

Solidarity

Issue No. 189 / November 2024

\$3/\$5

BREAK THE US ALLIANCE

NO TO TRUMP

NO TO RACISM



QUEENSLAND

Labor election loss a warning for Albanese

LEBANON

Hezbollah and the history of resistance

CHINA

Rise and working class resistance

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

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Melbourne

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday
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Things they say

Granting upgrades has long been part of the commercial offering by airlines.
David Hawes, former Qantas government relations adviser

The biggest trading partner the US has ever and will ever have is China. Let's not forget that they butter each other's bread.

Andrew Forrest on Trump and China, hoping his iron ore exports will be safe

A Dutton Coalition government will be the best friend that the mining and resources sector in Australia will ever have.

Peter Dutton to a meeting of the Minerals Council of Australia

We are absolutely reliable suppliers. Australia has always been a reliable energy partner.

Anthony Albanese promises to keep fossil fuels flowing following a meeting with new Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba

Hezbollah and Hamas are paralysed temporarily and Iran is exposed. Right now, they're naked, they don't have the ability to protect themselves. Israel has the greatest opportunity in 50 years to change the face of the Middle East.

Former Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennett in the *Wall Street Journal*

Many members of staff have been part of the inefficiencies that the university is now seeking to address
ANU Chancellor Julie Bishop on why she thinks ANU staff should accept a pay cut

I don't think there's a left wing in the Labor Party. I think the left wing disappeared. I think the left wing died.

Former ACTU Secretary and Labor powerbroker Bill Kelty

We live in the greatest arms race in our region since 1945.

Pat Conroy, Defence Industry Minister, who is feeding the arms race through pouring billions of dollars into acquiring missiles and other weapons

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Surge in F-35 spare parts to Israel

ISRAEL HAS relied on a surge in spare parts for its F-35 fighters jets to keep up its lethal bombing raids in Gaza and Lebanon, experts have told *Middle East Eye*.

“Modern fighter jets rely on immense amounts of continuous maintenance,” a former US State Department official told the outlet.

“If you cut off the supply of spare parts, particularly on something like the F-35s, which relies on a global just-in-time delivery chain, it would very quickly become unflyable”.

A member of the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, Rob Wittman, said that the F-35 program had “moved at breakneck speed” to send more spare parts to Israel after October last year.

There are a number of components for the jets produced only by Australian companies. Parts manufactured in Australia for the F-35s are sent to a storage facility in the US for dispatch around the world—including to Israel.

The Guardian revealed separately in October that there are another 66 defence-related export permits for Israel that are still active. The Defence Department is now reviewing them to consider whether they are consistent with Australia’s international law obligations.

The government claims there have been no weapons or ammunition exports to Israel for five years, but has refused to disclose what the other export permits cover.

Billions more on missiles

THE FEDERAL Labor government will spend another \$7 billion to buy hundreds of long-range SM-2 IIC and SM-6 missiles.

The government boasts that they are, “the most advanced air and missile defence weapons in the world”.

More missile production is also planned in Australia, with Thales to produce 15,000 rounds of M795 artillery ammunition in Benalla every year by 2028, with capacity to ramp up production even further if it can be exported.

The government is also handing Lockheed Martin \$316 million to build a manufacturing plant to produce 4000 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMLRS) a year.

Trust in COVID lockdowns and mandates broken



LOCKDOWNS, VACCINE mandates and punitive COVID policies have shattered public trust in science and health measures.

The result will be long-term damage to public health and vaccination programs.

These were the findings of the official federal government COVID review, undertaken by public servant Robyn Kruk, epidemiologist Catherine Bennet and health economist Angela Jackson.

They found that one in five of the population would refuse to get a vaccine offered by the government in a future health emergency, and only three in ten had high levels of trust that the federal government had done the right thing during the pandemic.

Punitive “enforcement” measures such as COVID fines and lockdowns were inconsistent, poorly explained, and mandating measures, “had the biggest negative impact on trust and increased rejection of these measures”, they said.

They also hit people in some occupations and locations, as well as Indigenous people and migrant communities, harder.

Blue collar workers had to keep going to work during lockdown, were more likely to lose work, and suffered higher death rates.

The review found that, “broad opposition to vaccine mandates is one of the clearest findings from focus groups and surveys” it conducted.

Vaccine mandates “helped drive vaccine scepticism and hesitancy” and have produced “troubling declines in vaccination for COVID-19 and other diseases”, it said. In some areas of Queensland 20 per cent of children are reportedly not being vaccinated for polio.

Another damning finding was that “lockdowns have lost credibility with the Australian public”, particularly in Victoria. One reason was their inconsistent use between states, with curfews and blanket state-wide lockdowns imposed without any proper justification.

There was a continual failure to explain and educate the public about health measures, it found, feeding distrust and suspicion.

As a result, it said, “Many of the measures taken during COVID-19 are unlikely to be accepted by the population again”.

Mining boss in massive tax fraud

MINING BILLIONAIRE Chris Ellison ran a multi-million dollar tax evasion scheme lasting a decade, involving himself and four other founding directors of mining company Mineral Resources.

Ellison’s personal wealth was estimated at \$2.25 billion last year.

The scheme involved buying mining equipment through a company listed in tax haven the British Virgin Islands, then on-selling it at inflated prices to Mineral Resources.

The executives made almost \$7 million in profit that was not declared to the tax office.

The tax office eventually agreed to an 80 per cent reduction in penalties for Ellison and four others, in exchange for “voluntary disclosure” of the details of their tax evasion scheme. Ellison’s lawyer proposed the deal to the ATO when he feared the authorities were about to find out.

Astoundingly, as Neil Chenoweth revealed in the *Financial Review*, “The deal he proposed to the ATO contained an important condition: the tax office would never reveal its existence or its investigation to anyone including the Australian Federal Police or the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.”

Ten super accounts hold \$422 million

THE COUNTRY’S 100 biggest superannuation accounts held \$13.1 billion in assets in 2022-23, with the super-rich using them to avoid tax and hoard money for inheritances.

The top 42 self managed super funds took more than \$140 million in tax breaks that year, figures *The Financial Review* obtained show. The ten largest held an average of \$422 million in assets, or 2577 times more than the average superannuation balance.

Super contributions as well as investment earnings are taxed at a lower rate than other income. This is meant to allow workers to save for retirement but is being exploited by the rich.

The Albanese government wants to double the tax rate on super accounts worth over \$3 million. But this would still mean a tax discount.

EDITORIAL

Trump's return a warning as Labor fails on genocide and cost of living

DONALD TRUMP'S victory in the US Presidential elections will boost the right around the world.

Trump has ridden to power on the back of the Democrats' failures over the Gaza genocide, immigration and the cost of living. Any attempt by Trump to round up and deport any of the 11 million workers said not to have legal immigration status should be met with mass protests. And the Palestine movement needs to hit the streets and campuses again.

Trump's victory is a warning of how the right can feed off the misery of capitalism and the failure of left governments to offer any alternative. And there is a very real risk of the same scenario being repeated in Australia, as the Coalition inches ahead in the opinion polls.

Labor's loss to the LNP in Queensland is a warning that the Albanese Labor government could lose to Peter Dutton in 2025 for the same reasons—a cost-of-living crisis and a genocide in Gaza that is enabled by Australia's support for US imperialism with US spy bases and parts made in Australia for Israeli F-35 war planes.

Anthony Albanese likes to talk about his humble origins growing up in a housing commission house but he is now more likely to be found in the Qantas Chairman's Lounge rubbing shoulders with the super-rich.

Albanese is able to buy a \$4.3 million cliff-top home on NSW's Central Coast but millions of others he supposedly represent are left struggling with skyrocketing rents and mortgages.

Queensland Labor made a last-minute left turn, handing out 50 cent public transport fares, free school lunches, power bill rebates and funding for bulk-billing GPs. But it smacked of desperation and was all too late.

Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers is concerned to maintain Labor's credentials as responsible economic managers. He says there will be no spending spree in Labor's next budget, yet Labor is spending another \$7 billion buying missiles.

But federal Labor has learned something from its Queensland loss. Albanese is promising to wipe 20 per cent of student HECS debts and raise the repayment threshold if re-elected. And 100,000 TAFE places will remain free.

He claims the government's existing economic plan is working and that "the worst is behind us" as headline inflation starts to come down. But



Above: Trump's win will embolden every racist and right-winger

that is no comfort to people already locked out of the housing market and facing soaring grocery bills. Real wages have fallen to 2009 levels, yet the tax office has reported that around 1200 of Australia's large companies paid no tax in 2022-23.

Albanese and Labor are totally committed to managing Australian capitalism. The hope for system change lies in the fight outside parliament, building grassroots movements in the streets and workplaces.

A union fightback for real wage increases is desperately needed. The NSW nurses' campaign for a 15 per cent one-year wage rise would be a shot in the arm for the union movement.

Rank-and-file CFMEU members in Sydney have defied the government imposed administrator and called a strike against administration for 12 November. That's the kind of action, spread nation-wide, that can beat back Albanese and the bosses.

Israel expands genocide

Israel is relentlessly expanding its wars, bombing Iran again in what threatens to be an escalating exchange of missiles.

Its war crimes in Gaza have become even more brazen and obscene.

It is attempting to forcibly transfer of the whole population from the north as part of its strategy to defeat Hamas. All 400,000 people have been ordered to leave, while almost no food or medical aid has been allowed in since 5 October.

The remaining hospitals have been directly targeted and ambulances have no fuel. The injured are simply left to die.

And Israel continues to starve the whole of Gaza and continues to bomb Lebanon. The US has called declared the situation a "catastrophic humanitarian crisis".

In response Israel's parliament voted overwhelmingly to ban UNRWA, the main aid organisation for Palestinians.

Western nations like Australia and the US could stop the horror. Instead the Albanese government makes mild criticisms of Israel, but takes no action. We need sanctions now to put real pressure on Israel to end the killing. The government should expel the Israeli ambassador and cut all ties with Israel.

But the government and the mainstream media has stepped up the attacks and repression of the Palestinian movement. Protests for Palestine at universities have faced a renewed crackdown. Federal police are investigating protesters for carrying Hezbollah flags.

Most people want Israel to end its attacks on Gaza. But the movement has to go beyond the weekly rallies to build more seriously in wider layers of society.

Efforts to organise within the teachers' union, as well as university BDS campaigns to cut ties with Israel, show the possibilities of building a movement with the power to stop Israel's butchery.

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There is a real risk of the same scenario repeating in Australia, as the Coalition inches ahead in the polls

ANU faces fight against restructures and hundreds of job cuts

By Bea Tucker

MORE THAN 400 staff and students rallied on 16 October at ANU in defence of jobs and pay, marching to the Chancelry building and office of the Vice-Chancellor.

ANU has announced sweeping restructures and job cuts in response to large deficits. It aims to make cuts of \$250 million by 2026, \$100 million of it in cuts to staff jobs and salaries.

The NTEU estimates a total of 638 full-time equivalent jobs are threatened, with 137 jobs cuts announced so far.

Cuts are looming across the sector, triggered by the Labor government’s introduction of caps on the number of international students. The University of Canberra has also announced 200 job cuts.

Enrolling more international students has become a major source of income for universities in the face of declining government funding.

With ANU already running deficits, the loss of income due to the caps has pushed it over the edge.

The restructure will see the College of Health and Medicine abolished, cutting 50 administrative staff and amalgamating it into the College of Science.

The Fenner School of Environment is being moved to the new college of “Systems and Society”, which includes cybernetics, engineering and computer science and will house the new ANU Nuclear Systems engineering major created for AUKUS.

In recent years, ANU management has sought to become a small elite university, using slogans like “Teach less, better” to justify restructures and degree cuts to the College of Arts and Social Sciences in 2022.

The same language has been used by the new Vice-Chancellor, Genevieve Bell, who claims, “We will do less, but we will do it better.”

But these cuts will dramatically decrease students’ quality of education and staff teaching conditions, just as they did in 2022.

Staff at the protest agreed to vote No to the VC’s proposal to forego this year’s 2.6 per cent pay rise staff won in enterprise bargaining.

In 2020 during COVID staff agreed to forego a pay rise and ANU repaid staff by cutting more than 400 jobs.

The NTEU estimated 10 per cent of the ANU workforce was lost. Manage-



Above: Around 400 staff and students protest the cuts at ANU Photo: NTEU

ment’s aim of saving \$100 million in staff costs equates to cutting more than 12 per cent of today’s ANU workforce.

VC Genevieve Bell has claimed she is “doing her part” by taking a 10 per cent pay cut. But she will still earn over \$1 million a year.

ANU also just spent \$200 million on a physics building that will, in part, house the new AUKUS-aligned Nuclear Systems major and has just announced the creation of a new Defence Institute.

A union fightback is needed to

save jobs. In 2012 when the University of Sydney announced 340 job cuts, thousands protested, saving half the academic jobs.

In 2016, a 65-day occupation saved half the jobs and several studios threatened by the closure of Sydney College of the Arts.

Rank-and-file ANU staff need to push for a stronger fightback against the cuts and make it clear that they won’t be forced to bear the brunt of the mismanagement of the higher education sector.

Over 100 days fighting for permanent visas

ALMOST EXACTLY five years ago, then Immigration Minister Peter Dutton tried, and failed, to deport the Tamil family from Biloela to Sri Lanka. Last minute court action and airport protests forced the plane to land in Darwin. A week later the family was in the Christmas Island detention centre.

Tony Burke, who was a former immigration minister, forcefully declared that, “it was in the national interest for the family to stay in Australia”. Burke told *Sky News*, “You’ve got a town that says this family is good for our town in Biloela. You’ve got a business that says ‘I don’t want to lose my employee’. You don’t even need to get to compassionate arguments before you have a national interest case. That’s what there is right now.”

Today, scores (and sometimes hundreds) of such “national interest cases” can be found protesting outside the electorate office of Tony Burke, who is now Home Affairs

Minister. Wednesday 13 November will be the 100th day of the 24/7 Sydney protest.

Burke now has the power to grant permanent visas to the around 10,000 asylum seekers, who, just like the Tamil family, are all victims of the fast track process. Five years ago, Burke and the Labor party recognised the injustice. When Labor was elected in 2022, the Tamil family were granted permanent visas.

Labor finally abolished the fast track system in October. But Labor is yet to establish a pathway to permanent visas for its victims.

At Labor’s early federal election love-in in Adelaide, Anthony Albanese trotted out the same catchphrase he used on the election night in 2022. “No-one held back, and no-one left behind. This principle has guided me my whole life,” he proclaimed.

The phrase is meant to sound compassionate, but for 10,000 fast track victims it’s empty.

Ian Rintoul

.....
Staff at the protest agreed to vote No to the VC’s proposal to forego this year’s 2.6 per cent pay rise

Rank-and-file teachers step up for Palestine and Lebanon

By Chris Breen

TEACHERS AND School Staff for Palestine (TSS4P) from over 40 NSW schools, double the number involved in previous actions, held a successful week of action in solidarity with Palestine and Lebanon in late October.

Teachers wore keffiyeh (the Palestinian scarf), Palestinian badges and earrings into schools, held “Watermelon Wednesdays” and took group photos with signs demanding to end the genocide in Gaza, stop the bombing and sanction Israel.

Teachers and staff defied media attacks, and stood up to the emailed threat to all staff from the Education Department about possible breaches of the Code of Conduct.

After a year of genocide and Israel’s attack on Lebanon more schools responded to building work from TSS4P and were willing to take action. It also showed the anger in schools that is still to be tapped and mobilised.

The week of action went ahead without backing from the Teachers Federation. Official union support could have seen the Palestine solidarity action potentially spread to hundreds of schools. Such widespread action could have put real pressure on state and federal governments to end the repression in schools and stop arming, and politically defending, Israel.

However the spark lit by Teachers and School Staff for Palestine is making its way into local union structures. The Inner City Teachers Association is hosting an advertised Palestinian speaker at their next meeting on 26 November. Canterbury Bankstown Teachers Association is organising with the Palestinian Australians Welfare Association to call a fundraising dinner and film showing for Palestinian refugees at 6pm Wednesday 4 December, and a Fund schools not Genocide rally on Tuesday 10 December (Human Rights Day) outside Federal Education Minister Jason Clare’s office in Bankstown.

Nor is the rank-and-file union movement for Palestine abating in Victoria. More than 200 public sector workers rallied at state Parliament on 30 October to demand their employer, the Victorian government, break all ties with Israel.

Five AEU (Australian Education Union) regions endorsed the rally, as well as the Health and Community Services Union.



Above: One the teacher actions in NSW held during a week of action

More schools responded to building work from TSS4P and were willing to take action

NTEU commits to academic boycott of Israel

ON 5 October, the National Council of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) voted to endorse an institutional academic boycott of Israel.

The National Council includes more than 100 rank-and-file delegates elected from all NTEU branches. More than 90 per cent of delegates voted to support the motion.

The motion commits the union to boycott terms outlined by the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), including a prohibition on any forms of co-operation with Israeli academic institutions.

It also commits the NTEU to a campaign demanding university administrations end ties with Israel, along with cutting all ties “with the weapons industry and militaries in general”.

This vote was a major breakthrough for the pro-Palestine campaign on campuses and efforts to commit unions to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

Pro-Palestine activists in the NTEU have worked for more than a decade to build support for the academic boycott, with similar resolutions vigorously debated at previous National Council meetings. An influx of university workers into the movement during the current genocide in Gaza, and focussed rank-and-file organising, has transformed the debate.

NTEU branches across the country supported the student encampments earlier this year, helping to

build understanding of links between Australian universities and the genocide in Gaza and popularise the demand to cut campus ties.

In May, over 300 staff in an NTEU meeting at Sydney Uni voted to support the academic boycott. This was followed by similar resolutions at members meetings at Melbourne University, UNSW and UTS, along with the Tasmanian and ACT Divisions.

In September, a mass online meeting held by the rank-and-file group NTEU for Palestine endorsed the resolution to National Council, and called a National Day of Action on 23 October to press demands on university administrations.

As a result of the National Council motion, the NTEU promoted 23 October through emails to all members. Events were held at more than ten campuses.

At UTS, the biggest staff mobilisation since the genocide began joined with students for a lively rally.

After merging with a march from Sydney Uni, students led a brief occupation of the UTS Engineering building, demanding UTS break its partnership with the Israel Institute of Technology (Technion).

With strong union policy behind them, the challenge facing pro-Palestine staff on campuses is now to keep building momentum and take focussed action that can force universities to cut ties with Israel.

Paddy Gibson

Industrial action the key to ending CFMEU administration

By James Supple

CFMEU MEMBERS in NSW are set to strike on 12 November in protest at the Albanese government placing the CFMEU into administration.

It is a very welcome move to keep up the industrial campaign. But it is clear that the Building Industry Group of unions' legal campaign is overshadowing the industrial fight.

Despite widespread support among the rank-and-file who are outraged at Labor's takeover of the union, suggestions of a 72-hour strike in Victoria and a possible national strike on 30 October unfortunately came to nothing.

Now blue-collar unions, including the CFMEU, CEPU, plumbers and the MUA, are set to meet in Canberra on 9 December to hold a "Trade Unions for Democracy Summit" to discuss forming a breakaway union federation as an alternative to the ACTU.

The meeting coincides with the 10 December opening of the High Court action challenging the legality of Labor's administration regime that has strait-jacketed the CFMEU and removed officials from their elected positions.

The summit will also consider running "union political candidates" in the federal election against Labor.

There is widespread anger at the ACTU's collaboration with Labor's attack on the CFMEU. But it is not clear what an "alternative to the ACTU" would actually look like. It will be challenging, but there are good reasons to keep fighting inside the ACTU to win more unions to opposing administration.

What's needed is not just opposition to the ACTU and administration but a strategy based on militant industrial action, and a willingness to defy anti-strike laws to defend union organisation and end administration.

CFMEU officials are putting too much emphasis on the High Court challenge. This is a big mistake. The chances of winning in court are slim. And the government has already made it clear it will simply change the law again if the case succeeds.

A rally has been called for Canberra on 10 December, when the High Court hearing starts. This needs to be nationwide stopwork action.

The two national construction stopwork rallies in August and September rattled the government.



Above: CFMEU members stopwork rally in Melbourne in September Photo: ETU Victoria

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The two national construction stopwork rallies in August and September rattled the government

But the administrator and the government are just biding their time. The administrator stopped ACT CFMEU acting secretary Michael Hiscox from speaking to the media before the ACT election that Labor won in October.

Industrial Relations Minister Murray Watt has said, "It's still pretty early days in this administration process" that will run for "a minimum" of three years.

Watt is putting together a blueprint for construction industry reform in collaboration with construction bosses and compliant unions through the National Construction Industry Forum.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is also trawling for information to bring charges for coercion against union delegates and officials, announcing that it has 42 new investigations into the CFMEU running.

In Victoria, after unions secured a written assurance from the state's construction bosses association Master Builders Victoria that it supports the CFMEU EBA, the threatened three-day strike was called off.

But the Fair Work Commission is stalling on ratifying the agreements, looking for any evidence of union "coercion" to force employers into signing. The construction unions need to make it clear that if it starts rejecting agreements or continues to delay them, there will be a fight.

Victoria's rank-and-file Defend the CFMEU committee has argued for empowering delegates to hold site meetings to discuss industrial action aimed at ensuring building companies

sign the EBA. Action targeting individual companies, backed if necessary by industry-wide strikes, is needed.

Bosses' agenda

The construction bosses' agenda is clear. It is only a matter of time before they begin more serious attacks. Already there are indications that safety standards on sites are being ignored.

A letter from four construction employer organisations to Murray Watt, Minister for Employment, has exposed the real agenda behind the attack on the CFMEU.

In it, the employers thank Labor for putting the construction division of the union into administration—but make it clear that they want blood.

They call on the government to ban five clauses they object to from enterprise bargaining agreements. These include an attack on conditions by outlawing any union say over the "selection and use of contractors or mandate consultation about the use of such contractors".

They also want an end to clauses that require all subcontractors to be "engaged on terms no less favourable than the terms of the Head Contractor" (known as "jump-up" clauses).

The bosses are out to smash the "business as usual" approach to enterprise bargaining and weaken the union, and Labor is helping them.

The discussion we need at the 9 December summit, and on every job, is about how we mobilise the real industrial power that workers have to beat Labor and the bosses.

Last minute lurch left not enough to save Queensland Labor

By Mark Gillespie

LABOR HAS lost office in Queensland after nearly a decade. While early polling indicated an LNP landslide, Labor managed to avoid total humiliation—but still suffered a 7 per cent swing.

This is an ominous sign for Anthony Albanese's federal Labor government, which faces an election by May.

Underpinning this electoral disaster is the sharpest fall in living standards in generations.

People are hurting and were out to punish the government. The further from the relatively prosperous inner suburbs of Brisbane, the greater the swing against Labor. They lost traditionally safe seats in Rockhampton, Maryborough and Mackay with swings between 13 and 15 per cent.

Labor attempted to deal with their plunging popularity by changing leaders ten months before the election and moving sharply to the left.

In June they passed a budget full of cost-of-living discounts including rebates on electricity bills, reduced car registration costs, 50 cent public transport fares and vouchers for children's sport and recreational activities.

This was followed by promises to fund 50 new bulk-billing GP clinics, state-owned petrol stations and free school lunches for primary school students. These promises would be funded by taxing "big mining companies".

Labor also warned the LNP would initiate an "orgy of cutting, sacking and selling" like the previous LNP government.

The LNP, led by David Crisafulli, sought to make themselves as small a target as possible. They supported Labor's electricity rebates and the 50 cent public transport fares and said, "Anything that's in the budget is going to be honoured".

Crisafulli even refused to support nuclear power, one of federal Liberal leader Peter Dutton's centerpiece policies.

Only on the issue of abortion did Labor manage to get some traction. In 2018 Crisafulli and all but three LNP MPs voted against Labor's Termination of Pregnancy Act that decriminalised abortion. Crisafulli said rolling back abortion rights was "not part of our plan", but he refused to commit the LNP to a binding vote.

This created the potential that



Labor's cost of living measures like 50 cent public transport fares were too little, too late Photo: Queensland Labor

a private member's bill on abortion, introduced by the Katter Party, could pass. Crisafulli's mealy-mouth responses provided a glimpse of his real agenda.

The LNP campaigned hard on "youth crime" promising to introduce "adult time for adult crime". Youth crime rates have fallen by 50 per cent over the last 14 years, while Aboriginal kids are locked up in unprecedented numbers. But a racist campaign against Black youth in regional areas by the LNP and some media organisations has elevated the issue in state politics since 2022 and led to vigilante attacks.

Disgracefully, but typically, Labor's response has been to move to the right, twice overriding their own Human Rights Act to introduce draconian laws they boasted were the "toughest in the nation". But this only legitimised the LNP's fear campaign, allowing "youth crime" to remain a major election issue.

Vote buying and the Greens

Labor's sudden swing to the left, after nine years of middle-of-the-road conservative rule, was initially seen as desperate vote buying.

But the more people became concerned about Crisafulli's trustworthiness and the social conservatism of his MPs, the more Labor was able to roll back the LNP's lead. In the end it was too little, too late.

The Greens also suffered. Despite their claims that, "The Greens can win up to six seats ... and transform

politics forever," their vote went backwards in their target seats. They even lost South Brisbane, one of their two existing seats, to Labor.

Anthony Albanese's claims that The Greens had moved too far to the left or were punished for blocking Labor's agenda in parliament, however, don't ring true. Some left-wing voters instead shifted back to Labor out of fear of an LNP government.

While The Greens' vote didn't collapse there was no sign that working class voters were looking to them to solve the cost-of-living crisis.

The Greens remain very much confined to the inner city.

Crisafulli and the LNP are riding high but they have created an albatross for their own necks. Big business will demand budget restraint and the LNP can fulfil this only by reversing their election commitments.

Peter Dutton's plan for nuclear power will have an enormous hole in it unless he can convince Crisafulli to repeal the state's nuclear ban. The Katter Party will at some point put forward their regressive abortion bill and test Crisafulli and his rabidly socially conservative backbench.

Crisafulli is desperate to distance himself from the memory of the last Queensland LNP Premier Campbell Newman, who sacked 14,000 public servants and went on a privatisation binge.

But the Crisafulli government will be nasty and right-wing. The crucial question for workers is how we build a fighting alternative.

.....
The LNP, led by David Crisafulli, sought to make themselves as small a target as possible

Disasters in Spain and Florida a sign of growing climate chaos

By Maeve Larkins

LAST MONTH, Hurricane Helene and Milton ripped through Florida, killing 241 people and wiping out hundreds of billions in homes and infrastructure. A few weeks later, intense flash floods in Spain trapped thousands, killing more than 200.

These catastrophes are a sign of what's to come as scientists warn that climate-induced natural disasters are increasing in frequency and severity, as fossil fuel usage is propped up in the interest of militarisation and maintaining the profits of fossil fuel mega-corporations.

A recent "State of the Climate" report published by climate scientists paints a grim picture: the past year has been the world's hottest on record, and there has been no progress on transitioning away from fossil fuels. Instead, fossil fuel consumption has increased—coal use by 1.6 per cent, and oil by 2.5 per cent.

Our climate is already changing. Record-high ocean temperatures create the ideal conditions for more frequent and more intense hurricanes and storms, and at shorter notice.

Hurricanes can absorb heat from ocean water as they form, so that warmer waters provide more energy to the storm.

With waters in the Gulf of Mexico this year around 2 degrees hotter than usual, climate change has already made hurricanes 2.5 times more likely to develop.

Florida was first hit by Hurricane Helene, which formed, intensified, and hit land in just three days as a Category 4 hurricane.

It was one of the largest hurricanes ever to hit the US at around 640 kilometres wide, dropping 42 trillion gallons of water and wreaking havoc with wind speeds of 225 kilometres per hour. It saw 227 people killed, making Helene the second deadliest hurricane in US history.

Less than two weeks later, Florida was hit again by Hurricane Milton, which developed into a Category 5 hurricane in less than 12 hours, with wind speeds of 285 kilometres per hour. A further 14 were killed.

Six million people were placed under immediate evacuation orders, but many were not able to leave for economic reasons, such as lacking transportation, having disabilities, or requiring other supports.



Above: Flooding during Hurricane Milton Photo: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission/Flickr

Those that tried to leave were often stuck in huge traffic jams, with major highways clogged with cars for several hours.

Despite Florida's hurricane-prone location, the government of Florida under Republican Ron DeSantis has upheld a policy of climate denialism.

He has banned any teaching about the climate crisis in schools, passed a law which outlawed municipalities creating heat protection restrictions for workers, and even passed a bill to delete all reference to climate change in government documents.

Earlier this year, he legislated to remove all climate targets from state

statutes. He claimed the freak twin hurricanes had no connection to climate change, saying, "It is hurricane season. You are going to have tropical weather."

Here in Australia the Labor government may give lip service to the need for climate action, but are in reality approving more and more fossil fuel projects, and leaving it to the private sector to construct alternative renewable energy infrastructure.

To stop runaway climate change from making severe climate disasters a routine reality, we need an immediate just transition to 100 per cent renewable energy.

New study says offsets scheme a sham

MANY OF Australia's offset schemes remove almost no carbon from the atmosphere, a new study has found, despite claiming hundreds of million of dollars worth of credits.

The "Human Induced Regeneration" method supposedly stores carbon through encouraging increased tree and plant cover on areas previously cleared for farming.

But research into 116 such projects found there was no meaningful difference in regrowth between areas that were claiming offsets and other areas.

Practically all the regrowth that took place was due to rainfall. It is

the latest research from a team of ANU and UNSW academics led by Andrew McIntosh.

In total there are already 465 similar projects claiming offsets over a land area six times the size of Tasmania.

Offsets are at the centre of the Labor government's Safeguards Mechanism, its main policy to reduce the 28 per cent of the country's emissions that come from industry. It allows companies to buy their way out of cutting emissions—as well as the opening of new coal and gas projects.

This is further proof it's a fraud.

Record-high ocean temperatures create the ideal conditions for more frequent and more intense hurricanes and storms

Trump returns after Democrats back genocide and a rigged system

By James Supple

A RACIST far right figure with a history of extreme sexism will sit at the top of the world's most powerful country, after Donald Trump regained the US Presidency.

Trump won the popular vote as the Republicans took a clean sweep, also winning control of the US House of Representatives and the Senate.

His win is a product of Democratic candidate Kamala Harris's pro-corporate policies and support for genocide, and shows the disillusionment with the US political system.

After a disastrous pandemic, workers in the US have suffered the biggest fall in living standards since the 1930s.

More than half of Americans told a Gallup poll they are worse off today than four years ago, with prices up 20 per cent.

Kamala Harris and the Democrats had no solutions to the cost of living crisis, while many Americans remember Trump's term in office as a time when the economy was better.

But life has been getting harder for decades as a result of the neoliberal offensive.

Inequality in the US is already extreme and getting worse. The top 1 per cent take 21 per cent of income, more than double that of the bottom half of the country.

Large numbers of people are locked out of the housing market and struggle to afford essentials.

An AP poll showed that eight in ten voters wanted at least a "substantial change" in how the country is run—with one quarter saying they want "total upheaval".

Democrats' failure

Kamala Harris, Vice-President for the last three years, was seen as representing the continuation of Joe Biden's policies and the status quo.

Asked what she would have done differently to Biden, she said she couldn't think of anything—apart from wanting to put a Republican in her cabinet.

Instead of promising to deliver change, the Democrats chose to chase well-off Republican voters in the suburbs of major cities.

Harris avoided laying out any major policies to address the cost of living or take back wealth from the rich. Instead she paraded her endorse-



Above: Resistance on the streets is going to be needed to Trump's racism and bigotry Photo: Fibonacci Blue/Flickr

ment by Republicans like Liz Cheney as well as former generals and national security figures, and declared her support for anti-migrant border policies.

Harris was the candidate of war hawks and the Pentagon. She attacked Trump from the right over support for the war in Ukraine and US imperialism, allowing him to posture as a peace candidate.

She lost thousands of votes from Arab-Americans and supporters of Palestine over her backing for the Gaza genocide.

In Dearborn, an Arab-American majority suburb in the key swing state of Michigan, the Democrats' vote fell from 74 to 28 per cent.

But the result is not a sign that most Americans have embraced Trump's reactionary ideas—or that it's impossible to fight for change.

Some Arab-American voters backed Trump out of disgust at the Democrats or belief he couldn't be any worse. In Dearborn, Trump's vote climbed from 24 to 47 per cent. Another 21 per cent there backed Greens candidate Jill Stein, in an indication of how disaffection can also push people to the left.

The teamsters union declined to endorse the Democrats this time because many of their members were voting for Trump. But union members can be drawn into struggles to fight the priorities of corporations and the rich.

Racism

Trump sought to channel the anger over the cost of living and blame it on

immigrants and "liberal elites"—instead of the billionaires and bosses really responsible.

He promised to bring back jobs and "the American Dream", while linking his aim to "rescue our economy" to plans to "restore our borders" and deport immigrants.

His win will encourage racists and the far right everywhere.

But Trump is a billionaire backed by sections of big business who supports tax cuts for corporations and the rich and will deliver nothing for workers.

Trump's control of the US military makes the world even more dangerous.

It is even more reason to abandon the AUKUS nuclear submarines and the US alliance.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may feel even less restrained, after doing everything he could to help Trump get elected.

There needs to be a wave of resistance to everything Trump stands for. The Democrats' failure shows that the political mainstream is no block to racism and the far right. The alternative is building opposition from the grassroots through mass protest movements.

Recent strikes by wharfies on the east coast and a seven-week strike at Boeing are the latest signs of a new labour movement emerging in recent years.

These, together with the movement for Palestine, can be the beginnings of the fightback that is needed.

.....
Kamala Harris was seen as representing the continuation of Joe Biden's policies and the status quo

Sub-imperialist powers fuel the carnage in Sudan's civil war

By Adam Adelpour

SUDAN IS being ravaged by a civil war between the country's generals. Outside powers are feeding the conflict—but on this occasion it is mostly a struggle between sub-imperialist regional powers, not the world's biggest states.

Violence broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023.

Since then over 13 million people have been displaced, according to the International Organization for Migration. By September this year Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, estimated over 20,000 had been killed.

The war has seen large scale atrocities including mass rape and ethnically motivated killings that amount to war crimes, according to the UN. In total 25.6 million people are in need of humanitarian aid—more than half the population.

Both the SAF and the RSF shared the goal of suppressing the movement for democracy that exploded into revolution in late 2018, collaborating to crush the Sudanese revolution with a coup in 2021.

But they quickly turned against each other over the question of who will dominate Sudan, its people and its valuable resources.

Some of the latest atrocities have been in the central Gezira state, known as the “bread basket” of Sudan because of its rich agricultural land. The pro-democracy Wad Madani Resistance Committee reported that the RSF killed more than 124 civilians on 25 October.

The brutal battle for control is led by contending generals Abdel Fattah al-Burhan of the SAF and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemedi) from the RSF.

Each side is backed by a complex array of international supporters who funnel arms and support, fuelling the carnage.

An Amnesty International report found weapons and military equipment supplied by the UAE, Turkey, China and Russia have flooded the war zone. Enemies Ukraine and Russia are both providing training to the SAF.

Sudan is a rich prize for the outside powers vying for influence. The country contains huge amounts of gold, precious arable land and has a



An Iranian Mohajer-6 drone, supplied to the Sudanese Armed Forces Photo: Hadi Hirbodvash / Fars Media Corporation

strategic stretch of Red Sea coast-line close to the Suez canal.

In the past Russia's Wagner mercenary group has worked with the RSF, using them to protect gold mining operations run by the company in Sudan.

But Russia has now reportedly offered the SAF “unrestricted qualitative military aid” in exchange for allowing it to set up a naval base on the Red Sea.

But unlike Ukraine where there is a proxy war between major imperialist powers—Russia, the US and NATO—in Sudan some of the most serious foreign interference is by smaller regional powers.

Sub-imperialist powers

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is backing the RSF while Egypt and Saudi Arabia as well as Iran have thrown their support behind the SAF and provided weaponry.

A document sent to the UN Security Council in June indicated the UAE had armed the RSF with drones modified to drop controversial thermobaric bombs which are more devastating than conventional weapons.

The UAE's bloody arms trade is an extension of its quest for economic and strategic influence in Sudan. It has invested over \$9 billion in Sudan since 2018, including in major agricultural projects and a Red Sea Port. The UAE has also recruited and paid Sudanese fighters—mainly from the RSF—to fight in its brutal intervention in Yemen.

Egypt's military has a long-

term relationship with Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the official Sudanese army, with Sudan sitting on Egypt's southern border.

For Iran, supporting the dictatorial generals of the SAF helps contain the influence of Gulf rivals like UAE and increases its influence in Sudan and Africa.

Iran increasingly sees Africa as strategically important, a significant destination for its exports and as a source of uranium. Before his death in May Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi went on a tour of Africa to expand political and economic relations across the continent.

Between December and January the SAF began to deploy Iranian Mohajer-6 mid-range reconnaissance and combat drones against the RSF.

These drones have helped them successfully monitor RSF movements, target their positions and pinpoint artillery strikes.

The importance of these regional players in fuelling the conflict underlines the fact that imperialism isn't a game simply involving the world's most powerful states.

While the US uses its military might as well as economic and diplomatic interference to ruthlessly pursue its interests globally, mid-level powers play a similar game on a smaller scale in their own region.

The relative decline of US power goes hand in hand with the growing willingness of these sub-imperialist powers to throw their weight around. As with all imperialism, it is ordinary people who are paying the bloody price in Sudan.

In Sudan some of the most serious foreign interference is by smaller regional powers

As war spreads: Why hasn't the US restrained Israel?

By David Glanz

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden has spent the past 13 months tut-tutting over the death toll as Israel has committed genocide. But the flow of American weapons to the IDF has never stopped.

Regardless of the presidential election result, there's no indication that the US will back away from its support for Israel.

An *Al Jazeera* investigation has revealed that over the past year the US and Britain created an air bridge to Israel, with 120 cargo planes making more than 6000 trips, including hundreds of flights carrying weapons.

The US has made more than 100 military sales to Israel since the start of the genocide, including tank ammunition, components to make 155mm artillery shells, precision-guided munitions, small-diameter bombs, bunker busters and small arms.

In August, the US announced a further \$30 billion of weapons sales to Israel, including jets, missiles and mortar rounds.

And as the death toll in Gaza and Lebanon climbed, Biden last month reconfirmed "his ironclad commitment to Israel's security" in a conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Zionist lobby

Why is the US so determined to stand by Israel as it commits genocide in Gaza and bombs the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Iran?

For many people, it is because of the influence of the Zionist lobby in the US.

There's no question that Israel's supporters are well funded and influential. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee and others spent tens of millions of dollars in the recent election to support challengers running against candidates regarded as even partially pro-Palestine.

But to see the Zionist lobby as controlling US politics is to get things the wrong way round.

Pro-Israel lobbyists appear influential because the US sees Israel as an indispensable ally in a region of huge strategic importance.

The Middle East boasts 50 per cent of the world's oil supplies. In addition, 12 to 15 per cent of global trade, including 30 per cent of global container traffic, passes through the Suez Canal.



Joe Biden meets Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel
Photo: US Embassy

That's why the US has 40,000 soldiers and sailors in the region, with 19 military bases, eight of them permanent.

The US is self-sufficient in oil. But by dominating the Middle East it can control oil flows to both allies in Europe and rivals such as China, confirming its global dominance.

Israel does not always follow orders from Washington. The US was critical, for example, of the massive attack on Rafah earlier this year and the recent decision by the Netanyahu government to outlaw the UNRWA relief agency.

Netanyahu is openly contemptuous of Biden and clearly wanted Trump to win on 5 November.

But Israel's value to the White House is that it can carry out attacks that would be politically too risky for the US. If America were to bomb Iran, for instance, it would risk provoking Russia and China, both of which have drawn closer to Tehran.

So by backing Israel, the US can send a message to the Iranian regime—the major obstacle to total American domination of the region—while minimising the possibility of escalating the conflict.

The attacks on Lebanon fit the same mould—by attacking Hezbollah, Israel weakens the influence of Iran and benefits the US agenda.

The US has other allies in the region, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia. But only Israel, as a settler colonial state that is directly dependent

on the West, is guaranteed never to undergo an anti-imperialist revolution.

Narrow path

If there are tensions between the US and Israel, they come from America's concern that Israel's genocidal offensive might provoke unrest and potentially revolution in Arab countries.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has visited Israel 11 times in the past year to navigate the narrow path between smashing Iran's allies Hamas and Hezbollah and avoiding regional unrest.

Millions of Arabs stand in solidarity with Palestine, putting them at odds with leaders who collaborate with Israel and the US.

As Saudi ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, told Blinken in September, "Do I care personally about the Palestinian issue? I don't, but my people do."

Mass anger over Palestine can fuse with widespread discontent over falling living standards.

In Egypt, the dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi bans rallies for Palestine. At the same time he is imposing sharp cuts to fuel, bread and electricity subsidies in return for a \$11.8 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund.

Anger over the cuts and el-Sisi's backing of Israel can explode, challenging the hold of imperialism and its Israeli watchdog.

That is the nightmare for Netanyahu and the new US president. And the hope for Palestine.

To see the Zionist lobby as controlling US politics is to get things the wrong way round

ISRAEL'S BLOODY AGENDA IN LEBANON AND HEZBOLLAH'S RESISTANCE

Hezbollah emerged as a resistance movement to Israeli occupation and has humbled Israel before, but recent years have shown its limitations, argues **James Supple**

ISRAEL IS escalating its war in Lebanon, with brutal bombing raids on civilian areas leaving over 3000 dead and up to a million displaced.

As in Gaza it has deliberately bombed hospitals and targeted ambulance and relief workers, with more than 120 killed so far.

Israel has invaded and occupied Lebanon several times before, leaving thousands of civilians dead and enormous destruction in its wake. But it is also here that it has suffered its first major military defeats.

Israel's new war is an attempt to reverse its previous failures—in particular its humiliation at the hands of Hezbollah in the 2006 war.

Israel's political right sees southern Lebanon as territory that should eventually be part of a "Greater Israel", based on the same expansionist logic that has seen it install settlements in the West Bank. But its immediate aim is to crush resistance in Lebanon similar to its aims in Gaza.

More than 100,000 Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon during the Nakba in 1948 when Israel was created. By the 1970s, armed Palestinian resistance groups were a significant power in Lebanon, leading to Israeli intervention.

In 1982, Israel launched a devastating invasion, occupying part of Beirut and killing 14,000 Lebanese and Palestinians.

This included organising the massacre of up to 3500 Palestinian refugees—men, women and children—in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

It aimed to crush Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) fighters who were allied with left-wing groups in Lebanon, and to install the Christian Phalange leader Bashir Gemayel in power.

The Palestinian resistance, led by the PLO, was defeated, and forced to evacuate the country.

Israel continued to occupy south-

ern Lebanon for 18 years, arming a local militia group called the South Lebanese Army to help it impose control. It declared the area a "buffer zone" protecting Israel's northern border.

Hezbollah, the Party of God, emerged as an armed resistance movement against the occupation, based among the Shia Muslim population of southern Lebanon. It drew inspiration, as well as arms and training, from the Islamic regime in Iran that came to power following the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Hezbollah developed deep support among the Shia population, both through providing its own system of welfare, education and health services and through resisting Israel's occupation.

Israel occupied Lebanese villages and set out to punish the civilian population for attacks on its soldiers with overwhelming force.

In July 1993 it killed 118 civilians in a week of intense bombing. Then in August 1996 it launched another offensive, deliberately shelling a UN facility in Qana serving as a shelter for refugees, massacring 100 civilians.

But Hezbollah attacks kept increasing, killing more and more Israeli soldiers. In 2000 Israel was forced to withdraw from southern Lebanon.

As Israel control collapsed, thousands of Lebanese civilians marched on occupied villages, forcing Israeli and allied troops to flee.

Hezbollah's standing grew as a result of their victory, winning support across the whole Lebanese nation.

The 2006 war

In 2006 Israel invaded Lebanon again in an effort to crush Hezbollah. It again employed collective punishment of the civilian population to try to force them into submission.

Hezbollah emerged as an armed resistance movement against the Israeli occupation

Up to 1300 people were killed and civilian infrastructure including bridges, power stations, sewerage facilities and Beirut's airport were all targeted.

This became known as the "Dahiya doctrine" after the suburbs of southern Beirut that Israel carpet bombed—just as it is doing again today in its latest assault. The local Shia population were known as strong supporters of Hezbollah.

Israeli General Gadi Eisenkot pledged that the same targeting of civilians would "happen in every village from which Israel is fired on", with the aim of "harming the population" to turn them against Hezbollah.

Israel's aim was to kill, maim and terrorise as many civilians as possible, as a warning about the cost of continuing to resist.

But as Lebanese socialist Simon Assaf explained, in 2006, "Despite its savagery, it failed. Instead of intimidating the population, an unprecedented mass movement came to its aid."

The Shia population of south Beirut were welcomed and given shelter by Christian residents in other parts of the city.

The war ended in humiliation for Israel. It had boasted that its army would win a swift victory against Hezbollah's guerilla fighters. Instead, "A small band of irregulars kept at bay one of the world's most powerful armies for over a month, and inflicted remarkable losses on it," *The Guardian's* correspondent David Hirst wrote.

While Israel could bomb Lebanon with impunity, its ground invasion saw its troops falter. Resistance fighters successfully defended local villages, with 50 Israeli soldiers killed in one battle near the village of Aita al-Shabb where the resistance lost just 11 fighters.

Hezbollah's efforts were celebrated across the whole Middle East, inflicting Israel's first defeat in a major

war since the foundation of the state in 1948. In Lebanon they became national heroes.

This time around Israel has inflicted more severe damage on Hezbollah, assassinating its leader Hassan Nasrullah and other senior figures. Israel has had greater success than before in amassing intelligence on the group, seen in its brutal pager attack.

The damage to communities in Lebanon has also been severe. Yet Israel has also been cautious in sending its troops too far into Lebanon—and Hezbollah is far from defeated.

Class

Recent years have also shown Hezbollah's political shortcomings. Hezbollah draws funding for its social programs and its weapons from the regimes in Syria and Iran.

This saw Hezbollah send thousands of fighters into Syria against the 2011 popular uprising to defend the dictatorship of Bashar Al-Assad. Like Hezbollah, the Syrian regime is aligned with Iran and its so-called "axis of resistance".

This shows how Hezbollah is tied into promoting the interests of the ruling classes in Iran and Syria at the expense of ordinary people and any consistent struggle against imperialism.

It has also developed increasing links with wealthy Lebanese Shia donors from inside the country and overseas.

Lebanon is deeply divided along religious and sectarian lines as a result of the political system imposed under French colonial rule in the 1920s. This sees elites among the rival communities—in particular Christians, Sunni and Shia Muslims—compete to parcel out state funding and jobs.

Instead of challenging the sectarian system Hezbollah has helped to entrench it. Since 2005 it has had ministers in several governments and supported waves of austerity measures.

As Assaf puts it, "By joining the government and making political concessions, Hezbollah's ability to address social and economic questions was constrained, diminishing its potential to become a voice of the poor and to challenge sectarian politicians."

Several times in recent years workers and ordinary people in Lebanon have staged strikes and mass movements to fight against poverty and neoliberalism—with Hezbollah on the wrong side.

In 2012 electricity workers went on strike for 94 days to demand permanent jobs and an end to temporary



Above: Israel's bombing of residential areas in Beirut and across Lebanon has killed thousands

Photo: Sally Hayden/
SOPA Images via
ZUMA Press Wire

contracts. In 2013 and 2014 teachers took weeks of strike action to demand pay rises.

In 2019 Lebanon exploded in its "October revolution", after the government tried to impose a tax on WhatsApp calls.

This was a mass movement that spread across the country, uniting ordinary people across sectarian divisions against the country's elites, branding "All of them" responsible for the country's crippling economic crisis.

Weeks of road blockades and strikes forced the prime minister to resign and the dumping of the new tax.

But Hezbollah was part of the government and opposed the protests, even beating up protesters, burning down tents and trashing cars.

The revolt showed how class

struggle can break down Lebanon's sectarian divide and win gains for workers and the poor. The struggle points to a strategy of resistance that goes beyond Hezbollah's limitations.

The country remains in a severe economic crisis following a currency and debt crisis, with about 80 per cent of the population below the poverty line. But there are still six billionaires with a combined wealth of \$11.8 billion.

Israel won't break Lebanon's resistance, but Hezbollah's missiles cannot defeat Israel militarily.

Resistance to imperialism and Israel's total war has to be a project of revolution in Lebanon and the region.

Socialist politics based on building the struggle from below is the way to both fight poverty and imperialism.

Supporting Hezbollah is no crime

HEZBOLLAH'S LISTING as a terrorist organisation by the Australian government is an act of gross hypocrisy. It means the display of Hezbollah symbols and flags carries the risk of arrest. Police in Sydney have charged a 19-year-old woman with waving a Hezbollah flag at a rally in October.

Israel's terror has murdered as many as 200,000 Palestinians in Gaza and thousands more in Lebanon, yet there is no sanction on waving Israeli flags or raising funds for Israel.

Australian citizens are even allowed to travel and fight with the Is-

raeli Defence Forces as they carry out systematic and repeated war crimes. Anthony Albanese describes Israel as "our friend".

Hezbollah should be removed from the terrorist list. It is being demonised simply because it opposes US imperialism and Israel's occupation of Palestine. But it is a mass political force in Lebanon representing the Shia population, with 15 seats in parliament and ministers in previous governments.

In the face of Israel's invasion and ruthless bombing of Lebanon, Hezbollah and the Lebanese population have a right to resist.

THE US WORKING CLASS— A HISTORY OF RADICALISM AND RESISTANCE

Far from any natural conservatism, ordinary people in the US have a history of bitter and explosive struggles against exploitation and racism, writes **Jacob Starling**

TRUMP'S VICTORY in the US election has seen many people conclude that the US population is fundamentally right-wing—comfortable with his appalling sexism, racism and contempt for democracy.

This echoes the response to Hillary Clinton's loss in the 2016 election, when many on the left claimed that the American people were simply too conservative to support a woman as president. This time some are saying the same thing about Kamala Harris.

Yet the Democrats' overwhelmingly pro-business campaign presented no real alternative for a population ravaged by neoliberalism and the soaring cost of living.

Kamala Harris ran as the defender of the political system, aiming to peel off so-called "moderate" Republicans from Trump's coalition. She flaunted endorsements from Republicans like Liz Cheney, pledged to include Republicans in her cabinet, and adopted Trump's anti-immigration policies.

Yet large numbers of Americans are simply fed up with the political system—with 62 per cent saying the government mostly works to benefit itself and elites and just under six in ten calling for major changes or the tearing down of the whole political and economic system, in a *New York Times* poll ahead of the election.

Most elections around 40 per cent of the population do not bother to vote at all.

Many on the left think that the American worker has been bought off by the creature comforts of consumer capitalism and is no longer capable of resisting exploitation.

However, these assumptions ignore the radical history of the US working class, which at times has led the world in strikes and workers' revolt.

While the past few decades of the neoliberal era have seen the working class suffer a series of defeats, there

is no reason why this radical tradition cannot reemerge.

The Early 20th Century

At the turn of the 20th century, the working class in the US was divided between skilled, mostly native-born, and unskilled, mostly immigrant, workers. Unions, organised in the American Federation of Labour (AFL), refused to admit anyone but skilled workers. They were led by the reactionary Samuel Gompers, who actively discriminated against Black and women workers and argued that immigrant workers were an unorganisable rabble.

This was a disastrous policy, reinforcing divisions within the working class and actively impeding labour organisation and class consciousness. Native workers were encouraged to see immigrants as their primary enemy, driving down wages and conditions, rather than uniting with them to fight the bosses.

However, the AFL was proven wrong by the outbreak of a massive wave of strikes among immigrant workers. In 1909, 60,000 women garment workers in New York, dominated by immigrants, struck against sweatshop conditions and pervasive sexual harassment from foremen.

This strike would become the inspiration for International Women's Day. The success of the strike inspired further industrial action across America, often under the leadership of revolutionaries in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the Socialist Party.

In 1912, 25,000 textile workers from 25 different nationalities struck against wage cuts in Lawrence, Massachusetts. For ten weeks, workers resisted state violence. When the state militia were called in to attack the children of the striking workers, a nationwide protest movement erupted, forcing the bosses to raise wages

The strike wave reached a high point in 1937, as auto workers led a wave of factory occupations

across the textile industry.

Alongside these struggles the Socialist Party grew dramatically, reaching a peak of 120,000 members. In the 1920 election, their presidential candidate, Eugene Debs, ran from prison and won just under a million votes.

During the First World War, hundreds of thousands of workers built a grassroots movement against the war, in defiance of the Espionage Act and repression from the AFL bureaucracy. However, the wave of radical working class action faced a vicious counter-attack from the employers and the government.

In September 1919, when 400,000 steel workers across ten states walked out of the mills, the government responded with devastating violence. Meetings were outlawed, martial law was declared in Gary, Indiana, and the police murdered 26 unionists in Pennsylvania.

By January 1920, after holding out courageously through months of struggle, the strike finally collapsed. What followed was a coordinated employers' offensive and a government-sponsored Red Scare campaign, rolling back the rights of all workers, skilled and unskilled. The result was a decade in the wilderness for the labour movement, as the US economy boomed.

Workers in the 1930s

The Great Depression that began in 1929 savaged workers in the US, with a quarter of the workforce unemployed. Those who kept their jobs faced massive pay cuts.

In the face of economic catastrophe, a section of the ruling class argued that state intervention in the economy was necessary to preserve capitalism. Franklin Roosevelt was elected President in 1932 and introduced the New Deal, providing unemployment benefits and relief work

constructing government projects. However, these were minor measures given the scale of the ruination of the Depression years.

Importantly, Roosevelt's package also included a law that appeared to guarantee workers the right to join a union. This was not intended to have much effect. But it triggered "a virtual uprising of workers for union membership", according to the AFL.

Hundreds of strikes broke out. However, it was not until the following year that workers made a decisive breakthrough. In 1934, massive strikes erupted across the country. In three decisive strike campaigns, in Minneapolis, Toledo and San Francisco, socialist leadership played a crucial role in securing victory.

In Minneapolis, a handful of union militants set out to unionise the trucking industry, with Trotskyists playing a central role in the organisation of the struggle. In a series of well-prepared strikes, workers organised the distribution of food and medical supplies to sustain strikers.

The "teamster rebellion" saw the union forced into a situation of virtual civil war across the city. When the employers organised violent attacks on picketlines, union members formed their own militia armed with clubs to defend them.

Workers defeated 1500 police and special deputies in a pitched battle, who were driven off in an episode that became known as the Battle of Deputies Run.

The strikes of 1934 led to union recognition and collective bargaining rights across the board but were only won through defying the conservative AFL leadership. The failure of the AFL bureaucrats led to a split, and the formation of the Congress of Industrial Unions (CIO), dedicated to unionising workers into single unions across each industry.

The strike wave reached a high point in 1936-37, as auto workers led a wave of factory occupations, called "sit-down strikes". In 1937 alone there were 477 sit-down strikes that involved half a million workers. One such sit-down in Flint, Michigan spread across General Motors plants nationwide, involving 40,000 strikers and winning union recognition across the company.

By 1941, a third of the US workforce was unionised. However, the momentum was broken by vicious repression from the employers that inflicted a series of defeats. The AFL also collaborated with employers to denounce the CIO as Communist-



controlled.

During the Second World War, the CIO and the AFL both shamefully agreed to a no-strike pledge. This capitulation left the labour movement exposed to the systematic purging of radicals during the years of McCarthyism and Cold War anti-Communism. By the advent of the 1960s, socialist politics had been forcibly dispelled from the unions.

The 1960s revolt

In the 1960s, massive social movements again shook the US ruling class, the biggest of which were the campaigns for Black civil rights, and the campaign against the Vietnam War.

The civil rights movement, initially dominated by moderate leaders like Martin Luther King, gave rise to an explicitly anti-capitalist struggle as it ran up against the grim reality of state repression and began to confront the need for economic justice.

As the Black Power movement spread its roots across the cities of the US, the ghettos rose up in rebellion. After the assassination of Martin Luther King, rioting broke out in 100 cities as residents clashed with the police.

The Black Panther Party, founded in 1966, advocated for armed resistance against the racist violence of the police. It quickly developed mass support among young Black people.

In Detroit, one group of Black revolutionaries began organising workers in the car factories, staging successful wildcat strikes against speeds ups and discrimination, until an increase in unemployment during recession strengthened the employers'

Above: Sit down strikers guarding the Fisher body plant number three in 1937 Photo: U.S. Department of Agriculture

hands.

By the end of the 1960s, the campuses had become a battleground in the anti-war campaign. When Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was founded in 1961, it had about 300 dues-paying members. By the end of the decade, it had anywhere between 30,000 and 100,000. The teach-in movement on campuses sparked fierce debate about the justification of the Vietnam War, radicalising thousands of students. The biggest, at UC Berkeley in 1965, had 30,000 students in attendance.

Waves of mass demonstrations followed. In the face of violent state repression, the movement only grew more militant and spread further.

In 1970, the Ohio National Guard shot dead four student protesters at Kent State University, prompting an immediate and overwhelming groundswell of protest nationwide. Four million students, from 350 universities, went on strike within days. Such massive defiance ultimately made the Vietnam War unsustainable for the government.

The neoliberal era has seen a sustained attack on wages and the erosion of trade union power. This has produced ballooning inequality and deep bitterness within the working class.

But there is a strong tradition of resistance from below in the US. By studying the successes and failures of this tradition, we can learn lessons for the rebuilding of working class strength today.

It is a mistake to write off the US working class as reactionary and assume that struggle cannot erupt again. The tasks of socialists must be to rebuild this radical tradition.

CHINA'S RISE AND WORKERS' RESISTANCE

Griffin Phillips reviews a new book that charts China's emergence as an economic power, the growth of an immense working class and the likely turmoil ahead

IT HAS always been important for socialists to understand China but there is added urgency today as the Australian government openly prepares for war against China if US-led efforts to contain it fail.

Our rulers want us to believe that this is a contest between democratic states and a “totalitarian regime” that seeks to dominate the region. The past year in Gaza has shown us in graphic detail what all that talk about “freedom”, “human rights” and “the rules-based international order” actually amounts to.

Most ordinary people do not want war with China, but neither do they want Xi Jinping-style authoritarianism to spread. The fundamental problem here is that too few see any realistic hope of an alternative emerging from within China itself.

That's why Adrian Budd's new book, *China: Rise, Repression and Resistance*, is so important. It shows that China's economic and political system are much more like those in the US and Australia than either regime wants to admit.

The most important consequence of China's rise has been the creation of the largest industrial working class in the world—workers who have protested, organised, gone on strike and rioted in defence of their wages, living conditions and rights as human beings.

It is in their hands that the future of China lies.

Economic development

Budd first sets out to establish that the People's Republic of China is, and always has been, capitalist—not socialist nor communist in any way.

Why does this matter? Because, on both sides of this vicious competition the economy is controlled by billionaires and gigantic corporations.

China has 124 corporations in the Fortune magazine Global 500; the USA 121. At last count, China had 814 billionaires; the USA 800. In 2010 in China, the richest 1 per cent owned 41 per cent of total wealth; in the USA

it was 40 per cent—and inequality in both is getting worse.

Budd enables us to see the ways that Chinese capitalism is both similar to, and different from, Western capitalism.

He argues—as *Solidarity* always has—that the Maoist regime that triumphed in the revolution of 1949 was a form of capitalism, state capitalism, in which the labour of workers and peasants was directly exploited by the state in the hope of catching up with the rich countries of the West. The result was economic development punctuated by extreme crises.

After the chaos of the Cultural Revolution the Chinese leadership turned towards “reform and opening up”.

This was the Chinese version of neoliberalism, starting with the dismantling of rural communes, allowing township enterprises and deregulating and decentralising much of the economy. They also experimented with free trade zones in a few coastal areas that gave foreign capitalists access to low waged labour, virtually untaxed.

The success of all these led to the privatisation and restructuring of most state-owned enterprises (SOEs), costing 45 million workers their jobs. While SOEs are still central to the economy, private capital is now responsible for 60 per cent of GDP and 90 per cent of exports.

The prize for all these “reforms” was membership of the World Trade Organisation, which gave China's exporters access to global markets for goods they could produce cheaper than anyone else. Foreign capital flooded in, turbo-charging growth. In 1978, China accounted for just 1 per cent of global GDP; today it's 18 per cent. It produces 32 per cent of all manufactured goods in the world, double the US and five times Japan.

This success was built on the back of extreme levels of exploitation. From 1983-2005, the share of national output going to wages fell from 57 per cent to 37 per cent. This allowed

the ruling class to accumulate capital at an extraordinary rate—double the average in Western economies—allowing vast investments in new means of production.

A new working class

That economic dynamism required labour. Hundreds of millions of people from poor farming villages were drawn to work in the cities. The urban population quadrupled.

People moved because wages and living conditions in the cities were better than in the villages but the work regimes they faced were relentless. In the early 2000s, three quarters of migrants worked seven days a week and 100,000 workers a year were killed at work.

So from the 1990s on, this massive new working class began to fight back. Official figures show mass protests rising from 10,000 in 1993 to 60,000 a decade later. Police violence failed to contain the unrest and by 2007 there were 360,000 strikes and double that the following year, especially in the automobile, textile and electronics industries.

Many strikers won their demands quickly and this forced local authorities to double minimum wage rates. But as Budd argues, “The greatest impact was on the workers themselves, who demonstrated not only determination but also a growing, though still limited capacity to act independently of the official trade unions” which are directly controlled by the ruling Communist Party.

It was also clear that “embryonic plant-level rank-and-file organisation was developing”. This was assisted by the rapid growth of pro-worker NGOs which gave workers advice about their legal rights.

One highpoint was the massive 2014 strike at the sprawling YueYuen footwear factory complex in Dongguan, southern China, which produced for global brands such as Nike and Adidas. Forty thousand workers, largely women, came out over the fail-

ure of the business to pay their social security contributions. After confrontations with police and many arrests, the company paid up and raised wages as well.

These victories threw up a layer of self-conscious worker-militants who saw Chinese society as fundamentally divided by class. They assisted workers in other factories and advised them on how to wage a successful strike. The possibility of a future, mass revolutionary leadership grounded in the Chinese working class was clear.

For ordinary workers, the experience of China's boom has been extremely mixed. On the one hand, their militancy has forced a historic rise in incomes. Average annual wages in China rose from less than 4 per cent of those in the US in 2001 to around 30 per cent by 2021; nearly eight times as much in less than a generation. The fact that everyday goods are so much cheaper than in the West means that the gap in living standards is much narrower.

The purchasing power of 2000 yuan per month, about the average legal minimum wage, is only some 20 per cent less than that of the federal minimum wage in the US.

This is important in understanding one aspect of both the strength and vulnerability of the CCP. Many Chinese give great credit to the regime for China's rise and improved living standards. But young people have no memory of life in 2010, much less 1949. They expect further improvement but falling growth rates and the current crisis of overproduction mean the system is less and less able to deliver.

They still face appalling working conditions—996 work culture (9am to 9pm, six days a week); lack of job security, non-payment or underpayment of wages and promised bonuses; wages linked to revenue (in hospitals, for example); the use of ultra-low-waged fake intern positions for factory work, lack of health care and compensation when injured.

All this is driving high levels of alienation and discontent among young people.

The strike wave of the mid-2010s ended in repression but strikes and protests have continued. In 2022, a walkout by some 200,000 workers at the Foxconn plant in Zhengzhou against COVID restrictions, along with small but brave “White Paper” protests across China, created panic in the regime. It suddenly reversed course and opened up.

All this shows that the regime is



Above: Workers at a toy factory in Tangxia, China
Photo: DCMaster/
Flickr

far from the all-powerful, totalitarian monolith portrayed in the West.

Chinese capitalism

One important element of weakness in the regime stems from decisions from the 1980s to decentralise government power.

Provincial and local officials were given virtually free rein to compete for investment, labour and infrastructure, and to decide for themselves how to subsidise and regulate business in their regions. One academic calls the system “one country, thirty-two economies”—the number of provincial and quasi-provincial governments.

Budd describes the way, “Many collective enterprises are owned and run by capitalists, while many private enterprises are spun off of state properties owned and run by cadres or their kin”, amid “a constant migration of party and state officials into the private sector”.

The central state still plays a major role but it is much the same kind of role we see in Western economies; top level regulation, subsidising strategic industries, fiscal and monetary policy. It also controls many major enterprises and the largest banks, just as many Western states did before neoliberalism, but as in the West, capitalism is driven by its own logic—“the private interests of capitalists and local bureaucrats frequently combine to thwart the central state”.

The authoritarianism of the Xi

regime is an attempt to partially re-centralise power and deal with a range of these economic and social stresses. They're thrashing around trying to revive a sluggish economy as liberal critics demand more rights for private capitalists, capitalists demand large-scale stimulus and nationalists demand no retreat from state ownership.

With childbirth numbers collapsing, local officials are ringing women to ask if they're planning to get pregnant. Their efforts are being openly ridiculed online.

The regime's answer to its problems is to demand sacrifice. It resisted any substantial improvement in welfare, meaning that hundreds of millions of older people still live in terrible poverty.

At some point the Chinese working class will need to move from conflict with individual employers to confrontation with the regime as a whole. The outcome of that struggle will have a huge impact on the future of us all.

Here in Australia we can play a role—by rejecting anti-Chinese protectionism, fighting everywhere against AUKUS and the drive to war, by taking any opportunity to offer solidarity with workers' struggles in China. We need to build a movement that shows Chinese workers that we know that Albanese and Dutton, Harris and Trump are our enemies as well as theirs; that their struggles are our struggles too.

China: Rise, Repression, Resistance
By Adrian Budd, Bookmarks
2024, \$25

NEW ATTACKS ON PALESTINE PROTESTS AT UNIS

By Luke Ottavi

UNIVERSITIES ARE cracking down on Palestine activism in a blatant attack on free speech and the right to protest. This is a desperate attempt to cover for their complicity in Israel's genocide of Palestinians.

In October, Western Sydney University (WSU) called the police onto campus when students held a sit-in for Palestine. Three WSU students were arrested and charged.

UTS has sought to ban meetings on Palestine. In October management banned a UTS academic from speaking on campus on "Gaza: a health system in crisis". Instead, he spoke over Zoom while students and staff occupied the room where it was meant to take place, with 70 others joining online.

Students were also told to stop leafleting for a Palestine rally, and warned that all leaflets handed out on campus required approval. Security later backed down following a letter from the NTEU and the Student Association.

Similarly, at RMIT, university management has announced plans to ban room bookings for "protests or related activities" that they think may damage RMIT's reputation.

At ANU, management has introduced an extensive policy restricting where students can put up posters.

Students found to have broken the policy could face disciplinary proceedings, or the defunding or disaffiliation of the university club responsible.

Ridiculously, ANU is demanding two weeks' notice if students want to display the Palestinian flag or a protest banner for Palestine on campus, with approval from the Director of Facilities and Services Division required.

At UNSW, Students for Palestine have had their club suspended on the bogus grounds that a banner drop didn't prioritise the "psycho-social safety" of students.

Slander

University managements have tried to justify these attacks by slandering the Palestine movement as antisemitic, and claiming they are making campuses free from discrimination and harassment.



Above: Students protest ties to Israel at UTS on the national day of action on 23 October Photo: Solidarity

University managements have tried to slander the Palestine movement as antisemitic

But there is nothing antisemitic about the university protests for Palestine. Israel's disregard for Palestinian lives and international law has become more and more blatant.

The university bosses are echoing dishonest claims from supporters of Israel that are an attempt to silence opposition to its crimes. The latest crackdown follows a Senate inquiry into "antisemitism" on campuses which saw Vice-Chancellors grilled by Israel's most ardent supporters in parliament.

At the inquiry, Sydney University (USyd) Vice Chancellor Mark Scott apologised to Jewish staff and students for failing to handle the Palestine encampment and protests in a way that satisfied hardline Zionists.

Incoming Chancellor David Thodey has promised to "do more" to silence Palestine protests on campus.

USyd management have since threatened students with suspensions for their role in organising protests.

Sydney University was one of the first to enact a raft of anti-protest rules in the wake of the Gaza solidarity encampments around the country.

Its now notorious Campus Access Policy (CAP) demands that students notify management 72 hours in advance of any protest, and seek permission to use any amplification, including megaphones or sound systems.

In October, USyd removed a bake sale from campus that was raising

funds for a Palestinian family surviving the genocide in Gaza, because it contravened the CAP.

At Melbourne University, students who occupied the office of an academic who runs a PhD exchange program with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJ) have also been smeared as antisemitic and threatened with suspension and disciplinary action.

Students have been accused of targeting academic Steven Praver because he is Jewish. But the reason for targeting the PhD exchange is because the HUJ—like all Israeli universities—is deeply complicit in maintaining Israel's apartheid system. The HUJ helps train IDF officers who are committing war crimes in Gaza. It is partially built on illegally occupied Palestinian land in East Jerusalem.

Students rightly targeted the exchange program because it helps to whitewash Israel's war crimes and normalise Israel as an apartheid state. The university's refusal to cut the program makes it complicit in genocide.

University bosses and politicians like Prime Minister Anthony Albanese are intentionally conflating criticisms of Israel with antisemitism in a desperate attempt to justify their continued support for apartheid Israel.

We need to continue organising for Palestine and demand our universities and governments cut ties, and end their attack on the right to protest.

Solidarity