

Solidarity

Issue No. 190 / December 2024

\$3/\$5

GUILTY OF GENOCIDE



ARREST **ALL** THESE WAR CRIMINALS

LEBANON

Ceasefire no sign
Israel wants peace

TRUMP

Why he won and what
it means for the left

WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

Why blaming men won't
solve the crisis

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
Kathleen Syme library and community
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Things they say

Don't you just love the saying 'drill baby drill'?

Gina Rinehart, channelling Donald Trump at the National Mining and Related Industries Day, hosted by Santos.

Corporate profits are essential to investment and enabling higher living standards.

Hancock Prospecting chief executive, Gerhad Veldsman, explaining the \$2.8 billion boost to Gina Rinehart's living standards from her Roy Hill mine in WA.

I reiterated the West Australian government's point of view about the Nature Positive laws in their current form should not be progressed

WA Labor Premier Roger Cook on why Albanese dumped the laws, giving the mining industry what they wanted

No one is returning to the northern part... We received very clear orders. My task is to create a cleansing of the area.

Division Commander Itzik Cohen, commander of Division 162 operating in northern Gaza

It's possible to create a situation in which Gaza will have less than half its current population within two years.

Far right Israeli Finance Minister Beza-lel Smotrich

The amount we get from government is much less than 50 per cent of our income. The idea we should be regarded as public servants in some sense is kind of crazy.

Duncan Maskell, Australia's highest-paid university boss, who took home about \$1.45 million last year, on why corporate-style salaries at universities are ok

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Trump will let Israel off the leash

DONALD TRUMP masqueraded as a peace candidate during his campaign for President. But he has already made it clear how strongly he backs Israel, threatening there would be “hell to pay” if Israeli hostages were not released before his inauguration on 20 January.

Trump has reportedly told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu he wants a ceasefire by then, but is not opposed to ongoing “residual” Israeli military action. But he also backs Israel’s war, saying they should “finish the job” and criticising Biden for trying to set limits on Israeli actions.

Trump’s appointments also show his extreme pro-Israel bias.

His pick for Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, is a Christian Zionist who said in 2017 about illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, “There’s no such thing as a settlement. They’re communities, they’re neighbourhoods, they’re cities. There’s no such thing as an occupation.”

He later claimed, “there’s really no such thing as a Palestinian”.

Netanyahu and his government expect Trump will give them whatever they want, following his last administration where he recognised Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, cut funds to UNRWA, and recognised its illegal annexation of the Golan Heights.

Bezalel Smotrich, the far right Israeli minister who oversees the settlements said, “Trump’s victory brings an important opportunity for the state of Israel... we were on the verge of applying sovereignty over the settlements” and the West Bank during his last term in office. “Now, the time has come to make it a reality.”

Trump also shares Netanyahu’s aggression towards Iran, nearly sparking war while he was President last time by assassinating Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani.

Trump won’t bring peace in Palestine.

Indigenous cop slams racist police

A FORMER Indigenous police officer has told the ABC that racism is rife within NSW police—and is driving the massive over-imprisonment of Indigenous people.

Gomeri man Steve Bartholomew left NSW police after nine years, saying he faced constant racism in the job.

“It goes from the highest ranks down to the lowest ranks in the cops,” he said.

“I believe it’s a racist organisation, they’ll say we’ve done cultural awareness training but it’s all garbage. The racial profiling is out of control and that’s why I believe incarceration rates are as high as they are.”

Bartholomew was part of an Indigenous recruitment program meant to repair the police’s image with Indigenous people. But he said other officers repeatedly questioned his loyalty and made racist comments about the community he came from, “They started talking about letting all the blackfellas ... drink it out and fight until the death and the last one gets shot as a prize.”

No action was taken to discipline police over the racism, he said.

Government refuses to provide safe drinking water in NT community

THE NT government is arguing it has no responsibility to provide clean drinking water to residents in the remote Indigenous community of Laramba. Tests showed their water supply has nearly three times the recommended limit of uranium.

The Territory government is the landlord for 72 tenants in the community, whose water is supplied by a government-owned water company. Water quality failed to meet health guidelines in six remote NT communities last year, a PwC report found.

The government is trying to overturn a court ruling that found it was legally required to provide safe drinking water in the community.

“It’s disappointing that the government continues to fight what would seem a very reasonable position: that they have to provide clean drinking water to their citizens”, Dan Kelly, one of the lawyers representing them said.

Woolies workers strike back: ‘We are not robots!’



MORE THAN 1500 members of the United Workers Union (UWU) were continuing an indefinite strike at four Woolworths distribution sites in NSW and Victoria as *Solidarity* went to press.

The company failed to reopen its Melbourne South Regional Distribution Centre in Dandenong after several days of picketing in early December prevented scabs from entering.

Workers are fighting to scrap the punitive speed-up “Framework” system, a computerised management system, introduced earlier this year, that aims to drive up productivity.

They’re also fighting for a pay rise of 11.5 per cent a year for three years. Woolworths has offered only 11.5 per cent over three and a half years and is refusing to budge on the Framework.

Woolworths claims that 3 per cent is generously above inflation, but grocery prices at Woolworths and Coles are up 18 per cent in the last three years. And Woolworths made \$1.7 billion net profit in 2023.

One worker at the Erskine Park warehouse in Sydney told *Solidarity*, “Last year’s pay rise was only 0.5 per cent, and how much money did Woolworths make?”

The new “Framework” management system is just as big an issue for workers. One worker told *Solidarity*, “The main reason we’re sitting out here is because Woolworths says we have to reach 100 per cent target every time. And they can change the numbers, so it’s almost impossible to achieve.”

Maximise profits

According to a report from the UWU, the Framework attempts to raise picking and packing speed by making workers process a target number of items in a given time. The number is determined by a computer programmed to maximise profits.

As the UWU report states, “Should a worker fail to meet the designated speed of work at 100 per cent capacity of every measured minute of their shift, they are placed on a twelve week ‘coaching’ program referred to as the Glidepath.”

Increasing the tempo of work increases the chance of workers being injured or even killed.

One worker told *Solidarity*, “We’ve had broken ankles, shoulder injuries, people running into each other. There was an incident at Minchinbury, someone got killed there. He went into a spot he shouldn’t have and ended up with a lot of pallets on top of him.”

Workers are also on strike at Lineage, a separate company with a major contract with Woolworths, supplying chilled and frozen food to about 280 Woolworths stores across Victoria.

Coordinated action across the distribution centres can beat Woolworths, win a real pay rise and scrap the Framework
Jayden Awarau

EDITORIAL

Albanese short-changing workers and still backing Israel's war crimes

ANTHONY ALBANESE ended the year rushing a flurry of bills through parliament, clearing the stage for an election as early as March.

But Peter Dutton has been left buoyed by Donald Trump's victory in the US.

Labor's failure over the cost of living means Albanese could easily follow Kamala Harris and the Democrats out of office.

Albanese is trying to point to Labor's record of tax cuts, childcare and cost of living relief. But most workers don't feel like they've had any relief.

Real wages have dropped, with household living standards down 8 per cent over the past three years. That's a bigger drop than in any other OECD developed nation.

Labor is promising further policies to address the cost of living before the election. But at the same time it has attacked blue-collar workers in the construction industry with its forced administration of the CFMEU.

This can only weaken union organisation and put pressure on wages, safety and conditions.

The other danger from the US election is that anger over the cost of living fuels racist scapegoating. Trump tried to blame undocumented migrants for taking jobs and has promised mass deportations.

Dutton thinks he can ape Trump through ramping up racist rhetoric against immigrants and refugees.

But Labor is taking another page out of Kamala Harris' failed US election campaign through trying to outdo the Liberals on racism, introducing new deportation laws for refugees with powers more sweeping than anything the Liberals ever tried.

Labor's attempt to cap the number of international students at universities and colleges didn't get through the Senate but it is already restricting visas through other measures.

Immigrants aren't a threat to jobs—keeping out international students threatens job cuts at universities across the country.

A union fightback against the bosses and the government is the way to protect jobs and tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

Nurses in NSW have again taken strike action for a one-off 15 per cent pay rise, with rail workers also staging industrial action to demand cost-of-living pay rises.

More than 1500 warehouse workers at six Woolies and associated sites in



Above: There should be a warrant for Anthony Albanese's arrest too for aiding the Gaza genocide
Photo: Solidarity

three states are also striking to win pay and end speed-ups forced on them by a new management system.

Victoria's Building Industry Group of unions has pledged to support the strike, with the ETU donating \$30,000. Everyone should support their fight. Neither Albanese nor Dutton are going to end the cost-of-living crisis—unions and workers need to lead the fight for pay.

Israeli war criminals

The International Criminal Court arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant are a small step toward justice for Palestine.

They put the weight of the world's highest criminal court behind the arguments of the movement—that Israel is committing outrageous and appalling war crimes in Gaza.

They are charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity including the deliberate starvation of civilians, the denial of medicines, anaesthetics and medical care, and intentional attacks directed against civilian populations.

A number of countries have already confirmed they were willing to arrest Netanyahu and Gallant, including Ireland, Norway, Belgium, Spain, Slovenia, Switzerland and Austria.

But the response has again exposed the hypocrisy of many Western governments and their complicity with Israel's crimes. All member states of the ICC are obliged to arrest those charged if they set foot in their territory. The US, which is not

a member, denounced the ICC and declared it would always stand with Israel.

Both France and the Netherlands have cast doubt on whether they would arrest Netanyahu. Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong has refused to commit to his arrest, avoiding the question by saying, "We respect the independence of the International Criminal Court and its important role."

The charges also confirm that governments who supply weapons and support to Israel are equally guilty of war crimes. Joe Biden and Albanese also deserve to be in the dock.

Australia is still allowing the export of weapons parts and the use of the Pine Gap spy base to send Israel intelligence.

Shamefully here it is those who oppose Israel's crimes that are facing the sanctions. A student at Sydney's Conde Park High School was barred from his year 12 formal after wearing a keffiyeh at his graduation, while Sydney Uni has announced further restrictions on freedom of speech to target protests for Palestine.

But the arguments of Albanese and the supporters of Israel's genocide are getting weaker and weaker.

The Victorian government has ended its partnership with the Israeli Defence Ministry, in a win for the campaign to end military ties with Israel.

The movement for Palestine has to keep organising to expose Australia's role and demand that Albanese end all ties with Israel and US imperialism. The ICC arrests warrants show why we need sanctions against Israel—to isolate the genocide state and demand it end its wars.

.....
Real wages have dropped, with living standards down 8 per cent over the past three years

Uni staff fight job cuts as Labor scapegoats international students

By Alex Nicolson

HUNDREDS OF university staff in Canberra and Wollongong have rallied against job cuts, as universities across the country roll out attacks in the wake of Labor’s plans to slash the numbers of international students permitted to study in Australia.

More than 1200 job cuts have already been announced across the sector, with Universities Australia estimating 14,000 jobs are at risk.

Staff are wary of these figures—universities used loss of revenue during the pandemic to justify a staggering 35,000 job cuts, only to announce a total surplus of \$5.3 billion thanks to their attacks on workers.

At the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra, staff have defeated a plan to axe their pay rise of 2.5 per cent this year—with 89 per cent of the more than 4700 votes in an all-staff ballot against the proposal.

ANU also announced in October they would cut more than 150 jobs, with the NTEU estimating 638 full-time equivalent jobs are threatened.

But the number of job cuts from ANU’s College of Health and Medicine has been reduced from 50 to just 13 after the NTEU filed a dispute.

The University of Canberra announced plans to scrap no fewer than 200 jobs—despite paying former Vice-Chancellor Paddy Nixon an astonishing \$1.8 million and an increase in spending on consultants of \$9.5 million.

The University of Wollongong (UOW) is set to cut as many as 137 jobs following the drop in international student enrolments. UOW interim Vice-Chancellor John Dewar is a partner of KordaMentha, the firm hired to oversee the restructuring and job cut plans, a conflict of interests that beggars belief.

More cuts are on the way—the University of Sydney, for instance, is openly expecting a shortfall of \$90-110 million and has already announced that hiring freezes and other cost-cutting measures are to come. Similarly, the University of Technology of Sydney is expected to announce cost-cutting measures in excess of \$100 million.

University bosses across the country are blatantly lining their pockets while they attack workers. An NTEU report has exposed that there are 306 senior executives nationwide earning more than their respective state



Above: ANU staff rally against the university’s proposed pay freeze
Photo: NTEU ACT

premiers.

A much larger fight will be needed against the cuts—including industrial action by staff. In 2012 when the University of Sydney announced 340 job

cuts, thousands protested and students went on strike and launched occupations, saving half the academic jobs. That’s the kind of fightback needed again.

Oppose Labor’s cuts on international students

ALBANESE’S PLANS to cap the number of commencing international students for 2025 have stalled, after the Senate rejected the legislation. But it will continue reducing international students through other measures to restrict visas.

Labor’s moves are designed to help halve net overseas migration—scapegoating immigrants for the cost of living.

The idea that Australia’s housing crisis is caused by students cramped into accommodation in suburbs near the universities is ridiculous.

Albanese has opened the door to a racist debate he cannot win. Dutton is campaigning already against international students as “the modern version of the boat arrivals” and the Coalition has promised “deeper cuts” if they win the next election.

Labor is desperately trying to attack Dutton for failing to support the caps, with Immigration Minister Tony Burke arguing, “If anybody out there is thinking that because of the rate of immigration they are having trouble getting into a home, just know the leader of the opposition has decided to make that worse.”

But Labor cannot convincingly out-flank Dutton on the right on immigration.

The National Tertiary Education Union has demanded no jobs are lost, but stopped short of opposing the caps as a whole. This stems from the misguided belief that caps push back

against corporatisation, and an unwillingness to confront those university staff who blame international students for our sky-rocketing workloads.

It’s a travesty that international students are paying upwards of \$50,000 per year to study and that the universities take this money while providing very few of the supports to ensure students can meaningfully access their education.

Universities have continued to jack up class sizes while keeping marking rates at punishing speeds. Students with English as a second language often need more support than teachers can give, and too often staff blame students for this instead of management.

But capping student numbers does nothing to reduce class sizes or reduce fees. It merely allows the scapegoating to continue and for racist ideas to go unchallenged.

We need to demand the student caps be abandoned and that the university sector receive full public funding, instead of relying on inflated student fees.

The campus-level fights against job cuts are already pulling the union left. The NSW Division has called on the NTEU to reconsider its position on student caps, and called a statewide mobilisation demanding public funding, while over 500 members in Victoria voted for a statewide delegates meeting and action to stop the job cuts and win public funding.

Sophie Cotton

More than 1200 job cuts have already been announced across the sector

Ceasefire in Lebanon but no sign Israel will end its wars

By David Glanz

THE CEASEFIRE in Lebanon was scarcely hours old before Israel launched fresh attacks, firing into the southern Lebanese town of Markaba, wounding two people. Israel also shelled the villages of Taybah and Khiam.

To drive home the point, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a far-right Israeli TV station that the ceasefire did not mean an end to the war.

With Donald Trump taking office on 20 January, Netanyahu is confident that he has even stronger US backing as Israel wages war on four fronts—Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank and Syria.

While the 1.2 million Lebanese driven from their homes by Israeli terror will hope to be able to return, the ceasefire marks a setback for those looking to an Iranian-backed “Axis of resistance” linking Hezbollah and Hamas.

Hezbollah had previously said it would stop its attacks on Israel only once a ceasefire had been agreed in Gaza. Now it is withdrawing its forces 30 kilometres north from the Israeli border, beyond the Litani river, having failed to repel the Israeli ground invasion.

The largely ineffective Lebanese army will patrol southern Lebanon, giving Israel the buffer zone it has been demanding.

Meanwhile the deal gives Israel fully 60 days to pull back its troops. Talks on a permanent border will allow Israel to try to steal Lebanese territory.

Netanyahu boasted that the ceasefire will free up troops to threaten Iran and to continue the grinding genocide in Gaza.

And he got a bonus from the deal, with France (a party to the ceasefire) saying it would not necessarily enforce the arrest warrant issued against him by the International Criminal Court.

Displaced people

In Gaza, the horror continues. Israeli strikes killed at least 40 Palestinians, many of them in the Nuseirat refugee camp. Further attacks killed 15 people, some in a school housing displaced people.

Natalie Boucly, an official with the UNRWA aid agency, said, “Gaza



Above: Damage from Israeli bombing of Beirut after the ceasefire Photo: Sally Hayden/SOPA Images via ZUMA Press Wire

has become uninhabitable ... basically the entire population of Gaza are in desperate need of assistance amid a looming famine.”

Two million refugees are living in tents flooded by sewage or winter rains. A woman lamented, “I’m left with nothing. I look at my children, call to heaven and say, ‘Good, enough. It’s better to die from a missile.’”

There is open discussion in Israeli ruling circles of seizing northern Gaza outright. Far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich said, “We can and must conquer the Gaza Strip. We should not be afraid of that word.”

Giora Eiland, a former head of the Israeli National Security Council, has defended what has been dubbed the Generals’ Plan—to depopulate and seize the north of the strip.

He wrote in the Israeli paper Haaretz, “Since it is allowed to conquer territory in war, the question is how this should be done.

“One possibility is to do it in territory where hundreds of thousands of civilians are present. The inevitable result will be a high number of innocent people killed.

“The other possibility is to act first to make sure there are no civilians there.”

This explains why the Netanyahu government has starved northern Gaza of supplies.

Even if Israel does not annex parts of the strip outright, it seems set to maintain military rule.

Tamir Hayman, a former head of Israeli Military Intelligence, has

written that the IDF will slice up Gaza and use the occupied zones for raids into areas where Hamas continues to organise.

Picking olives

Israel claims its attacks on Gaza are justified by the influence of Hamas. But it has been stepping up its harassment of Palestinians in the West Bank, which is ruled by the Palestinian Authority.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israel killed 719 Palestinians including 163 children in the West Bank and East Jerusalem between 7 October 2023 and 6 October 2024.

Israeli soldiers stand by while Israeli settlers harass Palestinian villagers. At least 15 Palestinian farmers picking olives were injured between 30 September and 6 October.

In early November, masked settlers set fire to 17 cars in the Palestinian city of El Bireh, near Ramallah. They spray-painted the words “For Judea and Samaria—War”, using the Zionist term for the West Bank.

Backed by the US and its allies, including Australia, the Netanyahu government is intent on its agenda of ethnic cleansing. Ceasefire deals are unlikely to be more than pauses in the horror.

We need to step up efforts to build solidarity with Palestine here while looking to those with the real power to bring the horror to an end—the Arab working class.

.....
There is open discussion in Israeli ruling circles of seizing northern Gaza outright

Ramp up NSW rail workers and nurses strikes to win pay

By Chris Breen

NSW NURSES held their third day of strike action in November, as rail workers also ramped up industrial action over pay.

After crying poor for months when it comes to teachers, nurses and rail workers, the Minns Labor government in NSW has offered police a pay rise of up to 10 per cent a year over four years.

Nurses and railway workers are right to reject the government's shabby 3 per cent offer and keep fighting for more. Rail workers are fighting for 8 per cent a year and nurses are fighting for a one off 15 per cent pay rise.

NSW nurses are among the lowest paid in the country. A 3 per cent pay rise would leave nurses well behind inflation and still hundreds of dollars a week behind interstate nurses.

Victorian nurses recently won a 28.4 per cent pay rise over four years—that's 7.1 per cent per year. NSW public sector workers shouldn't settle for less.

If there is money to pay police, there is money to pay the nurses, midwives, teachers and rail workers.

Despite a catch-up pay rise last year of around 8 per cent for most teachers after a long industrial campaign, teachers' more recent settlement for 3 per cent a year for the next three years is starting to look embarrassing. It is below real inflation for workers—a real pay cut. There was no face-to-face teaching workload relief either, a key demand.

Official inflation has fallen to 2.1 per cent, but this is largely because of the government's one-off electricity subsidies, and temporary petrol price falls.

This measure doesn't accurately track the cost of living. It doesn't include mortgages, which rose 18.9 per cent for the year, or rents which rose 6.7 per cent. That's why the Australian Bureau of Statistics developed separate Living Costs Indexes—which for employees increased 4.7 per cent for the year.

The Minns government claims their commitment to ratios for nurses means they can't provide decent pay increases too. The union is concerned that without a wage increase, ratios won't be realised as nurses won't stay.

Minns claims the money to offset the police pay deal will come from re-



Above: NSW nurses march on state parliament during one of their 24 hour strikes Photo: Solidarity

versing the privatisation of the police insurance scheme. If the government needs more money for wages, there are plenty of other privatisations that could be reversed. Up to \$400 million of public money per year to Eraring coal power station should be scrapped, as should \$1.5 billion of public money per year going to private schools, where several principals now earn over \$1 million per year.

The federal government could be asked to help out, after all they just announced they were wasting a dangerous \$7 billion for new long range missiles.

Strikes

Strike action can make the Minns government pay. It was strike action that broke the NSW government wages cap, and led to the teachers' increase last year.

Industrial action on the railways has already won a multi-enterprise bargaining agreement with Sydney Trains and NSW trains, a worker on every metro platform and a qualified driver on every metro train as well as a \$1310 annual allowance for a "Workplace rights training course" for RTBU members. But the key wage claim is yet to be won.

Determined strike action will be needed to win. But a major weekend of industrial action was called off in November to allow "two weeks of intensive negotiations".

This threat of major strike action showed the union's power. But calling

action off without winning claims just hands advantage to the government, slowing momentum. A major problem has been the lack of union meetings or any member control over the campaign.

The teachers' campaign was worse, with no campaigning in schools and no members meetings held until the final vote. The deal was done by union officials entirely through negotiations behind closed doors, and presented to members just half an hour before they voted on it.

Members at the meetings were supportive of arguments for two hours face-to-face teaching reduction and an above inflation pay rise, but voted for the deal because there was no confidence union officials would lead a fight for more.

The nurses' union has called three well attended strikes and rallies. But a plan to escalate action through further, more frequent strikes and a willingness to close beds and disrupt hospitals is going to be needed to win 15 per cent.

There is strong community support for the nurses and midwives' campaign. Well-paid nurses and nurse-patient ratios are crucial to the public health system and should be a priority for the Labor government.

United public sector action would help increase the pressure on Minns. Determined industrial action, and active rank-and-file mobilisation and decision making can ensure workers win.

.....
The threat of major strike action showed the rail union's power

Don't rely on court case to end CFMEU administration

REBEL BLUE collar unions were set to meet in a "Trade Unions for Democracy Summit" as *Solidarity* went to press, ahead of the opening of the unions' High Court challenge to the CFMEU administration regime.

Many are still putting their hopes in the court case overturning administration—with a decision expected by February or March. But the government has already vowed to legislate again and reverse the result if the unions win.

Representatives from the ETU, MUA, plumbers' union, AMWU and RTBU are discussing plans to run senate candidates in the federal election. A union-backed electoral campaign against Labor is another chance to expose the ALP's anti-union attack and build opposition to administration.

But the stopwork rallies held in Brisbane on 27 November, and in Sydney two weeks before, need to continue and grow. With the CFMEU set to be kept in administration for at least three years, ongoing industrial action is the only way to win back union democracy.

The administrators are slowly tightening their grip.

Respected Victorian CFMEU health and safety organiser Esther Van Arend was summarily sacked by the administrator in late November over an alleged altercation with Nine media journalist Nick McKenzie in a cinema. She has been a vocal critic of administration.

Administrator Murray Irving has also requested an investigation into charges against sacked NSW CFMEU Secretary Darren Greenfield for obstructing administration, which carries a fine of up to \$187,000 or a maximum two years' jail.

Sydney stopwork

When CFMEU delegates in NSW called a third stopwork protest against administration on 12 November, the administrators did everything in their power to try to stop it.

They even sent out an SMS to all members at 4pm the day before the protest claiming, "There is no CFMEU rally tomorrow."

This followed a letter sent to all members on CFMEU letterhead warning, "This action is NOT authorised by the CFMEU" and was unprotected action and claiming that if anyone attended, "Your employer may have the right to take action against you."

CFMEU organisers were told they'd be sacked if they attended or



Above: Construction unions in Brisbane staged another stopwork rally on 27 November, with sacked official Jade Ingham speaking. Photo: Solidarity

promoted the rally.

But 2000 workers defied the administrators to take to the streets. The turnout, however, was well down on the previous stopwork rallies in August and September.

As sacked NSW CFMEU Secretary Darren Greenfield put it, "They thought they could scare our members into not coming out on the streets today.

"And they might have achieved it with some, but they will see that you've turned out on the streets to protest these rotten, stinking laws and stand and fight and that will spur others on. Next time they're lied to and told not to come ... they will turn up and they will turn up in droves."

Some bosses prevented their workers from attending, threatening delegates with the sack if they walked members off the site.

This shows the importance of rank-and-file CFMEU delegates and activists making sure workers understand the administration's dirty tricks and organising to carry their sites to attend future stopwork protests.

CFMEU delegate Denis McNamara told the crowd to "prepare yourselves. If the High Court challenge doesn't go our way ... we have no option but to shut this industry down until our union is delivered back to us."

That's the kind of industrial action needed to defeat administration.

Strike shows power to beat Crisafulli and administration

THOUSANDS OF construction workers in Brisbane walked off the job on 27 November and marched on Queensland Parliament.

The rally followed the death of two construction workers in one week—one on a city site after being ordered to work in the rain, the other on a Vestas wind farm in Dalby.

The strike was also aimed at the new Crisafulli LNP government's attack on working conditions.

Crisafulli is re-establishing the Queensland Productivity Commission tasked with reviewing the construction industry. He has also changed the right of entry rules for CFMEU health and safety officers so that 24 hours' notice has to be given to the boss.

Workers voted to defy Crisafulli's restriction on the right of entry, unanimously voting to stop work if any union health and safety official is denied entry to their worksite.

The LNP Government has also announced that the Best Practice Industry Conditions (BPIC) agreement, negotiated in 2018 for all state government projects over \$100 million, would be suspended.

This could affect conditions on new projects from Olympic infrastructure to transport upgrades, starting in 2025.

BPIC conditions include a heat policy that allows work to stop if it reaches 35 degrees, or 29 degrees and 75 per cent humidity three hours from the start of a shift, as well as a 5 per cent pay rise every year until 2027.

The strike was also another blow to the Labor government's administration of the CFMEU. Given the anger over the workplace deaths, and the attack on BPIC, the Queensland administrator didn't dare oppose the strike.

Construction workers are going to need to keep fighting to protect their conditions and their union.

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Some bosses threatened delegates with the sack if they walked members off

Are we facing a new wave of attacks on abortion rights?

By Judy McVey

HUNDREDS OF pro-choice activists marched through Brisbane on 1 November to “keep abortion legal” in the aftermath of the Liberal National Party’s win in the Queensland election.

During the campaign anti-abortion MP Robbie Katter (Katter’s Australian Party) promised to introduce a bill to recriminalise abortion, supported by some LNP politicians. LNP leader David Crisafulli refused to rule out a conscience vote for LNP MPs, creating a danger the bill might pass.

All but three LNP MPs voted against legalising abortion in 2018, including Crisafulli and his deputy Jarrod Bleijie.

The issue hurt the LNP. Labor campaigned strongly in the city in favour of reproductive rights, lifting their vote there from what was tipped to be a wipe-out.

This shows why Federal Liberal leader Peter Dutton wants to keep abortion off the agenda in the lead up to the federal election next year.

The “right to choose” is a popular demand and abortion has been decriminalised in every jurisdiction across Australia.

While they are unlikely to completely overturn legislation, anti-abortionists inside and outside the Liberal Party continue to focus on later periods of pregnancy and administrative loopholes to limit access.

On 16 October, an anti-abortion bill was narrowly defeated in the South Australian upper house in a conscience vote, 9-10.

Liberal MP Ben Hood’s hideous bill would have meant that women seeking abortions at about 28 weeks would be forced to give birth instead. The only choice would be whether to keep the child or have it adopted.

Greens MP Tammy Franks said that the proposal would force birth upon pregnant people seeking an abortion, including “children, victims of rape, incest and sexual slavery; or on much wanted pregnancies where the mother or the foetus will not survive”.

Specialist obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr Heather Waterfall said that compelling women to undergo premature birthing came with risks, explaining that at, “less than 32 weeks [foetuses definitely] have an increased risk of cerebral palsy, ongoing lifelong respiratory or breathing issues”.

Federal Liberal Party leaders have



Above: Rallying for abortion rights in Sydney, one example of the widespread support for the right to choose Photo: Solidarity

tried to slap down anyone who raises the issue.

When NT Liberal Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price raised her opposition to “late term abortions” she was defended by National Party Senator Barnaby Joyce, but Nationals’ leader David Littleproud said he supported a “woman’s right to choose”.

Queensland Labor campaigned for abortion rights. Abortion is also an issue for the Federal government, which funds Medicare rebates for abortion and provides health funding to the states and territories.

Yet, we cannot rely on Labor to consistently defend reproductive rights. Before the 2019 federal election the Labor Party promised that, if elected, it would use federal funding to provide abortion services at all public hospitals. That policy was dumped in 2022.

Now The Greens are calling on Labor to return to their earlier policy and fund public hospitals, “to ensure that all Australians ... can access essential reproductive healthcare at no cost, through the public hospital system”.

But Labor doesn’t want abortion to be on the federal election agenda either. It refuses to stand up to the conservative religious groups and anti-abortion activists opposing wider access.

Postcode lottery continues

Most pregnant people who require reproductive health services can access them, if you have sufficient cash. Out-of-pocket costs for a surgical abortion can be around \$1000.

But abortion access remains dependent on your postcode.

Firstly, the nature of services provided in clinics and hospitals varies.

Recently, the ABC reported accusations that Queanbeyan and Orange regional hospitals denied abortion services and procedures to patients. In response, the NSW government intervened and these hospitals reversed their policies.

Lack of access in regional areas forces many people to travel to services in metropolitan areas.

As Greens Senator Larissa Waters points out: “With the closure of many private abortion facilities in recent years, many ... are left with little choice but to travel hundreds of kilometres and spend thousands of dollars.”

Secondly, the law in each state and territory treats abortion access differently. While a first trimester abortion cannot be legally denied in any state or territory; at later stages of pregnancy, the rules vary.

In South Australia abortion can be performed at the request of a woman up to 22 weeks and six days; other states are similar, but in Tasmania it is only 16 weeks. Terminations after that point require the approval of two doctors and the pregnancy must pose significant risk to the pregnant person, or carry significant risk of serious foetal anomalies.

The continued anti-abortion campaign waged by groups like the Australian Christian Lobby reinforces uncertainty and increases stigma.

There is still an ongoing fight to end problems of access and out-of-pocket costs—including against conservative Labor governments.

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Abortion access remains dependent on your postcode

Rich countries refuse to pay for climate action at talks in petrostate

By Angus Dermody

AFTER WHAT'S almost certain to be the hottest year on record, world leaders have again failed to consider any serious action on climate change. Another greenwashing climate summit was held in petrostate Azerbaijan in November, in the wake of climate denier Donald Trump's re-election in the US.

Trump has pledged to boost oil and gas drilling and tear up climate laws. His first administration rolled back more than 100 environmental regulations and withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement, which seeks to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.

Trump's nominee for the Environmental Protection Agency is his ally Lee Zeldin, who he promises will "ensure fair and swift deregulatory decisions" in a clear suggestion that more attacks on environmental protections are on the table.

His nominee for the Department of Energy is Chris Wright, an oil company executive who denies the impacts of climate change.

But the Democrats' agenda was also far from green. Kamala Harris supported fracking, bragging that as Vice President she "cast the tie-breaking vote to open up more fracking leases". Oil production in the US has reached its highest ever level under Joe Biden's presidency.

As Harris and Trump were fighting to prove their worth to the fossil fuel industry, hundreds of thousands in the southeast states were severely impacted by a devastating hurricane season.

COP29

In the weeks after the US election, COP29 was held in Azerbaijan, a fossil fuel state, following last year's conference in another oil state, the United Arab Emirates. Azerbaijan's leader Ilham Aliyev proclaimed at the conference that fossil fuels are a "gift of god".

In 2022, 47.8 per cent of Azerbaijan's GDP and 92.5 per cent of its export revenue came from oil and gas, making it one of the most fossil-fuel dependent economies in the world. Azerbaijan is also one of Israel's largest crude oil suppliers, having increased exports to Israel significantly this year to fuel its genocide in Gaza.

Much of the conference was focused on climate finance, with the



Above: President Ilham Aliyev hosted this year's COP climate summit in the petrostate of Azerbaijan Photo: Vugar Amrullayev

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Azerbaijan's leader Ilham Aliyev proclaimed at the conference that fossil fuels are a 'gift of god'

establishment of a new "global climate finance goal" of \$US300 billion annually by 2035 to help developing countries transition to renewables. But the deal itself admitted that \$US1.3 trillion a year was needed.

The Least Developed Countries Group, representing over 1.1 billion people, has described the outcome as a betrayal, saying the conference ended, "Without an ambitious climate finance goal, without concrete plans to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees and without the comprehensive support desperately needed for adaptation and loss and damage."

Australia's Labor government went into the conference hoping to finalise its bid to host COP31 in Australia in 2026, but the decision has been delayed until June after Turkey refused to drop its bid.

Australia pledged an insulting \$50 million to the global fund to deal with losses and damage from climate change. State and federal governments handed out \$14.5 billion in fossil fuel subsidies in 2023-24—a 31 per cent increase.

Labor's ambition to host what has been termed a "Pacific COP" here in 2026 is an attempt to greenwash its climate crimes while shoring up Australian influence in the Pacific.

While standing alongside Pacific island leaders at COP29, Australia was accused by the Special Envoy for Climate Change of Vanuatu of "not acting in good faith" and Tuvalu's

Minister for Climate Change has said that while a Pacific COP would be an "exciting opportunity" it must be accompanied by "a commitment to end new fossil fuels".

Instead new gas projects are still going ahead all across the country.

In Western Australia, the state Labor government looks set to extend the life of Woodside's North West Shelf Project in the Burrup Peninsula for 50 years. It passed amendments to its environmental regulator that remove its ability to regulate emissions from projects like Woodside's.

In the NT, the new Country Liberal government is proposing to hand sweeping powers to the Chief Minister and a new government bureaucrat so that gas fracking projects in the Beetaloo Basin and elsewhere can be approved without environmental assessment.

One positive is that Infrastructure Australia, which needs to approve the \$1.9 billion in public money for the Middle Arm development in Darwin, has knocked back the business case. This means more delays for the project, which aims to facilitate the extraction of gas from the Beetaloo Basin.

The grim prospects for official climate action are a reminder of the need to keep fighting to stop new fossil fuel projects and build the kind of movement that could force governments to fund a just transition to 100 per cent renewable energy.

The centre cannot hold: German government collapses as far right gains

By Jacob Starling

JUST HOURS after Donald Trump emerged victorious in the US presidential election, the German government collapsed, plunging the biggest economy in Europe into confusion.

The collapse comes after three years of dysfunctional and increasingly unpopular government from the country's first three-party coalition.

As the German economy enters its second year of recession, the failure of centrist parties to address inflation and the cost-of-living crisis has fueled the rise of the far right. A radical left-wing intervention is urgently necessary.

After the 2021 federal election, the Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens were forced to invite the small, pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) into their cabinet to form a government.

The coalition was divided from the start, with the SPD Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the FDP finance minister Christian Lindner clashing over budget policy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Its spending plans were too high for the FDP but too low to deliver on the SPD's promises to improve living standards for workers and pensioners struggling with post-pandemic inflation.

The fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine only deepened the economic crisis. Germany, which had relied heavily on Russian natural gas, was hit very hard by the global increase in energy prices.

Cost of living

The result was the biggest collapse in German living standards since the Second World War and the biggest economic downturn since the 2008 financial crisis. Real wages slumped further in 2022 than in any year since 1950.

The failure of the government to address the cost-of-living crisis is a major factor in the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany party (AfD).

In the September regional elections, the AfD nearly won Brandenburg, which the SPD has governed since 1990.

The party has viciously scapegoated migrants and refugees for the rising cost of living, demanding a complete halt to immigration for five years and calling for mass deportations.

It is increasingly dominated by



Above: A protest against the AfD, who are gaining in the polls. The banner reads 'Stand up to racism' Photo: Martin Heinlein/Die Linke

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The failure of the government to address the cost-of-living crisis is a major factor in the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany

barely-disguised Nazis in the party leadership.

The government coalition finally split during negotiations over the 2025 budget.

Chancellor Scholz wanted the government to increase borrowing, using the extra money to stimulate the industrial sector, under threat from Chinese competition, and continue funding weapons for Ukraine.

Car manufacturer Volkswagen has just announced factory closures that will mean thousands of job cuts as well as pay cuts of 10 per cent for the rest of its workers.

However, Lindner refused to take on more government debt, proposing a sweeping slate of pro-business reforms instead. On 6 November, Scholz sacked Lindner from the cabinet, leading the FDP to quit the coalition, robbing the government of its majority.

After publicly exchanging blame, the government announced that Scholz will face a vote of no confidence on 16 December, which he is expected to lose.

Snap elections will then be held on 23 February and, despite his unpopularity, Scholz plans to run again. The conservative Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), currently polling at 32 per cent (twice as much as the SPD), are expected to win, although they too will likely be forced to form a coalition to reach a majority.

If no radical left-wing alternative is offered, the far right will continue to benefit from the dysfunction of the

mainstream centrist parties. The AfD is currently polling at 18 per cent, making them the second most popular party in Germany.

Germany's main left-wing parties have proven incapable of challenging the racism of the far right.

Sara Wagenknecht's BSW split from Die Linke (The Left) last year to campaign on an anti-immigration platform, in the hope of winning back voters from the AfD by accommodating to their racist politics.

Die Linke itself, Germany's largest left-wing party, is in a severe crisis and only narrowly managed to win seats in the last national election.

Instead of clearly opposing cuts and building resistance to the decline in living standards it has discredited itself by moving closer to the other mainstream parties and seeking to join a coalition government at a national level.

This comes after its participation in numerous state-level governments that have implemented cuts.

The party has been paralysed over the war in Ukraine, refusing to oppose arms shipments, allowing the far right to take the lead in opposing the war.

It has also shamefully voiced support for Israel's genocide in Gaza and repressed pro-Palestinian voices within the party.

The need for a radical left response is urgent—to build an anti-racist movement able to take on the far right, stand up for Palestine and fight the bosses and governments that are slashing living standards.

Trump's cronies prepare to launch rotten agenda

By Maeve Larkins

INCOMING US President Donald Trump has named a rogues' gallery of loyalists, billionaires and racists to staff his new administration. They show his intent to impose mass deportations, racism and tax cuts for the rich following his inauguration in January.

This is a response to Trump's first term in office when he was often restrained by establishment officials such as his former Homeland Security head General John Kelly, who these days calls Trump a "fascist". This time around, Trump wants an administration that will toe the line.

Trump has nominated a series of hardline anti-immigration fanatics to lead his border policies and implement plans to deploy the military to mass deport the estimated 11 million undocumented migrants within the US.

His "Border Czar" Tom Homan is a former Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer who earlier this year stated, "If Trump comes back in January ... I will run the biggest deportation force this country has ever seen."

He will be helped by Homeland Security pick Kristi Noem, who, as Governor of South Dakota, sent hundreds of National Guard troops to the Mexican border over 3000 kilometres away, declaring it a "national security crisis". She has also promoted claims she shot dead her family's 14-month-old dog because it was "untrainable".

Trump's Homeland Security Adviser will be Stephen Miller, who has a history of extreme racism. In Trump's first term, Miller allegedly suggested that drones should be used to explode and sink asylum-seeker boats, and leaked emails have exposed him promoting the white supremacist "great replacement" conspiracy theory.

His pick for Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, is a former Fox News host with neo-Nazi symbols tattooed on his chest. He has decried war crimes regulations as rules "written for us to lose" and wants to change the name of the Defence Department to the "War Department". He has also pledged to over-turn "woke" rules in the US Army, such as those allowing women in combat roles.

Trump's other foreign policy picks, such as senior Republican



Above: Trump is planning to step up deportations of undocumented migrants Photo: US Department of Homeland Security

Trump has tied his administration to the billionaire class through many of his closest advisers and donors

Senator Marco Rubio for Secretary of State, are in lock-step with Trump's plans to much more aggressively confront China.

Similarly, Trump has flagged Mike Waltz as National Security Adviser. Waltz is a former colonel in the National Guard who preaches preparing for war with China by sending more arms to Taiwan and by upgrading the US military.

His UN ambassador Elise Stefanik is an outspoken critic of the United Nations, suggesting that US funds to the body ought to be cut for its lack of support for Israel's genocide.

For the Department of Health and Human Services, Trump has nominated Robert F. Kennedy, an anti-vaxxer who has claimed that "no vaccine is effective" and who believes they cause autism in children.

Super-rich

Trump has also tied his administration to the billionaire class, with many of his closest advisers and donors being billionaire members of his Mar-a-Lago Club in Florida.

The richest person alive, Elon Musk, is set to head a new Department of Governmental Efficiency, alongside fellow billionaire and biotech investor Vivek Ramaswamy. The acronym DOGE is both a stale internet meme as well as Musk's preferred cryptocurrency. Musk wants to use this role to slash a third of federal spending through sweeping layoffs in the public

sector.

For the Treasury, Trump has flagged Scott Bessent, a Wall Street billionaire who wants Trump to impose austerity and deregulate the economy. His Energy Secretary nominee is Chris Wright, the founder of oil company Liberty Energy who last year claimed, "There is no climate crisis and we're not in the midst of an energy transition, either."

Proposed Commerce Secretary, Howard Lutnick, is CEO of elite investment bank Cantor Fitzgerald and will co-chair Trump's transition team alongside Linda McMahon, a former executive of World Wrestling Entertainment, who is also flagged for the Secretary of Education role.

US stock markets jumped after Trump's election, anticipating sweeping tax cuts and deregulation, and feeling assured that Trump's presidency will be a "friendly environment" for corporate profits.

Trump's picks show the horrific priorities and potential for widespread upheaval of his incoming presidency. He has promised to impose a 60 per cent tariff on China and a 10-20 per cent tariff on all other countries.

With Republican control of Congress and a party bent towards his will, Trump's entrance into office in January is likely to mean the rapid introduction of his priorities.

More than ever, the left in the US will need to build broad resistance on the streets and in the workplaces.

WHY TRUMP WON AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE LEFT

Trump appealed to racism and bitterness about the Democrats' failures on cost of living to attract some workers, but most are far from won over, writes **James Supple**

DONALD TRUMP'S return to the presidency shows the sick state of the political institutions in the most powerful nation on Earth.

Trump is a creature of the far right, who will use his position to spread foul sexism, transphobia and racist abuse against immigrants.

Americans' willingness to vote for him shows the depth of the rage at the political system—and the failure of the Democrats.

For decades, both major parties have stacked the system in favour of corporations and the rich—with workers' wages held down and inequality skyrocketing.

The US is now one of the most unequal societies on the planet. The top 10 per cent control nearly 60 per cent of its wealth, compared to just 6 per cent for the bottom half of the population.

Uniquely among developed countries, life expectancy in the US has declined over the past decade, to sit five years shorter than comparable countries. Working class Americans have it even worse—those without college degrees were living eight and a half years less on average before the pandemic.

Poverty and despair are widespread. Drug overdose deaths from medications like fentanyl, fuelled by the big pharma's profiteering, are out of control.

In 2021 they claimed the lives of 106,669 people, a rate of 32 per 100,000, three times the rate of most other countries.

Workers' anger and the desire for change has been super-charged by the cost-of-living crisis, with prices up by 20 per cent in the last four years. In exit polls, almost half of voters said they were worse off than four years ago.

The number of people struggling to get by has grown. Around 40 per cent of adults say they are relying on credit card debt to meet basic expenses.

Kamala Harris and the Democrats

did nothing but promise more of the same after holding the White House under President Joe Biden for the last four years.

Given multiple chances to explain what she would do differently to Biden, all she could come up with was that she would put a Republican in her cabinet.

Harris's desire to pull in corporate money saw her adopt what the *New York Times* called a "Wall Street-approved economic pitch", avoiding issues like the minimum wage or expanding healthcare that might have appealed to those doing it tough.

Instead she focused on trying to win over wealthy Republican voters concerned about Trump's contempt for democracy and US institutions.

Biden and Harris's backing for the genocide in Gaza also cost them support—particularly among Arab-Americans. It even allowed Trump to posture as a peace candidate.

One measure of the lack of enthusiasm about Harris was the drop in Democratic supporters bothering to vote at all, with 7.1 million fewer votes for the party overall compared to the last presidential election in 2020.

Trump scored an increase of 2.5 million votes on his previous total.

Trump sought to tap into the resentment and frustration with the system, denouncing the Democrats for destroying the country and promising "a golden age" that would "make America great again".

At his rallies he repeated the accusation against Harris, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" and played on the memory of his four years in power as a time of lower inflation and a better economy.

And it worked—with 80 per cent of the voters who rated the economy as the most important issue going to Trump.

Votes

The result was not the down-to-the-

The biggest gains for Trump were among those at the bottom of society

wire outcome expected. Trump won comfortably, taking all the swing states and the popular vote, with 2.5 million more votes than Kamala Harris across the country.

There were swings towards Trump virtually across the board—from young voters, Black and Hispanic voters, and voters without college degrees.

Trump's core support was still overwhelmingly white and more rural, as it always has been, with 80 per cent of Black voters remaining with the Democrats. But this was down from 90 per cent of Black voters in 2020.

The biggest gains for Trump, however, were among those at the bottom of society.

Trump won 50 per cent of voters earning less than \$50,000, as 10 per cent of voters in that bracket abandoned the Democrats compared to four years ago.

At the other end of the scale, the Democrats won 51 per cent of voters in the income bracket of over \$100,000, up from 43 per cent last time. This was the only income group that swung towards the Democrats.

Working class

Since the New Deal of the 1930s, the Democrats have styled themselves as the "party of the people", winning the majority of working class and union votes by standing for change.

Now some are saying the working class has abandoned the party, won over by Trump's anti-immigration and right-wing populist politics, with the Democrats becoming the party of the rich.

Trump's vicious attacks on immigrants clearly had some appeal. He sought to channel anger at the rising cost of living and the way life is getting harder into blaming immigrants for taking jobs and destroying communities.

This racist scapegoating lets the real criminals—the billionaires whose wealth has soared through destroying

jobs and squeezing more of working Americans—off the hook.

Trump is set to attempt to round up millions of immigrants for deportation, something that surely will destroy lives and tear apart communities.

But we shouldn't write off working class Americans as stupid or irremediably racist.

Small shifts towards Trump were enough to win him the election. But working class voters remain almost evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans—Trump won 50 per cent of those earning less than \$50,000 versus 48 per cent for Harris.

Many others are so disillusioned with the political system that they don't vote at all. Almost 90 million Americans didn't cast a vote—more than one-third of the eligible population.

Those who don't vote are overwhelmingly working class and low-income people, previous studies have shown.

Even those who did vote for Trump sympathise with many left-wing causes. In Missouri, a solidly Republican state where Trump won 58.5 per cent of the vote, 58 per cent of voters also backed proposals on the ballot for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and guaranteed paid sick leave for workers.

Voters there also rejected the state's near total abortion ban, creating a constitutional right to an abortion until foetal viability.

Alaska, which also voted for Trump, backed a similar measure for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and sick leave. Montana, Nevada and Arizona all also approved measures supporting abortion despite backing Trump. In Florida 57 per cent voted for abortion rights, just short of the required 60 per cent.

And while some embraced Trump's racism, others were simply voting to punish the Democrats.

This means many of those who voted for Trump can be drawn into struggles against him and the billionaire class of which he is part.

Trump has no solution to the problems facing workers in the US. His administration is already stuffed with billionaires and Wall Street figures—from Elon Musk to hedge fund manager and proposed Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and billionaire investment banker and proposed Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick.



Above: Donald Trump managed to appeal to some workers' sense of the US's decline
Photo: Michael Vadon

He wants to cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans as well as reduce corporate tax rates. His plans for tariffs on imports from Canada, Mexico and China won't bring back the well-paid manufacturing jobs the US has lost.

A number of unionists likely supported Trump.

The Teamsters Union polled its members and found 58 per cent were voting for him. Yet these workers can be drawn into campaigns for wage rises and to tax the rich to fund public services and jobs.

Union members can also be won to defending undocumented workers, who have their own history of union struggles as farm workers, cleaners and elsewhere.

Trump's victory has not produced the same shock it did the first time. But the consequences are likely to be even more dramatic than in 2016. Trump now is out for revenge against those who frustrated his efforts during his last term in office, and more determined to impose his will on Washington.

Trump's racism will again encourage the growth of violent far-right groups, like the attempted insurrectionists who stormed the US Capitol building in 2021.

He has threatened to begin the

largest deportation of undocumented migrants in US history—after talking of deporting up to 20 million people during his campaign.

Despite posturing as a peace candidate who would end the war in Ukraine, Trump's nationalistic American First policy also means confrontation against rivals such as Iran and China.

His plan for sanctions and tariffs could produce economic chaos.

His wholehearted support for Israel means Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thinks he can do whatever he wants.

Trump is swaggering and unpredictable.

During his last term, his push to bomb countries at will was repeatedly blocked by military officials in his administration—including his desire to bomb Mexico to destroy drug labs and to attack North Korea.

This time he is surrounding himself with Trump clones determined to take control of the bureaucracy and make sure he gets his way.

The US left has a huge challenge ahead to build resistance. The key to this is to break with any reliance on the Democrats and build opposition from below, through mass movements that fight Trump on the streets and in the workplaces.

#METOO AT AN IMPASSE EXPLAINING THE FAILURE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Critics argue the government response to violence against women is failing, writes **Lucy Honan**, but recognising its roots in capitalism and the family is necessary to addressing it

THE LABOR government’s 2022-2032 plan to end gender based violence “in a generation” is the height of public policy gaslighting.

It is seven years since the global rage against the extent of violence against women bubbled up into the #MeToo moment. But rates of sexual violence in Australia are increasing, as are the misogynistic attitudes of young men. Domestic and family violence remains extremely prevalent.

Efforts to change men’s behaviour through school lessons, advertising campaigns, men’s behaviour change programs, and coercive control laws have failed spectacularly, and in many instances created more danger for women. As a result, the DFSV (domestic, family and sexual violence) sector is now beset by crisis and division.

This year, the government appointed expert panel’s report “Unlocking the Prevention Potential” controversially broke from what they called the predominating “gender equality model” which focuses almost all efforts to reduce violence on challenging cultures of disrespect for women.

Their recommendations marked a modest, but welcome shift away from targeting men’s behaviour, toward greater government accountability, including mechanisms to increase women’s economic independence, housing and other support for men who use violence, and independent oversight of police responses to gender based violence.

Labor met the report with more fanfare; a declaration of a “national crisis” of violence against women, and a slew of funding announcements. But the sound and fury concealed what some organisations estimate to be a 12.5 per cent annual cut to Commonwealth funding for frontline services when inflation is considered.

We need a serious plan to end gender based violence. We have to

reckon with the violent class power that organises and benefits from the oppression of women through the nuclear family. And we need to start with a more radical understanding of how deep the problem is.

The nuclear family and capitalism

The nuclear family is perhaps the most important tool for making capitalism’s theft of workers invisible.

For working class people, the family is a buffer from naked market exploitation; it gives people social roles and relationships that are not under the direct control of bosses, and it is invested with obligations that run counter to those of capitalist competition, like unconditional love, mutual support, and protection of the vulnerable and economically unproductive.

But rather than posing a threat to capitalists, families give workers a reason to go to work, and a way to pool resources to have children, something that benefits the system through replacing the working class.

Women’s contradictory social role in the nuclear family leads to her oppression. As primary carer for children, at least partial economic provider, and provider of sexual satisfaction and emotional protection for her partner against the abuses and degradations of capitalism, she is permanently in service to other people, and is lauded for her capacity to “do it all”—if she can.

But most of this work has no exchange value on the labour market. The more work women do to maintain the internal functioning of the family, the less they can take up paid labour.

The less involved men are in the labour within the family, because they are working outside it as primary economic providers, the more their labour is worth in comparison to women—despite ultimately still being exploited themselves at work.

Women’s contradictory social role in the nuclear family leads to her oppression

This toxic dynamic drives partners to try to claw back from each other the value that the ruling class drains from them both.

All members of the family, including children, are ensnared in the bitter contradiction between the idealised hopes and obligations of their roles within the family and their incapacity to fulfil them.

The more pressure the family is under, because of racism, unemployment or low wages, isolation, illness, or very young children, the more its members need each other, but the fewer resources it has to draw on.

The nuclear family doesn’t explode outward in strikes or other forms of resistance, it implodes.

Ruling class domination normalises abuse. The chasm of inequality at the heart of the family creates an opportunity for men to replicate the pattern, and abuse women to try to restore their own depleted status.

Women often fight back against this abuse, to defend themselves and their children. Sometimes this leads to police misidentifying them as the abuser.

Too often women’s economic dependence means they are unable to leave a violent partner, and the abuse can escalate.

Areas of low income and high unemployment correlate with the highest levels of domestic violence. Racism, disability, pregnancy and isolation increase the incidence of family violence.

Violence against women often plays out in private, but the conditions for it are created by a system wide dynamic, not an interpersonal one.

You can’t ‘change the story’ without changing reality

Two of the government’s expert panelists, Jess Hill and Michael Salter, have also been vocal critics of the government’s “Change the Story” advertising

campaigns and Respectful Relationships school programs, for having not made a dent in rates of violence, or even in changing men's attitudes.

Despite "Stop it at the Start" government advertising since 2015, and Respectful Relationships lessons in some form in every government school, a 2024 study found that 22 per cent of the 18 to 30-year-old men surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that "men should use violence to get respect if necessary"; a 2 per cent increase from 2018.

One survey of high school boys in NSW found that a third consider Andrew Tate (a proudly violent and misogynistic social media influencer) "relatable", and one quarter "look up to Andrew Tate".

But the alternatives the expert panel proposed are mired in the same mistaken theory that sexist attitudes can be shifted without challenging the entire structure of the nuclear family. They promote a greater focus on representations of "positive masculinities", targeted men's behaviour change programs, and programs to combat online misogyny and "radicalisation".

There can be no positive masculinity under capitalism. It is inherently exclusive of women, and of higher status.

Working class people of all genders can oppose all manifestations of sexism and build the struggle against the class interests that enforce gender roles. But none of us can opt out of these dynamics; they are endemic to capitalism.

Tate and his brand of online misogyny is repulsive, but it is an outgrowth of mainstream gender role expectations, not an aberration. When Tate says "men and women have different roles and responsibilities" and "a man has a duty to protect and provide for her wife" and lauds women's value as their capacity to produce and rear children, he is describing the gendered division of labour under capitalism.

This division is certainly not natural or inevitable, but it is a material reality. The women in working class young men's lives are doing copious unpaid and underpaid caring work.

The chauvinism Tate figures preach has a purchase for some because boys can test and expose a "truth" about the way social power is organised. For example, female teachers' and students' status is confirmed as "replaceable" (which is a Tate term for a low status person), when sexist



bullying at school can predictably prompt school management to blame victimised female teachers for poor classroom management.

The response is not just a sexist attitude that principals can be re-educated about. It reveals (to the humiliation of the teachers) the reality of women workers' lack of power in the workplace.

Whose coercive control?

A strength of the "Unlocking the Prevention Potential" report is the authors' recognition of the way police too frequently "misidentify" victims of domestic violence as perpetrators, and their failure to respond to and take seriously victim-survivor calls for assistance.

But one of their key recommendations, for domestic violence threat assessment centres, would extend the state's ultimate coercive powers further.

One of the ways that police powers are being extended in the name of protecting women from domestic violence are new laws against "coercive control" being introduced in many states and territories.

Coercive control is a non-physical form of abuse defined by a NSW government fact sheet as, "any behaviour which scares, hurts, isolates, humiliates, harasses, monitors, takes away another person's freedom or unreasonably controls their day-to-day activities."

This description could easily ap-

Above: Despite the #MeToo movement and the March for Justice rallies governments are still failing to tackle violence against women Photo: Matt Hrkac

ply to the normal way a boss behaves toward their workers, the way that schools control young people, how Border Force treats migrants and refugees, or the way police behave in general.

Police powers ultimately increase the pressures the family is put under. As Indigenous abolitionist and victim-survivor Tabitha Lean writes of her own experience, "real safety, especially for those of us most vulnerable to both interpersonal and state violence, cannot come from the same institutions that criminalise, surveil, and punish us."

The Albanese government could immediately relieve the pressure on families that increases the prevalence of violence, and stops women from leaving violence. The expert panel proposed meagre improvements, like removing the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test.

Massive public housing builds, raising all Centrelink rates, an end to income management and permanent visas for all those on bridging visas would start to meet the scale of the DFSV crisis. But expert panels won't win those reforms—let alone make them.

The family seems like our only refuge in a hostile world, but it's a suffocating and dangerous trap. We need to build working class power, to fight for a society where solidarity, care and satisfying human needs can be the real goal and work of everyone—not just the unpaid, private labour of women.

ROLLING THE RIGHT BUILDING RANK-AND-FILE POWER IN THE NSW BLF

Tom Orsag looks at how the NSW BLF set the standard for militant construction unionism as a result of years of rank-and-file organising in the union

THE NSW Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) of the 1970s was famous for its militancy. It raised the pay and status of builders' labourers with two mass strikes in 1970 and 1971 and then implemented the famous "Green Bans" to save the environment.

The BLF's proud tradition of militant left-wing unionism was later incorporated into the CFMEU construction union.

But the BLF wasn't always a fighting left-wing union. For decades the NSW branch of the union was controlled by some of the worst officials imaginable.

It took ten years of patient rank-and-file organising to build the militant, socially aware union of the late 1960s.

The current attack on the CFMEU is aimed at wiping out this kind of unionism. Most of the militant leadership of the union has been sacked and replaced with administrators.

The officials and organisers who remain are now increasingly restricted, threatened with sacking if they disobey the directions of the unelected administrators.

This puts more responsibility on rank-and-file delegates and activists to hold the union together and stand up to the government-appointed administrators as they attempt to weed out militancy.

The way rank-and-file activists in the BLF built the traditions of militancy and won control of the union contain valuable lessons for building rank-and-file organisation to defend the CFMEU from the corrupt administration today.

The story is brilliantly told by Paul True in his pamphlet *Rolling the Right*.

Brawl

Fred Thomas gained control of the NSW BLF in 1941, after the old officials were removed by the union's

federal office in Melbourne.

Thomas ran the union like a gangster, sending thugs to beat up opponents inside the union and paying them to stack union meetings. If there was opposition to him at a meeting it usually descended into a brawl.

Later, it was discovered that he had stolen or misused around \$300,000 of union money over the years.

Thomas did his best to avoid strikes or any effort to improve conditions. Migrant workers in the industry were openly mocked in racist terms in the pages of the union journal.

Conditions in the industry were rough, with almost all the lifting and digging done by hand. Workers were divided between different unions—in particular the BLF for the labourers and the Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU) for the carpenters and bricklayers.

The BWIU at the time had a Communist leadership and was more willing to fight for its members. Thomas instructed BLF members never to cooperate with them, making united action on sites impossible.

Neither the builders nor the government cared that Thomas was a corrupt gangster because he ran a union that never threatened builders' profits.

His neglect of pay and conditions meant that, by the early 1960s, builders' labourers in NSW were paid 15 per cent less than in Victoria.

In 1955 anger at the failure to get a wage increase forced the union to lead a strike.

Thomas called it off after four days following an unwritten "gentlemen's agreement" with the Master Builders Association. This allowed the bosses to later renege on it.

Hoist

A Rank and File Committee (R&FC)

The newsletter agitated around workplace issues like the lack of 'wet weather' pay and basic amenities

was finally formed in 1951 by a handful of Communist Party (CPA) members within the union.

It built up support through years of rank-and-file organising, leading strikes on individual sites and producing a newsletter called *Hoist* that was distributed on job sites every few months.

The newsletter agitated around workplace issues like the lack of "wet weather" pay and basic amenities such as drinking water, toilets or lunch sheds on sites.

Their first public meeting saw just five Communist Party members and ten other rank-and-file union members attend.

The group led its first strike at the Goodyear site at Camelia, demanding pay for days of work cancelled due to wet weather. The strike united tradesmen and BLs and they won two hours' pay rather than the previous "fares" to get to the job if it was "rained off".

This strike built the reputation of the R&FC. They worked to win the support of union delegates at different sites, organising on big projects including the St Mary's munitions factory with 4000 workers.

As one activist told Paul True, "We really became established in 1956 when the big job started in St Mary's."

"There was a thousand builders' labourers on it. There would have been about 20 builders' labourers delegates on the job, we had about 15 of them supporting the Rank and File. Blokes that had problems, they could always come to the Rank and File Committee and raise their problems there."

Thomas held onto control of the union through gangster-like violence.

At union branch meetings, members of the R&FC could speak only if they organised four or five others to sit surrounding them and hold off Thomas' thugs as they rose to speak.

Things got worse as the challenge to the union leadership grew. One activist, Don McHugh, recalled that Thomas began bringing heavies to union meetings who “used to open up their coats and show you the butt of their revolvers”.

Boom

In early 1957, Thomas gave up, taking a six-month leave of absence and never returning to the union. The R&FC backed a former Thomas ally, “Banjo” Patterson, in an election against another right-winger.

Patterson was elected the new secretary and the R&FC and the broader left won four lower-level positions within the union.

Boom conditions had produced a widespread wave of strikes across other industries and building workers were also becoming more militant.

Patterson went along with this new mood and the R&FC worked with him. They were prepared to cooperate with officials and other groupings within the union when they showed they were serious about fighting for workers’ rights.

Under the new leadership, the union worked together with members of the BWIU and other construction unions for the first time to organise joint campaigns.

A combined building unions mass meeting was held at Sydney Stadium over pay rises and safety, something unheard of previously.

But it wasn’t to last. The right rigged the union election in November 1958 and an old official from the Thomas-era, Bill Bodkin, became secretary for the next three years.

It was a demoralising outcome but the R&FC continued to organise on the job.

In a sense they had to. As True wrote, “The most striking feature of the new leadership was their utter laziness. Increasingly ... jobs were being left to their own devices.”

As Jack Munday explained, it was “a blessing in disguise” because it allowed the rank-and-file group to establish control of the delegates networks on building sites.

Considerable

At the time the union still held regular members’ meetings that had considerable power, including the ability to elect paid organisers where there was a vacancy.

The rank-and-file group was now able to organise enough members to the meetings to win elections.



Above: Members of the BLF on the Opera House construction site in the 1960s

The Bodkin leadership’s response was to turn meetings into a farce, using control of the chair to declare motions carried when they were clearly defeated. When challenged they simply walked out and shut down the meeting.

Out of frustration, the rank-and-filers adopted a new tactic at a union branch meeting in January 1961, attended by 200 members.

Shortly after 8pm, Bodkin attempted to shut the meeting down and leave, knowing he was outnumbered. So as Munday explained, “Bodkin kept descending the stairs and I kept picking him up, carrying him back and sitting him in his seat.” With Bodkin still present the meeting could then continue.

“It was the first democratic meeting ever held in the Builders Labourers ... we kept them sitting in their seats till 10 o’clock.”

The R&FC followed up the next day by holding a stopwork rally, marching 1000 building workers to Trades Hall.

Decisively

By the time of the 1961 union election, the right-wing group running the union had split.

The Left decisively won the November 1961 union election on a joint ticket of the R&FC and left-wing ALP members. They won 17 of the 21 positions up for election.

The Left assumed control of a union drowning in debt, with little experience of running a union and a newly-elected secretary, left-wing Labor Party member Mick McNamara, who was only 22.

Within a short period, the new leaders were able to increase participation in the monthly branch meetings and launch a number of militant actions.

Despite a formidable challenge from the Right at the following election in 1964, the Left and R&FC won even more decisively.

In 1968, with McNamara resigning due to ill health, CPA member Jack Munday was elected secretary with Labor member Bob Pringle as president. Along with CPA member Joe Owens, elected as organiser and later as assistant secretary, they formed the core leadership of the reformed branch.

This saw the NSW BLF become a model of radical and militant unionism.

Its achievements in civilising the building industry, improving wages and conditions, as well as championing social causes including the Green Bans and Aboriginal rights are another story.

But this was made possible not simply through replacing a group of right-wing union leaders with left-wing officials.

The Left leadership of the BLF built its support through organising on the job over many years among union delegates and activists.

The real source of union dynamism and power is rank-and-file organisation and strength on the job—able to work with the officials when they fight for workers’ interests, but independently of them when they don’t.

That’s the real lesson of the BLF Rank and File Committee—and the struggles that followed in what became Australia’s best trade union to date.

Read Paul True’s Tales of the BLF: Rolling the right online at <https://bit.ly/BLF-history>

LABOR'S REFUGEE SHAME AS LIBERALS CLAIM 'WE ARE RUNNING IMMIGRATION'

By Ian Rintoul

THE THREE anti-refugee laws rushed through Parliament in the dying days of the last parliamentary sitting are even worse than those of the Howard and Dutton era. They will hang like the proverbial albatross around Labor's neck.

The government insists that the laws are only meant to apply to those with criminal convictions. That would be bad enough; providing for extra-judicial punishment of non-citizens.

But the laws give the government sweeping powers over anyone with a bridging visa on removal or departure grounds. That includes not only those released from indefinite detention by the High Court NZYQ case but also around 4800 asylum seekers rejected by fast track and the 1000 refugees brought from Manus and Nauru who are being denied permanent visas.

The laws will allow the Australian government to pay third countries to accept refugees and non-citizens that it cannot otherwise deport. Disgracefully, while the government says they are too dangerous to live in the Australian community it has no concern at all about sending them to a third country.

The laws will allow the government to jail people who will not co-operate with their own deportation to countries where they fear persecution. And the government has given new draconian powers to Border Force to search for "prohibited items" and confiscate mobile phones in detention—something Labor refused to support in 2020 when the Coalition tried to introduce it.

George Newhouse, principal solicitor for the National Justice Project, made the telling point that the Biloela family, granted permanent visas in 2022 by Albanese, would have been deported in 2019 without a mobile phone to alert supporters and lawyers.

Labor's hypocrisy knows no bounds. Labor supported Medevac legislation in 2019 that got refugees off Nauru. But Labor's new laws would prevent such legal action to stop refugees being mistreated in a third country.

Kurdish refugee Mostafa "Moz"



Above: Refugees marching on Immigration Minister Tony Burke's office for permanent visas as part of their 24 hour a day outside his office Photo: Solidarity

Azimitabar, detained on Manus and then in an Australian hotel, said, "For eight years I was tortured by the Australian government... To not know if you will ever be safe is another kind of torture."

Playing the refugee card

Labor's crass electoral calculations were revealed when Albanese was asked on *Insiders* why he was passing laws they previously opposed. Albanese smugly replied, "Before the last election, there was some questioning of our resolve." He went on, "We have kept Operation Sovereign Borders. No-one who has arrived here by boat has been allowed to settle here."

Not for the first time, Labor has purposely sacrificed principles on the altar of electoral opportunism. Since Labor was elected asylum boats have been intercepted and turned around at sea. More than 100 asylum seekers have been sent to Nauru, with no prospects of resettlement.

Under the new laws, refugees or non-citizens who are sent to Nauru could be indefinitely detained there. There are literally no conditions placed on the treatment of those sent to a third country.

Labor could have taken a stand when it was elected in 2022. Labor could have ended indefinite detention instead of opposing the High Court decision. Instead of bringing all the refugees from PNG it has left 42

refugees and their families there since 2013, without income or medical support for the last year. Labor has even refused to transfer the ten refugees who are so mentally unwell they are unable to respond to medical assessment.

Burke attacked The Greens for "their love affair with the Liberals" for blocking Labor's housing bills, but Labor itself has no qualms about collaborating with the Liberals. After Labor's bills were passed, Liberal shadow minister for Immigration [Dan Tehan](#) boasted that the Coalition is now "basically running the immigration system".

Just when you thought Labor could not sink any lower, it has. By passing these laws, Labor has handed extreme anti-refugee powers to any future Liberal government. Like the attack on the CFMEU, many people will choose not to vote Labor at the next election.

But there is no parliamentary solution. The campaign to get refugees off Nauru was built on protests and demonstrations. It was protests and demonstrations, inside and outside the hotels, that finally ended detention for those brought to Australia from Manus and Nauru.

When asked if he would use the laws, Albanese coyly replied, "We will do what we need to do." And the refugee movement will need to do all we can to stop him.

Solidarity