 billion.

Shell claimed that it spent one-sixth of its total investment of \$25 billion on green energy last year. But the bulk of this appears to be spending on trading and marketing gas, according to an analysis by Global Witness. Just 1.5 per cent of Shell's investment was in genuine renewable energy like wind and solar, it said.

Chevron plans \$14 billion in investment for this year with just \$1 billion on "renewable fuels".

BP also scaled back the plan to reduce its total emissions from 40 per cent by 2030 to only 20 to 30 per cent, as it expects to keep pumping out oil and gas for longer.

Balloon farce shows threat of US-China war



BIZARRE PRO-WAR hysteria overcame the rulers of the US and Australia after the discovery of a Chinese balloon over US territory.

Republicans in Congress demanded the US shoot it down, panicking that it could contain "bioweapons" sent "from Wuhan". US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken cancelled a major visit to China, declaring the balloon a "clear violation of US sovereignty and international law".

The Pentagon, however, was unconcerned, declining to act for several days after concluding there was little information China could gain from the balloon it wasn't already capable of collecting through satellites. US officials had already acted to shield military sites from surveillance. *The Washington Post* later revealed that the US had known about the balloon for a week before it got anywhere near the US, tracking it the whole time.

High altitude balloon surveillance was used by the US against the Soviet Union over 60 years ago.

US President Joe Biden finally sent warplanes to shoot it down, following up by attacking another three balloons over North America, only to admit afterwards they were "most likely" weather balloons owned by private companies.

A local hobby balloon that cost \$17 was one of the casualties, with the Northern Illinois Bottlecap Balloon Brigade reporting that their science experiment had gone missing. The White House even responded to "questions and concerns" by reassuring the public none of the targets was an alien spaceship.

But the ridiculous episode is an indication of how dangerous the situation between the US and China has become. A succession of US military officials have declared that a war over Taiwan is imminent, with General Mike Minihan, head of US Air Mobility Command saying "My gut tells me we will fight in 2025." If a balloon and a bit of hot air can cause an international crisis we are living in dangerous times.

Hospo staff sacked and rehired to avoid penalty rates

MANTLE GROUP sacked and rehired around 700 hospitality staff in late January in order to deny them penalty rates under a new agreement.

Staff were shifted onto an enterprise agreement approved on the basis that it only applied to a single cafe that did not operate on weekends or nights.

The move came less than two weeks after the Fair Work Commission struck down an earlier agreement as fraudulent, accusing the company's head of Human Resources of deliberately lying, and ordered the company to reinstate penalty rates.

Mantle is one of Queensland's largest hospitality companies and runs a string of venues in Brisbane including the Pig'N'Whistle pubs, restaurants Jimmy's On The Mall and Milano.

It has employed staff on a series of agreements since 1999 that deny hundreds of workers weekend and public holiday penalty rates.

One previous agreement was approved with a vote involving only four highly-paid managers, before other staff were moved onto the agreement.

Fair Work Commissioners slammed management's evidence about that deal as "frankly incredible" and full of "numerous inconsistencies, improbabilities and evasions".

The company is defending the legality of its actions in court.

Plans to offset NT gas developments a farce

CLAIMS THAT carbon emissions from new gas projects in the Northern Territory could be completely offset are "wildly unrealistic", climate experts say.

The NT government has welcomed a report that claimed emissions from new projects could be "completely mitigated or offset within Australia". The government is preparing to decide whether to open up the Beetaloo basin and allow gas fracking to go ahead.

Offsetting the emissions would rely on failed carbon capture and storage technology, as well as 10 per cent of the land-based carbon offset credits currently available in Australia.

Academic Andrew Macintosh told the ABC, "the scenarios around the capacity for offsets to be supplied for this project are fundamentally unrealistic".

The report was completed by the Gas Industry Social and Environment Alliance, a collaboration between CSIRO and other agencies partly funded by the gas industry.

Mining billionaire Twiggy's racist paternalism on show

ANDREW "TWIGGY" Forrest is refusing to pay compensation to the Yindjibarndi people in WA's Pilbara, claiming it would just lead to an "alcohol disaster". Forrest's company has refused to sign a compensation agreement for mining on lands where the Yindjibarndi hold native title.

In comments that reek of racist paternalism Twiggy declared in February that "Ending the Indigenous disparity is not done with cash", claiming that Aboriginal people wouldn't be able to manage the money and it would just lead to more "Alice Springs alcohol disasters".

Twiggy's company faces a multi-million dollar claim after it mined the area without permission. The court case is the final act in an almost 20 year saga following underhanded and aggressive efforts by Twiggy's company to try to push the Yindjibarndi to agree to mining. The Yindjibarndi refused its initial offer, which was well below comparable compensation packages. In return Fortescue withheld funds from the desperately poor Indigenous community, fighting them through the courts.

But Twiggy still has the hide to style himself as a philanthropist, proclaiming "I believe in real, practical action to end the savage disparity" Indigenous people face.

EDITORIAL

Labor failure on climate and cost of living result of refusal to challenge corporations and the rich

ANTHONY ALBANESE and Labor are riding high, with Peter Dutton and the Liberals staying far to the right and still branded by their failures in office.

If NSW Liberal Premier Dominic Perrottet loses the state election on 25 March, there will be Labor governments in every state except Tasmania.

Yet Labor is still refusing to deliver any kind of serious change.

The cost of living keeps rising, with inflation up again to 7.8 per cent. The Reserve Bank has hiked interest rates for the ninth month in a row, warning there are still further increases ahead.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers says Labor's price caps on coal and gas are working to bring down power bills, but has confirmed they will still rise another 23 per cent this year.

The government is refusing to do any more, claiming more spending would fuel inflation.

But tougher price caps on power as well as other soaring costs like rents could hit profits without pushing up prices. And workers deserve pay rises matching inflation when it's mainly corporate profits fuelling the problem.

Instead, Labor is committed to modest, middle of the road policies that pose no challenge to capitalism or the rich.

Albanese wants a Voice to parliament that is a powerless advisory body without committing to deliver any serious boost to funding for Indigenous communities, land rights or action on deaths in custody.

Instead of actually listening to the voices of Indigenous people in Alice Springs or the opposition to mining development in the Pilliga, Albanese's focus is on winning over Liberal Party support for his referendum.

He says he wants it to be a "moment where we come together as a nation". But bringing together Peter Dutton, big business and the mining bosses is not going to deliver real change. And Dutton does not even seem interested in it.

The Liberals have also moved to oppose Labor's climate Safeguards legislation, even though big business wants them to back it. The Liberals are determined to oppose doing anything on climate change.

This will only ensure their problems winning back heartland seats lost to the teal independents, keeping them out of government for the foreseeable future.



Above: Labor's new climate Safeguards mechanism won't cut carbon pollution

But instead of seizing the opportunity to lock in meaningful action on climate change, Labor is sticking with the small target policies it took to the election, designed to minimise the differences between Labor and the Coalition.

Stop the Safeguards farce

Its Safeguards mechanism is a policy the Liberals invented. Labor's version is a gift to big polluting companies, allowing them to buy unlimited offsets instead of actually reducing emissions. It will enable a mass expansion of coal and gas mining.

Labor has made it clear it won't move one inch beyond this, with Chris Bowen saying it would implement what it took to the election and "nothing more". Instead it is demanding The Greens back down over their demands to halt new coal and gas developments and wave it through, accusing them of setting out to "sabotage" climate action in league with the Liberals.

Labor hopes to neuter The Greens, after they gave in last year to back its hopeless 43 per cent climate target and have given uncritical support to the Voice to parliament.

If Labor won't move, The Greens should block the legislation. But their concern to be parliamentary players able to strike deals means that's unlikely.

The limits of what can be achieved in parliament are dramatically on show. Despite holding the balance of power in the Senate, The Greens have been unable

to force major concessions from Labor.

Instead Labor has used the conservative weight of the media and big business to demand The Greens retreat. Even liberal commentators in *The Guardian* have taken Labor's side.

We need a much bigger movement on the streets to turn this around and win any real change.

The School Strike for Climate rallies on 3 March, the first since the election, are an important first step. There will be actions in five cities, including Sydney, Canberra and Perth.

Labor has announced that it will finally deliver on its election promise by allowing refugees on Temporary Protection Visas to apply for permanent visas by the end of March.

But again it refused to go any further, offering nothing to the 10,000 rejected under the Liberals' unfair processing system or those brought here from Manus and Nauru. The Palm Sunday rallies will demand that Labor back permanent visas for all and end their support for offshore detention.

Teachers' and nurses' unions in NSW have wound down their strikes into a door-knocking campaign for Labor at the state election.

We need a union strike campaign for wages that keep pace with the cost of living. Workers in Britain are showing the way, with the largest national strikes in 30 years.

It is struggle on the streets and in the workplaces that holds the hope for change—not relying on parliament to do it for us.

.....
Instead of seizing the opportunity for action on climate, Labor is sticking with the small target policies it took to the election

Lidia Thorpe raises dissent over Voice to parliament

By Ian Rintoul

LIDIA THORPE'S resignation from The Greens has exposed the limits of the party's radicalism and invigorated the debate about the Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

Thorpe's cry that there is a desperate need to "grow and amplify a Black sovereign movement in this country" has struck a chord with many who have watched in despair as the new Labor government supports resource companies attacking Aboriginal land, extends punitive Intervention-style measures in the NT and fails to act on mass incarceration and child removal.

Thorpe's move was driven by The Greens' uncritical support of the Voice in the face of significant opposition from Indigenous activists in and outside the party. While she has not declared which way she will vote in the referendum, she is right to say, "There is a progressive No vote out there."

Thorpe's strongest ground is when she insists that the Voice is not going to deliver the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody, change the rates of child removal, or do anything about Indigenous poverty or land rights.

Thorpe says she wants to "fully represent" the grassroots Black sovereign movement.

There is no doubt we need a movement. The fact that there was not one protest in Alice Springs or anywhere else in response to the government reimposing measures that mirrored the Intervention is one indication of that.

Indigenous people in the Northern Territory and in the Pilliga in NSW are fighting separate attempts by mining companies to develop gas projects on Indigenous land, but these are not often linked to a wider Indigenous rights movement.

Treaty?

While calls for Treaty reflect a demand for something more substantial than the Voice, the actual content of any proposed Treaty is also vague. Thorpe has suggested that a Treaty could deliver ten Black senators who would "have real power". This seems to reflect an idea that goes no further than The Greens' view that real power is in parliament. Yet Thorpe has already experienced the limitations of that strategy.

No Treaty negotiated with the Australian state is going to give "real

Above: Lidia Thorpe speaks at an Invasion Day protest

power" to any Black senators who might be elected.

But there is also a more basic problem with the idea of a Treaty. Any Treaty would amount to a compromise with Australian capitalism.

Stan Grant argues that treaties signed by the Maori and Native Americans mean that First Nations people are recognised as "sovereign". But this simply amounts to token recognition of Indigenous people in exchange for treaties that have left them deprived of their land and subject to on-going discrimination.

Real sovereignty would mean Indigenous control of Indigenous affairs, real land rights that could prevent mining on Indigenous land, and an end to the homelessness, poverty and deprivation that blights Indigenous lives.

Australian capitalism is not going to grant that kind of self-determination, or negotiate a Treaty recognising such rights. They will have to be fought for.

It is crucially important to recognise the nature of that struggle. There is no doubt that the European invasion, and the state it gave rise to, excluded Indigenous people and was founded on racism.

The ruling class implemented a "White Australia" policy, creating a virulent racist nationalism to entrench the mythology that white workers and white bosses had a common interest.

But the Australian constitution is about Australian capitalism; it does not contain rights for non-Indigenous workers, migrants or women either.

Racist ideology has infected the working class and must be consciously fought. But there is also a tradition of anti-racism in the Australian working class, recognising a common struggle with Indigenous people against a common enemy.

From the Pilbara strike in 1946, to the Gurindji strike for land rights in 1966, the struggle at Nookanbah against mining companies in 1980, to Jabiluka and the more recent fight against nuclear waste dumps, solidarity from the union movement was central.

Black liberation won't come about through a Treaty with the Australian state. Thorpe herself is scathing about the Treaty process in Victoria. To win Black liberation, the Australian state will have to be smashed.

There is an old slogan "No socialism without women's liberation and no women's liberation without socialism". The same applies to Indigenous sovereignty.

It is united class struggle that has the power to win real gains within capitalism, but also the power to overthrow it. The tens of thousands, Black and white, who turned out for the Black Lives Matter rallies in 2020 and the growing numbers that attend Invasion Day protests show the potential for a real struggle.

Thorpe's resignation has drawn attention to the widespread anger and frustration among Indigenous activists that, for all the talk about the Voice, the voices of grassroots Indigenous struggles are still being ignored. The challenge is to build a movement that can't be ignored or bought off.

.....
Australian capitalism is not going to grant self-determination, or negotiate a Treaty recognising real rights

Intervention-style bans back in Alice Springs as governments still not listening to Indigenous people

By Sarah Thorne

THE REINTRODUCTION of blanket alcohol bans on NT town camps and communities heralds the return of racist Intervention-era controls over Aboriginal people. On 16 February, in a reactionary response to rising crime in Alice Springs, the NT government reimposed alcohol prohibition on people in 344 Aboriginal areas across the territory.

This comes just seven months after people in “alcohol protected areas” (APAs) were released from 15 years of liquor restrictions first imposed under the NT Intervention legislation in 2007, and extended by Labor in 2012 with the Stronger Futures legislation.

Some have claimed the alcohol bans would never have been lifted had there been an Indigenous Voice to parliament.

However, Tangentyere council, the elected representatives of the Aboriginal town camps in Alice Springs, have staunchly resisted alcohol restrictions. Chief executive Walter Shaw says the measures criminalise Aboriginal people based on where they live, and that the council “supports the aspirations of its member and town campers for self-determination and the abolition of punitive, race-based laws.”

Labor and Liberal governments have shown no interest in listening to the voices of local Indigenous people. Billions of dollars have been spent on Intervention measures and on a massive expansion of police, prisons, and child protection in the Territory over 15 years. This has only made Indigenous poverty and disadvantage worse.

NT Intervention

The Intervention decimated communities. Crime and unrest has escalated across central Australia with Indigenous people stripped of a future. “These children are a product of that”, Que Kenny, a Western Arrente woman and human rights activist said, “They are the children of the Intervention who have grown up watching their parents be demonised and rejected.”

There is little doubt alcohol has had an impact on rates of crime, but the sensationalised reporting of “alcohol-fuelled violence” and crime consuming Alice Springs only reinforces the paternalist narrative that says Aboriginal people need to



be controlled. It whitewashes decades of neglect and government failure that are the real drivers of crime.

The Intervention saw the Racial Discrimination Act suspended to allow a vicious attack on Aboriginal self-determination.

Compulsory income management saw 50 per cent of welfare recipients’ money quarantined onto a Basics Card, to be spent only on government approved “essentials”.

The Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) employing thousands of Aboriginal people was scrapped, leading to a collapse of community services and an explosion in unemployment. Communities lost control of township land and local community councils were abolished and replaced by mega-shires. Police were given special powers to enter homes and vehicles without a warrant.

Recent media coverage has been reminiscent of the lies about “paedophile rings” operating in Aboriginal communities that justified sending in the military to launch the Intervention.

The mayor of Alice Springs, Matt Paterson, made national headlines in January by calling for the army to again be brought in to restore order: “We need more boots on ground every single day of the year at this stage, until this is addressed.” This was echoed by right-wing politicians including Liberal leader Peter Dutton and NT Senator Jacinta Price who called for federal police intervention.

All this has fuelled racism in Alice Springs. White supremacists have been threatening vigilante violence on

Above: Indigenous communities opposed NT Intervention measures from 2007 under Liberal and Labor governments

Aboriginal youth. The organiser of a 3000-strong meeting said the police should be called on “groups of kids”, and threatened to sue the NT government for allowing the alcohol restrictions to lapse.

Anthony Albanese was forced to fly in to announce a review of the alcohol bans, changes to bottle shop hours, and a \$48 million “community safety” package that includes \$14.2 million for policing. Within a week the review had recommended reimposing alcohol bans.

On 7 February Albanese pledged an additional \$250 million to bolster community services and fund youth diversion and domestic violence programs. But this is a drop in the ocean of what’s needed to address chronic disadvantage and poverty, shocking rates of overcrowding, and surging imprisonment rates.

Labor have shown they cannot be trusted to support Indigenous people in Alice Springs. Their first action was to restore punitive restrictions. The party has also reneged on its promise to end the income management system introduced with the Intervention.

Even the promise to eventually ease alcohol restrictions and introduce “Alcohol Management Plans” in consultation with communities rings hollow. Labor promised this under Stronger Futures, and while multiple communities and town camps negotiated such plans, blanket prohibition remained in force.

Local Aboriginal people have solutions—they have been crying out for funding and Aboriginal control for years. But it will take resistance and organisation to force real action.

Billions have been spent on Intervention measures and on police, prisons, and child protection in the Territory over 15 years

Veronica Nelson a victim of racist law and order agenda

By Jayden Rivers

ON 30 January, coroner Simon McGregor handed down his report into the death of Gunditjmara, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman Veronica Nelson in Melbourne's Dame Phyllis Frost prison.

The findings were an indictment of the racist, violent prison system in Victoria and the complicity of successive governments in perpetuating policies that kill Aboriginal people in custody.

Four days before her death in January 2020, police arrested Veronica over shoplifting allegations. That evening, Veronica awaited her bail application hearing in the Melbourne Custody Centre. The court didn't reach her matter.

The next morning, police opposed Veronica's unrepresented application for bail and the magistrate refused her.

She was then sent to prison. Over 36 hours, Veronica used the intercom 49 times to request assistance or complain of symptoms, pleading: "I feel like I'm going to die."

After 4am on the morning of 2 January, Veronica stopped responding in the middle of a call to prison staff. No one checked on Veronica and she was found dead at 7.30am.

McGregor said: "The sounds of Veronica's last pleading calls for help echoed around the courtroom when played during the inquest, prompting me to ponder how the people who heard them and had the power to help her did not rush to her aid, send her to hospital, or simply open the door of the cell to check on her."

Fatal neglect

The coroner found that Veronica "died of complications of withdrawal from chronic opiate use and Wilkie Syndrome in the setting of malnutrition". Veronica would have been alive today if the prison staff had responded to her pleas, he said.

Prison guards even told another inmate, Kylie Bastin, that she was "not allowed" to give cordial to Veronica to help with her withdrawal.

It was the neglect from racist, drug-stigmatising prison staff that killed Veronica Nelson. But it was the refusal of Veronica's bail that delivered her into their hands.

Despite its progressive image, Dan Andrews' Labor government has overseen a large expansion in budgets for police, prisons and "tough on crime" policies.

Above: Family and supporters outside the inquest into Veronica Nelson's death

The 2018 Bail Act created a presumption against bail for all repeat offenders, regardless of the severity of the crime.

In 2021, 89 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women entering prison were unsentenced.

Under pressure from the inquest findings, Andrews has now committed to reforming his own Bail Act. But this is just one policy shift in a broader agenda that prioritises punishment over social justice.

Andrews' policies run counter to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which delivered a landmark report in 1991 calling for systemic reform to stop Black deaths.

The recommendations include "close monitoring of bail legislation to ensure [it doesn't restrict] the grant of bail to Aboriginal people"; use of imprisonment "only as a last resort"; and "the provision of health care to people in custody to a standard equivalent to that available to the general public".

In his inquest findings, coroner McGregor argued: "Had the RCADIC recommendations been successfully implemented by the government and its agencies, Veronica's passing would more likely than not have been prevented."

Voice no solution

The Albanese government is also not addressing the mass incarceration of Indigenous people and the deaths in custody crisis. Instead, it is talking up the Voice to Parliament.

Albanese has reassured right-wingers that the Voice will have no

real power. Yet Labor also claims it will give Aboriginal people direct input into policy.

The government already knows how to stop deaths in custody. It just refuses to challenge the power of police.

Police and prisons play a crucial role in defending capitalism—a deeply unequal, unstable system which continuously expands a few people's wealth at everyone else's expense.

"Tough on crime" policies also allow governments and media to blame targeted communities for their own social misery.

Andrews has allocated \$3.9 billion extra to the police and spends \$1 million a day to keep unsentenced prisoners in jail.

Meanwhile, as Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service chief Nerita Waight reports, there are 35 Aboriginal people arrested each day, most accused of economic crimes.

At the 2023 Melbourne Invasion Day rally, Senator Lidia Thorpe said she might support a Voice if the government showed it was serious about acting on longstanding Indigenous demands.

"When [the ALP] implement the RCADIC, the Bringing Them Home report, the Close The Gap report ... otherwise what? They're going to bring in an advisory body, that has parliamentary supremacy over it at all times, to give [the parliament] advice on what implementing recommendations?"

The real voice is on the streets—we need to build a protest movement, backed by workers' power, that the parliament can't ignore.

The government already knows how to stop deaths in custody—it just refuses to challenge the power of police

Labor's climate plan only safeguards fossil fuels

By Jordi Pardoel

THE ALBANESE government wants to force changes to the climate Safeguard Mechanism through parliament by 31 March. The policy is central to Labor's claim it is taking climate change seriously and working to cut emissions.

Its purported aim is to reduce the emissions of Australia's biggest industrial polluters. But companies will be allowed to buy their way out of reducing emissions through purchasing offsets if they exceed their emissions limit.

There is mounting opposition to this, with climate scientist Bill Hare calling it state-sanctioned greenwashing. It will do nothing to stop the over 100 new fossil fuel projects in the approval pipeline and will likely lead to an **increase** in emissions.

Labor's emissions reduction target of 43 per cent by 2030 is already weak, far below the 75 per cent target consistent with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's reports. But the new measures make its climate failure far worse.

The Safeguard Mechanism was introduced by the Coalition. In its six year existence it has failed to reduce emissions.

The current scheme covers 215 of Australia's biggest industrial polluters – those that emit more than 100,000 tonnes of carbon every year, including mining and manufacturing. They represent 28 per cent of the country's annual emissions.

All of these facilities were required to limit their emissions to a Safeguard baseline. Instead, overall emissions increased by 7 per cent.

Despite this, Labor has chosen to "revamp" it rather than scrap it, planning more stringent baselines, a \$275 penalty for every tonne of carbon beyond the limit, and a 4.9 per cent baseline decrease every year.

But the reforms leave in place a massive loophole. Companies can purchase unlimited carbon credits to offset their emissions—allowing them to continue polluting.

Carbon credits

These Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) are typically generated by specialised companies who manage projects like reforestation, with trees consuming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.



Above: Rallying against Labor's climate policy to demand real action

Companies such as energy giant Santos plan to offset emissions by investing in carbon capture and storage projects directly.

But offsets are not equivalent to the fossil fuel emissions they replace.

Trees in reforestation projects can burn down or die after a few decades. Carbon from burning fossil fuels will stay in the atmosphere far longer.

There is also significant evidence that at least 75 per cent of Australian carbon credits do not reduce emissions at all. For example, companies have claimed credits for protecting forests that would never have been cut down anyway.

Not only is the carbon stored hard to measure, companies profiting from these projects have an incentive to exaggerate, double count, or simply lie about offset projects.

Professor Andrew Macintosh, the former chair of the ACCU scheme's regulatory body, blew the whistle on the Australian carbon credit market, claiming it was largely a sham.

In one study Macintosh and his colleagues found that 17.5 million carbon credits were issued to projects meant to regrow native forests. However, the total forest area had barely increased at all.

Carbon offset credits are being exposed as a scam worldwide.

Four Corners recently uncovered an offsets company in PNG that was logging the forest it was supposedly protecting to create carbon credits for Australian companies.

The Liberals are opposing the

changes outright, forcing Labor to negotiate with The Greens and the crossbench.

The Greens have said they will consider supporting them if Labor promises to stop new coal and gas projects. Bandt however has said this is an "offer" not an "ultimatum".

Labor is again accusing The Greens of threatening to block climate action and siding with the Liberals.

But The Greens are right to insist on no new coal and gas projects.

An Australian Institute report calculated that the emissions associated with the 116 new coal and gas projects on the way would total to 1.7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

This is three times Australia's current annual emissions – completely overshooting our already weak emissions reduction target.

The Scarborough gas project in WA alone could make Labor's already inadequate 43 per cent target impossible to achieve.

We are now three years into the most critical decade for climate action. The Safeguard Mechanism will do nothing to reduce existing emissions. It will allow huge expansion of digging up and burning coal and gas, and widespread use of dodgy offsets.

The climate strike on 3 March is demanding no new coal and gas, and real carbon cuts not offsets. We should take this opportunity to expose Labor's greenwashing and build a fight for real emissions reductions, no new coal and gas and a just transition to 100 per cent public renewable energy.

Carbon offset credits are being exposed as a scam worldwide

Chalmers has no solution for the crises of capitalism

By Jean Parker

LABOR TREASURER Jim Chalmers has followed in the footsteps of previous Labor ministers, including Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2009 and Treasurer Wayne Swan in 2012, by penning a theoretical article in the pages of the *Monthly* magazine. With each essay the theoretical coherence and aspirations, never high, have sunk.

Rudd's essay came at the very height of the global economic crisis in February 2009 as banks collapsed and stock markets fell in the worst recession since the 1930s Depression.

The enormous fiscal packages and bailouts implemented by governments across the globe managed to stabilise the world economy but did nothing to solve the fundamental crisis in profitability.

They kicked the crisis down the road and much of the economic growth that occurred in the following 15 years centred on even more financial speculation, while living standards have stagnated and even dropped for most of the world's population.

Chalmers' essay recognises the even darker clouds of instability that now face us, with the havoc created by COVID and inflation. Yet Chalmers offers no solutions. There is a complete mismatch between his recognition of the storms facing humanity and Labor's economic policy ambitions, which amount to a forlorn hope that capitalists will start to invest based on "values not value".

Chalmers cites economist Nouriel Roubini to talk about the interlocking "mega threats" we face: rising inflation with slowing growth, economic inequality and workers displaced by technology, government debt, the rise of extreme right parties, a new cold war and climate disaster leading to falling living standards and displaced people.

Fluffy rhetoric

So what does Labor propose to do to protect us from impending economic, imperialist and climate barbarism? Beyond Chalmers' fluffy rhetoric of a "new, values-based capitalism for Australia" there is precious little.

First, he proposes "strengthening" institutions such as the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Productivity Commission. Yet both institutions



Above: Labor Treasurer Jim Chalmers thinks capitalism can embrace new values

are products of neoliberal deregulation implemented by Paul Keating and John Howard as they drove disastrous policies of corporatisation and privatisation to boost profits as the market ripped through healthcare, education and housing.

Second, he proposes to "measure what matters" by adding wellbeing into the budget.

With the right metrics and guided by government, Chalmers argues, corporations will start to invest for social and climate need, not profits.

And finally Chalmers talks about public/private co-investment in the industry, housing and electricity sectors. On housing, for instance, with 437,000 households already in need of social housing and an acute affordability crisis in the private rental market, Labor's Housing Australia Future Fund proposes to borrow \$10 billion to invest in the stock market.

The proceeds (they hope) from this gambling exercise will go towards funding up to 30,000 social housing homes and 10,000 affordable rentals in the first five years.

As The Greens rightly point out, under this policy the housing crisis is certain to get worse.

Instead of taxing corporate profits to fund genuine social democratic reforms, Labor wants to rely on the capitalist market.

Chalmers claims, "the private sector is key and central to sustainable growth, and there's a genuine appetite among so many forward-looking businesspeople and investors for something

more aligned with their values, and our national goals."

Chalmers has learned nothing from the Royal Commissions into aged and disability care that exposed the abuse and abject denial of human dignity that results from allowing the profit motive to determine care for the most vulnerable.

Economic instability

It is capitalism's drive for profit that underpins the crises Chalmers' cites—the economic instability, the new cold war with China and the climate catastrophe. Yet Chalmers' essay asks us to watch government fold its arms and hope that capitalists will do the right thing.

Chalmers notes the, "reality of our fiscal position—the federal budget is deep in debt and under pressure—so the options for large, broad new programs are limited." He recognises some of the intractable problems that capitalism has created but is incapable of breaking from the neoliberal script to solve any of them.

Chalmers doesn't mention the stage 3 tax cuts worth \$15.7 billion per year that are due to come into effect in July 2024. Fifty per cent of the tax cuts will go to the top 10 per cent of taxpayers.

Chalmers could scrap the tax cuts. He could also scrap the nuclear submarines and use the \$179 billion to fund pay rises, climate action and public housing. But he is committed to running capitalism when it needs to be overthrown.

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Instead of taxing corporate profits to fund genuine reforms, Labor wants to rely on the capitalist market

NSW Liberals on the ropes but Labor's promises aren't enough to fix hospitals and schools

By Adam Adelpour

THE NSW Liberals are unravelling in the face of growing scandals, with polls showing Labor comfortably ahead as the state election approaches on 25 March.

There have been signs of real discontent with the Liberals after 12 years in power.

Last year saw a wave of public sector strikes as accumulated bitterness was finally brought to a head following the peak of the COVID crisis. Teachers, train drivers and nurses, who were hailed as “frontline heroes” during the pandemic, faced nothing but pay cuts, understaffing and the rising cost of living on the other side of COVID-19 lockdowns.

The strikes were the biggest in a decade in NSW. But instead of escalating the fight and breaking the NSW Liberals, union officials wound down the strikes and are focusing on an electoral campaign to elect Labor.

New anti-protest laws have seen climate activists, like Violet Coco, facing serious jail time.

Liberals' civil war

Scott Morrison's right-wing Liberal government went down in flames at the 2022 Federal election, damaged by the rise of teal independents who won a swath of formerly safe Liberal seats.

NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet has sought to give his election campaign a progressive sheen as part of a strategy to neutralise the threat of the teals at a state level.

He has announced a gambling reform package that would introduce cashless poker machines, allowing gamblers to limit their spending via cashless cards, as well as funding for clubs and venues to reduce their reliance on pokies.

He broke ranks with Peter Dutton's Federal opposition to support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament and has pleaded with Liberal Party branches to address the party's appalling lack of female candidates. This has been mostly ignored, aside from a deal to add two more women to the party's upper house ticket.

But these moves have been a bridge too far for the right of the party.

Perrottet was supposed to be their champion. When Donald Trump



Above: Nurses took the fight to Perrottet last year through ongoing strikes but have now wound down action

Labor leader Chris Minns is hoping to coast into power while offering precious little change

won the 2016 Presidential election Perrottet hailed it as a “victory” for conservative “values”. Now, his lean to the left has provoked a vicious right-wing backlash amongst some of his former allies.

In January Perrottet had to apologise for wearing a Nazi costume at his 21st birthday party. The apology came after transport minister David Elliott called Perrottet, informing him there were plans to use the story about the Nazi costume against him.

Elliott told the media, “Political rivals knew about the costume and everyone, including the premier's own staff, had heard the rumour that someone was planning to use it against him”.

The Liberals have also been dogged by revelations of corruption and other scandals.

The most high profile was the case

of former deputy premier John Barilaro, who was given a \$500,000 per year “jobs for the boys” appointment to a plum US trade role.

The factional bloodbath inside the Liberals means “dirt files” are being dug up to sink factional rivals, exposing the rotten underbelly of the party.

In February trade minister Damien Tudehope resigned after it was discovered he held shares in Transurban, who have profited from the toll roads built under the Liberals. In the same week Peter Poulos was dumped from the party's upper house ticket over circulating explicit images of a female Liberal MP in 2021.

Minns offers little

Labor leader Chris Minns is hoping to coast into power while offering precious little change. Even on gambling reform Minns is unwilling to match what the Liberals are putting forward, positioning himself to the right of Perrottet.

On the cost of living Labor says it will scrap the public sector wage cap, but has given no indication of what kind of pay rise it might offer nurses or teachers. All Minns has said is that wage increases have to be offset by “productivity gains”, meaning workers will have to sacrifice conditions for higher pay.

Amid high inflation, climbing interest rates and with cost of living topping voters' concerns, all Minns has put forward is a modest \$60 cap on road tolls.

While he has followed Victoria's Daniel Andrews with a plan for a publicly-owned renewable energy company, its \$1 billion of funding is modest and relies on private sector partnerships.

The Greens are campaigning on demands for a rent freeze and free public transport, and backing real pay rises for public sector workers. They are expected to hold their three lower house seats and could take three seats in the upper house.

It will be a welcome development if the Liberals are booted out of their last mainland state government. But it is going to take a renewed union campaign of strikes and protests to win the pay rises, staffing and funding increases needed in hospitals, schools and the wider public sector.

Ardern jumps ship as NZ Labour lets down its supporters

By David Glanz

JACINDA ARDERN'S resignation last month as leader of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Labour Party and therefore as Prime Minister came as a shock.

Ardern had led Labour to two election victories, including in October 2020 when the party won more than half the popular vote in a general election for the first time since 1946.

In May 2020, her domestic popularity peaked at 61.3 per cent.

Globally, she became a favourite of the soft left, not least for her empathetic reaction to the horrific Christchurch massacre in 2019, in which an Australian far right terrorist killed 51 Muslims.

Ardern explained her resignation as “not having enough in the tank” to continue the job. She had endured death threats for her COVID-19 lockdown policies and misogynist attacks similar to those suffered by Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

But that personal story can't hide the fact that, under her leadership, Labour went into decline. Although new Prime Minister Chris Hipkins has received a small bounce in the polls, Labour is still heading for defeat in October.

In 2020, Labour won 50 per cent of the vote. Today, it is sitting at about 34 per cent. The main conservative party, National, is heading for victory in alliance with ACT, which is a more right-wing and fiercely anti-worker party.

Ardern has a reputation as a progressive. As Aotearoa socialist Elliot Crossan notes, her government reduced child poverty from 22.8 per cent in 2018 to 16.3 per cent in 2021. It raised benefit levels above inflation, increased the minimum wage and introduced a new top income tax rate of 39 per cent.

However, that is far from the whole story. Ardern, who learned conservative social democratic Third Way politics while working as an intern for British Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2006, was committed to placating the rich throughout her time as leader.

In 2017, Ardern confirmed her support for a set of Budget Responsibility Rules to be followed by a Labour-Green government. Although the policy had been proposed by the Greens, it represented neoliberal

orthodoxy.

The aim was to keep the government in surplus and reduce government debt—while maintaining state spending at or below 30 per cent of gross domestic product.

In 2019, Ardern pledged she would never introduce a capital gains tax. The following year, she committed to never introducing a wealth tax.

Even when she introduced a new scheme to allow workers to strike deals across industries there was a sting—no strikes were to be allowed during bargaining.

Faced with COVID disaster, Labour spent huge sums to keep the economy afloat during the pandemic. But the benefits flowed overwhelmingly to the bosses.

So there was a mortgage “holiday” but no restrictions on rent, giving landlords a boost. Labour gave subsidies to business, some of which took the money and sacked workers anyway.

This led to the biggest increase in inequality in the country's recorded history, worsening a situation which had already seen the wealthiest tenth own one-quarter of the country's assets, while the poorest half of the country had just 2 per cent.

Housing crisis

For many workers, the biggest attack on their standard of living has been the cost of housing, with property prices rising much faster than wages.

The result, according to Save the Children, is a growing disaster. Seven

Above: Jacinda Ardern resigned as Prime Minister as she faced defeat at the coming election

per cent of all children in Aotearoa live in households with major problems, including dampness or mould. That figure rises to 11 per cent for Maori children and 17 per cent for Pasifika children.

The number of households on the public housing waiting list grew from 3352 in 2015 to 18,520 by 2020.

As Crossan observes: “We have a crisis of inequality, a housing crisis and a low-wage economy in Aotearoa, and a climate crisis upon which every country needs to take radical action.”

“Transformational change was needed and was promised by Ardern. But that was taken off the table by the self-imposed fiscal straitjacket of the Budget Responsibility Rules, and by the ideology of Third Way social democracy.”

Faced with inflation at 7.2 per cent and food prices going up by more than 11 per cent in the last year, the response from new Labour leader Hipkins has been to declare that Ardern went too far, too fast.

So he has “delayed” new hate speech laws that were a response to the Christchurch massacre and a plan for an improved unemployment insurance scheme.

All this is a reminder to Australian unions that going quiet for Labor helps the right.

Ardern was ultimately loyal to Aotearoa capitalism, undermining support for her government. Voting Tory in October won't help workers. But whoever wins, workers will need to fight.

Ardern was committed to placating the rich throughout her time as leader

Bloody proxy war in Ukraine continues to escalate one year on

By Chris Breen

THE US and Germany are now sending heavy armour to Ukraine, starting with 14 German Leopard 2 tanks, in yet another escalation of Western arms supplies. This heightens the risk of direct confrontation between NATO and Russia.

Tragically the German Green Party has been at the forefront of demanding more weaponry, with Greens vice-president of the German Parliament Katrin Goring-Eckard tweeting “the Leopard’s freed!” after the announcement.

There are also calls to supply fighter jets to Ukraine and the UK has agreed to start training Ukrainian pilots.

Australia is part of this escalating Western war effort. Seventy Australian military personnel have been sent to train Ukrainian troops in the UK.

Labor Defence Minister Richard Marles said in January that this: “Builds on Australia’s military support for Ukraine, with the previously gifted Australian-produced Bushmaster protected mobility vehicles proving their worth as highly valuable military vehicles.

“To date, Australia has provided Ukraine with about \$655 million in support, including \$475 million in military assistance.”

Australia will also help supply Ukraine with artillery shells, produced by a French company with Australian-supplied gunpowder. Marles said the plan would come with a “multi-million-dollar” price tag.

Arms firms are reporting soaring profits. US General Dynamics, which makes Abrams tanks, reported revenue for its combat systems rose 15.5 per cent last year. Its total profit was up 4.1 per cent to \$US3.39 billion.

A proxy war

Russia began the war with its brutal and unjustified invasion. But the US has built up Ukraine as a proxy to weaken Russia and cement US and NATO control over Eastern Europe.

US direct military aid to Ukraine increased sharply from around \$US70 million a year in 2013 to well over \$US600 million per year from 2019 onward. As a result, Ukraine’s military budget tripled in size in real terms from 2010 to 2020. Its troop numbers grew from 125,000 in 2013 to more than 300,000 before the war began.



Above: A German Leopard tank like those being sent to Ukraine

Ukraine president Vladimir Zelensky has said he wants Ukraine to play the role of a “big Israel”—a militarised society defending Western imperialism on Russia’s border.

The US has now spent more than \$US140 billion on the war according to an *Al Jazeera* report in December. Around \$US70 billion of this is direct military aid, with the rest going towards propping up the Ukrainian government, paying government and military salaries, pensions, housing and fuel subsidies.

As Sean Spoonts, a US Navy veteran and editor-in-chief of *Special Operations Forces Report*, told *Newsweek* that Ukraine “probably could not continue the fight without the West’s supplies”.

The UK is the second largest supplier of arms to Ukraine and the European Union has contributed around \$US70 billion in total aid.

Those kind of sums could be spent on dealing with climate change or addressing the cost of living but instead they are being used to feed human beings into what NATO officials have referred to as the “meat grinder”.

Ukrainian and Russian conscripts continue to pay with their lives. Zelensky has declared martial law in Ukraine and has made all adult males between 18 and 60 eligible for conscription. Russia conscripts men aged between 18 and 27, with ten years jail for those who refuse to serve. It has called up 300,000 conscripts for the war.

At least 100,000 have died on both sides. In January, Norway’s defence chief General Eirik Kristoffersen said estimates were that Russia had lost 180,000 dead and wounded, with

100,000 Ukrainians soldiers killed or wounded plus 30,000 civilians dead.

Alternative

Zelensky is a warmonger who wants to continue fighting until he retakes all previous Ukrainian territory—including Crimea and other areas Russia has held since 2014.

The longer the war drags on the more deaths there will be and the greater the nuclear threat, either from a desperate Russia in the face of looming defeats, or indirectly from fighting around nuclear power plants.

Journalist Seymour Hersh’s claims that the US deliberately blew up Russia’s Nord Stream 2 pipeline last year—which would be an act of open war—shows the risks the US is prepared to take.

The hope lies in opposition to imperialist war in Russia, Ukraine and the West. The possibility of conscript rebellion and fraternisation among Russian or Ukrainian troops may currently seem remote but the weight of the war on workers can result in unpredictable consequences. Rebellion seemed remote in the First World War until revolution in Russia and Germany ended the fighting.

The West also sees the war in Ukraine as a precursor to war with China over Taiwan. US politicians approved \$US10 billion in military aid to Taiwan in December 2022. Undermining support for Western escalation of the war can also help push back the threat of war with China.

We need to unmask the proxy nature of the war and oppose the growing Australian government involvement.

The US has built up Ukraine as a proxy to weaken Russia and cement US and NATO control over Eastern Europe

TOOTHLESS AND TOKEN WHERE THE VOICE TO PARLIAMENT CAME FROM

The plan for an Indigenous Voice to parliament was a result of the government-funded push for constitutional recognition instead of any real rights, argues **Paddy Gibson**

IN FEBRUARY, on ABC’s 7.30, Indigenous leader Noel Pearson appealed to Liberal leader Peter Dutton to get behind the referendum for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, urging him to “finish the job that John Howard started in 2007, when he first announced the commitment to constitutional recognition”.

Anthony Albanese’s promise to hold a referendum on the Voice, against Dutton’s hostility, has created a perception that it represents progressive change.

But as Pearson reminded viewers, “the proposal does not come from the left-wing”. It was designed by his Cape York Institute in 2014 by a working group that included Liberal Party members and prominent conservatives.

It was part of a government-funded process promoting token constitutional recognition.

This did indeed start with John Howard in 2007, in the dying days of his time as Prime Minister.

Howard had waged war on Aboriginal self-determination, defunding community-based programs, abolishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), attacking Native Title and finally, launching the NT Intervention in 2007.

He committed to a constitutional referendum to recognise the “special status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders” if he was re-elected. Pearson had urged Howard to make such a proposal, in a long letter where he also expressed hope that Howard would defeat Kevin Rudd in the election.

Both the Labor and Coalition governments that followed retained Howard’s commitment both to the Intervention and to constitutional recognition.

The main political function of this was to create the impression that governments were moving on a positive reform agenda in Aboriginal affairs, while they implemented racist policies against Indigenous communities.

In 2010, the Gillard government

commissioned an Expert Panel to prepare a report on possible avenues for constitutional recognition.

Along with exploring potential symbolic statements of recognition, this panel also proposed more substantial changes to the constitution, such as a new clause prohibiting racial discrimination.

The Liberal-National Coalition ruled out support for any such changes delivering substantive rights.

But the concept of “recognition”, offering lip service but no rights, was embraced across the corporate sector and by both major parties. The government bankrolled the “Recognise” campaign, which tried to build popular support for the idea.

Labor leaders attended community barbecues wearing “Recognise” t-shirts at the same time as they designed legislation to entrench the NT Intervention.

The Recognise campaign failed to generate any grassroots support and began to attract protests. It was quietly dropped and a new body, the Referendum Council, was established by the Abbott government in 2015, to begin a new round of consultation with Aboriginal communities to try and salvage constitutional recognition.

Pearson’s Voice model

Noel Pearson and his Cape York Institute were already plotting a change of course.

Two things were clear. Conservatives in the Liberal Party would never support constitutional amendments that could allow Aboriginal people to challenge government legislation in court on the grounds that it was racially discriminatory or violated rights to self-determination. These would therefore fail at any referendum.

However, Indigenous communities would not accept constitutional change that was merely symbolic, such as a new preamble.

The Cape York Institute set out to work through this apparent contradic-

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The body itself would be completely subordinate to parliament—there would be no guaranteed structure, budget or powers
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tion. Pearson engaged human rights lawyer Shireen Morris and conservatives such as Liberal MP Julian Leeser and the philosopher Damien Freeman.

Freeman was writing a book on Tony Abbott’s political philosophy and was also close to John Howard. In her book *Radical Heart* Shireen Morris attributes the genesis of the “Voice to Parliament” proposal to a phone conversation between herself and Freeman.

The idea was to use the constitution to empower parliament to create an Indigenous advisory body. This could be sold to the Indigenous community as substantive reform.

But the body itself would be completely subordinate to parliament—there would be no guaranteed structure, budget or powers. Crucially, the constitutional amendment would be “non-justiciable”, creating no rights to litigate in the High Court.

Pearson received some early encouragement from then PM Abbott, who had created a hand-picked advisory body called the Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC). Pearson wrote to Abbott promising that his new Voice proposal would ensure “parliamentary supremacy... You have already begun down this path... I am interested in how we can enhance and build upon your IAC”.

Constitutional experts Anne Twomey and Greg Craven were also brought into the process.

Twomey explained that the proposal was “developed specifically to bring the far right inside”.

Major corporations such as BHP and Rio Tinto were early supporters, recognising that a powerless advisory body presented no threat at all to their exploitation of Aboriginal lands.

Pearson’s model was included in the discussion paper that informed consultation by the Referendum Council, which held a series of “regional dialogues” that culminated in the major conference at the Yulara resort near Uluru in 2017, giving us

the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Uluru and after

The regional dialogues were invitation only and capped at 100 participants. Despite this, they did reject the idea of tokenistic constitutional reform.

Key themes at all the discussions were demands for treaty, sovereignty and an end to the skyrocketing rates of child removal, incarceration and policies like the Intervention.

Speaking after the convention at Yulara, Referendum Council co-chair Pat Anderson said symbolic acknowledgement in the constitution had been “totally rejected”.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart made three demands, for “a First Nations Voice enshrined in the constitution... a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history”.

The Referendum Council claimed the call for a Voice as an endorsement of Pearson’s advisory body.

Nineteen elected delegates walked out of the convention, with Wiradjuri leader Jenny Munro telling the press, “It’s not a dialogue, it’s a one-way conversation. They are not looking at any alternative options other than the Noel Pearson road map”.

However, other delegates who stayed in and signed the Uluru statement argue that the call for a “Voice” meant far more than a body with no powers.

Josie Crawshaw, one of the NT delegates, was elected to the Statement from the Heart Working Group (SFHWG), a body that was supposed to carry forward a campaign for the demands of the Uluru statement.

In the week following the convention, Crawshaw told a panel in Darwin: “Pearson’s model, the advisory body... has been ruled out by every dialogue and Uluru. It needs to have some delegation of powers that the Federal Government has now... powers to make policies and programs. And we need a guaranteed source of revenue”.

A SFHWG submission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee examining options for constitutional reform in 2018 also argued that “the Advisory Voice model is unsustainable and does not provide the structural change needed to substantively address First Nations’ inequality”.

However, the SFHWG was not funded to continue meeting. There was no consistent, public challenge the Indigenous leaders associated with the Referendum Council. As a result,



Above: Indigenous leader Noel Pearson with conservative Damien Freeman and Liberal MP Julian Leaser, both involved in helping put together the Voice proposal

the Statement from the Heart has come to be popularly understood as a call for Pearson’s advisory Voice.

Despite being designed to appease the Liberal party, PM Malcolm Turnbull rejected the idea, disingenuously branding it a “third chamber of parliament”.

But both major parties were still keen to keep discussion of constitutional reform alive, as a diversion from dealing directly with any of the crises facing Aboriginal communities.

Turnbull supported further consultation and Scott Morrison commissioned a report by Tom Calma and Marcia Langton on a potential model for the Voice. The idea was to legislate a body first, with a possible referendum later on.

Two campaigns

Advocates of the Voice continued to campaign for a referendum. There were essentially two campaigns run, for different constituencies and with different messages.

On the one hand, major corporations and conservative politicians were given assurances that the Voice would be tame and powerless.

A document released in December by the Constitutional Expert Group advising the Albanese government spells out this case.

It says, “The Voice does not confer ‘rights’, much less ‘special rights’” on Indigenous people, because its functions would be limited to making representations to parliament or government and “this is an opportunity available to any individual or organisation”.

The proposed constitutional amendment does not even create a “right” for Indigenous people to choose their own representatives, Expert Group member Anne Twomey

has explained, because it “leaves for parliament the power to decide the composition of the Voice”.

Other pro-Voice campaigners, however, have focussed on building support from trade unions, religious groups and civil society organisations.

This campaign argues that the Voice can realise Indigenous self-determination, forcing the government to finally listen.

The experience of ATSIC, abolished in 2005, has been raised as a key reason why it is needed. If it’s enshrined in the constitution, the argument goes, the government will not be able to get rid of a Voice it doesn’t like, the fate of every advisory body thus far.

This ignores the fact that the Voice will be a creature of legislation, and a hostile government could pass legislation abolishing one particular Voice model and replacing it with representatives of its own choosing.

As Twomey outlined back in 2017: “Although the Constitution [will say] there has to be a body, it will be up to the parliament to decide how it should be composed... The reason for this is to avoid the ATSIC problem—the concern being that entrenching something like ATSIC in the Constitution, if it becomes dysfunctional you can’t get rid of it.”

Pearson’s Voice proposal is based on the political fiction that appeasing powerful vested interests can somehow convince them to address the shocking oppression faced by Aboriginal communities.

But every major step forward for Aboriginal rights has come through struggle—through organisation and protest to demand concessions from the government and corporate interests. That is what’s urgently needed—not a toothless Voice to parliament.

HOW DO WE MOVE FROM REVOLT TO REVOLUTION?

Poverty, war and climate change drive millions to fight back. But we need to turn resistance into a challenge to the whole system, writes **James Supple**.

ECONOMIC CRISIS and the cost of living is driving a new wave of global revolt. Last year massive protests brought down Sri Lanka's hated President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, with ordinary people storming the presidential palace and taking a swim in his private pool.

Iran has seen months of protests demanding the fall of its authoritarian regime, fusing women's demands against sexism with anger at crippling inflation and unemployment. And China saw the most widespread protests for decades in December against Xi Jinping's authoritarianism and COVID lockdowns.

Neither of the revolts in Iran or China have gone far enough to bring down the regimes. So what turns a mass revolt into a revolution?

One answer is the scale of the protests. In Sri Lanka hundreds of thousands took to the streets for months. Those in Iran have involved at most tens of thousands, and faced ferocious repression with over 500 killed.

A revolutionary situation develops when a social crisis is sharp enough that both the mass of the population and the ruling class at the top of society cannot continue in the same way, the Russian revolutionary Lenin explained.

The most powerful uprisings involve workers moving into action—especially when this involves strike action on a large scale.

In 2011, when revolt from below toppled regimes across the Arab world, strike action played a key role in the successful revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia.

The emergence of mass strikes in Egypt, after weeks of protests that occupied Tahrir square, were decisive in forcing the fall of the dictator Hosni Mubarak. In Tunisia a general

strike amid a growing wave of protest caused dictator Ben Ali to flee the country.

Similarly, a revolution in Sudan in 2019 toppled dictator Omar al-Bashir after four months of protests and strikes, with trade unions organised in the Sudanese Professionals Association playing a leading role.

The power of strike action comes from its ability to bring the whole economy to a halt—paralysing factories, transport, offices and schools. This not only disrupts society on a massive scale but halts the profits on which a capitalist economy and the rich and powerful depend.

But the revolutions in Egypt, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Sudan all share an important weakness. Although they brought down dictators or presidents, the underlying regime remained the same. Simply replacing the figurehead at the top of the government delivered little real change.

So the man appointed Sri Lankan President by Gotabaya Rajapaksa as he fled has remained in charge, with the support of the Rajapaksa faction in parliament. Ranil Wickremesinghe is now imposing savage austerity measures including privatisation, power price rises, income tax hikes and cuts to government spending in order to qualify for an IMF bailout loan.

In Egypt an even more brutal dictatorship took power, after a military coup swept aside limited democratic reforms in 2013 in order to preserve the power of the old regime.

Poverty has worsened further since 2011, as the new dictator General El-Sisi raised energy prices, cut fuel subsidies and let inflation spike to 30 per cent in exchange for his own IMF loan.

In Sudan too after the revolution's

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Replacing a dictatorship with parliamentary democracy does not change who controls the capitalist economy

initial success the military staged a coup to take full control in October 2021, brushing aside a transitional process that was supposed to eventually lead to democratic elections.

The lesson from this is not that revolutions inevitably end in failure. It is that the process of change cannot stop half way.

Capitalist rule

The fight for civilian rule and democratic change has been at the centre of the uprisings in Egypt, Sudan and Iran.

But replacing a dictatorship with parliamentary democracy does not change who controls the wider capitalist economy and leaves the basic relations of exploitation between workers and capitalists in place.

To fundamentally transform society, the capitalist system and the state and ruling class behind it have to be swept aside.

The police and the army, the core of the state apparatus, have remained basically unchanged through the recent revolutions in places like Egypt and Sudan.

These state institutions exist to serve capitalism and the rich. They are frequently used against major protests and strikes that threaten the powers that be.

In both Egypt and Sudan the military have carried out brutal massacres against protests and played a key role in preventing revolutionary movements from winning deeper change.

Capitalism is a system based on exploitation. Working class people produce all the wealth through running the factories, mines, software companies, ports and the transport system. But the profits workers produce go to a small elite who run the companies, not to the workers themselves.

Lower wages and poor working

conditions produce higher profits for the company bosses.

This means the interests of workers and bosses are fundamentally in conflict.

This has resulted in vast global inequality. On a global scale human society is wealthier than ever before, yet this wealth is concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority. Just 81 billionaires control more wealth than half the world's people.

This class divide exists inside every country too. In Egypt the richest 1 per cent control half the country's wealth, and there are 17,000 US dollar millionaires, as well as six billionaires from just two families. Yet around 30 per cent of the population live in poverty.

Yet the revolution in 2011 in Egypt left the wealth of the millionaires and billionaires untouched—most of them linked to the old regime and the military.

The economic power of the capitalist class, who own the productive resources and major companies, is greater than that of any democratically elected government.

Any government within capitalism has to work to ensure their profits—and ensure working class people accept continuing exploitation.

Winning real change requires not just a political revolution that changes the figures in government, but a socialist revolution that challenges the rule of the capitalist class, through seizing control of their wealth and putting it under democratic control.

As the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky put it, this means becoming not simply a revolution within capitalism, but a revolution against capitalism.

The possibility of such a revolution has been demonstrated in many of the great revolts of recent decades. In Egypt after the revolution of 2011, workers began taking action in their workplaces to remove the “little Mubaraks”, the workplace managers and bosses who had supported the old Mubarak dictatorship and oppressed them in the workplace. There were even some efforts by workers to elect new bosses to replace them.

In other revolutions this process has gone further. On a number of occasions during revolutionary upheavals, workers have taken control of their workplaces and set up democratic councils to run them themselves. These first emerged in the Russian revolution of 1905 and again in 1917, but similar bodies were created in Germany in 1919, Hungary in 1956, Chile in 1973, Portugal in 1974-75,



Above: The revolution in Sudan is still ongoing against military rule

Iran in 1979 and Poland in 1980.

In their most developed form these councils involved workers' delegates elected from across workplaces on a city-wide and national basis, and operated as an alternative government.

In contrast to parliamentary governments, they sought to put workplaces and the whole economy under democratic control.

In Sudan, hundreds of local resistance committees are continuing to play a key role in calling large demonstrations onto the streets to oppose the military's control of government. They have also set out to ensure the supply of flour to bakeries and distribute basic supplies like bread and cooking gas. This echoes the way that workers' councils thrown up in the course of previous revolutionary struggles have begun to take control of running society, through organising the production and distribution of food and other essential goods.

Sudan's resistance committees are another example of the way that revolutionary struggles can throw up new more democratic ways of running society that challenge capitalism and the existing regime—especially if they can spread into the workplaces and begin to exercise control of production.

But so far in history it has only been in Russia in 1917 that workers' councils were able to overthrow capitalism and take power. This was due to the existence of a revolutionary socialist party, the Bolsheviks,

with tens of thousands of members rooted in the most dynamic sections of the working class.

This meant there was a large and organised current within the working class that was clear about the need for workers' councils to take power in their own right in order to get rid of capitalism and end the poverty and inequality in Russia.

Such a mass revolutionary party was missing in the recent revolutions in Egypt, Sudan and Sri Lanka.

In developed countries like Australia we have not yet seen anything on the scale of these upheavals in recent years.

But the way workers have suffered increased hours of work, demands to work harder and more casualisation have created bitterness.

In recent months rising prices and a severe drop in real wages have produced the biggest increase in strikes in 30 years in Britain. Two million workers in France have joined ongoing strikes and demonstrations against the government's attempt to raise the retirement age.

Revolutionary socialist groups have a key role to play within these struggles in developing workers' confidence to fight and understanding of the need to get rid of capitalism as a whole.

This is also necessary in the smaller struggles going on here in individual strikes and movements for climate action or against racism and war. We need to build socialist organisation in the here and now to prepare for the bigger battles of the future—and the ultimate necessity of revolutionary change.

BROKEN HILL IN WWI: STRIKES, CONSCRIPTION AND WORKERS' RADICALISM

Tom Orsag looks at the bitter class struggles ignited by the First World War in Broken Hill, in the first of a Solidarity series on war and workers' resistance

A LABOR government was elected as the First World War began just over 100 years ago in 1914. It held down workers' living standards and enthusiastically backed the war for the British Empire. By 1916, Labor Prime Minister Billy Hughes was campaigning for conscription.

This produced an enormous clash with trade unions and the left, who won stunning victories both industrially and against conscription.

Two of the stand-out individual leaders of these campaigns were Jack "Percy" Brookfield and Mick Considine—both from tiny Broken Hill, in far western NSW.

Both were miners, militants and union leaders who became Labor MPs. Percy Brookfield, a NSW MP, has been better remembered, following his tragic death while trying to disarm a deranged gunman in 1921.

Mick Considine became the Labor MP for the now abolished federal seat of Barrier.

Broken Hill was then the third largest city in NSW and its rich silver and lead deposits gave rise to BHP (originally the Broken Hill Proprietary company).

Its large mining workforce produced strong unions and made the town a magnet for socialists and class conscious workers.

The Labor government promised to defend the British Empire in the war "to our last man and our last shilling". Labor, like social democratic parties around the world, capitulated to its own ruling class to support the slaughter.

Australia entered the war outwardly united. Class and sectarian differences were blanketed by an initial jingoistic patriotism.

A level of anti-German hysteria developed. There were nine recorded strikes where workers refused to work alongside German-Australians.

Broken Hill was little different.

The mining industry in NSW accounted for three-quarters of all strike days in the years before 1914.

However, at a conference convened by Broken Hill mining companies a fortnight after the war began, union leader W.D. Barnett, head of the Amalgamated Miners Association (AMA), promised to support the war effort, telling bosses, "We are going to give you every assistance ... anything we can do in our power to get work carried on at Broken Hill."

The German Club in Broken Hill was burnt down on New Year's Day 1915. In that year the number of strikes fell by 50 per cent.

But the socialists and militants of Broken Hill refused to give up the class struggle because of the war.

Eventually, the scale of industrial scale slaughter as well as the impact on the cost of living eroded working class support for the war.

In NSW, prices rose by around 30 per cent between 1914-1917, even as wages fell. On the other hand the federal government offered profitable interest rates to the wealthy who could afford to loan it money for "war bonds". The stark class divide would fuel bitter class conflict.

Barrier miners' breakthrough

Thousands of miners lost their jobs as the war began, with Germany the Broken Hill mine's main export market. But by early 1915 employment had recovered as demand for the war effort inflated the value of commodities used in munitions and armaments.

In March 1915, with the miners' contract due to expire, they demanded shorter working hours and more pay. Mine owners wanted the same contract in place until six months after the war ended.

In May, a motion to strike for a 44-hour week was defeated at a mass meeting due to continuing pro-war sentiment.

The miners' strike held out and despite being branded 'German sympathisers', they won

But over time the companies' efforts to cry poor wore thin due to rising metal prices and profits.

By late September, anger boiled over, with a mass meeting of underground miners resolving to boycott the Saturday afternoon shift and to work only a 44-hour week.

At an Eight-Hour Day march, thousands of workers wore badges saying "If You Want a 44 Hour Week—Take It."

Underground workers, including Brookfield, were determined to carry on the fight. The less militant surface workers, including Considine, abandoned them.

In response, the companies sacked all the underground miners.

Even though Considine had opposed the strike, he responded in a principled way to the companies' escalation of the dispute. "All that was a thing of the past ... It is now a question of the mining companies versus the workers of the Barrier."

A mass meeting declared a strike of all 3000 workers from 11 companies.

The NSW Labour Council refused to back them. But the miners held out despite being branded "German sympathisers" and won.

The Arbitration Court, under orders from the federal government, awarded underground miners a 44-hour week in April 1916.

The victory in Broken Hill began a wave of strikes nationwide demanding pay rises in the face of rapid inflation. Some also won a 44-hour week including miners at Gympie in Queensland.

In November 1916, coal-fields districts across Australia went on strike, overturning a compromise by their officials. They won a smashing victory of a 15 per cent wage increase and shorter hours. The strike wave kept spreading.

By 1916, Labor Prime Minister

Billy Hughes wanted conscription, with enlistment falling as enthusiasm for the war waned. Faced with deep opposition in the Labor Party and the unions, he called a referendum—or technically a plebiscite—for late October 1916.

Hughes hoped that a vote in favour of conscription would silence his opponents. But with anger growing at the cost of the war on living standards and the government's failure to fix prices, the move saw the tensions between the government and its base in the unions and the Labor Party explode.

In four states, Labor Party conferences declared against conscription by overwhelming majorities. These decisions were backed up resolutions of the Labour Councils in every state and a special Australia-wide trade union conference.

In Broken Hill, the mining union's paper, the *Barrier Daily Truth*, initially took a pro-war stance in 1914.

A small minority of socialists and radicals like Considine and Brookfield, alongside the Australian Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), opposed the war from the beginning. By 1916 they were leading thousands.

In Broken Hill the referendum led to street battles between supporters and opponents of conscription. In July 1916 anti-conscriptionists launched an organisation called Labor's Volunteer Army, with Brookfield as president.

Members declared that "the conscription of life and labour in Australia will be a death blow to organised labor and will result in the workers of this land being crushed into subjection by a capitalist military oligarchy", as part of a pledge to fight conscription and defend unionism.

More than 2000 draft-age workers enrolled.

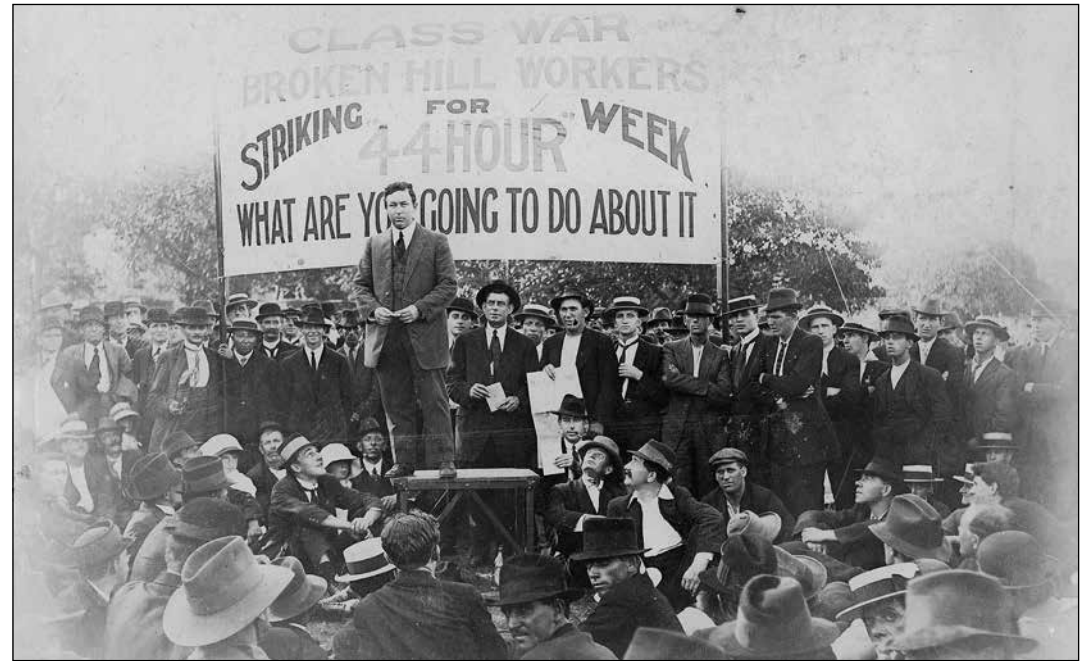
In August, Empire loyalists attacked an anti-conscription speak-out. Brookfield was pelted with eggs and tomatoes as he tried to speak, then assaulted and beaten.

The next night 10,000 people rallied in the town of 30,000 to denounce the attack.

The government made ruthless use of wartime powers to suppress opponents of conscription, censoring newspapers and prosecuting more than 3000 people nationwide including Brookfield for speeches deemed "prejudicial to recruitment".

Twelve members of the IWW in Sydney were jailed for up to 15 years on trumped-up charges of arson.

Conscription was defeated by 72,000 votes Australia-wide. The deci-



sive state was NSW, where the majority for "No" was 120,000. In Broken Hill, 70 per cent voted "No".

Labor's crisis

Conscription tore the Labor Party apart. Prime Minister Hughes was expelled from the party. NSW, Victorian and Queensland Labor branches issued an ultimatum to all MPs to oppose conscription or lose the right to stand as Labor candidates.

In Broken Hill, Considine and Brookfield campaigned against the "old generations of [Labor] politicians, whose flirtations with the vampire [the capitalist] are so openly admitted by the latter's press".

Both the local federal and state Labor MPs, Josiah Thomas and John H. Cann, were prominent supporters of conscription.

The result was that in 1917 Brookfield became the state Labor MP and Considine the federal Labor MP for the seats based on militant Broken Hill.

Hughes joined with the conservatives to form a new Nationalist Party and retain government. He then called a second plebiscite on conscription—and was defeated with an even bigger majority.

Both Considine and Brookfield used their positions in parliament to campaign vigorously for the release of the IWW Twelve from prison.

Brookfield was so incensed by Labor's inaction that he resigned from the party in disgust. He was re-elected to parliament as part of a breakaway Industrial Labor Party formed by militant unionists.

Above: Miners in Broken Hill waged a militant struggle for a 44-hour week during the First World War

Considine was re-elected as a Labor MP, despite being jailed for three weeks after he refused to pay a fine for insulting the King. A returned soldier called Considine a "bloody Sinn Feiner and disloyal". Considine replied, "Bugger the King, he is a bloody German bastard."

He was briefly the acting consul for the new Bolshevik Government of Russia after Peter Simonoff, its official representative, was arrested under the War Precautions Act and jailed.

He too eventually left the Labor Party in 1920 after refusing to condemn his comrade Percy Brookfield for running against it in the NSW election.

Labor tacked to the left in an effort to contain the left-wing radicalisation of the working class as a result of the war and the Russian Revolution, adopting a vaguely worded "socialist objective" in 1921 following the vote of a trade union conference for "the socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange".

This was designed to undercut support for the challenges to its left, including Considine and Brookfield's Industrial Labor Party and the newly formed Communist Party.

Considine's parliamentary seat was abolished in 1922 and he failed to win re-election. Unwilling to join the Communist Party, he rejoined Labor—but the party refused him pre-selection ever again.

The experience of Broken Hill was part of a wave of the class struggle that showed how war can lead to mass strikes and workers' radicalisation—and rank among the high points of workers' struggle in our history.

PERMANENT VISA DECISION LEAVES THOUSANDS BEHIND



Above: Refugees rallying in Canberra for permanent visas last year

By Ian Rintoul

ON 12 February, nine months after the Albanese government was elected, Labor finally made good on one element of its election promise to refugees.

It was very good news for 19,000 people on TPVs and SHEVs who had eked out an existence for up to 13 years. They are now eligible to apply for permanent Resolution of Status (RoS) visas.

But Labor's announcement has been overshadowed by the fact that thousands of other refugees and people seeking asylum have been left in a hell of uncertainty.

Despite Ministerial assurances that Labor's announcement would encompass the 10,000 asylum seekers whose protection visa claims were rejected under the Liberals' fast track process, Labor has not even undertaken to review their claims.

They remain on bridging or expired visas, many without the right to work or any kind of support at all.

Around half of the asylum seekers who arrived after 19 July 2013 remained in Australia and will now be eligible for permanent visas. But around 1100 refugees brought from PNG and Nauru (and their children born in Australia) have been told they will never resettle here.

Labor is maintaining the entire architecture of refugee deterrence policies. Prime Minister Albanese defended the permanent visa announcement by declaring, "The government will be tough on borders without being weak

on humanity." But four things over the past two weeks show just how little humanity and how much Liberal policy Labor actually embraces.

Firstly, Labor's 2021 national platform says, "Labor will abolish Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas," and that, "Labor will abolish this fast track assessment process." But they haven't.

Secondly, when it emerged that Nauru's official designation as a place of offshore detention had lapsed, Labor hurriedly pushed through a new parliamentary instrument (with Liberal support) to renew its status and put beyond doubt its commitment to Operation Sovereign Borders.

Thirdly, a few days later it also emerged that, prior to its permanent visa announcement, Labor had called on the navy for "surge capacity" to turnback asylum boats if they attempted to reach Australia from Indonesia.

Detention roundup

Lastly, on 13 February, Labor pushed its "Aggregate Sentences" bill through Parliament, again with Liberal support, to give itself retrospective powers to overturn a Federal Court decision in December last year that resulted in 163 people whose visas had been cancelled under s501 of the Migration Act being released from immigration prison.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, around 30 people have been re-detained in raids by squads of Border Force officers and police, including picking up one refugee on his way to work.

Labor's legislation has been

condemned by human rights lawyers and refugee activists. Rachel Saravanamuthu, ASRC Senior Solicitor, said, "People have just begun to rebuild their lives – reunite with family, start new jobs and have hope for their future. All of their dreams have been ripped away so suddenly".

Section 501 is discriminatory and racist, allowing the government to hold people in immigration detention after they have completed prison sentences just because they are non-citizens. But rather than scrapping s501, Labor has worked with the Liberals to maintain powers that violate human rights.

Labor's permanent visa announcement is a win for the refugee movement and the struggle in and out of detention. That same determination is going to be needed for the movement's unfinished business with Labor.

Fourteen thousand refugees remain in Indonesia with those who arrived after July 2014 still subject to the ban imposed by the Liberal government that prevents them being referred to Australia for resettlement. Around 150 people are in their tenth year held offshore on Nauru and PNG.

Hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers will rally in Canberra on Monday 6 March to continue the fight for permanent visas for all. Zaki Haidari, an Afghan refugee on a SHEV visa told SBS how happy he and others were with Labor's announcement that they would get permanent visas but, "Some Afghan refugees also hold bridging visas for whom the government is yet to announce any plans, so our advocacy now turns to them".

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Around 30 people have been re-detained in raids by squads of Border Force officers and police