

NO NATO IN ASIA NO NUCLEAR SUBMARINES



NO WAR ON CHINA

MILITARISM

Universities back the nuclear subs

ENVIRONMENT

Can degrowth save the planet?

WEST PAPUA

War on the independence movement escalates

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

Sydney

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday
Brown St Hall, 8-10 Brown St
Newtown

For more information contact:

Adam on 0400 351 694

sydney@solidarity.net.au

Melbourne

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday
Kathleen Syme library and community
centre, 251 Faraday St, Carlton

For more information contact:

Jason on 0456 624 661

melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Brisbane

Contact Mark on 0439 561 196 or
brisbane@solidarity.net.au

Perth

Contact perth@solidarity.net.au

Canberra

Contact canberra@solidarity.net.au

Adelaide

Contact Robert on 0447 362 417 or
adelaide@solidarity.net.au

Or check fb.com/soliaus/events

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
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Things they say

We need to invest in more housing for communities

Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek tries to justify housing—not for the community but for the Defence Force—at Lee Point in Darwin

When I started here, I took the annual report and everything was rectangular. I said, ‘I don’t like that. The kind of values we’re standing for—a more humane organisation—can we have softer lines?’ It’s trying to get away from the hard things and use more earth colours.

Jakob Stausholm, Rio Tinto’s new CEO, who took over after Rio blew up the Juukan Gorge

My sense is that peak insanity on climate and identity already may have passed.

Tony Abbott, revealing his peak is still ahead of him

All this is, is an advisory group.

Anthony Albanese explaining what the Voice is on *The Project*

The Voice as proposed is nothing more than an advisory body. The federal government already has dozens. This would be just one more.

Peter Hartcher, *Sydney Morning Herald* political editor, concurs

Stoltenberg by instinct and by policy, is simply an accident on its way to happen.

Former Prime Minister Paul Keating on Jens Stoltenberg, the head of NATO

Activist groups do not always adhere to these standards of transparency, honesty, and evidence-based dialogue. Notably, these groups are not subject to the same level of accountability that corporations face.

Gas industry lobby group the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA)’s submission into the Senate inquiry on greenwashing

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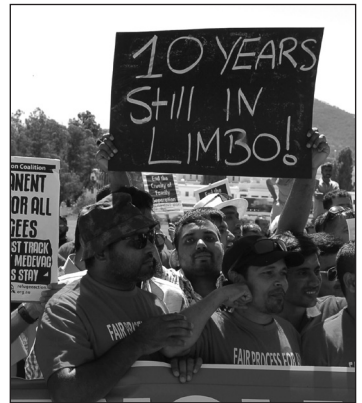
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World's hottest week in history

THE WORLD broke the record for the hottest day ever three times in one week in July. It was the hottest week in history based on US records beginning in 1979. The EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service said it was also the highest based on its records dating back to 1940.

But according to Jennifer Francis, a senior scientist at Woodwell Climate Research Centre, the records were "almost certainly" the highest temperatures in 120,000 years, since the last interglacial warm period.

The heatwave in the US has seen Phoenix, Arizona hit 43C for ten days in a row while China experienced its hottest day ever with a temperature of 52.2C at Sanbao in Xinjiang. Southern Europe and North Africa experienced "heat storms" pushing temperatures over 40C.

Sea ice levels in Antarctica have also reached record lows of 17 per cent below average for the middle of winter—the lowest since satellite records began.

This is around 1.3 million square kilometres less than last year—previously the lowest year on record. The sudden shift has shocked observers, since Antarctic sea ice levels were still increasing until 2015. An El Nino is predicted to bring extreme heat to Australia later this year.

It shows "climate change is out of control", as UN Secretary-General António Guterres put it. "If we persist in delaying key measures that are needed, I think we are moving into a catastrophic situation", he said.

Maternal mortality doubles in US

THE MATERNAL mortality rate in the US more than doubled between 2009 and 2019, with the highest rates among African-Americans and Native Americans. Maternal mortality measures deaths of women during childbirth or within the first year after.

Among Native Americans the rate more than tripled, from 19 per 100,000 live births to 69.3. For African-Americans it rose from 31.4 per 100,000 to 67.6. Among white Americans it also rose, from only from 9.2 to 27.9 per 100,000.

Fight to save Indigenous land at Lee Point



LARRAKIA TRADITIONAL owners have halted a Defence Housing development at Binybara, along known as Lee Point in Darwin, after protesters blockaded the site.

Eleven people including Larrakia woman Milima May were arrested as bulldozers moved in, and a permanent protest camp has now been set up.

When hundreds of endangered Gouldian finches were discovered at the site last year, Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek reconsidered and gave approval to the proposal with new conditions. But trees that are over 400 years old are still set to be bulldozed in order to build 800 houses for Australian Defence Force personnel.

The Larrakia people also have important cultural ties and stories associated with the area.

Larrakia Danggalaba elder Tibby Quall said "I'm 74 and I've been living here and taking family to Binburra my whole life. It's a sacred place."

"It's all part of the Dreaming and our culture and heritage connects us to the land."

But it took legal action and protest before the government would even respond to the voices of local Indigenous people.

Plibersek has now agreed to consider an emergency application under Cultural Heritage Laws and paused work until 11 August. But the fight to save Binybara continues.

Methane emissions far higher than claimed

AUSTRALIA HAS been under-reporting methane gas released during coal and gas mining by more than 80 per cent, a study for the International Energy Agency has concluded.

The independent analysis was based on public data including from satellite records. This amounts to an extra 28 million tonnes of greenhouse gases during 2022, around 6 per cent of the entire national total.

The study casts further doubt on Australia's already shonky emissions reduction efforts—and would mean the Safeguard Mechanism covering industry emissions would need to deliver an extra 13 per cent reduction by 2030. A few less coal and gas projects would be a start.

Indigenous boy spent 500 days in solitary confinement

AN ABORIGINAL teenager was locked in solidarity confinement for over 500 days in one of Queensland's youth detention centres.

The young man, who has an intellectual disability, spent two years on remand in the Cleveland detention centre in Townsville while the children's court dealt with his charges over a violent sexual assault on a 16-year-old girl.

He was locked in his cell alone for at least 20 hours a day for 530 of the 744 days he spent in custody, overwhelmingly as a result of staff shortages at the centre in what was labelled in court a "major failure in our system".

Records showed that for much of the time he was in isolation 24 hours a day.

An investigation by *The Guardian* found that in Queensland's youth prisons young people were locked down so often earlier this year that some spent months in solitary confinement and attended almost no classes or programs.

In May the Queensland Labor government announced it was moving ahead to build two more youth prisons.

Unemployment increases suicides, study finds

UNIVERSITY OF Sydney researchers have concluded that 10 per cent of suicides in Australia are caused by unemployment or underemployment.

The study examined suicides over a 13 year period between 2004 and 2016 using a method called convergent cross mapping to determine the link between higher rates of unemployment and suicides.

Lead author Adam Skinner said that it should serve as a message to policy makers who are hiking interest rates to curb inflation through increasing unemployment, "Using unemployment as a means of reducing inflation is unethical."

"You can't use that approach unless you're prepared to accept that you're causing people pain."

EDITORIAL

Albanese backs NATO and militarism but won't act on cost of living

ANTHONY ALBANESE is still stalling on cost of living relief, even after announcing a further budget windfall. The budget surplus has swelled to \$19 billion, well ahead of the \$4.2 billion tipped in May.

Labor claims that more spending could increase inflation. But that's an excuse. It has also boasted that energy bill relief in its budget actually decreased inflation.

Further efforts to reduce power bills would be a start. Power prices went up another 20 to 30 per cent in July, forcing many to think twice about turning on the heating in winter.

Another increase to JobSeeker payments and support for low income workers is urgent.

Foodbank's Brianna Casey says the charity is hearing reports of school children stealing food from other students' lunchboxes to find something to eat.

But instead of helping workers who are struggling with power bills and mortgage costs, Labor would rather appease business through conservative economic management.

It made a show of replacing Reserve Bank Governor Philip Lowe, after he delivered 12 interest rate increases in 14 months. But this will do nothing to stop further rate rises. His replacement, Michelle Bullock, already sits on the board that has been raising rates.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus blustered against Bullock's support for deliberately driving up unemployment. But where was the signal for a union offensive on pay?

Labor's militarism

Albanese travelled to July's NATO summit for the second year in a row to promote militarism and the arms race with China.

He urged on NATO's move into Asia to join the US confrontation with China, alongside NATO "Indo-Pacific partners" Japan, South Korea and New Zealand. The meeting's final communique declared Chinese policies were a "challenge our interests, security and values" and posed a "systemic challenge... to Euro-Atlantic security".

Although plans for an office in Japan were postponed, NATO struck a series of deals deepening co-operation with the four Indo-Pacific nations.

Albanese announced another 30 Bushmasters for Ukraine, and is dispatching a surveillance aircraft to Germany to help secure the pipeline of Western arms to the war. And he announced a \$1 billion deal with Ger-



Above: Workers at the API warehouse on strike for a 7 per cent pay rise

many to export armoured cars.

This year German troops will also join the Talisman Sabre war games in Queensland for the first time.

Paul Keating was right to say NATO is run by a "supreme fool" and that the West's encirclement of China is incredibly dangerous.

We need an anti-war movement that fights Albanese's militarism. The appalling \$368 billion nuclear submarines are only making war with China more likely, and diverting billions of dollars that could be spent on cost of living relief or climate action.

Voice to Parliament

Labor's support for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament is another big distraction from the action needed to deliver real self-determination and end Indigenous oppression.

Support for the Voice has dropped steadily in the polls as Peter Dutton steps up his racist campaign.

But it is not just Dutton to blame for the loss of support. The Yes campaign is struggling to show how a Voice to Parliament would make any difference. The fact that it will be a toothless advisory body means many Indigenous people are unenthusiastic, some are openly opposed.

Under attack from the right, Voice campaigners have denied the body would have any influence over key Indigenous rights issues such as the demand for reparations, military bases on Indigenous lands and even ending national celebrations on 26 January.

The Albanese government is still ignoring Indigenous voices, from the calls to stop expanding youth detention, his broken election promise to end

compulsory income management, or the opposition to coal and gas mining on Indigenous land.

This will continue if the Voice is established. Real change is going to require a movement on the streets.

Larrakia traditional owners have delayed land clearing at a Defence Housing development at Lee Point in Darwin after blockading the site. More of this kind of action is needed to defend Indigenous land and win justice. The Black Lives Still Matter rally in Sydney on 19 August is another important step.

Unions NSW is backing action in the Pilliga against the Santos gas project on 12 August and another major rally against Santos is planned in Sydney on 14 September.

A union campaign for higher pay in the face of the cost of living crisis is also needed.

Workers at the API pharmaceutical warehouse in Dandenong in Melbourne have been on strike for over three weeks demanding a 7 per cent pay rise.

But after threatening strikes against the NSW Labor government, the Health Services Union called them off following the offer of a \$3500 across the board wage increase, instead of 4 per cent. They would see low paid workers get more, at the cost of others accepting less. A concerted campaign of strikes could win far more.

Albanese and Labor are committed to policies that benefit the rich and do nothing to solve the problems facing working class people. Building resistance from below against Labor's militarism, new coal and gas projects, anti-refugee policies as well as strikes for higher wages is what's needed.

.....
A union campaign for higher pay in the face of the cost of living crisis is badly needed

Universities rush to back nuclear subs and training for war

By Mickey Throssell

UNIVERSITY BOSSES are already racing to support the government's ambitions for nuclear submarines under the AUKUS agreement.

Universities Australia, representing uni managements across the country, has declared their enthusiasm to be "a crucial partner of government in Australia's defence transformation."

Presently, Australia has only one nuclear facility located in Lucas Heights in Sydney. Consequently, there is not the large workforce with the necessary qualifications to run nuclear submarines.

"At every stage of the process—from acquisition to construction to disposal—the project hinges on the skills and expertise of university-educated professionals," stated Viki Thomson, Chief Executive of the Group of Eight, including the country's richest universities.

The aim of training the next generation for AUKUS is already creeping into the education system, inadvertently moulding students into instruments of warfare. Brian Schmidt, Vice-Chancellor of ANU, told the Submarine Institute of Australia Conference last year that "Starting today we need to set a 14-year-old schoolgirl on the path to be captain of Australia's first nuclear-powered submarine."

This plan has already been set in motion through initiatives like the Nuclear-powered Submarine Propulsion Challenge, aimed at high school students in years 7-12. This will see high schools provided with teaching materials by the Defence Department and students encouraged to compete for the chance to tour a naval base.

By implementing these measures, the education system and the military are working together to cultivate a new generation of soldiers, furthering the drive towards war.

Since the Dawkins Reforms to tertiary education in 1987, government funding as a proportion of university income has decreased from 89 per cent to 35-40 per cent. This has pushed universities to seek alternative sources of funding, including from arms manufacturers. Group of Eight Universities currently invest approximately \$70 million annually in defence research and development.

The militarisation of the university system has been going on for years, with institutions such as the Univer-



Above: University managements are falling over each other to help train the workforce that will be needed for nuclear submarines

sity of Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, South Australia, RMIT, Flinders University, and ANU establishing partnerships or receiving funding from arms manufacturers like Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems, Raytheon, and Boeing. Universities' involvement in AUKUS is an extension of this trend.

Funding

The most recent federal budget announced \$127 million in funding and additional places for 4000 students in AUKUS-related courses and programs.

The first batch of students in these courses is scheduled to commence next year. The Group of Eight asserts that this funding in STEM disciplines "will help generate that workforce; especially, to support Defence priorities", and help ensure that "Australia's required sovereign capability can be realised and on time".

In addition to these student places, universities have made AUKUS a top priority, with the Go8 emphasising research and education in the field of nuclear energy, while directing graduates towards military careers and a war-oriented agenda. Course offerings at universities across the country are rapidly declining, with less and less choice being given to students. Now, however, they are deciding to create new courses specifically designed to contribute to the AUKUS workforce.

While other departments are losing staff, ANU's submission to the Government's defence Strategic Review declared that "the current academic workforce is too small to meet the increasing demands for formal training and education that will be

required by AUKUS".

The Australian National University is introducing a new major in nuclear engineering, focusing on defence capabilities, after cutting other engineering majors such as biomedical engineering. The University of Adelaide is adapting its masters program in marine engineering and radiation management course, catering to the specific requirements of a nuclear submarine capability. A new partnership between Flinders University, the University of Manchester and the University of Rhode Island in the US is designed to bolster its nuclear masters program.

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead has also confirmed that Royal Australian Navy officers are currently undergoing nuclear reactor training in the US and are concurrently enrolled in programs at UNSW and ANU.

AUKUS and the nuclear submarine deal is another step in furthering the drive to war against China. When wars occur it is the working class who will be sent to fight a war decided on by the ruling class.

This push to assist AUKUS by Australian universities shows that the façade of universities as a place to learn and think critically comes second to ruling class priorities such as creating soldiers who will fight and ultimately die in wars to protect their profits.

We need to oppose the militarisation of the university system and demand more government funding for socially useful studies in renewable energy, zero carbon industries, tackling poverty or building public housing, not preparations for war.

.....
Universities have made AUKUS a top priority, emphasising research and education in nuclear energy

Renewable rollout faltering due to reliance on free market funding

By James Supple

THERE ARE increasing warnings that Australia's renewable energy rollout is stalling. This puts even the chance of reaching the hopeless emissions target of the Albanese government at risk.

Daniel Westerman, the head of the Australian Energy Market Operator, told a major energy conference in June that "investment is not happening fast enough" to meet the government's target of 82 per cent renewable energy by 2030.

Investors failed to commit to a single new renewable energy project in the first three months of 2023, a big drop on previous levels. Yet the amount of investment and new projects needs to be accelerating to meet the target.

Investment in renewable energy has actually dropped since 2018 from \$8 billion that year to around half that in 2020 and 2021, and was still only \$6.2 billion last year. Now it has seems to be dropping again.

Labor's whole plan is to leave it up to private investors to fund renewable energy projects. This is jeopardising the transition needed. It requires much greater government planning and direct investment to succeed.

Most of the country's coal power plants are decades old and approaching closure. They need to be replaced—and renewable energy is now the cheapest option. But the speed of the transition—and how quickly Australia cuts carbon emissions—remains open.

The Vales Point coal power station in NSW has just delayed its closure by four years, until 2033. There have also been suggestions from the NSW Labor government that the Eraring coal-fired power plant, which supplies 25 per cent of the state's energy, could have its closure delayed from mid-2025 too.

Investors that hope to make money from renewable energy have grown nervous due to a range of problems, from supply chain issues to labour shortages, and delays connecting to the grid. Competition for investment from the US, as a result of government subsidies for clean energy through the Inflation Reduction Act, is also a threat.

The total cost to build all the renewable energy, storage and transmission upgrades needed over the next



30 years is estimated at \$320 billion—less than the cost of the nuclear submarines over that period. And the government would recover the full cost of this under current laws through consumers' power bills—as well as a healthy profit.

Challenges

There are huge challenges in planning and co-ordinating the switch from an energy system based on coal power stations to renewable energy.

The Clean Energy Council says that a "conservative estimate" is that the skilled energy workforce needs to double in the next five to seven years. Another estimate is that 15,000 more workers are needed by 2025.

The obvious answer is government spending on education and training to ensure there are enough workers. The Albanese government found \$127 million to fund 4000 university places to train workers for the AUKUS nuclear submarine program but has not shown the same urgency about the need for renewable energy workers.

Blame is also being laid on the delay in building new transmission lines. A big expansion of electricity poles and wires is required to connect new solar and wind generators to the existing power grid.

The *Financial Review* has reported that "The CEOs of Australia's biggest energy companies—Origin Energy, AGL and EnergyAustralia—all warn that extensive delays in building new transmission are threatening the expansion of renewable energy."

This is the one area where the

Above: Building the transmission wiring needed to connect new renewable projects to the grid is a major challenge

Albanese government is providing a form of government investment through the Rewiring the Nation program. So far this has come in the form of low cost loans provided through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

Renewable energy has been the one area that has delivered significant reductions in Australia's emissions, apart from the questionable impact of land use changes, declining by 21 per cent since 2005. Labor is also relying on renewable energy to deliver the bulk of its overall emissions reduction target.

But instead of relying on the market and private investors to fix the problem it should use direct government investment.

Government control would also allow it to ensure there are quality, union jobs in the new renewables industry.

There have been some moves in this direction.

The Queensland Labor government last year released plans to ensure 54 per cent of new renewable energy capacity will be state-owned, as it aims for 80 per cent renewable energy by 2035. It is investing \$19 billion over the next four years.

The NSW and Victorian Labor government have also talked about state investment but have only committed \$1 billion each.

The bushfires in North America and record ocean temperatures worldwide show the scale of the climate crisis we are facing. The Albanese government needs to treat this like the emergency that it is.

Instead of relying on the market and private investors it should use direct government investment

INDIGENOUS ACTIVISTS SAY: VOICE WON'T BRING CHANGE

Wayne Wharton is a Kooma man and longtime Indigenous activist, organising with the Brisbane Aboriginal Sovereign Embassy. He is travelling around the country to campaign against the Voice. He spoke to *Solidarity*.

What are some of your concerns about the Voice? Do you see it more as denying you a voice rather than giving you a voice?

One of the aims of the Constitutional working group was to deliver ways of manufacturing our consent.

The Voice is actually about denying freedoms and recognition that the High Court gave us under Mabo, but have been taken away from us since then.

None of the advisory bodies that have been set up over the years have recognised our representative structures. So when we talk about representative structures, it's got to reflect our law from the grassroots.

We don't want self-appointed representatives.

Co-Chair of the Uluru Dialogue, Professor Megan Davis spoke at her last address to the National Press Gallery, bragging, she was laughing about it—how one of their strategies was to ban people [like me] from the process.

That spells out the deception, manipulation and prejudice that has been part of the process.

And Noel Pearson was the one that went along with watering down and butchering native title. He was Howard's right hand man for reconciliation.

Since the 70s there has been a push from the Commonwealth about forcing people to assimilate. There's always been an underlying wish of the colony to have us assimilate.

And what you see here is a whole lot of conservative blacks that have already decided that they've already decided to assimilate. They've already got positions and the salaries and the superannuation that warrants them to be Australians.

But many of us still hold fast to the belief that we were born free; although the place is under occupation, we are born free.

They haven't spelled out how this



Above: Koomar man and longtime activist Wayne Wharton

version, the Voice, would run. And, what they're promoting is that they will be the middlemen. Their Voice will be empowered to make decisions and advise over the top of us.

A lot of places are talking about a Voice, like South Australia. Each state in the Commonwealth has their own constitution. But once again they're bullshit. They're legislative.

The next government that comes along can amend and change any Voice.

Where has real change come from?

Any change we have won has come from the groundswell of people and individuals that have a vision.

We need campaigns that will actually scrutinise the police, scrutinise the powers that be and make them answerable.

Today a lot more young people are much more articulate. People fed up with the system. Have a look at the Black Lives Matter protests here and around the world, Indigenous people want real change.

They say the Voice is a way to welfare reform, but there are issues at a local, state as well as at a Federal Commonwealth level.

What do you mean by Treaty?

Hawke promised a treaty way back [in 1988].

I still hold fast to the idea of a treaty. This thing was supposed to be Voice, Treaty, Truth, yep? But in the referendum question, where is the reference to a treaty or any reference to truth telling or a truth commission?

If it's not in the question, it's not talked about.

The war against First Nations people has to stop, before any peace process can begin, before any treaty. The war has to stop. A treaty is signed between two equal sovereigns. You don't put one under another's constitution. You can't have one subordinate.

The biggest global colonial power at the moment is the US. They've got 3000 foot soldiers posted at Darwin, and are expanding an Air Force base.

Australia is now doing the biggest deal with them with AUKUS and is buying nuclear submarines. Where are they going to put the waste dump? They will try and put it in Aboriginal land it like they've done every other time.

So if we get the Voice. I don't have to talk about nuclear waste dumps? Yeah, right.

They are spending \$368 billion on nuclear submarines. What say the amount of money that they spend on submarines was spent on Aboriginal affairs? And we had control of it. Every Aboriginal family could have a house. Our kids wouldn't have to steal cars. Every Aboriginal community could have their own water.

If they stopped the war and made reparations, housing and water are just some of the fundamental things that could be done.

Self-determination is the first step in liberation.

The message to the 16, 18 million voters is "Don't throw us under the bus". A lot of our kids are rebelling and acting angry. They're at war with a racist system.

I'd like to deal with mining companies. But BHP, Santos and every other major mining company are financially supporting The Voice.

We want people to think about what the Voice will actually do. We want people to hear what we're saying. We want liberators. We don't need gatekeepers.

.....
'The next government that comes along can amend and change any Voice'

Solidarity spoke with **Marianne Mackay**, a Nyoongar woman from WA who travelled to Canberra in June to join with Lidia Thorpe and other Aboriginal people opposed to a Voice to Parliament. This is an edited transcript of the interview.

I WORK as an advocate for my people, with Megan Krakouer at the National Suicide Prevention and Trauma Recovery Project. I'm active in my community advising on different projects, setting up events, I'm also a mother of seven and grandmother of one and doing a law degree full-time.

We get phone calls from people in crisis, it doesn't matter what the issue is, we try to help.

Australia has the world's highest incarceration rates, the world's highest suicide rates, forced child removal rates and I see the impacts of this on a daily basis.

We have so many homeless people, sleeping in overcrowded situations, tents, cars or with nowhere to stay. The prisons are in constant crisis, juveniles through to adults locked down for 23 hours, only let out for exercise and phone calls.

There are deaths in custody and also deaths after people coming out of custody, young people who leave Banksia and suicide after being traumatised in there, or by other government systems like child protection, and just give up.

This Voice to Parliament is not going to change any of this. It's just a powerless advisory body. We already have Aboriginal bodies that give advice to government, we have the coalition of peak Aboriginal bodies, health and legal bodies. We already have constitutional recognition and a state-based body here in WA but not once did Premier McGowan even meet with them.

There are conferences and conventions on the national level that put all kinds of proposals to government but they just refuse to listen. They don't care, that's what it comes down to. It doesn't suit their agenda, it doesn't fit with party policy. The same will happen with the Voice, they'll take whatever advice and then turn it around and impose what they think is best.

Those pushing the Voice say that it will have power because it's in the constitution, but that's just not how the constitution works.

If the Voice amendment has been designed so we can't run any High Court challenges, what's the point

'We already have Aboriginal bodies that give advice to government but they refuse to listen'



Above: Nyoongah woman Marianne Mackay

of it being in the constitution? We wouldn't get any justice from the High Court anyway, not in time for the urgent needs of our people dying every day.

Funding

We need action now—but we are getting nothing from government, just talk about the Voice. All this time and resources wasted on the Voice when we need a huge investment in resources to Aboriginal people on the ground to manage our own affairs and meet the needs of own people.

Take child protection—they spend three quarters of their budget just on removal of children and keeping them away from families, when we need a huge injection of funds for family support where it can make a difference.

They are ignoring the fact that our sovereignty has never been ceded. We still have tribal boundary law, we can't speak for different nations other than our own.

I've seen a model for the Voice that just include two reps from WA. This isn't coming from a cultural viewpoint, its an imposed westernised structure.

The Voice will be set up by the colonial government on their terms.

The government that was created to repress, silence and deny our people our ancestral rights. The door is open for them to hand pick representatives already in their pocket and then say we get to vote for them. And in the referendum it won't be up to our people about whether we want this Voice—we are only 3 per cent of the population.

Linda Burney is already trying to dictate what the Voice will be able to talk about.

We've been told it won't comment on military bases, but like uncle Michael Anderson said in Canberra, military bases invade tribal lands and water ways. If we can't even talk about that what's the use of having a Voice? They're saying it won't even impact on Invasion Day, it's just ridiculous.

This society is set up to allow people to inflict pain, suffering and torture on our people and our voices are silenced every day by a government that says they are trying to protect us and make things better.

But I say to you, this government does nothing for our people.

We don't get nothing for free, we have to protest for change in this country and we protest against the Voice.

.....
'We need action now—but we are getting nothing from government, just talk about the Voice'

Sydney Uni struggle wrapped up, but much more to fight on

By Sophie Cotton

Branch Committee NTEU Sydney Uni

THE SYDNEY University strike campaign ended in June, with 80 per cent of union members voting to accept management's offer, and 96.5 per cent of workers supporting the agreement in the final ballot.

The final result is a mixed bag. In the words of one worker, "I'll be getting sick pay for the first time in my life, but the below inflation pay rise is going to be hard."

The branch has a sector leading win on sick pay for casual staff, held back the attempt of management to rip the 40:40:20 academic workload allocation out of the enterprise agreement, made improvements on conversion rights, wage theft, working-from-home rights, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment targets.

The branch's epic struggle broke records for the National Tertiary Education Union with nine days of strike action, 22 months of negotiations and repeated member meetings of 700 to 900.

Management, however, has kept our pay rise below inflation and won a huge expansion of so-called "Education Focussed Roles", a method of lumping academic staff with almost double teaching workloads.

Rank and File Action (RAFA), a rank and file grouping of union activists that has been crucial to building the strike campaign, argued to reject the deal and to continue the fight.

Three factors influenced the members' decision to accept management's deal: cost of living, industrial law, and the limits of the NTEU official strategy.

After just a 2.1 per cent increase over the prolonged negotiation period, workers were severely feeling the pinch.

Management pushed hard, insisting that the \$2000 settlement bonus and the 4.6 per cent pay rise was contingent on a successful yes ballot.

Workers had already won an additional 1.5 per cent, bringing the pay offer to 16.1 per cent over four years. But to break the pay framework being set in the sector more strike action was needed, along with the possibility of united action with other campuses across the country.

Secondly, the anti-strike laws have been used to limit industrial action since day one. Marking bans were



Above: NTEU members on the picket line during the strikes at Sydney Uni

judged early to be unlawful and foolishly left off the protected action ballot, and stop work meetings had also been deemed unlawful after the union failed to implement the industrial action within 30 days of workers authorising it.

Albanese's so-called "Secure Jobs Better Pay Act", that became law in June, gave management the right to apply to the Fair Work Commission, after nine months of bargaining, to declare a dispute "intractable". If granted, Fair Work can impose a new enterprise agreement, unilaterally set any non-agreed terms, and end the period of lawful strike action.

Though union officials rightly pointed out that these changes were an attack on the right to strike, they argued the only option was to settle with management quickly. There was never any strategy to challenge or defy the laws.

Officials' strategy

Finally, the Sydney University struggle was politically isolated by the NTEU officials.

While division and federal officials were willing to encourage limited strike action, after one day (or sometimes less) of strike action, they pushed branches to settle.

Officials call this an "expedited bargaining" strategy, seeking to limit militancy, settle quickly, and accept weak management offers to avoid testing new IR laws, or any risk of non-union ballots.

Officials also kept USYD isolated by delaying any declaration of the national week of action. Coordinated national action could have boosted

the fight at USYD, but the officials didn't announce the week of action until the morning after the decisive 18 April meeting that voted against strike action.

The vote does not spell an end to the struggle at Sydney Uni.

The 42 per cent of the membership that voted to continue striking, and the 20 per cent who voted to reject the agreement entirely, indicate a strong base to fight any future management attacks.

The union will need to resist the expansion of Education Focussed Roles and fight on wage theft, hopefully with a renewed energy from the hundreds of workers mobilised throughout the campaign.

But there are sharp lessons for the NTEU across the country. The unpromising nine-day strike campaign saw membership grow at a time of shrinking national net membership. Strong picket lines are an incredible weapon that can mobilise and cohere the struggle when confronting an intransigent management.

A militant and organised membership is needed to counter the limited framework of the union officials that will eventually confront every branch that moves into action.

Workers need to understand and prepare to fight the anti-strike laws, including breaking the taboos around illegal industrial action.

The struggle at Sydney Uni has set an example. The possibility of other branches winning better pay and conditions will depend on learning from the experience to build greater levels of militancy and an organised rank and file.

A militant and organised membership is needed to counter the limited framework of the union officials that will confront every branch

French riots a rebellion against poverty, racism and police

RIOTS SWEEPED France in early July after cops shot dead a 17-year-old, Nahel M., and then lied about it.

The explosion shows the anger and bitterness across France after months of protests against President Macron's increase to the pension age.

Police said Nahel, from a French-Algerian family, had driven at officers after they tried to stop his vehicle. But a video circulated on Twitter showed the police by side of the car, which was at a standstill in the traffic.

One cop points his gun at the driver, and as the car moves away he shoots Nahel in the heart. Before the killer shot, the police gunman can be heard saying, "I'm going to put a bullet in your head." A second officer says, "Shoot him."

Killings by police have soared since a 2017 change to the law that relaxed the rules on shooting in "legitimate self-defence". Since then, the number of deaths from "refusal to comply" has surged with at least 13 last year.

The French police are notorious for their racism and contempt for the country's large Arab and Black population, whose families migrated from former French colonies in Africa. This has intensified as a result of Islamophobia during the "war on terror".

One of those on the streets in Lyons explained "The background is that every week I'm hassled by the police, every week there's some cop who snarls at me, and every week I hear of someone like me who is told they are a 'dirty Arab'.

"The French left Algeria, but many of them still have an invader's thoughts. Many think they are better than us, that we are not from the same world."

He lives in one of the suburbs dominated by families of migrants, where youth unemployment is 40 per cent and half the population live below the poverty line.

Vile racism has become mainstream after politicians targeted Muslims, banning the hijab in schools in 2004 and then the "burkini" on French beaches in 2016.

Macron, and presidents before him, have used racism time and again. During the turmoil over the attack on pensions his government launched a new anti-migrant bill to speed up deportations.

This has helped feed the far right,



Above: A march in Paris where Nahel was killed led by his mother, Mounia, on top of a van

with last year's presidential election seeing the fascist Marine Le Pen come second with 41 per cent in the second round.

Far right groups took to the streets during the riots to physically attack Arab and Black youth.

Solidarity

The riots are a rebellion against racism, poverty and violent police. They echo the Black Lives Matter protests in the US, which saw a police station and other buildings in Minneapolis, where George Floyd was murdered, burnt to the ground.

The left has to make clear its solidarity with all those fighting back against racism and the police.

As the revolutionary socialist group in France linked to *Solidarity*, *Autonomie de Classe*, put it "We should champion the bravery and determination of young, mainly black and Arab working class people", calling the riots part of "a process of class-confrontation against capitalism, the ruling class and the forces and the structures of the state".

But much of the French left has a long-term problem in failing to fight racism.

The most high-profile figure on the left, Jean-Luc Melenchon, denounced the police as "uncontrolled". It was hardly a wild description after months of police assaults on pension protesters and now their attempt to cover up Nahel's execution.

But after being attacked by the Labor-type Socialist Party, which is

part of Melenchon's electoral coalition, he seemed to retreat.

He spoke of his "absolute disavowal" of the attack on the house of the right-wing mayor of L'Hay-les-Roses. And his central demands are merely improved police training and for independent "oversight commissions".

Police who talk of being "at war" with "vermin" can't be changed through new training programs.

Other members of Melenchon's party have been better. Clementine Autain said, "We don't want a return to normal, because what is abnormal is precisely the normal situation. The responsibility for these riots lies with the power that left the situation to rot.

"Inequalities have worsened, poverty has exploded, public services have deteriorated."

But French Communist Party leader Fabien Roussel, also part of Melenchon's coalition, has viciously attacked the rioters. He announced his "absolute condemnation of the violence that took place"—and he didn't mean the cops.

US civil rights leader Martin Luther King called riots "the language of the unheard".

Riots do not have the same power as strikes to shake the system and target the profits on which capitalism depends. But if the rage on the streets is fused with the power of workplace struggles it could produce a large, powerful movement against the system.

With Socialist Worker UK

The left has to make clear its solidarity with all those fighting back against racism and the police

Greek border policies see hundreds of refugees left to drown

By Cooper Forsyth

WHILE THE desperate search for a missing submersible covered our news feeds, 750 refugees were left for dead in the Mediterranean after a fishing vessel capsized.

While three separate countries spent millions in an attempt to rescue billionaire thrill seekers on the submersible Titan, the refugees were deliberately left to die.

At least 500 people are missing and presumed drowned. Despite the trauma, many survivors will now face the threat of deportation from Greece back to the countries they fled from.

The Greek authorities have strongly denied they were at fault. But the evidence shows otherwise.

The first distress call was received by the refugee monitoring group “Alarm Phone” at 2:30pm on 13 June. An hour later the trawler was located via helicopter by the Greek coastguard. Aerial photographs showed every inch of the boat covered with people, some with hands outstretched.

Six people had already died due to the horrible conditions on the boat. For five days they had no drinking water. Those on board were forced to drink sea water and their own urine. Some were driven to suicide.

Yet four hours later, at 6:30pm, the Greek coastguard claimed the boat was safely headed for Italy. In fact its engine had broken down and the boat had been drifting aimlessly for five days.

The coastguard had received the position of the boat. Alarm Phone had been told by passengers that the trawler was not moving, and the captain had fled to another boat. The boat was not moving for seven hours before it sank.

The Greek coastguard continues to claim that the boat was safely headed to Italy and did not want help. Their story is full of holes. Three days after the sinking they admitted a rope was thrown to the boat. It’s possible this is what caused it to capsize.

One survivor said “The coastguard threw a rope but because they didn’t know how to pull the rope, the vessel started dangling right and left. The coastguard boat was going too fast but the vessel was already dangling to the left, and that’s how it sank.”

The coastguard denies they tried to tow the boat.

But there are suspicions they were



Above: Aerial footage of the refugee boat carrying up to 750 people before it sank

trying to tow it away from Greek waters—as Greek authorities have done in the past.

The authorities were much quicker to deny responsibility than they were to act. One man was treading water amongst dead bodies, including children, for two hours before he was seen and rescued.

Turning back boats

This tragedy could have been prevented. It is the product of the vicious EU border regime, which persecutes anyone arriving “irregularly” from non-EU countries.

Billions of dollars are poured into trying to prevent refugees reaching Europe via boat from Libya, and search and rescue operations are criminalised. The result is refugees are condemned to either be trapped in Libya, or die at sea.

The approach is inspired by our own government’s notorious cruelty towards refugees. Like Australia, the EU “deters” refugees by exiling them in foreign countries like Turkey, as well as funding the Libyan Coast Guard to implement boat turnbacks.

A video released by the *New York Times* in May provided proof of the Greek government’s shocking push-back operations.

It showed a group of 12 asylum seekers, including children, being taken from the Greek island of Lesbos and summarily expelled to Turkey. They were loaded onto a Greek coastguard vessel and then abandoned on a raft to

drift back into Turkish waters, where they were eventually rescued by the Turkish coastguard.

Within 24 hours of the sinking 30,000 people were on the streets of Athens in protest against the government’s contempt for refugee lives and its cruel anti-refugee policies. There were other demonstrations across the country.

Despite the Nauru detention centre now being empty, our own Labor government is committed to keeping it open, insisting no refugee who arrives by boat will ever be allowed to settle permanently in Australia. Around 80 refugees remain in Papua New Guinea, and 14,000 asylum seekers are trapped in Indonesia. The deadly policy of boat turnbacks continues.

These policies are being exported worldwide as governments try to deflect anger at the cost of living towards refugees. This makes more of these tragedies inevitable, unless there is a fight to force them back.

The fight for open borders and freedom for refugees in Australia has international ramifications. In Greece, anti-racist group KEERFA (United Against Racism and the Fascist Threat) are campaigning for the victims and the survivors now facing deportation to get the justice they deserve.

We need to keep up the fight against Labor to free the refugees and win justice for all those who have suffered under Australia’s ten long years of bipartisan refugee cruelty.

.....
With 24 hours 30,000 people were on the streets of Athens in protest against the government’s contempt for refugee lives

Rebellion shakes Putin but Ukraine's offensive goes nowhere

By Adam Adelpour

THE ABORTED rebellion in June by Yevgeny Prigozhin exposed fractures in Putin's regime. But this could easily make the war in Ukraine even more dangerous as Western escalation continues.

Western commentators greeted the rebellion as a sign that Putin's rule was collapsing in the face of the Ukrainian counter-offensive. But despite the damage to Putin's credibility, it has done little to speed up Ukrainian attempts to reclaim heavily defended territory controlled by Russia in Eastern Ukraine.

The offensive has stalled, with huge loss of life for negligible gains.

But the West remains committed to an ongoing proxy war. The NATO summit saw US President Joe Biden declare the US would support Ukraine "for as long as it takes", with G7 leaders similarly pledging their "unwavering" support for the war.

The US's latest move is the shocking decision to provide Ukraine with cluster munitions—brutal offensive weapons designed to shower "bomblets" over a wide area and maximise casualties. The unexploded "bomblets" left behind are notorious for maiming civilians, particularly children, many years after conflicts have ended.

Wagner

Prigozhin is the Russian chief of the Wagner Private Military Company, a mercenary army that has played an increasingly prominent role in Russian war efforts. In May Putin praised Wagner for the leading role its "assault units" played in capturing the city of Bakhmut.

In late June, Prigozhin took to his Telegram channel to denounce an alleged missile attack by the Russian army on one of his camps. He then brazenly declared the start of an armed conflict between Wagner and the Russian Ministry of Defence. Wagner forces seized control of the Russian military hub of Rostov-on-Don with virtually no resistance.

Prigozhin then launched a dramatic "March for Justice" on Moscow. Wagner columns began to move towards the capital with the stated aim of unseating Defence Minister General Sergei Shoigu.

The march on Moscow was ultimately aborted and Prigozhin cut



a deal with Putin to go into exile in Belarus.

But the episode has raised questions about the strength of Putin's control. He held back from launching full-scale attacks on Wagner forces despite his strong-man persona.

In an interview Putin admitted that he met with Prigozhin and Wagner commanders following the rebellion and unsuccessfully tried to negotiate the replacement of Prigozhin as leader of Wagner fighters in Ukraine.

According to the *New York Times*, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine there were only around 1000 Wagner mercenaries in the country. But Russia's military set-backs saw Putin encourage Wagner's growth as a military force outside the full control of the Russian army. Prigozhin was given a free hand to recruit from Russia's huge prison population and Wagner's ranks swelled to around 50,000.

Prigozhin rose to prominence as an oligarch who made his fortune selling hot-dogs. He became an associate of Putin after opening a restaurant frequented by the now President.

The Wagner Group was established as an extension of Russian military operations. Its status as a private army meant it could be used for "grey zone" operations that the Russian state could distance itself from.

Wagner was first active in the Russian seizure of Crimea in 2014. But it was also used to support Putin's brutal intervention in the Syrian civil war.

In Africa, Wagner has been used to give Russian imperialism a greater foothold, bolster weak and cor-

Above: Yevgeny Prigozhin in a video he released from Ukraine

rupt governments and seize natural resources.

In Ukraine, Wagner's growing prominence and Prigozhin's ambitions began to create tensions.

Prigozhin complained his troops were starved of ammunition by an incompetent and envious Defence Ministry. He began to stridently denounce the incompetence of the Russian defence establishment in public videos. Small skirmishes broke out between Wagner forces and Russian troops.

Prigozhin's rebellion was finally sparked by a decision to make Wagner forces sign contracts with the Ministry of Defence.

The conflict between Wagner and the Defence Ministry is also entangled with divisions in the Russian state itself. Important figures who have been side-lined in the Russian military and security forces have joined Wagner's ranks. Former Russian deputy defence minister Colonel General Mizintsev joined Wagner the day after he was sacked by the Ministry of Defence in April.

It is not clear whether the Wagner rebellion was a negotiating tactic or a failed coup. But what is certain is that the war in Ukraine remains bloody and dangerous.

The prospects of a decisive Russian defeat look slim. And if Russian forces did face collapse, Putin could still respond through using nuclear weapons.

An anti-war revolt in East and West is necessary to end the bloodbath and stop the war. Here we need to oppose Albanese pouring fuel on the fire with more arms shipments to Ukraine.

.....
The US's latest move is the shocking decision to provide Ukraine with cluster munitions

CAN DEGROWTH SAVE THE PLANET?

The idea of degrowth recognises capitalism’s destructive nature, argues **Martin Empson**, but ends up looking for solutions within capitalism rather than looking to overthrow it

IN SEPTEMBER 2019 Greta Thunberg made a powerful speech to a UN climate meeting: “We are at the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth”, she said.

Her attack drew the wrath of mainstream commentators, but for many environmental activists it went to the heart of their concerns. “You can’t have infinite growth on a finite planet” is a popular slogan that emphasises the idea that capitalist growth is surpassing planetary boundaries.

Growth is central to how capitalists view their economy. The short-lived Prime Minister of Britain Liz Truss blamed an imaginary grouping of trade unionists, environmentalists, “remainers” and labour activists for forming an “anti-growth coalition” which supposedly brought down her government.

Commentators have fretted about low rates of growth in the economy of just over 2 per cent a year.

The obsession with growth arises out of the nature of the capitalist economy, which is based on constant expansion of the means of production. Karl Marx described this process as “accumulation for the sake of accumulation”. But as the American Marxist John Bellamy Foster has said, “Accumulation of capital is accompanied by the accumulation of catastrophe.”

One response to this is “degrowth”, whose proponents argue that we need to reduce sections of the economy that are destructive. Degrowth is not a monolithic set of ideas. There are many different academics, commentators and activists who all have slightly different emphases. But degrowth is increasingly part of political discussions within the environmental movement, academic economics and to a lesser extent sections of the labour movement.

As Marxists we share with degrowth activists a hatred of a capital-

ist system that destroys our world in the interests of profit. We are on the same side as degrowthers who argue for an economy that is less destructive and more equitable. But a major flaw of degrowth theory is that while it is anti-capitalist, it is a reformist strategy that cannot stop capitalism’s destruction.

Growth

To understand this, let us look at growth itself. Capitalism’s driving force is the capitalist’s desire to maximise profits. In Marx’s *Capital*, he placed this drive in the context of a system with two great divisions—that between the bosses and the workers, and competition between the capitalists themselves.

Capitalists pay their workers less in wages than the value the workers create. The extra the capitalist steals from the workers is called “surplus value”. Marx argued that the capitalist is “compelled” to reinvest this surplus back into the means of production because they are in competition with their rivals. They do this to develop new technologies, improve or purchase new machinery and so on.

The capitalists are stuck on a treadmill of production. Innovation is driven not by a desire to solve human need, but to make profits. We only have to look at how industry constantly offers us new clothing, phones or cars, each superseding the previous model despite offering little difference.

Marx’s understanding of the compulsion at the heart of capitalist production is one of the great insights of *Capital*. It is shared by some degrowth thinkers.

Jason Hickel, whose recent book *Less is More* is a good introduction to left degrowth ideas, argues that “Capitalism is fundamentally dependent on growth... Growth is a structural imperative—an iron law”. The authors of the book *The Case for Degrowth*

Marx’s understanding of the compulsion at the heart of capitalist production is one of the great insights of *Capital*

make their debt to Marx’s ideas even more explicit: “Unlike other human economies, capitalist ones depend on growth. In order to thrive amid market competition, those who have money must invest it, make more money, and expand production.”

This logic of capitalist production explains the ruling class’ obsession with growth and their inability to act against the system and stop its destruction.

The meaning of degrowth

Degrowthers share socialists’ understanding of the consequence of unrestrained accumulation and our desire for something better. Hickel argues we need the “planned reduction of excess energy and resource use to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a safe, just and equitable way.”

Socialists would agree with most of the things degrowth theorists argue for. We need less fossil fuels, arms manufacturing and advertising, at the same time as we need more schools, hospitals, public transport and renewable energy.

These reforms do not directly challenge the logic of capitalism, or indeed its growth imperative. For instance while it is possible to conceive of capitalism without the advertising industry it would still be capitalism.

The best degrowth theorists understand this and argue for the phasing out of capitalism, often involve calling for workers’ cooperatives or community owned businesses.

Such ideas have a long history on the left. Some degrowthers even quote a slogan of the anarchist influenced IWW union, aiming to “build a new world in the shell of the old”.

Capitalism can tolerate some non-profits or workers’ cooperatives. Cooperatives are still going to be battered by the storms of capitalist crisis. Ultimately, they cannot escape the logic of the market—however well meaning their

collective owners might be.

But there are other problems with degrowth. In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis the dominant response from the global ruling class was to cut expenditure on public services, impose wage restraint and expand neoliberalism. This would, they hoped, restore growth rates.

So it is natural that many workers might see degrowth as a manifestation of “green austerity”. In the Global South activists have often challenged degrowth by arguing that they need economic development and growth to give their populations opportunities that have only been available in the North.

While the majority of degrowth writers understand that the historical development of capitalism has left the Global South undeveloped and under resourced, a small minority have used language referring to “frugal living” or “creating beautifully poor spaces”. This is not attractive to people who have faced austerity or already lack access to basic services like sanitation or health-care.

Secondly, because degrowth theory relies on the idea of natural limits, it can lead to a right-wing interpretation that sees ecological issues as being solely down to “too many people”. This was very much part of the earliest, and very influential, approach to growth made by the Club of Rome in the 1972 report “The Limits to Growth”.

Marxism’s alternative

The most important criticism of degrowth is that it is a reformist strategy seeking to win changes within capitalism.

Revolutionaries understand that capitalists will try to stop any challenge to their ability to maximise profits. The fossil fuel industry has been protected for decades, even as awareness of climate change has grown.

Any serious challenge to the interests of big business will provoke a violent backlash.

Consider the reforms proposed by Salvador Allende’s government in Chile in the 1970s. These were met with a brutal response. In 1973, General Pinochet led a coup and installed military rule, murdering Allende and thousands of activists.

The state is a set of institutions and “armed bodies of men” which protects the class interests of the rich.

Degrowth theorists do not offer a way to challenge the capitalist state. They have no argument for how we



Above: Opposition to the idea of endless growth is common within the climate and environment movements

can end capitalism—nor do they have a sense of the power within capitalism to change the world—the working class.

Marx saw workers as the “grave-diggers” of capitalism. Because of their centrality to production, they have the power to overthrow the system and smash the capitalist state. But through their struggles, workers can also create institutions that form the basis for a new way of organising society.

Every time workers fight back we see a glimpse of this power. The recent strikes in Britain have shown how workers have the power to shut down the economy. Mass strikes in France saw energy workers organise to ensure that hospitals did not lose power during their strikes.

Revolutions magnify this experience ten thousand times. In situations where millions of workers are rebelling they are forced to go beyond simply organising strikes to take on questions like the distribution of food, the maintenance of power and the need to protect strikes from the bosses and the right wing.

During the Russian Revolution, revolutionary workers organised “councils” in their factories and workplaces. These councils started from the need to organise the struggle but quickly took over the running of workplaces.

Networking these councils into “Soviets” through the election of delegates created citywide, then countrywide, bodies that represented the interests of workers and coordinated

the revolution. This was the basis for an alternative, socialist, society.

The revolutionary struggle itself creates the basis of a rationally organised economy.

Workers’ councils take on the running of individual factories, but can then coordinate production across sectors and economies.

Mass democracy is central to this process. In the revolutionary Paris Commune of 1871, workers insisted that their representatives were paid the average workers’ wage and could be instantly recalled.

In a socialist society, we would collectively make decisions about what was needed, and how to produce it sustainably.

We might “grow” parts of the economy—by building more schools, hospitals and housing for instance, but also “degrow” other parts of the economy like mining operations—and even abolish major industries like advertising and arms manufacturing.

We could also respond to needs, such as those caused by a changing environment, or the emergence of new diseases. These decisions would take place through a mass democratic process, not the whims of capitalists trying to make more profits.

We should welcome the way degrowth theorists have generalised an anti-capitalist critique in the environmental movement.

But we also have to be clear that this is not enough. We should fight alongside them, engage with the debates while all the time pushing for a revolutionary strategy.

WILL FIJI'S NEW GOVERNMENT REVIVE RACIAL POLITICS?

There are worrying signs of a return to some of the racial politics of Fiji's past after the end of the Bainimarama government, argues **Jasmine Ali**

AFTER 16 years in power, Frank Bainimarama and his Fiji First party were narrowly defeated in national elections held last year. Fiji First secured 26 seats with 42 per cent of the vote, two seats short of an outright majority.

A new "People's Coalition Government" headed by Sitiveni Rabuka of the People's Alliance Party, who received the second largest vote with 21 seats, together with Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA)'s and the National Federation, has formed government.

This followed a period of tense negotiations during which Bainimarama deployed the military and police amid claims of violence and anti-Indian racism.

Shortly after the election, Rabuka, suspended Bainimarama from parliament for three years after he encouraged military intervention against the new government.

Since 1987, Fijian politics has been marked by a series of coups designed to assert the supremacy of the indigenous iTaukei Fijian elite against the rise of a multi-racial working class-based Labour Party.

These began when the Labour Party was first elected to government under iTaukei Fijian leader Timoci Bavadra, with the support of both iTaukei Fijians who had broken with racist Fijian nationalism, and Indo-Fijians.

Bainimarama took power in another military coup in 2006, but with the aim of ending government corruption and the racist gerrymander that had kept the indigenous elite in power.

While many have welcomed the end of the Bainimarama government, the new coalition represents a further shift to the right in political terms.

Disaffection with the last years of Bainimarama's government has tragically been captured by the conservative right.

The swing against Bainimarama coincided with a period of considerable deterioration in the socio-economic position of iTaukei Fijians, while corporate profits in Fiji have boomed.

During the pandemic, for example, Energy Fiji Ltd recorded \$96 million profit in 2021, while real wages continued to slide through a cost-of-living crisis, but CEO salaries soared.

In 2021, data released by the Bureau of Statistics, which for the first time published annual data on ethnicity, showed that poverty levels were at shockingly high rates among iTaukei Fijians, with 75 per cent living in poverty compared with 22 per cent of the country's Indo-Fijian population. Bainimarama and his Attorney-General responded by sacking the Bureau's CEO.

These poverty levels were measured by University of the South Pacific economist Dr Neelesh Gounder, who defended the veracity of the data.

The economic position for Fijian workers and the poor worsened during the COVID period when the Bainimarama government adopted policies such as strict lockdown measures, and vaccination mandates.

In 2014, Bainimarama had been elected in a landslide with 60 per cent of the vote in the first election since his "clean up coup" in 2006.

Bainimarama's "clean up coup" posed an important political break from the politics of anti-Indian racism and racial division imposed by previous military coups, notably the first led by Rabuka himself in 1987.

Support for Bainimarama reached its height following his decision in 2007 to disband the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), which had been a vehicle for anti-Indian racism and had enabled both Rabuka and businessman George Speight's coup in 2000. A new constitution, sponsored by

Fijian politics has been marked by a series of coups designed to assert the supremacy of the indigenous iTaukei Fijian elite

Bainimarama, in 2013 abolished the communal electoral roll installed by the British colonial authorities which privileged Indigenous Fijians, allocating parliamentary seats according to ethnicity.

However, by 2018, with Bainimarama following neo-liberal economic policies, Fiji First's majority was reduced, with the party winning only 50 per cent of the vote, while the conservative SODELPA, then led by Rabuka, secured close to 40 per cent.

Labour's failure

The growing anger at increasing poverty, rising inequality, and Bainimarama's crackdown on worker and union rights was not captured by Fiji's Labour Party (FLP) and left. The FLP picked up only 2.7 per cent of the vote and no seats.

Bainimarama's attack on the Bureau of Statistics was however just the latest example of his government's increasing reliance on anti-democratic and authoritarian measures to maintain its grip on power.

In 2011, the government cracked down on union rights and the right to strike in certain industries.

The FLP, founded by the Fijian Trade Union Congress, enjoyed support among both working class iTaukei and Indo-Fijians off the back of major strikes in the late 1980s.

But the FLP's decision to play junior partner to Bainimarama's interim government in 2006, was repaid by its leader Mahendra Chaudhry being banned from running in the 2014 election.

The FLP's failure to organise independently of Bainimarama's government among the working class and the poor of both iTaukei and Indo-Fijian backgrounds has resulted in a serious haemorrhaging of the party's vote.

The failure of the left to connect with disaffection with Bainimarama

opened the door for Rabuka's People's Alliance and SODELPA.

Rabuka reinstates elites

While Rabuka's new government has promised to unite Fiji and bring a new era of change, Rabuka's move to reinstate elite institutions such as the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) does not bode well. A review of its structure, composition and role will deliver its recommendations in August.

The GCC was created by the British during its colonial rule in Fiji. It operated as a forum for high-ranking Indigenous chiefs and colonial administrators, and acted, as Indigenous Fijian academic Steven Ratu described, as "trusted compradors" for the colonial state, supporting colonial rule against local rebellions.

Britain, which annexed Fiji in October 1874 after prodding by the Australian colonies, promoted the Fijian chiefs and implemented a "divide-and-rule" policy which separated Indo-Fijian and Fijian people.

From 1879, Indian people were imported as indentured labourers for the Australian-owned sugar plantations and mills of CSR—the Colonial Sugar Refinery.

Later many Indo-Fijians became sugar farmers but were still beholden to the economic power of CSR. CSR also used coerced labour from Melanesian countries like PNG, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu brought to Fiji by Australian shipping and trading companies like Burns Philp in a sordid practice of "coerced labour" known as "black-birding".

Following the first full elections in September 1966 and independence in October 1970, Fiji became, in effect a one-party state, ruled by the Fijian chiefs' political party—the Alliance Party.

During the 1950s, the GCC membership had been expanded to include trade union and other urban organisations, and a number of working-class Indigenous Fijians and other commoners.

This kind of expansion was however opposed by Rabuka and other Indigenous Fijian elites. One of Rabuka's complaints about the changes to the GCC was that it included too many commoners, and "...so many non-chiefs ... who will try to dictate resolutions."

After the 1987 coup the body was given enhanced powers, and the GCC played a prominent role in stoking racism towards the Indo-Fijian population and enabling the Rabuka and Speight coups.



Above: New Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka at the first meeting of the restored Great Council of Chiefs

To dispel fears around the resurrection of the GCC, the new government has made a gesture to the Indo-Fijian population by declaring a national public holiday, Girit Day, to commemorate the Indian indentured labourers who were brought to Fiji by the British.

On Girit Day celebrations in May, Rabuka even delivered a national televised apology, under the banner of 'national reconciliation', for his personal involvement in previous anti-Indo-Fijian coups and asked for forgiveness.

However the Girit Day celebrations turned out to be just a prelude to Rabuka's reinstatement of Ratu Sukuna Day, a national holiday that begins a six-day celebration of the elite Indigenous Fijian statesman, timed to coincide this year with the first meeting of the revived Great Council of Chiefs.

Sukuna Day had been abolished by Bainimarama in 2010 due to its association with the 2000 Speight Coup which toppled the Chaudhry Labour government.

Sukuna was responsible for setting up the Native Land Trust Board to administer Taukei land. As Steven Ratu outlines, "rather than emancipating the Taukei from the excesses of colonial domestication, Ratu Sukuna's ideas and policies simply reinforced colonial hegemony."

While Rabuka has promised a review of the GCC and pronounced that the GCC should be a voice for all people, not just the iTaukei, he has also stressed that it cannot be modernised, and should remain in the control of Chiefs based on genealogy,

as in the colonial era.

Potential for change

Rabuka and his Coalition have also backed the Australian and New Zealand military build-up in the Pacific and their aggressive stance towards China. Rabuka's Coalition has signed a new defence agreement to increase cooperation between New Zealand and Fiji military forces while withdrawing from a 2011 arrangement with China for training Fijian police officers.

Rabuka has come out strongly in support of the AUKUS deal and Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines. He has also celebrated right-wing Indian BJP Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, in a further indication of the government's right-wing trajectory.

Both the NZ and Australian governments see China as a bigger threat than climate change, which is already producing sea level rises that have decimated scores of villages across Fijian islands.

The hope for change lies with building the working class action and solidarity that can unite iTaukei and Indo-Fijians in struggle against the massive inequality across Fijian society, and resist any attempt by Rabuka to use anti Indo-Fijian racism to shore up his rule

In February miners balloted for strike action to win pay increases in the Vautokala mine. A major strike could change the industrial and political landscape, especially when Rabuka demands Fijians accept belt-tightening budgets.

Strike activity has the power to win real change and build solidarity across racial divisions to wrest power away from the business and corporate elites backed by Rabuka's new government.

INDONESIA ESCALATES WAR ON WEST PAPUA

Miro Sandev looks at the Indonesian military’s deadly new operation in West Papua—and how the Australian government helps its crackdown on the independence movement

A FOREIGN power illegally invades. It administers a brutal occupation underpinned by war crimes. Its aircraft drop bombs indiscriminately destroying civilian infrastructure and its armies massacre civilians. Hundreds of thousands are internally displaced. Martial law prevails.

No, this is not Ukraine. It is West Papua. And the Indonesian government—with Australia’s full backing—is carrying out these atrocities as the mainstream media studiously ignore them.

While Indonesia has been violently occupying West Papua for 60 years, in recent months it has ramped up the killing and torture.

West Papuans have been fighting for independence and there are some militias involved in the struggle, including the West Papua National Liberation Army (WPNLA).

Liberation army forces took a New Zealand pilot hostage in February in response to what they said was a violation of a no-fly zone. They have offered to negotiate with the Indonesian and New Zealand government over his release. Indonesian ministers refused to negotiate.

Instead, in an act of collective punishment, they sent in heavily armed forces. In a shootout between Indonesian forces and members of the WPNLA, several Indonesian police officers and a senior spy chief were killed.

As revenge, the Indonesian government designated the WPNLA as a terrorist organisation and implemented martial law across West Papua.

It then launched a military invasion that it calls a “special military operation”.

“Jakarta is declaring war in West Papua”, said Amnesty International. “Already many Papuan civilians accused of being freedom fighters are killed by the military. Now Indonesian forces have new licence to kill them—as terrorists.”

Helicopter gunships have been de-

ployed and over 4300 heavily armed soldiers have marched in.

The Indonesian military has unleashed savage violence on the civilian population.

In May, human rights groups reported on the shocking details of a raid on the village of Iliaga, situated in the highlands of West Papua. Indonesian air forces fired around 40 rockets on the village, devastating it and forcing the residents to flee into the surrounding jungles.

“In this attack, the Indonesia Airforces fired rocket bombs about 40 times on air attacks at local residents...The Indonesia Security Forces also were attack residents villages and burning down the local residents houses, and churches,” the OPM Free Papua Movement said in a statement.

Human Rights Papua has estimated that tens of thousands of villagers have been displaced by similar attacks since 2019, with at least 400 dying from health impacts as a result.

Last year Indonesian police and soldiers unlawfully killed at least 72 West Papuans, according to human rights groups. At least 12 of the cases involved torture.

Since April this year soldiers have been deployed to kill and to terrorise the whole population with arbitrary arrests and torture.

“Eight West Papuan civilians have so far become victims of torture and/or arbitrary arrest by Indonesian forces,” wrote human rights lawyer Veronica Koman. “Five of them are children, including one who was tortured to death.”

The crackdown has also extended to attacks on journalists trying to report the crimes and also on protests.

In Jayapura, university students organised peaceful protests demanding free education and an end to militarism in schools and unis in West Papua. The police responded by forcibly dispersing the students and

leaving four injured.

Soldiers have been deployed to kill and to terrorise the whole population with arbitrary arrests and torture

Indonesian colonialism

The unfolding military assault by Indonesia is simply the latest in its bloody occupation of the region and the slow-motion genocide of West Papuans.

Indonesia invaded and seized West Papua by force in 1961 from its previous colonial rulers, the Dutch.

West Papua comprises the western half of the island of New Guinea. Unlike the rest of Indonesia its population is ethnically Melanesian, as is the eastern half of the island, formerly an Australian colony and now an independent nation—Papua New Guinea.

Following a national liberation war against the Dutch, Indonesia won its independence in 1949. The Dutch still retained control of West Papua until 1961, when Indonesian forces invaded and claimed all of the territory of the former Dutch colony.

The Indonesians called the region Irian Jaya and did not bother to ask the indigenous West Papuans whether they wanted their lands and nation to be integrated into the Indonesian state. Indonesia wanted the region for its natural resources and its geo-strategic importance.

In this period the Cold War was in full swing. The US was anxious to prevent Indonesia from leaving the Non Aligned Movement and joining the Soviet Union and China in the “communist” camp. So it sponsored the 1962 New York Agreement which legitimised Indonesian control over West Papua. Australia also backed it.

The agreement set up a referendum, overseen by the UN, where West Papuans would vote on whether the region would remain within Indonesia or become independent.

However this referendum, held in 1969, was a sham involving approximately 1025 government-selected delegates. The vote was by show of hands in the presence of the Indonesian military. The delegates

unanimously supported integration with Indonesia and the UN General Assembly approved the vote.

After the seizure of West Papua, Indonesia launched a settler colonial takeover, sponsoring the migration of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians from Java.

In 1971 Papuans made up 96 per cent of the population but by 2013 this had fallen to just 50 per cent and has continued to decrease.

Australian complicity

The Indonesian military is estimated to have killed half a million people in West Papua since the 1960s. The Australian Labor and Liberal parties have both supported this industrial-scale murder.

In July 1998 the Indonesian military massacred a group of unarmed West Papuan demonstrators on the island of Biak. Not long after, mutilated corpses began washing up on the island's shores.

According to intelligence reports released last year, the Australian government received compelling evidence that the Indonesian military had fired live rounds into the protesters.

Australian officials ignored international calls for an independent investigation into the Biak massacre and did not release this evidence to the rest of the world. It has sat on it for 24 years.

The same report also details how West Papuans secretly handed over photographic evidence of the atrocity to an Australian intelligence officer, placing their own lives in danger by doing so. The film was distributed to the Australian Department of Defence but was never released publicly. It appears to have been destroyed in 2014.

Australia offered a very muted response to the reports of the Biak massacre, expressing concern but never outright condemning the massacre, nor calling for a United Nations investigation.

Despite these atrocities, the Australian Federal Police has continued to provide extensive training to the Indonesian army unit Detachment 88, which has been involved in torture and extra-judicial killings.

The Australian special forces unit the SAS has also helped to train Indonesia's Special Forces—Kopassus. Indonesia unleashed Kopassus to terrorise East Timorese civilians in the lead up to their independence in 1999.

Australia also supplies weapons to the Indonesian military, including Bushmaster vehicles manufactured



Above: West Papuan students demonstrate in Jakarta

by BAE Systems Australia that have been used in West Papua. Australian companies Electro Optic Systems and Northrup Grumman Australia have also contracted with the Indonesian military.

Inter-imperialist tensions

Australian government policy towards West Papua has been completely focussed on maintaining trade links and a stable political relationship with Indonesia.

In 2006 it signed a treaty with Jakarta giving a commitment that it would never “intervene in Indonesia’s internal affairs or undermine its territorial integrity”. This rules out any support for West Papuan independence.

The current Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in 2019 that Labor was “distressed by human rights violations”, but reiterated that the territorial integrity enshrined in the treaty “remains the bedrock of security cooperation” between the two countries.

Two-way trade between Australia and Indonesia has grown from \$8.5 billion in 2005 to \$18.3 billion in 2022, making it Australia’s 14th largest trading partner. Australian mining company Rio Tinto holds a 15 per cent stake in the Grasberg mine in West Papua, the largest gold mine in the world.

Even more important to Australia’s ruling elite is the fact Indonesia straddles vital sea routes between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Forty per cent of all shipping passes through the Indonesian archipelago.

Both the US, as the dominant imperialist superpower, and Australia, as a sub-imperial regional power, support Jakarta maintaining control over all of Indonesia to ensure stability for Western geopolitical and economic interests.

Both are concerned that an independent West Papua could be drawn under the growing influence of China in the region.

Last year the prospect of the Chinese building a military base in the Solomon Islands threw the American and Australian ruling classes into a panic and white-hot anger, with some US officials threatening military action.

With the growing tensions between the US and China, the US has been ramping up its courtship of Indonesia. In 2015 the US and Indonesia elevated their bilateral relationship to a “Strategic Partnership”, increasing cooperation.

The US and its allies have attempted to use tensions between Indonesia and China over maritime boundaries to draw the former into their policy of economically and militarily containing China.

Australia is very concerned to placate Indonesia given its criticism of AUKUS and Australia’s commitment to acquiring nuclear submarines.

We need to unequivocally oppose Australian imperialism and Indonesia’s domination of West Papua and call for Australia to end military ties with Indonesia, and for Indonesia to free all political prisoners. Socialists stand in solidarity with the West Papuan struggle for self-determination, and call for the borders to be opened to West Papuan refugees.

LABOR'S REFUGEE SHAME—END OFFSHORE DETENTION

By Ian Rintoul

THE LAST ten years of the Australian government's punitive policies and abuse of refugee rights are bookended by Labor governments: 19 July 2023 marks the tenth year of offshore detention, introduced by the Rudd Labor government.

In 2013, Kevin Rudd was running scared of Tony Abbott's Liberal opposition, which was running its election campaign on stopping asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat. Labor is still running scared.

Many of the same people responsible for Labor implementing the worst aspects of offshore detention are now key players in the current Albanese government.

In August 2012, Anthony Albanese was a senior minister in Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard's government when Nauru and Manus Island offshore detention centres were reopened. Albanese was deputy to Kevin Rudd when he announced the PNG deal and the ban on refugees ever resettling in Australia a year later.

Tanya Plibersek, now Environment Minister, was the minister for health in both the Gillard and Rudd governments.

Chris Bowen, now Minister for Climate Change, was Immigration Minister under Gillard. Richard Marles, now deputy prime minister, was the Labor MP who Rudd relied on to negotiate the resettlement deal with PNG in 2013.

Tony Burke, now Minister for Employment, was the immigration minister who oversaw the PNG deal.

Albanese, who had strongly opposed turning back asylum boats at the Labor conference in 2015, subsequently back-flipped in 2018, as did Tanya Plibersek.

There will be another attempt to overturn Labor's support for offshore detention and turnbacks at Labor's national conference in August this year. Given Labor's record, no-one expects this attempt will be successful.

In any case, it is a fundamental flaw that Labor policy is not binding on Labor parliamentarians. It means that Labor parliamentarians can ignore their



Above: Refugees held on Manus and Nauru who are now in Australia protest outside Parliament House in Canberra last year

own rank and file, and ensure that the opinion of their membership or Labor voters is always subordinate to the whims of members of parliament.

So Labor in power has ignored Labor policy to abolish Scott Morrison's fast track refugee determination process that has seen 12,000 people rejected.

A lot of attention will be focussed on Andrew Giles, the left faction Labor MP who previously has voted to oppose both turnbacks and offshore detention. Giles is now Minister for Immigration in a government that already has a \$422 million contract with US company, MTC, to keep Nauru open and ensure that any future boat arrivals can be sent offshore.

The "Australian Solution" is the example that conservative British PM, Rishi Sunak, wants to emulate as he attempts to expel asylum seekers arriving in Britain by boat to Rwanda.

Stranded in PNG

With the last refugee being brought to Australia from Nauru, the refugee movement is now focussed on those still being held in PNG. Five refugees were transferred to New Zealand in early July, leaving around 77 with an uncertain future. Many of them are badly scarred physically and mentally from the torture they suffered on Ma-

nus Island. Around 16 of the refugees are too ill to engage with the UNHCR or any other refugee authorities and need urgent evacuation.

A number of the refugees who have been accepted for resettlement in Canada are being rejected at their final interview. Around 500 of those who were sent offshore have no secure resettlement future.

So far, Labor is refusing to transfer any of the refugees left in PNG to Australia, maintaining the Morrison line that PNG has sole responsibility for those that were dumped there.

But successive Labor and Liberal governments had also insisted that refugees on Nauru would never be brought to Australia. Although we still need to win the right of all the offshore refugees to settle permanently in Australia, relentless campaigning has brought them all off Nauru.

Labor oft-repeated glib slogan that it can be "hard on border protection without being weak on humanity", is a lie. Labor is weak on humanity.

The "Ten Years Too Bloody Long" protests around Australia marking the tenth anniversary of offshore detention are the kind of protests that can fight Labor's border protection policies, get everyone out of PNG, end offshore detention and win permanent visas for those rejected by fast track.

So far, Labor is refusing to transfer any of the refugees left in PNG to Australia

Solidarity